



**Birth**  
May 24, 1924

**Baptism**  
June 15, 1924

**Profession**  
July 31, 1946

**Death**  
March 31, 2014

**Burial**  
Sancta Maria  
in Ripa Cemetery  
St. Louis, Missouri

*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 Joan [Mary Thomasine] Conrad, SSND

The oldest of three girls was born to Alice Elizabeth [De Vilbiss] and Thomas Conrad on May 24, 1924, in Fort Madison, Iowa. She was named Emma Johanna at her baptism in St. Mary's Church, Fort Madison, on June 15, 1924.

Emma Jo attended Sacred Heart Parochial School and St. Mary's High School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. At graduation, she received a scholarship to the recently opened Le Clerc College in Belleville, Ill. but declined it in order to begin secretarial studies at DePaul University in Chicago, Ill. In Chicago, she stayed with an aunt who was very kind to her. However, the desire she experienced in grade school to enter religious life grew stronger when she was away from home. During this year, she made up her mind to follow God's call.

She entered the candidature at Ripa on August 25, 1943. Received into the novitiate on July 30, 1945, she was given the name Mary Thomasine in honor of her father. She professed first vows on July 31, 1946, and final vows on July 31, 1952.

After profession, Sister Thomasine taught third, fourth and fifth grade children at St. Joseph, Farmington, Mo. for one year. The next two years, she taught fifth grade and music at St. Liborius, St. Louis. She was then missioned with seven other sisters to open the new school, Santa Isabel in Los Angeles, Calif., where she taught seventh grade for six years. Returning to St. Louis, she taught music at Notre Dame High School and was assistant directress for the aspirants for another six years. In 1961, she received the first Cardinal Joseph Ritter Scholarship bestowed by the Missouri Region of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae to assist those who were pursuing a degree in higher education.

Her educational background included a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles in 1954; a Master of Arts degree in music education from the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. in 1961; a Master of Arts degree in English as a Second Language from the University of Hawaii, Honolulu in 1970; a certificate of studies in spirituality from Loyola University, Chicago, Ill. in 1984.

Sister Thomasine had volunteered to go to the missions and in 1961 was sent to study in Tokyo, Japan. Forty-one of her 68 years as a vowed religious were spent in Japan. After two years of study, she became local leader at Shishigatani and taught English in the middle and high school in Kyoto. She spent one year at the University of Hawaii pursuing a master's degree in applied linguistics. This was followed by two years teaching English at Notre Dame Women's College in Kyoto. In the late 1960s, SSNDs were given the opportunity to return to their legal name. Because of the Japanese understanding of Emma, she chose to change her religious name to Sister Joan.

*continued*

# In Loving Memory



*Sister Joan Conrad*



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**School Sisters  
of Notre Dame**  
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD  
THROUGH EDUCATION

Although Sister Joan enjoyed the ministry of teaching, she experienced another call to integrate the contemplative aspect of the Japanese culture with our faith and religious tradition. After two years with the Retreat Team at Notre Dame Hall, she returned to Japan. She taught part-time at Nanzan University in Nagoya and was part time in the Logos Retreat Center on campus for two years. When the Karasaki House of Prayer, Otsu, was established, Sister Joan was assigned as director. She set up a spiritual formation program involving preparing spiritual directors among the various religious communities, providing workshops, retreats, spiritual direction, etc. After 17 years, she had a short sabbatical and then returned to Karasaki as a spiritual director for another 13 years. She retired in the United States in 2006 and was assigned to Veronica House in February 2007. In 2012, she was transferred to Anna House. She died peacefully at Anna House on March 31, 2014, as sisters prayed with her.

A wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center on April 4, 2014. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Dennis Meyer, MS, as presider. Her sister, Jeanne (Marty) Meyer from Michigan City, Ind., and a niece, Mary Beth and her husband, Greg Lernihan from Barrington, Ill. were present for the funeral services. She was preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Thomasine (Harold) Slagter. SSNDs, friends and former students joined in celebrating her life.

Sister Joan's life was an example of service as prayer. She companioned many on their spiritual journey and aided in the formation of numerous Japanese leaders. Her passionate and single-minded determination bore witness to an embodied faith and a free spirit in a loving God. Sister Joan felt that the ministry she did to help develop the inner journey of Christians to become who they are in the image and likeness of God through self-knowledge was the most fulfilling aspect of her life. She used her many gifts to bring others to the God she loved. May God's loving embrace envelop her as she enters eternal life!

*By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND*