

**GRAIL IMMACULATA MCMULLEN**  
**November 25, 1918-December 20, 2012**

Grail Eucharista Immaculata came into the world in Jamaica, New York, the youngest of six children of John R. McMullen and Anna Dunne. Their father was an attorney, and their mother a person of self-sacrifice and steadiness. Together they created a faithful household that yielded five religious vocations. All but one of the siblings was to enter religious life: Anthony and Aidan became Jesuits, Brendan a Dominican, and her only sister Faine entered the Society after practicing law for some years. Declan, the one brother who married, became a Catholic publisher. All the siblings' names were unusual. While awaiting Grail's birth, her parents attended a performance of Goethe's opera *Parsifal*, and chose her name that evening. As a young girl, she did not like her name; she was of course tagged as "Holy Grail," which did not match her adventurous nature. She loved to swim at the beach and especially to play tennis, highly competitive against her equally competitive siblings.

Grail attended private elementary and secondary school. She grew up during the Great Depression and remembered their father coming home to tell them of tragic suicides of some for whom it was too much to bear. She also remembered seeing people standing in long lines waiting for distribution of food. After graduating from the Academy of Mount St. Vincent, she attended Manhattanville College, where she singled out Mothers O'Byrne and Keyes as special guides in the deepening of her faith. She graduated in 1939 with a major in Philosophy and a minor in English. Within a few months she entered the Society at Kenwood on September 7, admitted by Reverend Mother Bodkin, with Mother Agnes Barry as Mistress of Novices. She received the habit on March 15, 1940 and made first vows on March 19, 1942.

Then began a very long history of classroom teaching and administration in the junior, middle, and senior schools, first in the junior school at Grosse Pointe for two years, then Newton Country Day School until probation September-February, 1947-1948 in Rome under the direction of Reverend Mother Zurstrassen, ending with final profession on February 9, 1948. Then it was back to Newton Country day School in the same position, 1948-1951; Stone Ridge 1951-1957 in the senior school; and Overbrook 1957-1962. While in Washington she earned a M.A. in Religious Education at Catholic University in 1955 and studied Spanish and linguistics at Georgetown University during the summers of 1956 and 1957. The pattern of teaching in schools of the province was broken by two years spent teaching six different levels of English classes at Colegio Sagrado Corazón, in Bogotá, Colombia, 1962-1964. Upon her return, it was back to lower and middle school at Carrollton, 1964-1965 and Eden Hall, 1965-1969. She had a special gift for teaching small children to read and inspiring in them a love for books and reading. She later said that the most rewarding experience of teaching was the opportunity of being able to help children be the best they can be.

Finally in 1969-1972, she began to try something else, public relations, for Stuart Country Day School, Princeton. In the transition from habit to secular dress in 1969, each community was asked for two volunteers to "experiment." Grail was one of the volunteers at Princeton, showing "a courage and far-sightedness...despite her rather tense and perfectionistic temperament." She continued work in public relations at Newton Country Day School, 1972-1974, while also beginning her new interest, adult learning with the economically disadvantaged

in Roxbury. In 1974 she moved to the new community at Casa del Sol in Boston to continue this work, spending the summer of 1974 in Mexico City in an intensive Spanish program. The director of Casa del Sol Adult Learning Center described Grail as "very resourceful...very responsible and intelligent...always ready to help and a tireless worker" with "a great spirit of sacrifice." For the next five years she continued her work in adult learning. In 1979 she moved to Varnum St., Washington, to be secretary to the Director of the Religious Formation Conference for the next two years, followed by provincial secretary in St. Louis at the time of the provincial merger in 1982. After that she spent three years as parish secretary at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Houston, while also working at Casa Juan Diego and other volunteer work. In her secretarial work, she was known to bring "order out of the chaos of files and procedures." She was the perfect person for the job at Our Lady of Guadalupe, a person of great detail yet very warm in greeting people. She developed a close relationship with the pastor, Father Tony Russo, SCJ. He would come into her office with a lighted cigarette that he placed at the edge of her wooden desk; when it burned down too far she would adeptly remove it. Their relationship continued after she left Houston, and he visited her even later in Albany when possible. In 1986-1987 Grail spent one year in a self-development program in St. Paul, Minnesota, then was in New Orleans for the next six years at Napoleon community, teaching English as a second language and working in the Latin American apostolate.

Throughout the years, Grail was active in community service wherever she was, including membership on the Stuart Committee in the 1960s, the National Association of Women Religious as secretary of the Trenton group, the Archdiocesan Council of Women Religious and the Global Awareness Committee in Washington, board of directors of the Storefront Learning Center in Boston, and volunteer work with the Carroll Guild for the Blind in Newton, the Attorney General's Office and the Archdiocesan Planning Office in Boston.

In 1993 she moved to Pax Christi at Kenwood, where she did a variety of services including sacristan some years, until her diagnosis of Alzheimers and move to Teresian House in 2006.

Those who had known her in her earlier years were impressed with the joy that was her trademark in her final years. Although she could be cantankerous particularly with the staff who attempted to take care of her, her dominant response to life was gratitude for the love of God and for the beauty she saw especially in nature outside her windows. She and her sister were known everywhere at Teresian House because Faine, in a wheel chair carrying Grail's walker, and Grail pushing, they would make their way from the front hall, to the chapel, to the elevator taking them back to their rooms. The last months, Faine became Grail's faithful helper until her death just before Christmas.