

## SISTER JOANNE TOOHEY

Entered eternal life on June 26, 2026  
at the age of 88  
after 70 years of religious life

Remembering Service:  
Monday, June 29, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.  
Marywood - Chapel of the Word

Mass of Christian Burial:  
Monday, June 29, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.  
Marywood – Chapel of the Word



We commend Sister Joanne to your prayers.

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“Bless the beast and the children . . .” Song by the Carpenters

Joanne Toohey was born on December 15, 1937, in Essexville, Michigan, to John Toohey and Naomi Klingbeil (Clingbeil) Toohey. She was the eldest of four children and grew up in a strongly Catholic family where faith and service were an important part of daily life.

She attended St. John the Evangelist Parish School in Essexville for twelve years where she was taught by the Dominican Sisters. Their influence led her to join the congregation in 1955. At the time of reception, she received the name Sister Dennis Michael but returned to her baptismal name after the Vatican II Council reforms made that an option. So began a life of prayer and study, ministry and life in the community. She completed her education with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Aquinas College, a Master's degree in Religious Education, and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Western Michigan University.

Sister Joanne served twenty years in ministry teaching children in grades four, five, and six. Her mission assignments took her to many schools, including St. Thomas School in Grand Rapids; St. Mary in St. Charles; the public school on Beaver Island; St. Joseph, Muskegon; St. Francis, Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico; St. Mary, Gaylord; St. Joseph, Beal City; SS Peter and Paul, Saginaw; St. Francis, Traverse City; Immaculate Conception, Traverse City; Holy Trinity, Muskegon; Fr. Marquette School, Muskegon; and Our Lady of Grace, Dearborn Heights. She cherished every place she taught, with especially fond memories of Beaver Island and Ranchos de Taos.

Although she enjoyed teaching and was successful in this area, she also longed for something else. She discovered a deep love for ministry through Scripture study and faith formation with adults. These gatherings became a source of mutual enrichment, as she often remarked that she received as much from the participants as she offered them.

She also found profound meaning in accompanying those who were grieving and helping adults deepen their understanding of faith. This realization led her into a new phase of ministry centered on parish pastoral work and adult religious education.

So began her next period of ministry – working with adults in parishes throughout Michigan. In this new ministry, Sister Joanne served at Guardian Angels Parish in Manistee; St. Maria Goretti Parish, Bay City; Holy Trinity Parish, Bay City; and Corpus Christi, Bay City. Wherever she ministered, she was valued for her compassionate presence, thoughtful leadership, and ability to help people encounter God through Scripture and prayer.

Bible study remained one of her greatest passions throughout her life. She never tired of gathering people to reflect on the Scriptures, discuss the readings of the week, and explore the richness of God's Word. Even after retiring to Aquinata Hall in 2019, she continued to lead Bible study sessions for the sister-residents, who deeply appreciated the opportunity to share love of Scripture together and engage in lively discussion and reflection.

Sister Joanne also had a special affection for animals, particularly dogs. Over the years she rescued and adopted several dogs that had been abandoned or neglected, providing each with a loving home. She spoke of them as faithful companions who brought joy and comfort to her life. Her care extended beyond her pets to the birds and squirrels that visited her yard. Through Michigan's cold winters, she faithfully provided food for them, believing that they too were cherished members of God's creation.

In 2019 health concerns prompted her move to Aquinata Hall. There she embraced community life and enjoyed many simple pleasures, including playing cards, watching movies, gardening, solving word-search puzzles, playing board games, and creating beautiful needlepoint projects. Her warmth, humor, and gentle spirit continued to enrich the lives of those around her.

At the time of her 70th Jubilee as a Dominican Sister, she reflected: "My heart is full of gratitude for all that has been, all that is, and all that is yet to come." Those words beautifully summarize the spirit with which she lived. In the same way, all who knew and loved Sister Joanne are filled with gratitude for her faithful witness, generous service, and enduring trust in God's goodness throughout her life.

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Sr. Joanne is survived by sisters, Patricia Seeburger and Ellen Markey; nieces; a nephew; friends; and members of her Dominican Community.