Sister Lorraine Morin, OP 1928-2019

Lorraine Morin was two weeks shy of her thirty-third birthday when she finally took a step she’d been discerning almost half of her life: she wrote to Sister Patrick Jerome Mullins, the Congregation’s novice mistress at the time, asking to be admitted.

“It may be that, now that I can no longer fight it, it is too late,” she wrote.

But the General Council gave its permission, and on June 26, 1962, Lorraine arrived in Adrian from her home town of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to become a postulant.

Lorraine was born on October 10, 1928, in Somerville, Massachusetts. Both of her parents, Joseph Morin and Adelaide Ouellette, were natives of St. Helene, Quebec who had immigrated to Massachusetts, Joseph’s family to Salem and Adelaide’s to Lowell.

Joseph was a mill foreman and Adelaide a dressmaker when the couple married in June 1913. At some point Joseph became a barber, for Sister Lorraine spoke in her life story about how her father would give his clients “haircuts and a couple of hundred dollars’ worth of counseling.”

The Morins had six children in all, four boys (Roland, Robert, Ferdinand, and Alfred) and two girls (Adelaide and Lorraine, the youngest). Lorraine’s childhood was a happy one except for the fact that from the time she was in first grade she was plagued with almost-daily migraine headaches whose cause went undiagnosed until she was thirty-two: she was allergic to all fish and other seafood and the iodine in it.

She attended St. Teresa School in Somerville for grade school and her first year of high school, at which point she changed to St. Clement School in the same city. Both schools were staffed by Sisters of St. Joseph from Boston. When she was in eighth grade, some Maryknoll Sisters came to meet with some of the girls, and it was at that point that she informed her mother she wished to join the Maryknolls right away.

“My mother was a wise woman and knew that I had a lot of growing up to do in order to pursue this plan for my life,” she said in her life story. Her migraines also factored into her decision to put aside any thought of entering the convent. When her first cousin Sister Marie Ouellette (Sister Martin Ann), an Adrian Dominican, came for home visits, and would talk about religious life, Lorraine would say to her, “When you can wear shorts when it is ninety degrees, I will think about entering.”

Lorraine went to work for Sears, Roebuck and Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after graduating from high school, and spent the next sixteen years there, first as a sales clerk and later in the office. She eventually worked her way up to supervisor of the accounting department, the job she held when she re-visited her desire to become a Sister. By that time, the cause of her migraines had been discovered and she felt she could move ahead with this major change in her life, and her family was supportive of her choice to be an Adrian Dominican Sister like her cousin.

In May 1962, right before entering, she and her sister went on a guided tour of Europe, and during a stop near Milan, Italy, she found herself onstage as part of a tradition of having tour participants...
entertain. "They put a microphone in front of me and I said I don’t need that," she said in her life story. "I sang something that was easy: 'Vissi d’Arte' from 'Tosca.'"

As a postulant, her time actually spent in Adrian was short, for she arrived at the Motherhouse in late June and in September was sent to teach second grade at St. Mary’s School in Royal Oak, Michigan. She returned to Adrian that December to begin her canonical novitiate year, receiving the habit and the religious name Sister Anthony Joseph.

In January 1964, she was sent to St. Mary’s School in New Baltimore, Michigan, where she spent the rest of the school year teaching eighth grade. Those six months were a difficult time for her, she said, because of the challenges of the class itself, “but with the help of the other teachers I survived.”

Her next six years, until 1970, were spent at Mother of Divine Grace School in Cheektowaga, New York, a suburb of Buffalo. In her life story, she told about her experience with teaching sixth grade when the curriculum was changed from geology to the Space Age.

My nephew Kenneth had given me a subscription to National Geographic, which was all on the Space Age. My teaching partner, Sister Jane Charles [Murphy], and I went out to libraries and found whatever we could because there was nothing in the textbooks. The saving factor was that I had the National Geographic Magazine.

The test for December and June came from the diocesan office and they forgot they changed the course of studies. You could only open up the exam in front of a monitor in the classroom. When I opened the envelope, I realized this was not the right exam. The look on my face was noticed by some of the kids.

… I told Sister Bibiana [Singer] that I had thrown the incorrect tests out. … She called the main office to tell them and said, “Since Sister has taught it, I suppose they can make up the exam.” So that is what we did that night. My teaching partner and I wrote the exam on the Space Age. We had to send it in to the Diocesan office for their approval. The kids ate up the Space Age. When they took our exam, they did well.

