

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Marlene Breimhorst, SSND



Birth
April 9, 1920

Baptism
April 11, 1920

First Profession
July 17, 1941

Death
May 23, 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

Sister M. Marlene Breimhorst, 95, died peacefully at 4:50 a.m. on Saturday, May 23, 2015, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. Throughout her life, she lived by the words of her father, “Gehe in Gottes Namen.” (“Go in God’s name.”)

Sister Marlene, the fourth child of eight, was born on a farm near Jordan, Minnesota, on April 9, 1920. Two days later, she was baptized Magdalen Gertrude at St. John the Baptist Church, Jordan. She later wrote, “Since this name was too hard to pronounce, the little ones soon changed it to Mag.”

Sister Marlene attributed her vocation to her early family life: “My parents were both devout Catholics and it was at home that I learned my prayers and received my first religious instructions. Prayers were said in common and the rosary was recited nearly every evening. No wonder the Blessed Mother called me to her own order.”

In September 1926, Magdalen enrolled in first grade at St. John the Baptist School where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. Magdalen received her first holy Communion in May 1927 and was confirmed on May 17, 1933, when she was in seventh grade. Three days later, her mother died. Magdalen wanted to be an aspirant at Good Counsel the following year, but put the thought aside because “we could never afford that and I thought it would break Dad’s heart to have one of us leave him just then.” However, Magdalen received a scholarship to attend Good Counsel and one of her sisters agreed to look after the home, so she was able to enter the aspiranture in September 1934. She was an aspirant for three years and, during summer vacations, her greatest joy was to be with her dad. When she told him at Christmas 1936 that she wished to enter the candidature the next fall for her senior year of high school, he readily consented in his usual way, “Gehe in Gottes Namen.” Her father died in April 1937, however, and she wrote, “I felt now as if it were the last thread, and that I couldn’t bear another thing, but God gave his grace together with the cross. My brothers and sisters stayed together on the farm and on August 27, 1937, I went to find a new home in the candidature.”

Magdalen finished high school in her first year as a candidate, spent her second year at Sacred Heart in St. Paul, and then returned to the candidature for another year of study. She was received into the novitiate in July 1940 and given the name Mary Marlene.

Sister Marlene professed first vows in 1941, and that fall taught high school science and mathematics at St. Peter School, Hokah. She also taught at St. Francis de Sales and St. Agnes, St Paul; Notre Dame High School, Cresco, Iowa; and Notre Dame Academy, Colton, Washington. She received her bachelor’s degree in 1947 and her master’s degree in 1953, both from Creighton University. In 1952 she began teaching religion, math and science at Good Counsel Academy, where she stayed until 1964. She also taught college courses to postulants and junior sisters both during

continued

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*Sister M. Marlene
Breimhorst*



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the school year and summer school. Former students remember her as an excellent teacher. A “Teacher Feature” in *Re-Echoes*, the alumnae newsletter, contained this remembrance: “Sister Marlene was a fantastic science teacher. She taught us to ‘wonder’ at the glory of the natural world. I’ll never forget that ‘Things in nature are orderly.’” Other students remember her gentle use of a Shakespearean quotation, “Her voice was ever soft and low, an excellent quality in a woman” (from “King Lear”).

In 1964, Sister Marlene was transferred to Don Bosco High School in Gilbertville, Iowa. She did not complete the school year because in March 1965, she was elected to serve as provincial councilor for the Mankato Province. She served in this capacity until February 1971. At that time she wrote to the sisters of the province about her decision to resign three months in advance of the conclusion of her term of office, and to follow through with plans to spend time in the Dallas Province. From 1971 through 1983, she taught at Mount Carmel High School in Houston. There she served as chair of the science department and taught several science classes. Following a six-month sabbatical at St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Mississippi, she returned to the Mankato Province in January 1984 and taught at Totino-Grace High School in Fridley. She retired from teaching in 1989 but lived in Fridley until 1996, staying active through community service. She also had time for her hobbies of reading, crocheting, knitting and tatting.

Sister Marlene moved to Good Counsel in 1996. She later wrote about her retirement, “God says ‘Come follow me.’ God doesn’t say ‘Stop in your tracks because you retire.’ I am so grateful for the changes we have made here and plan to make in the future. Being with the sisters is so important. Their loving support has taken me through the ups and downs of life.” Failing eyesight and a lack of mobility did not keep her from visiting with sisters, family members, friends and former students, whose company she truly enjoyed.

The funeral Mass for Sister Marlene, with Father Bernard Steiner as presider, was held Friday, May 29, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato. A vigil service was held the night before. She is survived by a sister-in-law, Dorothy, nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Francis and Helen (Flaschenriem) Breimhorst, her sisters Clara Welsch, Mary Ann Lambrecht, Betty McCarthy and Norma Morgan, and her brothers Martin, Richard and Herman.

When Sister Marlene was young, her father blessed the children of the family as they left for school with the words, “Gehe in Gottes Namen.” We who survive Sister Marlene send her and bless her with these words as she rejoices in Jesus, the Center of her Life.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND