Margaret Mary Mehigan was born on August 31, 1926, in Chicago to John and Hannah (Doherty) Mehigan. John and Hannah had both come to Chicago from Ireland, John from County Cork and Hannah from County Donegal, and met at St. Sabina Parish, one of Chicago’s traditionally Irish parishes.

After they married, the young couple settled in St. Kilian Parish, another home for Chicago’s Irish community. In time, four children arrived; in addition to Marge, there was John, Owen, and Anna Marie, who in time became a Springfield Dominican Sister.

St. Kilian School was staffed by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, and although Marge chose to attend the Academy of Our Lady (now Longwood Academy), operated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, for high school, the Adrian Dominican influence was instrumental in her choice to enter the Congregation. She graduated from Longwood in 1944, worked for a short time, and then came to Adrian in January 1945. When she was received as a novice that August, she was given the religious name Sister Thomas Owen.

After her canonical novitiate year, her first two teaching assignments were in Detroit, beginning with a month at St. Dominic School in August 1946 and then three years at St. Jude (1946-1949). From there, she was sent to Sacred Heart School, Albuquerque, New Mexico (1949-1950); St. Mary School, Kingman, Arizona (1950-1952); St. Augustin School, Des Moines, Iowa (1952-1955); and St. Clare Montefalco School, Chicago (1955-1957). She completed her bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Siena Heights College (University) in 1955.

In 1957, she was sent to teach at the Congregation’s Aquinas High School in Chicago, and was there until 1966. During this time, in 1962, she completed her master of education degree in guidance and counseling from DePaul University, and took on guidance counseling duties at the high school. It was the start of what became fourteen years of ministry as a guidance counselor; after Aquinas, she went to Sacred Heart School, Santurce, Puerto Rico (1966-1968); St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida (1968-1971); and Mother of Sorrows School, Blue Island, Illinois (1971-1974).

Sister Marge then took her counseling skills into the health care field, first by working with student nurses at South Chicago Community Hospital as Director of Student Affairs for four years (1974-1978). She earned her certification as a chaplain during this time. Next, she spent eight months at St. Mary Hospital in Streator, Illinois, as a pastoral associate until being called into Congregational leadership by being elected to a three-year term as Administrator of St. Dominic Province.
From January to June 1982, she participated in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) studies at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois, but after her term as provincial administrator ended she was immediately chosen as Chapter Priorress of the newly formed Midwest Dominican Mission Chapter.

Once that three-year term was up in 1985, Sister Marge completed a three-month internship in sponsorship with the Sisters of Mercy Health Corporation in Farmington Hills, Michigan, and then went to Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital in Santa Cruz, California, as its Coordinator of Mission Effectiveness. She served in that role from January 1986 to June 1989 and then filled the same role for the Congregation itself, as its Coordinator of Sponsorship and Mission Effectiveness, for six and a half years from 1990 to 1997.

After a year’s sabbatical in 1997-1998 spent in Chicago, she worked part-time in pastoral care at Ravenswood Hospital there for almost three years before retiring from active ministry. She continued to live either in or near Chicago for the next several years, however, and volunteered in many ways including as a Eucharistic minister, at Little Company of Mary Hospital, and at Southwest Chicago PADS, an emergency shelter for the homeless.

Finally, in late 2008, Sister Marge returned to Adrian to live, and was a ministering presence to the Sisters in the Dominican Life Center for as long as she could be. Eventually, in 2015, declining health required her to move from the Regina to the Maria Building. She died there on May 19, 2020, aged ninety-three and in her seventy-fourth year as an Adrian Dominican Sister.

Many remembrances of Sister Marge poured in for the wake and afterward, including these:

From Sister Jean Keeley, who was a student at Aquinas High when Sister Marge was sent there: *Marge was a good guide and mentor, didn’t mince any words, could be practical and encouraging, with a sense of humor and challenging. She was a wonderful sounding board for my junior and senior years with classes, friendships, student council, nurse aide work at Mercy Hospital, cycling through career possibilities: nurse, doctor, religious life, and settling on going to Adrian and Siena Heights.*

Former Adrian Dominican Sister Karen Verlinden recalled her very first day of school as a first grader at St. Jude School, when her mother forgot to pick her up on time after just a half day of class. After an unsuccessful effort to find her own way home, she ended up back at the school, where Sister Marge brought her into her classroom with the afternoon session of first-graders, got her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and some milk, and suggested she put her head down on the desk and take a nap.

*I did so very happily and a short while later Mother arrived, very apologetic for her mistake and very grateful for Sister Thomas Owen’s extra care and concern for one little first-grade girl in the midst of 120 other children. There was only one mishap of the day – I had lost my hair ribbon!*

*… Fast forward almost 50 years. … One evening at a birthday gathering for one of the sisters, we all sat in a circle chatting together. Sister Nadine Foley suggested we each tell a story from our childhood. When it was my turn, I told the story of Sister Thomas Owen, the lost hair ribbon, and the kindness she had shown to a very lost little first grader so many years before. When I finished, the room was very quiet and many of the sisters were smiling mischievously. Sister Nadine looked at me and asked, “Do you know who’s sitting next to you?” I looked to my right and saw the same bright eyes and smiling face of long ago.*
Associate Barbara Lawrence, a former co-worker, shared this:

… She was proud of her Dominican life and formed me in mission effectiveness with her actions and words. … Marge made sure I understood Dominican charism and my responsibility to share the mission with all my co-workers. … It’s selfish to want one last hug and twinkle from her eye but I feel her love from above. I’m so grateful for the time she took to love me with her Valiant Dominican soul.

Sister Patricia Benson also met Sister Marge as an Aquinas student, and when she joined the sodality asked Sister Marge to be her mentor:

You were so patient, loving, and supportive as you gently taught me more than to ‘say’ prayers, but to pray. I am grateful for those early instructions in meditation and quiet prayer as well as your listening ear for the issues and struggles to grow and discover who I was as a teenager.

In a later email, Sister Mary Lou Putrow shared this memory from her time as Vicaress of the Overseas Mission Vicariate:

Marge was a strong but sensitive leader. I came to know and appreciate her one year when she accompanied me on visitation with the sisters who were ministering in Kenya. Every time I saw her she would talk about that experience that I believe really affected her thinking about being a global society. I think she had never been in a third world country nor experienced such close contact with another extremely different culture. I really came to love and appreciate her and her astonishment and inquisitive nature.

Sister Maria Goretti Brown preached the homily for Sister Marge’s funeral.

When I heard the reading this morning [Isaiah 61:1-3], I thought: that first part is for us, here, mourning for Marge. Isaiah is asking God to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort those who mourn, to place a garland on our heads instead of ashes, to give us the oil of gladness, instead of the oil of mourning. Then, if we heard those words again, we would hear the same words, but in a different way. God chose Marge to heal the broken-hearted, to bring good news to the ordinary folk. The image I had when I heard this reading was Marge leaving all the suffering and sorrow behind and arriving in heaven and all the Adrian Dominicans were there to greet her. … There is a beautiful line from Isaiah that we heard also that describes the new arrivals: “They will be called OAKS of justice, of righteousness, planted by the Lord.” That was Marge – strong, feet firmly planted in her God, an OAK of justice.