Next came a year at Siena Heights College (University), where she completed her bachelor’s degree in French with minors in history and English. In 1971, she was sent to Jackson Catholic Middle School in Jackson, Michigan, where she taught for two years before returning to Adrian to work in the Siena Heights finance office as a bookkeeper.

It marked a return to the career she had had before entering the Congregation, and she spent the rest of her ministerial life in the accounting field. Following two years at the College, she came to the Motherhouse to serve in the finance office from August 1975 to January 1977 and then again from August 1977 to October 1981. In between, she was at the University of Detroit to earn her MBA degree.

She then spent a year (1982-83) at the merged St. Theresa Visitation School in Detroit as a bookkeeper and then became head bookkeeper at Marygrove College. In 1986, she went to Florida to minister at Barry University and spent the next twenty-five years there, serving as business office supervisor, as an accountant for the university, and finally as manager of Barry Villa and a volunteer in the business office. She returned to Adrian in 2011 to live at the Dominican Life Center.

Sister Lorraine died on March 22, 2019, at the age of ninety. She had been an Adrian Dominican Sister for fifty-six years.
At the wake service, Sister Rosemary Asaro, Holy Rosary Chapter assistant, remembered having lived with Sister Lorraine in the 1970s. “[I] will never forget the fun we had,” she said. “We were the two night owls of our Regina community and often stayed up enjoying TV and/or sharing stories about our day. Lorraine, we imagine you having a great reunion with your parents and siblings and that you have probably already joined the angel choir.”

In her homily at the next day’s funeral Mass, Sister Mary Sue Kennedy explored the Gospel reading of Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus invites the faithful to “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you… and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

“We gather today to celebrate Lorraine who loved God with all her heart and responded to God’s intimate call, ‘Come to me,’” Sister Mary Sue said. Then, recalling Jesus’ call to Peter and Andrew in Luke 4:10 to “Come after me,” she said, “Lorraine responded to both these calls – one to “come after me” when she said her ‘yes’ to becoming an Adrian Dominican almost fifty-seven years ago, and one, ‘come to me,’ God’s call to intimacy throughout her life but especially in her difficult later years.

“But oh, so much took place in the years in between, as she gave herself to the many students she taught, to the institutions where she served, to the sisters with whom she lived and to her family whom she loved dearly.”

Sister Mary Sue recalled Sister Lorraine’s tremendous singing talent, telling the assembly the story of that long-ago trip to Italy when Lorraine sang “Vissi d’arte,” and remembered another of Sister Lorraine’s special skills: cooking and baking.

Sister Mary Sue went on to note the great losses of Sister Lorraine’s later years, first her beloved sister Adelaide and then her health, and then said,

“The last years of Lorraine’s life were very difficult ones as she lived with her own diminishment and her music seemed to be lost. Indeed, her burden did not seem light. … Jesus’ promise of rest has now come to Lorraine. Indeed, as Lorraine drew her last breath in this life, I firmly believe that Jesus was with her saying, ‘Come to me. I will give you a well deserved rest.’ … Lorraine has taught us in her life and in her dying how to say ‘yes’ to the invitation to come and follow.”
Right: Sister Lorraine Morin, left, and her Sister Adelaide Morin on a cruise to Alaska

From left: Gathering on Entrance Day, June 26, 1962, are, from left, Adelaide Morin, Sister Lorraine’s sister; Sister Martin Ann Ouellette, cousin; Sister Lorraine; and her parents, Adelaide and Joseph. Sister Lorraine Morin, left, with Marilyn Paus, receptionist for Weber Retreat and Conference Center in Adrian, 2002
Right: From left, Sisters Magdalena Ezoe, Theresia Scheuer, and Lorraine Morin in St. Catherine Chapel, Adrian

From left: Sisters Lorraine Morin, left, and Patricia Dillon pose with Ophelia the camel and her manager during Weber Center’s 2013 Holy Land Pilgrimage. Sister Lorraine with her niece’s husband Bill at Plymouth-Cape Cod
Members of the 2012 Golden Jubilee Crowd are: back row, from left, Sisters Mary Rae Waller, Mary Hrovat, Mary Ellen Youngblood, Attracta Kelly (Priess), and Mary Alice Hoff; middle row, from left, Sisters Janet Schaeffler, Christine Ostrowski, Mary Ann Dardy, Marianne Supan, and Marie Breitenbeck; and front row, from left, Sisters Mary Lisa Rieman, Lorraine Morin, Bonnie Motto, and Lenore Boivin. Not pictured are Sisters Linda Bevilacqua and Marie Michaella Siplak.