



Birth  
April 24, 1934

Baptism  
May 6, 1934

Profession  
August 2, 1954

Death  
May 19, 2013

Burial  
Chatawa Cemetery  
Chatawa, Mississippi

*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 Marie Richard Eckerle, SSND

Dorothy Constance Eckerle was born in St. Louis on April 24, 1934. She was the third oldest of five children — four daughters and one son — of Herman Joseph and Mary Thecla (Meuer) Eckerle.

Two memorable events of these early years Sister Marie Richard recounts. The first she named as “the most important day of my life — my First Communion Day.” The other brought great sadness to her family circle — “When I was in the seventh grade, my only brother, Richard, age 14, died of uremic poisoning.”

Dorothy attended St. Andrew Elementary School, and later followed her older sister in choosing to attend Notre Dame High School on the campus of the motherhouse of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Louis.

Of her call to religious life, she wrote, “During my senior year, the desire of becoming a sister became quite real to me. I expressed my desire to one of my friends and discovered she had a like desire. Together we went to see Mother Evangela. That evening my friend was given her entrance papers; but I first had to have an audio test. When the results proved satisfactory, I received my entrance papers too.”

After high school graduation in 1952, Dorothy entered the candidature of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Louis. After one year in the candidature, she received the habit of the congregation and the name, Novice Marie Richard. She said, “I received this name after my brother.” She completed one year as a novice then pronounced her vows in 1954.

Her first assignment was to teach children in the primary grades, then the students in the middle grades at Christ the King School in Corpus Christi, Texas. On the weekends and during summers she taught religion to children who attended public schools. It is interesting that this first mission and all of her mission assignments were in the geographic area that would become the Dallas Province.

After 10 years in Corpus Christi, Sister Marie Richard was one of a trio of sisters who opened the new mission of St. Patrick School in Dallas. During two years of teaching children here, she found her hearing problem made it increasingly difficult to work with multiple students.

She was fitted with hearing aids; these proved very helpful in conversations with individuals. However, it was too difficult to continue teaching in the traditional classroom. As Sister Marie Richard explored different paths in education, she thoroughly enjoyed the time spent working for several months with students who needed special help in reading. These sessions were at the Reading Center of the motherhouse of the Dallas Province, in Irving, Texas

She began work on a master’s degree in library science at Texas Women’s University, in Denton, Texas. Following this, Sister Marie Richard’s

*continued*

# In Loving Memory



*Sister Marie Richard Eckerle*

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD  
THROUGH EDUCATION

assignments were as librarian at Sacred Heart School, Morrilton, Ark.; Redeemer High School, New Orleans, and St. Philip Neri School in Metairie, La.

In 1989, Sister Marie Richard took a semester for renewal at St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Miss. Then she served a semester as activities coordinator at Wynhoven Apartments, a retirement home administered by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, in Marrero, La.

Her background as teacher and librarian was good preparation for the next 19 years she spent serving at St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa as archivist for the Dallas Province. Sister Marie Richard wrote of her experiences as archivist, "I have grown to appreciate the women who have gone before us... I am amazed as each leader seemed to be able to read the signs of the times and led the province where it needed to be at that time."

Sister Marie Richard was attuned to community service. She was a thrifty shopper as she kept supplies current and available to all. Recycling and craftwork were enjoyable pass times. While serving on the finance committee of St. Theresa Parish, she developed a community spirit among parishioners, and worked with the wider parish to promote vocations.

Serving as Eucharistic Minister and leading liturgies were among her valued activities. She wrote, "Two things are important to me: my daily prayer life and the Eucharist. With the exception of two years I have lived in a convent which had a chapel. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is a high priority in my life and I try spending some time before the Eucharistic Presence each day."

In late 2009, physical symptoms prompted Sister Marie Richard to retire from her position as archivist. Chronic pain accompanied her as she continued to participate in community activities. She experienced a misstep and fall on May 14 which resulted in severe cerebral trauma. The medical team at the university hospital in Jackson, Miss., advised that further procedures would not be beneficial, so she was brought home to St. Mary of the Pines. Here her sisters watched and prayed with her during the last days and hours until her peaceful death on Pentecost morning, May 19, 2013.

A prayer service and Mass of Christian Burial were on May 23, 2013 with Rev. Robert Dore as president. The community, two of Sister Marie Richard's nieces and many friends attended. Burial was in the Chatawa Cemetery.

*By Sister MarieClare Powell, SSND*