



Birth

October 21, 1935

Baptism

October 27, 1935

First Profession

July 17, 1956

Death

May 20, 2014

Burial

Our Lady of Good
Counsel Cemetery
Mankato, Minnesota

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Antonette Marie Wagner, SSND

Sister Antonette Marie Wagner, 78, completed her journey with cancer on May 20, 2014, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato. Her SSND sisters, Monica and Esther, her brother, Clem, and a Poor Clare cousin, Sister Caroline Berres, OSC, were with her when she died.

Sister Antonette Marie was born on the feast of St. Ursula, October 21, 1935, on the family farm near New Market, Minnesota. At her baptism in St. Nicholas Church, she was given the name Ursula Mary. She joined her older sister Theresa in a family that grew to include seven daughters and three sons.

When she was five, Ursula enrolled in first grade at St. Nicholas School and was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. She wrote, "My youth was peppered with illness from grade two." She experienced severe appendicitis during the summer of 1946, but surgery was delayed due to the polio epidemic. Following the surgery in September, complications set in and she was anointed. Her parents did not expect her to survive.

Sister Antonette Marie described her call to SSND: "It was always my desire to be a sister. My mom thought the Notre Dames were too strict and the habit foreboding. So I became a Benedictine aspirant at St. Joseph, Minnesota, where I had several OSB relatives." However, further complications from her earlier surgery caused her to discontinue at St. Joseph at Christmas time. She spent the next months recovering, and in September 1950, became an SSND aspirant at Good Counsel in Mankato. She graduated in May 1954, and entered the SSND candidature in September. She was received into the novitiate in 1955 and given the name Antonette Marie, derived from both parents' names.

Following profession of vows in 1956, Sister Antonette Marie began a 40-year ministry in Catholic School education. Her ministry included teaching all eight elementary grades at some point. She started as a primary teacher at St. Francis de Sales in St. Paul (1957-60) and St. Joseph in Montevideo (1960-63), moved to intermediate grades at St. Francis Xavier in Sartell (1963-65) and St. Joseph in Silver Lake (1965-66), and worked with upper grade students at St. Joseph in Cresco, Iowa, (1966-67) and St. Joseph in Red Wing (1967-69). At St. Mary, Shakopee, she taught upper grades and was principal (1969-70) and continued as principal of the Shakopee Area Catholic School consolidation (1970-72). She taught intermediate grades at St. Bartholomew in Wayzata (1972-76) and upper grades in St. Paul at Sacred Heart (1976-88), St. Peter Claver (1988-89), and Holy Childhood (1989-96). During this time, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, and an Master of Science degree from Mankato State University.

Sister Antonette Marie participated in a sabbatical experience at Wellsprings in Glens Falls, New York, during the 1996-97 year. During this sabbatical time the Mankato province leased a place for hospitality at St. Therese Convent in the Highland area of St. Paul near the Minneapolis-St. Paul

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Antonette Marie Wagner



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airport. Following her sabbatical, she accepted the position of coordinator of Notre Dame Center. She wrote about her ministry, “This has been a great ministry of service to our sisters – meetings, airport service and overnight hospitality. I enjoyed these years even though it was a 24 hours a day, seven days a week ministry.” Sister Antonette Marie expanded on her Notre Dame Center ministry in an article in a 2002 province publication: “We had a dream for several years to have a hospitality house in the metro area to host meetings and overnight stays for our sisters. We wanted to do something in partnership with the parish and we wanted to make SSND more visible in the Highland area. We use the first floor in conjunction with parish groups and we help with parish hospitality.”

In 2007, Sister Antonette Marie moved to her final SSND ministry, pastoral care at St. Joseph Parish, Waconia. In April of the following year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. A series of messages to the province for prayer allowed sisters to journey with her as she chose alternative treatments, rejoiced in remission, and then experienced the spread of cancer to other areas of her body. She moved to Good Counsel Health Care in 2012. Here she continued to live life as fully as possible, enjoying family and friends, embroidering dish towels, playing cards, and sharing herself with the community.

Sister Antonette Marie reflected on her family in her autobiography, “Among the many joys of my life were the religious professions of three younger sisters – Dolores, Monica and Esther. What great gifts to have Sister sisters!” She also commented on the opportunities she received as a School Sister of Notre Dame: “Geography and history were my favorite classes as a student and teacher. I enjoyed travel and never dreamed I would visit the many places I have. My Silver Jubilee trip in 1981 has wonderful memories of places and people. In June 2000 I was privileged to travel around Ireland and renew and reconnect with religious who shared my sabbatical experience.”

Sister Caroline Berres, Sister Antonette Marie’s cousin, was a last-minute visitor, arriving just before Sister Antonette Marie died. In that minute, she said, “Antonette, I’m privileged to be here. I want to pray a prayer of St. Clare.” She paraphrased it, “As we live, we are grateful for the beauty around us from our God and Creator. The God who made you sanctified you and always loved you and watched over you. God gave you life. Now as you die, give your life back to your Creator.”

The funeral Mass for Sister Antonette Marie, with Father Bernard Steiner as president, was celebrated Saturday, May 24, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato. A prayer service was held earlier that morning. She is survived by three sisters, Agatha Ferguson; Monica, SSND; and Esther, SSND; one brother, Clem (Linda); a sister-in-law, Mary Ann Wagner; a brother-in-law, Len Meger; nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Anton and Antoinette (Lenzmeier) Wagner, her sisters, Theresa Meger, Dolores, SSND, and Judy Wagner, and her brothers, Conrad and Cletus.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND