



Birth
May 3, 1938

Baptism
May 22, 1938

Profession
July 23, 1958

Death
July 8, 2015

Burial
Notre Dame of
Elm Grove Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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 Joanne Marie Zavadsky, SSND

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on May 3, 1938, to Anthony and Anna (Lucas) Zavadsky, she was baptized Nancy May at St. Stephen Church in Milwaukee. She was the second of three children in the family. They were a close-knit family who took great pleasure in doing things together – be it work or recreation.

She attended St. Rose School for the first grade and St. Boniface School for second through ninth grades. The last three years of secondary education were at Messmer High School, Milwaukee. She wrote about her call to religious life, saying:

“When I think back over my many happy years at home and try to trace my calling to my very first awareness of it, I inevitably come up with two answers. I felt the first stirrings of my vocation while in the seventh and eighth grades, but I wasn’t so very eager to respond. ‘God couldn’t want me!’ I thought. However, God was very patient with the ‘doubting Thomas,’ and he let me go my own way – for a while! No matter how much I tried to put this idea aside, it still persisted. I was unable to silence my awareness of its presence. As the years passed my reluctance gradually ebbed away and I began to cherish the ideal of someday giving myself entirely to God.”

After the annual senior high retreat, she made the decision for religious life. The School Sisters of Notre Dame had been her teachers and inspirations all through school so she had no doubt about the religious order she wanted to join.

It was very important for her to have the approval and blessing of her parents. Nancy’s mother was very happy with her choice as she once had entertained that same desire. Her father gave his approval too but added. “Nancy, remember our doors are always open to you should you decide to come home.” She believed the love and support of her parents gave her the confidence and security as she prepared to leave home and answer the call to religious life.

Following high school graduation, she entered the SSND candidature at the Milwaukee motherhouse in the fall of 1956. At reception, she received the religious name Joanne Marie. She professed her first vows on July 23, 1958. Sister Joanne Marie received her bachelor’s with a major in biology and minor in history from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1961. She studied nursing at Sacred Heart School of Practical Nursing, Milwaukee, receiving her LPN in December 1971 and at St. Francis Hospital, Evanston, Illinois, becoming an RN in 1974.

Sister Joanne Marie taught elementary school for nine years in Wisconsin at St. Nicholas, Milwaukee; St. Mary, Neillsville; and St. Patrick, Menasha. She ministered as a nurse for 36 years at the Notre Dame Health Care Center in Elm Grove, Wisconsin and Maryhill Retirement Center in Milwaukee.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Joanne Marie Zavadsky



When she was the nurse manager at the Notre Dame Health Care Center, she was remembered for her moral authority. Statements beginning with “Sister Joanne Marie said...” carried weight. She was business-like but not cold. Efficiency was blended with compassion, an excellent combination for a nurse.

At the time of her 50th Jubilee (anniversary) of her SSND profession, Sister Joanne reflected on her life as a woman religious. She wrote:

“Being a sister has fulfilled my deepest desire to give myself entirely to God and the service of his people. I enjoyed my contact with children during my nine years of teaching and I loved my contact with the elderly in my years of nursing.

“A vocation is truly God’s call. If in your heart you hear this call, I would encourage you to look into this and give it a try. You will know if it is right for you. God will see to that!”

Upon retiring from nursing in 2007, she volunteered for three years as a tutor at Repairers of the Breach, a day shelter for homeless people in Milwaukee. In April 2011, she moved to Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Greenfield, Wisconsin where she served through prayer and presence.

She died on July 8, 2015 at Our Lady of the Angels, Greenfield, Wisconsin. She was 77. Sister Joanne Marie Zavadsky is survived by her sister Lorraine Kelly, her brother Thomas (Nancy) Zavadsky, many nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, dear friends and the SSND Community. She was preceded in death by her parents Anthony J. and Anna E. Zavadsky.

Thank You, God, for the gift of Sister Joanne Marie.

Thank you, Joanne, for your fidelity. Enjoy now the fullness of his love. God be praised!

This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information and the eulogy presented by Sister Joan Emily Kaul, SSND.

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