



In Loving Memory

Sister Madeline [M. Carolyn] Studer, SSND

Sister Madeline (Madge) Studer, 87, died Sunday, August 25, 2013, at Mayo Clinic Health System, Mankato, Minnesota. She had been anointed earlier in the afternoon with several School Sisters of Notre Dame and her sister-in-law, Mary, present. Sisters were also with her when she died. Using her second language, American Sign, she often signed the word “Home” before she died.

Birth
February 20, 1926

Baptism
March 5, 1926

First Profession
July 17, 1948

Date of Death
August 25, 2013

Burial
Our Lady of
Good Counsel Cemetery
Mankato, Minnesota

Sister Madge was born on a farm near Tony, Wisconsin, on February 20, 1926. She was baptized Madeline Ann at St. Anthony Church, Tony, on March 5. Shortly after that, Madge moved with her parents and sister, Rita, to a farm southeast of Wesley, Iowa. The Catholic faith was important to the Studer family. Madge learned her prayers from her mother and the family prayed the rosary daily. The Studer children attended St. Joseph School in Wesley and were taught by Franciscan Sisters from Milwaukee. Music was another important aspect of the Studer family life. Both parents played instruments, and Madge began piano lessons in third grade.

Because the family valued Catholic education, Rita and Madge attended Good Counsel Academy in Mankato as boarders. During the 1940-41 school year, Rita was called home to take care of the family when their mother was diagnosed with a serious illness. She died March 31, 1941, leaving ten children. Rita stayed home and Madge helped during vacations. When their father remarried, Rita was able to continue her schooling and entered the SSND candidature in 1944, the same year that Madge graduated from high school. Madge worked the next year in her dad’s business office and helped out at home. In August 1945, she entered the candidature. As a second year candidate she taught the 1946-47 year at St. Nicholas, New Market.

At her reception into the Novitiate, she was given the name Sister Mary Carolyn, a form of her mother’s name. (Rita had received their father’s name, Julius.) Sister Madge later returned to her baptismal name. Following profession in 1948, she helped open the new mission of St. John the Baptist, Dayton, Minnesota, where she taught intermediate grades. At Dayton, and wherever she taught, she was also the parish organist. Sister Madge also taught at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul (1954-56); and Assumption, Cresco (1956-61); Immaculate Conception, Gilbertville (1961-62) and SS. Peter & Paul, Springbrook (1962-63), all in Iowa. In 1963 she went to Sacred Heart, Eden, South Dakota, where she was both principal and teacher. She continued in that dual role at St. Joseph the Worker, Mankato (1967-70) and Project Discovery, St. Paul (1970-74). This was her last formal teaching experience because her hearing was failing. During her teaching years, she earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee (1959), and a master’s degree in administration from Loras College, Dubuque (1972). Later she earned a certificate in Sign Language from Technical Vocational Institute, St. Paul, and a master’s degree in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University, Omaha.

*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

continued

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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

Sister Madge decided to learn sign language to prepare for a new ministry. As part of her training, she completed an internship in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, and then in 1976 began an eight-year ministry to persons who were deaf in the Green Bay diocese. She worked with the deaf in religious education classes in Catholic and Lutheran congregations; appeared in court to interpret in accident and criminal cases, speaking legal language with her hands; went to nursing homes, hospitals and job service offices; conducted Bible studies in various churches; taught teachers of religious education programs; accompanied parents to school conferences; and taught sign language in halfway houses and the prison. She became an advocate for the deaf, doing whatever she could to build up the Deaf Community.

In October 1984, Sister Madge expanded her advocacy as she began a new position in the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, as a resource consultant to persons with disabilities. Her goal was to “create a caring community in church” so that anyone with a disability could become fully integrated into parish life. In several parishes, she implemented Jean Vanier’s “Faith and Life” support groups which combined Bible lessons and prayer with song and community-building activity. In 1988, Sister Madge moved to the St. Cloud diocese where her main role was adult education: preparing religious education teachers. She continued interpreting for the deaf and assisted with religious education classes for the deaf.

Sister Madge next served as a community leader at Good Counsel (1990-93). She then worked in Montevideo for two years as director of pre-school and primary religious education plus pastoral work. During the 1995-96 school year, she lived in St. Paul and helped her sister, Sister Rita, with Sister Parish work. She also provided spiritual direction and volunteered at Sand Castle Daycare. In 1996, she moved to Good Counsel where she continued Sister Parish outreach, spiritual direction and ministry to the deaf. She also helped care for Sister Rita, who suffered a severe stroke, until her death in 2004. Sister Madge used her sewing and needlework skills as she produced many items for the SSND Craft Fair. She continued sharing her musical abilities, playing the organ for Notre Dame community prayer, and planning weekday liturgies for the Good Counsel community. Throughout her life she stayed closely connected to her family, and they to her.

The funeral Mass for Sister Madge, with Father Ted Hottinger, S.J., as presider, was held Friday, August 30, in Good Counsel Chapel. She is survived by her sisters, Virginia (Bill) Orthel, Carol Elmore, Kay (Bienve) Perez, Margaret Studer and Rose Marie Studer; her brothers Philip (Rosa Lee), Steve (Hope O’Hara), and Gerald (Mary Ann); her sisters-in-law Mary, Judy and Janet Studer; and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Julius and Caroline (Wingert) Studer; her stepmother, Minnie; her sister, Sister Rita Studer, SSND; and her brothers, Vincent, Marvin, Stanley and Cletus.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND