

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Dionysia Brockland, SSND



Birth
December 3, 1916

Baptism
December 8, 1916

Profession
August 19, 1937

Death
February 29, 2012

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

Several weeks before Christmas, on December 3, 1916, the sixth of seven children was born to Margaret [Meierotto] and George Brockland in Shrewsbury, Mo. The little girl was baptized on December 8, 1916, at St. Michael, Shrewsbury, and given the name Catherine Josephine. She grew up in a family of three boys and four girls. Her young life was a happy one, although a constant concern was the ill health of her father.

Catherine attended St. Michael Grade School which was staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. This contact with the Sisters sparked a desire within her to join them and to teach others to know and love God. Two of her father's sisters were SSNDs in the Milwaukee province, Sisters Ambrose and Leon. At times, Sisters took a special interest in her because they knew one or both of her aunts.

Catherine attended high school at Nerinx Hall where she met the Sisters of Loretto. While these sisters confirmed her desire to be a religious, her choice was still SSND. Her parents willingly consented to her entrance into the convent on August 29, 1934. After two years of junior college, she was received into the novitiate on August 18, 1936, and given the name, Mary Dionysia. She professed first vows on August 19, 1937, and final vows on August 19, 1943.

She received a bachelor's degree in Latin from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wis. in 1947 and a master's degree in library science from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, La. in 1970.

Sister Dionysia taught elementary students at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Louis, Mo. for one year; St. Francis, Aviston, Ill. for 12 years and St. Joseph, Farmington, Mo. for 18 years. During her time in Aviston, she taught Latin, English and geometry at St. Dominic High School, Breese, Ill. for a semester. In Farmington, she taught Latin in the high school in the afternoons. With the close of the high school in Farmington, she was transferred to St. Francis de Sales, St. Louis, Mo. to teach Latin, English and developmental reading. During her years at Farmington and at St. Francis de Sales, she was also the librarian.

In 1972, Sister Dionysia was called to administer Cardinal Ritter Library of Notre Dame College. When the college closed in 1977, she remained and kept the library open for the sisters of the motherhouse and the province. The number of volumes had been greatly reduced and the remaining books stored on the ground floor of the former college building. In 2003, these volumes were further reduced and the holdings were moved to the first floor of the motherhouse. Sister Dionysia continued to serve as librarian until she was missioned to Veronica House in 2005. She was transferred to Anna House in July 2010. Several minutes after speaking with one of the nurses, she died unexpectedly on February 29, 2012, at 9:40 p.m.

In 1998, she was awarded the Fons Sapientiae Award from the Catholic Library Association in recognition of her lifelong contributions to the

continued

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organization. She did not consider her 54 years as a librarian as a job but as a ministry to serve and to offer the wonderful works of authors to those seeking knowledge, relaxation or inspiration. She was truly the guardian of these treasures of the written word. She also carefully watched over a collection of antique photos which had been willed to Notre Dame College and graciously consented to their donation to the Missouri Historical Society in 2001. She continued her legacy of sharing knowledge by participating in “The Nun Study.”

A wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center chapel on March 4, 2012. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Ed Fitzgibbon presiding. Burial was in the Ripa cemetery. Sister Dionysia is survived by a sister, Gertrude Harvath, and a brother, Edward Brockland, both of Shrewsbury, Mo.; nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

A gentle, prayerful, and delightful woman, Sister Dionysia was always available to all. She was a beautiful witness to the challenge of graciously “letting go” of one’s treasures. On the morning of her death, she joined other SSND jubilarians at The Sarah Community in planning for their celebration of this occasion. May she now experience the completion of her vowed life as she celebrates her 75th jubilee with her God!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND