



Birth
July 4, 1923

Baptism
July 8, 1923

Profession
July 22, 1944

Death
August 17, 2015

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 Dorothy [Mary Laurence] Olinger, SSND

As the Good Counsel community gathered for Liturgy, Sister Dorothy Olinger, 92, died at 11 a.m. on Monday, August 17, 2015, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. She entered hospice in June and patiently awaited her union with the Source of All Being. Family members, friends and sisters had kept vigil with her during the past weeks.

The youngest of 12 children, Sister Dorothy was born on July 4, 1923, in Mankato, and baptized Dorothy Theresa Mary at SS. Peter & Paul Church four days later. She grew up on the family farm south of Mankato. She wrote, "My father was the finest of farmers and my mother an accomplished homemaker. I marvel at the skills my parents exhibited as well as the unimaginable workload they carried. My father was also a beekeeper, wine/beer maker (and root beer), mechanic, butcher, builder and more. My mother raised big vegetable gardens and berry crops and canned everything, had beautiful flowers, and a yearly brood of chickens."

In 1928, Dorothy entered kindergarten at SS. Peter & Paul School. For 13 years she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She later wrote, "All those years I did not envision becoming one of them. Yet it was their joy in life, the dedication that drew me. At the senior Jesuit retreat, the thought of a vocation came to me. . . . I consulted our principal, Sister Pia Becker. She encouraged me and told me to talk to my parents." Dorothy's father suggested that she wait a year, but consented, as did her mother.

Dorothy entered the SSND candidature in 1941. She commented later, "My entrance is rather unique in the matter of paying the modest sum required. My father and brother a month later brought a truckload of potatoes to the convent!" She was received into the novitiate on July 21, 1943, and given her father's name, Laurence. She later returned to her baptismal name. She professed first vows on July 22, 1944, and began the first of what she called her "three careers of about 20 years each." As a teacher, she taught upper grades and high school in the following: St. Francis de Sales (1944-46) and St. Matthew (1946-50), both in St. Paul; Good Counsel Academy in Mankato (1950-55 and 1965-66); Notre Dame High School in Cresco, Iowa (1955-57); St. Peter High School in Hokah, Minn. (1957-58); St. Agnes High School, St. Paul (1958-62); St. Anthony in Lismore, Minn., where she was also high school principal (1962-65); and St. Michael High School in St. Michael, Minn. (1965-66). She earned a bachelor's in English and math from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul in 1950 and a master's in history from the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. in 1957. In 1970, she earned a master's in religious education from Webster College in St. Louis.

Sister Dorothy's "second career" was working in parish religious education programs. In 1967, she began ministry at St. Bonaventure Catechetical School in Bloomington, Minn. She listed five areas of ministry: teacher preparation for 60 catechists, adult discussion groups, ecumenical meetings, neighborhood groups and visiting. She stayed at St. Bonaventure

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Dorothy Ollinger



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until 1971 when she moved to St. Mary in Willmar, Minn. for three years. Her final religious education position was at St. Michael in Prior Lake, Minn. (1974-79). In 1979, she was asked by the provincial council to help develop programs for the unused space at Good Counsel Education Center in Mankato.

Following a sabbatical in 1983-84, Sister Dorothy began her “third career in education,” working with Global Education Associates (GEA) founded by Patricia and Gerald Mischke. Sister Dorothy wrote, “They were visionaries who saw ahead of their times the need for a new world vision. Through them I met the prophet of our age, Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest and cultural historian.” Sister Dorothy became a co-director and then director of the Global Education Associates Upper Midwest office. She was passionate about the ideals of GEA and shared this enthusiasm in various ways. Her writings often contained this message: “What we do to the earth we do to ourselves. God calls us to care for the earth and each other.” During her time as GEA director, she also worked as Justice and Peace Coordinator for the SSND Mankato Province, and published the “Peace Site Communicator” several times a year.

In 2004, Sister Dorothy retired from her work at GEA. The next four years, she served in St. Paul by volunteering and continuing to share her passion for the earth. A series of health issues caused her to come to Good Counsel in 2008. After regaining her strength, she could be seen walking the grounds several times a day. She continued to advocate for those in need and twice (at age 90 and 91) participated in Pedal Past Poverty, a stationary bicycle ride to raise funds for Mankato’s homeless shelters. In October 2014, she received the Call to Action-Minnesota 2014 Leadership Award. In retirement, as well as during her active life, her family was very important to her and often visited her. After her recent decline in health, friends and staff provided her with daily wheelchair rides in her beloved outdoors.

Sister Dorothy introduced one of her autobiographical accounts with these words, “I come from Earth, I am Earth, I will return to Earth’ sums up my life.” May she now be united with the Source of All Being . . . who is manifest in the wonder and beauty of Earth.

The Memorial Mass for Sister Dorothy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held Friday, August 21, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato, with a vigil service the evening before. Sister Dorothy requested a green burial and was buried in the Good Counsel cemetery the afternoon of her death. She is survived by nieces and nephews, friends, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Laurence and Theresa (Panter) Olinger, her sisters, Marie Neill, Agnes Hiebert, Bea Brey, Claire Bach, Maddalyn Giese and Phyllis Dentinger, and her brothers, George, Frank, Rudy, Eugene and Robert.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND