



Sisters of St. Casimir

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Sister Margaret Mary Mazgelis February 18, 1926 – August 5, 2020

The life journey of Lillian Mazgelis, our beloved Sister Margaret Mary, began in Brockton, Massachusetts on February 18th 1926. She was the fourth of five children born to Clement and Margaret. All were very dear to Lillian. Vincent was her oldest brother, Clement came next in line (Clement enlisted to serve his country during the second World War and tragically died in a plane crash), and John was the youngest. Her older sister by almost 3 years was Philomena who was called by God to serve Him as a Sister of St. Casimir becoming Sister Clement in 1943.

At the time of Lillian's childhood, Brockton, being known as 'the shoe city,' having over 91 shoe factories, provided her father with steady work to care for his growing family. St Rocco Parish was the spiritual home for the Mazgelis family. The children were baptized and received the sacraments there. The pastor saw the goodness of this family and in a reference letter for Sister Clement wrote that they were a beautiful gift of God to the parish. Her mother, having a beautiful voice, often was asked to sing for special events. This love for music and her gift for singing truly was passed on to her children.

Because there were no Catholic Schools nearby, Lillian attended Franklin Public School and Howard Junior High before going on to St. Patrick's for her freshman year of high school. Sister Clement, having gone to our Villa Joseph Marie High School in PA for two years before going to St. Casimir Academy in Chicago to complete her education, greatly influenced her younger sister to come to Chicago. Living with her aunt in the Town of Lake area, Lillian came to Chicago to attend St. Casimir Academy and graduated in 1944.

It was here, at the invitation and joy of Sister Clement, that she entered the Sisters of St. Casimir as a postulant on January 19, 1944 and was received into the community, becoming Sister Margaret Mary on August 15, 1944. She was able to continue her education after she entered the community, receiving her B.S. in Education from Marywood College, Scranton, PA in 1959 and an M.Ed. in Administration/Supervision from Loyola University, Chicago in 1980.

In her own words Sister Margaret Mary expressed this special calling she treasured from God: "My vocation is very precious to me. It was the way of life I accepted – to serve God and the people of God with love and dedication. I rejoice that I answered God's invitation." This she did, making her religious profession of vows on August 15, 1946. And how can we not thank God for the graces and blessings that followed?



In 2006 Sister Margaret Mary penned these thoughts on the occasion of her 60th Jubilee as a Sister of St. Casimir: “I found it rewarding that I was able to instill spiritual values and love of God into their hearts and minds. This realization of how so many lives were touched through my years of teaching is brought to mind every holiday when the greetings come in and the former students never forget to remind me how I have touched their lives. One young man, who had a difficult time growing up, listened and accepted my encouragement. I treasure his letters ending with ‘I’ll never forget you’ but most especially I treasure his openness to God working in his life.” She truly has left her mark in so many ways with her life serving God and all she did for others.

One very particular way Sister Margaret Mary has left her mark is her gift of designing and creating beautiful floral arrangements, wreaths, and bouquets. When she was assigned to her ministry at the Motherhouse from 1960-1976 she adorned each nook and corner of the Motherhouse with wonderful decorations – seasonally, with poinsettias for Christmas, lilies for Easter, autumn mums for fall, peonies and roses for summer, gold and silver for jubilees. These beautified our home throughout each year for more than 20 years. When Sister Margaret Mary was reassigned to live at the Motherhouse in 1996, she began to create new arrangements for every occasion and to answer many personal requests. Her magic touch remains visible with us even to this day. When the Sisters left the Motherhouse to live at Franciscan Village in 2014 and we needed to vacate our home of 103 years, we were able to sell in auction some of Sister Margaret Mary’s masterpieces, bequeath many bouquets to Catholic Charities that are still being used to decorate the hallowed halls of the Motherhouse and give and decorate each Sister’s apartment at the Village. What magnificent gifts she has left to all of us!

Her religious life’s journey expressed in her own words: “My heart overflows with gratitude to Him and to my Sisters in Community for their support and love for all that has been” can be akin to her beautiful wreaths – a circle of love - 74 years of answering Jesus’ call - from the Motherhouse in 1946 to teach little ones in Kindergarten and give piano lessons after school for four years at Providence of God, Chicago, for one year at St. Francis in Indiana Harbor, IN, for three years at St. Joseph, Scranton, PA, and for four years at St. George in Chicago before coming back, full-circle, to the Motherhouse campus in 1957 to teach Grades 3-6 and music at Nativity BVM for three years, to the Motherhouse to be a member of the Formation Team, teaching the Aspirants and Postulants about religious life while teaching at Maria High School for 10 years and assuming the role of Superior at the Motherhouse for six years, then moving across the street in 1976 to teach High School English at Maria High School for 17 years, returning to Nativity BVM to be Principal for 13 years before returning once more back to the Motherhouse in 1996 to recuperate from cardiac surgery, begin her work with the Leadership of the Sisters of St. Casimir and become my Administrative Assistant for the next 15 years before fully enjoying her retirement years at the Motherhouse and then at Franciscan Village. As her health began to decline, she moved from Independent Living to Assisted Living at the Village and then to skilled and hospice care at Mother Theresa Home. Mid-afternoon on August 5, 2020, she once again answered God’s call, this time to come home to Him.

Today this wreath has been completed. But let us continue to enjoy the memories of Sister Margaret Mary’s life through these special vases and arrangements designed as the legacy she has left for us.



Her 'Prayer-Inspiration' arrangement. Sister Margaret Mary was surely a powerhouse of prayer, offering each day of her 74 years in religious life and 94 years of life to the Lord. The Masses and reception of the Eucharist, the sacraments received, the rosaries and prayers prayed are countless. Her goodness, her kindness, her charity, all the helping hands to so many people. When one of her students was tragically injured, Sister Margaret Mary visited that child's home weekly for months on end till the child was able to return to school. Just being happy and having a good outlook on life was her recipe for happiness. 'If you smile, its much easier to face the difficulties of life,' was her quote in the Maria Herald in October,1978. She also was lector, leader of song and Eucharistic Minister as needed in her places of ministry – just another way to serve the Lord and one another.

Her 'Glories of God' vase. Many talents were given to Sister Margaret Mary. She did not put them under a bushel basket but developed them, multiplied them, and put them on the nightstand for all to see, hear and enjoy. She loved music, singing 'seconds' in the Sisters' choir and taking part in congregational singing. She played the piano, giving many lessons, the organ, being organist at parishes and the motherhouse, and violin, being a member of the 'once' terrific Sisters' orchestra. As my Administrative Assistant she had a flair for writing, not for just knowing the right words to say for the right occasion, but more importantly adding that 'personal' touch to each letter. She took pride in remembering people, who they were, what they did, little tidbits stored up to pull out when it was time. Sister Margaret Mary also took pride and joy in being able to use her special artistic touch of calligraphy on cards, posters, and documents.

Her distinct 'ordinary' bouquet. Here was a Sister of St. Casimir who always was demure and prim in appearance. She and Sister Clement enjoyed coming back from their summer vacations with great glowing suntans with the joy and excitement of being with their family. She was a great SSC Ambassador, always willing to represent the Congregation at special occasions and celebrations, wakes and funerals, religious and/or Lithuanian events in her friendly, charming, and gentle way. She truly enjoyed going out to eat and up to the time of the Coronavirus pandemic would always be present for the first Saturday Mother Maria Masses, funerals and luncheons, jubilees, and Alumnae reunions. She also quietly enjoyed going to White Sox baseball games. And she never did admit she was a Red Sox!

Her colorful 'day by day' vase. Each day for Sister Margaret Mary was filled with things to do for the Lord and for all the others she had come to serve. For many years she not only taught her regular classes but taught music lessons after the regular school hours had ended. When she learned to drive, she was often called upon to be chauffeur for her Sisters. When someone was in need, Sister Margaret Mary's heart pushed her to make a difference in their lives. She also was always willing to attend SWOP (the Southwest Organizing Project) action council meetings or marches to be a visible presence affirming all the peace and justice work that was being done to make a difference in our neighborhood. She not only made all the floral and seasonal arrangements for the Motherhouse, she did the decorating. It may not be known, but she would rise very early in the morning to transform the Motherhouse from fall to Christmas (or from one season to the next) so she could have free access to the elevator. She had her plan to decorate each area and on which day. And we experienced the 'awe' moments each year as each wing and section of the Motherhouse would be transformed to Christmas or the proper season. To accept help was not in her vocabulary. And add to this, she also decorated all the altars in the Motherhouse chapel. As my Administrative Assistant, we would spend time planning how we could address the demands needing our attention and/or often talked about how nice it would be to send this card or various cards to friends, benefactors, or people close to us – and, with that, her ingenious mind would begin to create ideas that would meet our hopes and thoughts. It all became awesome!

Her very special 'family' bouquet. The support and love of her sister, our Sister Clement, and her family and good friends were tremendous experiences in her life. Sister Margaret Mary, along with Sister Clement, so enjoyed their family visits in Brockton and New Hampshire and Florida. Vincent, who died in 2013 and his wife Elaine from Brockton, MA, and John and his wife Claudette of Litchfield, NH and their families were their pride and joy and so much a part of our lives, too, as they shared all their news and stories with us. Sister Margaret Mary's relationship and bond with Sister Clement deepened through the years. Sharing life together and caring for each other in good times and in the difficult times became even more of a blessing when they both moved to Franciscan Village in 2015. In this season of their lives they grew ever closer to one another, first sharing rooms across the hall from each other in Independent Living and then being together when more care was needed in Assisted Living.

Her 'heavenly' creations. And now as we bid our farewells to you, Sister Margaret Mary, we say thank you for YOU, your special gift to us, your Sisters, and thank God for your call to be one of us. You have touched many lives and will always be remembered with gratitude. I cannot help but imagine all the flowers, vases, leaves and decorations you have at your fingertips to begin designing some heavenly creations. Have fun!

“What I have learned over the years and want to pass on to others is to have faith and trust in God. I am convinced that He gives us the strength and courage to endure trials and to arrive at right judgments, but we must always ask for this help. I am grateful that my community, the Sisters of St. Casimir, continues to be a great gift to the Church and to the world by our faith and trust in God, our hospitality and kindness.” (Words taken from her Reflections on her 60th Jubilee)

“Sister Margaret Mary, well done good and faithful servant! You have fought the good fight and won the race! Welcome home to the place I have prepared for you!”

Written with gratitude, love, and prayers,
Sister M. Immacula Wendt



Sister Margaret Mary and Sister Clement at an immigration rally with the Southwest Organizing Project (left) and with Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (above).

Sister Margaret Mary was preceded in death by her parents, Clement and Margaret Mazgelis and her brothers Clement and Vincent and her sisters-in-law Elaine Mazgelis and Claudette Mazgelis. She is survived by her brother John of Litchfield, New Hampshire and many nieces and nephews.

Living member of Sister Margaret Mary's Profession Class:

Sister M. Lourdine Ramoska

Deceased members of Sister Margaret Mary's Profession Class:

Sister M. Maureen Juozapavicius

Sister M. Josine Vendzelis

Sister M. Damien Margis

Sister Ann Barbara Wilim

Sister M. Angela Balchunas

Sister M. Brunona Enceris

Visitation and Wake Service:

Tuesday, August 11, 2020 beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Nativity BVM Church

69th and S Washtenaw

Mass of the Resurrection: Nativity BVM Church

Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Nativity BVM Church

69th and S Washtenaw

Celebrant: Rev. Jaunius Kelpsas

Organist: Gia Sokas

Flutist: Anna Belle O'Shea

Interment: Saint Casimir Cemetery

Funeral Director: David Gaidas



Many of Sister Margaret Mary's lovely floral arrangements continue to adorn the St. Casimir Center.

