

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Emeria Jirik, SSND



Birth
September 8, 1917

Baptism
September 9, 1917

Profession
July 22, 1940

Death
February 3, 2012

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

Sister M. Emeria Jirik, 94, died peacefully at 9:55 p.m., February 3, 2012, in Notre Dame Health Care Center, Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. Although she had been in declining health and had just entered the Hospice Program, her death came suddenly. She prayed with the Health Care Community Friday afternoon and was present for supper, and seemed well when she went to bed.

Sister Emeria, the second of ten children, was born September 8, 1917, on the family farm near Webster, Minnesota. She was baptized Mary Lillian the next day at Immaculate Conception Church, Lonsdale. She and her older sister attended elementary school at Immaculate Conception, boarding with the sisters for four of those years. It was during this time that she came to know and love the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Mary was confirmed in 1930 and received a holy card with the prayer, "Sweetest Jesus, keep me always near to Thee." This inspired Mary's desire to become a sister even more, but she did not tell anyone. She graduated from eighth grade in 1931 and attended the two years of high school offered at Immaculate Conception. She longed to finish high school because she felt that was necessary to become a sister. However, that fall, she did not go to school, but did housework for a local family. In August 1935, she and her parents and other relatives came to Good Counsel to visit her two aunts, Sisters Pudentia and Alzbeta Marek. Mary hoped to share her secret with the sisters, but there were so many visitors that she did not get the chance. On the way home, the car had a flat tire, and Mary and her mother went for a walk while the tire was being changed. Her mother could tell something was bothering her, and asked if she wanted to stay in Mankato. Mary answered yes, and two weeks later she was enrolled at Good Counsel Academy as an aspirant in the junior class. The following February she learned that she could enter the candidature in fall, which she did. Mary and five other candidates completed their senior year and graduated in 1937. The 1937-38 school year found her in Albertville, Minn., where she did her practice teaching. She then spent another year in the candidature as a college student. Reception into the novitiate, where she was given the name Sister M. Emeria, followed in 1939, and she professed first vows in 1940.

For almost 30 years, Sister Emeria taught primary grades, and she was known as an excellent teacher and an excellent cook. Her teaching ministry included St. Mathias, Hampton (1940-44); St. Mary, Shakopee (1944-45); St. Peter, New Haven, Iowa (1945-48); St. Stanislaus, Winona (1948-50); John Ireland, St. Peter (1951-52); St. Anne, Wabasso (1952-57); St. Stanislaus, St. Paul (1957-60); St. Casimir, Wells (1960-67); and SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato (1967-69). In some of those places, she also served as the parish organist and gave music lessons. During this time she earned her B.A. from the College of St. Teresa in Winona (1952) and her M.A. as a reading specialist from Mankato State College (1968). Beginning in 1969, her educational ministry was focused on reading. She worked as a reading specialist for the Mankato Catholic schools until 1973, and as a tutor and later director of the Good

continued

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Central Pacific Province

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Counsel Reading Center (1973-79). Her work as director of the Title I program for the Mankato parochial schools (1975-81) coincided with her Reading Center position.

In 1979, Sister Emeria also began a part-time community service ministry at Good Counsel, which expanded to full-time in 1981. She assisted in the priests' department, endearing herself to the several resident chaplains who served Good Counsel during that time. Her deep love was the ministry of sacristan. At Good Counsel, she delighted in working with flowers, arranging – and rearranging – them into attractive bouquets to enhance the altar and other worship spaces, and took great care in preparing for the Mass and other services. Sister Emeria was also a driver, often taking sisters to visit relatives and friends. In 2000, when she began to cut back somewhat, she still served as an acolyte and Eucharistic Minister, led morning and evening prayer, volunteered in the laundry and tended plants.

An excellent seamstress, Sister Emeria took great pride in her embroidered dishtowels, once earning over \$1,000 at an SSND Craft Fair. She also enjoyed walking, and faithfully walked every day. She enjoyed traveling and spending time with her sisters Paulissa and Rita, especially hiking, and was always ready for a picnic.

For many years she looked forward to her retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, finding this to be a very special time each year. She was also very grateful for a 30-day retreat experience in 1979. Intensely proud of her Czech heritage, she requested that the Czech Hail Mary be sung at her funeral, if at all possible. With a birthday on the Blessed Virgin's birthday, she also had a strong devotion to Mary.

The vigil service was on February 7 and the funeral Mass for Sister Emeria was celebrated on February 8, in Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel cemetery. She is survived by her SSND sisters, Sisters Paulissa and Rita and her brother John (Eleanor). She was preceded in death by her parents Joseph and Anna (Marek) Jirik, her sisters Helen Smisek and Rose Skluzacek, and her brothers Frank, George, Joe and Ray Jirik.

“Be still and know that I am God” is a very apt theme for Sister Emeria's 94 years of service to God and the church. Throughout her life she listened for God's guidance. May she now sing God's praises forever – in English and Czech!

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND