Sister Marjorie (Maria Inviolata) Delaplane, OP
(1923 – 2014)

In her homily, Sister Patricia Walter said, “If Margie were to have written a book of theology she might have started it by saying, In the beginning was creative sound, a sound which was the eternal three-personed chord, joined by the music of the spheres, and brought into new and astounding harmony through the Word taking flesh in song.” Sister Pat’s image corresponds to Sister Marjorie’s own words describing her belief, “In my life, music comes next to God. Music is such a mirror of God.”

Born in Chicago, the first of seven children of Harry and Margaret (Kleinert) Delaplane, Sister Marjorie began her piano studies at the age of seven. She attended St. Xavier Academy until the Depression when she transferred to St. Columbanus for her remaining grade school years.

After attending Mount St. Mary Academy in St. Charles, Illinois, for one year, Marjorie asked to enter the Adrian Dominican Congregation but was turned down because of her young age. After graduating from Aquinas High School, she entered the Congregation on August 15, 1941. She received the religious name of Maria Inviolata.

Eventually three of her sisters also joined the Congregation: Joan, Marya, and Lois. Sister Marya died in 1976 and Lois left the Congregation.

As a graduate of Aquinas High School in Chicago, Sister Marjorie’s accomplishments at the piano had preceded her. She continued her studies with Sister Philomena Murray, a teacher in the Music Department of Siena Heights College (now University).

Within the first six months of her postulancy, Sister Marjorie was required to give a concert in Walsh Hall. Nadine Foley, who was a freshman at Siena Heights College that year, was studying voice with Sister Philomena. In preparation for Marjorie’s piano concert, Sister included a vocal solo by Nadine, who sang “Bless This House.”

Sister Marjorie’s first assignment was teaching fifth grade at St. Mary School in Adrian. Because of allergies, she was transferred to St. Mary School in Kingman, Arizona, where she taught grade school and music from 1944 to 1950. This was followed by one year at St. William Elementary School in Walled Lake, Michigan.

In 1951, Sister Marjorie was missioned to St. Joseph School in Bronxville, New York, where she was both principal and teacher for two years. For the next 16 years she taught high school along with music at Mount St. Mary Academy, St. Charles, Illinois; Dominican High School, Detroit; Regina Dominican High School, Wilmette, Illinois; Aquinas High School, Chicago; and Bishop Muldoon High School, Rockford, Illinois.
During these early years of teaching, Sister Marjorie spent her summers working on a bachelor’s degree in music from Siena Heights and a master’s degree in music from the University of Michigan.

After Vatican II and the impact of the Congregation’s Chapter of Renewal encouraging members to use and develop their talents, Sister Marjorie began teaching music at the college level as an associate instructor at Indiana University in Bloomington where she also began her doctoral studies in music. It was there that she studied under internationally known concert pianist Jorge Bolet, and harpsichordist Marie Zorn.

Sister Marjorie firmly believed that a career in music takes total dedication. The last 32 years of her life give ample testimony to her total dedication to being both piano teacher and concert pianist. Beginning in 1972 she taught piano at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. From 1981 to 2002 she gave piano instructions at South Suburban College in South Holland, Illinois. She was also a music teacher at Sherwood Conservatory of Music in Chicago for 12 years and gave private piano lessons in her studio at Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, Illinois.

To be an Adrian Dominican, Marjorie said, has given me the opportunity to work on my talents and use them for the honor and glory of God.

A wake-remembrance service was held for Sister Marjorie in St. Catherine Chapel on July 8. Sister Kathleen Klingen, Chapter Prioress of the Dominican Midwest Chapter, extended sympathy and welcomed Sister Marjorie’s relatives and friends who had gathered to bid her farewell. She summarized Marjorie’s life and ministry and added: “Personally, my love of classical music began at Aquinas High School where the then Sister Maria Inviolata taught music appreciation. Play on next to God now, Margie!”

Sister Joan Delaplane, her sister, shared what she said to Margie a year or two ago about an image of her entrance into eternal life:

Peter would open the Golden Gates and Margie would see Lake Michigan, with clean, white sand. On top of the sand would be a lovely polished platform on which stood her beautiful Steinway Baby Grand, with Mozart at the piano playing her favorite piece. In the corner would be a real Christmas tree all lit. She would know then that she was in heaven and would look around for God.

Sister Magdalena Ezoe first met Marjorie when they were both on the faculty at Dominican High School in the 1950s. Sister Magdalena recalled that in the late 1960s when she was teaching at St. Dominic College, St. Charles, Illinois, and Marjorie was at Muldoon High School in Rockford, Illinois, Sister Marjorie arranged for them to play Mozart’s Double-Piano Concerto, K365 in E-flat, with the Rockford Symphony and the Aurora Symphony in Illinois and the Michigan State University Chamber Orchestra in Lansing, Michigan. Sister Magdalena added, “I thank her for the opportunity to play these concertos with her and now she can rest her back and still play the piano in Heaven.”
Sister Joan Mehney recalled several stories from ministering together. They first met at Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, Illinois in 1961 and their paths next crossed at Bishop Muldoon in Rockford. In 1975 they lived together in a carriage house on Rainbow Beach in South Shore. It was at this time Joan learned how much Lake Michigan was a part of Sister Marjorie’s life. She said,

“Margie taught me to use the resources available to teach a lesson not just to students but to teachers, too. She was one of the first to have a smart phone which she used to video students who needed to improve piano playing techniques. She would email the video to their parents, showing what was not right and what the proper technique was. Then she would expect to see improvement at their next lesson.”

Elizabeth Luxem a friend, who served with Sister Marjorie on Regina Dominican’s Board, shared the following reflection:

“I first met Sister Maria Inviolata in 1958 when I got a call asking if I could get a few girls to come to Regina Dominican and help set up the library. During my four years at Regina Marjorie taught me Chorus, Piano, Voice and also Theology. She always challenged us to be the best that we could be, to strive to excellence and to be a leader. When I heard Marjorie had passed away, I sent an email to the Class of ’62. I was amazed how many women responded. One woman wrote: ‘We were all privileged to have known this wonderful woman who gave her life to musical education at Regina. I had her as a home room teacher freshman year and loved her dedication to music and to us all.’ Another woman shared, ‘I will remember her smiling face as she played the piano at our 50th reunion. She loved music and passed her passion on to so many of us.’”

The second week of June, Sister Marjorie stayed with Elizabeth while she was closing her music studio and took care of some details. Toward the end of her stay, Elizabeth said: “I told her that I was really amazed that packing up the studio was not harder for her. She replied, ‘I look at this as a ‘new beginning.’’ How prophetic were her words. How fitting she would be called home on the day we celebrate freedom.”

Sister Elaine Lederer shared the following memories of Marjorie:

“Way back in the late 1930s Marjorie came into my life at Mount St. Mary’s Academy. I experienced her many loving ways. She invited me to dinner to meet her dear mother and family. Marjorie’s smile, laughter, music and stamina couldn’t be beat. She loved the comfort of music, Dunkin’ Doughnuts Coffee, strawberries and chocolate! She frequently spoke of her mother those last days and was looking forward to seeing the art on her walls which had given her so much joy.”

Sister Marjorie’s Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated July 9, 2014, in St. Catherine of Siena Chapel. Sister Patricia Walter ended her homily with these words:

“...Marjorie died in peace, having let go of so much that was precious to her, that had been part of her life, while keeping her love for God, for music, for family and friends, of remaining who she was and is.”