Sister Marcelline Fouchey, OP
1928-2019

One of the many young women to enter the Congregation with the “Ambrosian Spirit” – educated by the Adrian Dominicans at St. Ambrose School in Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, just outside the Detroit city limits – was Marcelline Fouchey.

Marcelline was born on September 30, 1928, in Detroit to Harvey and Laurette (Bernier) Fouchey. Both Harvey and Laurette were of French stock dating back some five hundred years. Their respective sets of parents both were from Quebec, Canada; Harvey was born in Detroit but Laurette’s birthplace was Bromptonville, (today part of the city of Sherbrooke), Quebec. She came to Detroit at the age of twenty and married Harvey the next year, in 1927.

The couple had five children in all. Sister Marcelline was the oldest of the children; her two sisters were Florence, sixteen months younger, and Annette, four years younger. Two boys died in infancy. Florence would actually follow her big sister, with whom she was very close, into the Congregation, becoming Sister Mary Marcelle, but left in 1970 after twenty-three years in the community.

Both her parents were accomplished musicians. Harvey, who worked as a letter carrier, played the violin and mandolin, while Laurette was a pianist. Sister Marcelline recalled many nights when she and her sisters drifted off to sleep as their parents played music. In the often dark times of the Great Depression, the music lifted everyone’s spirits.

Marcelline attended both grade and high school at St. Ambrose, and in January of her junior year, 1945, four of the St. Ambrose girls were invited to Adrian for Reception. Additionally, one of their teachers, Sister Maura Phillips, was making final profession.

“Perhaps the events of this day were the actual grace that brought to realization the desire to become a religious,” she wrote in one of her St. Catherine letters.  

She and her friend Betty Lux, another of the foursome who visited Adrian, decided together that they wanted to be Adrian Dominican Sisters. In April 1945 they told their parents, who welcomed the news with understanding and loving acceptance, and the pair entered the Congregation together that June. Sadly, Betty, who became Sister John Clare, was only in the community for ten years before a severe illness took her life.

Sister Marcelline completed her high school education at St. Joseph Academy over the summer and received the habit and her religious name, Sister Jeanne Henry, on January 4, 1946. After her canonical novitiate year and eight additional months spent studying at Siena Heights College (University), she was missioned to St. Carthage School in Chicago in the fall of 1947.

“I loved the experience of a small mission and teaching in grade school,” she wrote in her life story. But her first teaching ministry in grade school turned out to be her last teaching ministry in grade school; in January 1951, she and a number of other Sisters were recalled to Adrian to complete their bachelor’s degree work, and once she had her degree (in mathematics) later that year, she was sent

1 St. Catherine letters were begun in 1980 to mark the 600th anniversary of the death of St. Catherine of Siena. Sisters were invited to pair up to write a series of letters to each other, telling about their lives.
off to the Congregation-operated Dominican High School in Detroit, and remained a high school teacher for as long as she was an educator.

In all, she spent eleven years at Dominican High School on three separate occasions (1951-58, 1959-61, and 1977-79) and "dug roots deeply while I was there," she wrote. While on her first mission to Dominican, she completed her master's degree in mathematics from the University of Notre Dame.

Sister Marcelline also taught high school at St. Theresa’s, Detroit (1958-59); St. Joseph Academy (1961-65, 1966-69, and 1974-75); Regina Dominican, Wilmette, Illinois (1965-66); Aquinas, Southgate, Michigan (1969-73); Immaculate Heart of Mary, Westchester, Illinois (1983-86); and the University of San Diego High School (1986-February 1987, after which she became the school’s treasurer and bookkeeper until June 1991). Her mathematics background also played a role in her being the treasurer of St. Joseph Academy and Regina Dominican during her time at those schools.

She also served both the Academy and Regina Dominican as alumnae director: the Academy solely from 1975 to 1977 (in addition to being its treasurer and maintenance supervisor, both schools together from 1977 to 1979, and the Academy again from 1979 to 1983, during which time she was also the development director.

When she was first sent to teach at the Academy, the particular structure she knew from her own time as a student there made her none too sure she wanted to go, she wrote. But a warm welcome by the principal, Sister Jean Cecile Hunt, and the discovery that found that one of her friends from Notre Dame and Dominican High, Sister Faith Glendingen, was still on the faculty, soon lifted her spirits, and in general she found her time at St. Joseph Academy to be a joy-filled experience. "[A]s I look back over the fourteen years I’ve spent at the Academy … they have been filled with all the struggles and joys and enriching experiences of a person’s lifetime. … The joys unfolded day by day," she wrote.

In 1973-74, on a Congregational grant, she was a graduate student at St. Michael College in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, studying scripture. “I found the experience of religious studies a refreshing change from the discipline of mathematics,” she wrote. “To this day, I appreciate the marvelous opportunity I was given for prayer and study.”

Sister Marcelline’s life took a very different turn from education in 1991 when she became the secretary for the Pacific West Chapter. She held that post until 1997 and then again from 2000 to 2003. In between, she served at Marion Catholic High School in San Diego, California, first as director of the education center and then as financial assistant.

“God’s plan for Marcelline’s life certainly held many different things and activities,” said Sister Mary Sue Kennedy in her homily at Sister Marcelline’s funeral. Drawing from the first reading, Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, Sister Mary Sue continued,

There was a time for Marcelline in all that she did and was from her roles as daughter, sister, Adrian Dominican, friend, grade school teacher, high school teacher, dorm mother, treasurer, secretary, alumnae and development director, business manager in a Catholic high school and Chapter secretary. Marcelline’s time found her in ministry in many parts of the country from the Midwest, to the South, to the Far West, and her travel took her far and wide. Indeed, Marcelline entered each phase of her life fully and completely and lived each day as it came along – there is a time for everything!
Sister Marcelline retired from active ministry in 2003 but continued to live in Santa Cruz, California, taking up residence at Dominican Oaks. She stayed busy, however, driving the Sisters, doing the chapel laundry, and serving as a Eucharistic minister.

She returned to Adrian in 2007 where she gradually developed more and more severe memory loss. “But she maintained her quiet, gentle spirit,” said Sister Rosemary Asaro, Holy Rosary Chapter Assistant, in her eulogy for Sister Marcelline.

Sister Marcelline died on June 27, 2019, aged ninety and in her seventy-third year as an Adrian Dominican Sister. In one of her long-ago St. Catherine letters, she reflected on the fullness of her life in the Congregation, a passage which Sister Rosemary quoted at the end of her eulogy:

> My life as an Adrian Dominican has been a rich one blessed with the presence of our sisters and filled with countless opportunities to develop gifts given me by the Lord. For all of these I am most grateful. Truthfully, I can look back on every mission with great joy in the superiors assigned at those times, the sisters with whom I was missioned, and the students in the schools where I taught. I am afraid I have no stories to tell of unbelievable accounts of the days that were. I look back with no regrets nor blame for anyone that things could have been different.

Sister Mary Sue said in her homily that to prepare for her preaching that day, she had spoken to many who knew and loved Sister Marcelline “and she was described in the following ways: she was a hard worker, she was enthusiastic, humble, committed, loyal; she was precise and particular, she was a perfectionist, she was fun, she was gracious and hospitable and had a great zest for life and energy.

“After reading her writings I would add to this that Marcelline was a woman full of gratitude for all that she was given by our loving God,” Sister Mary Sue continued.

“… Marcelline, you now know and experience the love of God and the fullness of God. We thank you for the many ways that you showed to us God’s love with your life. May you enjoy eternity surrounded with God’s love!”
Right: Sister Marcelline is shown with her parents, Lavette and Harvey Fouchev, during a visit, April 1948.

Left: Sister Marcelline, center, with her brother-in-law Joe Zack and her sister Florence Fouchev Zack at Dominican Oaks, Santa Cruz, California.
Left: Sister Marcelline examines items from Mexico during the 2006 Chapter Assembly.

From left: Sister Marcelline speaks during the 1987 Chapter Assembly. Sister Marcelline at the 60th anniversary dinner in Santa Cruz, California.
From left: Standing, from left, Sisters Marcelline Fouchey, Jane Robert Stuckel, Anne Herringer, and Mary Therese Napolitan, and seated, Sister Thomas Josephine Lawler. From left, Sisters Mary Roseen Maier, Marcelline Fouchey, and Hilda Marie Gelegan attend the 1993 Pacific West Chapter Assembly.

Celebrating their Diamond Jubilee in 2006 are, back row, from left, Sisters Marcelline Fouchey, Marie Siena Chmara, Jeanne Marie O’Laughlin, Anne L. Lindquist, Therese Tighe, Jane Quirk, and Clare O’Connor, and front row, from left, Sisters Sean Therese Halpin, Marie Sheila Beatty, Therese Margaret Roberts, Therese Craig, Donna Wencel, Betty Foster, and Mary Margaret Donnelly.