



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Edmund Laurent, SSND

Sister Mary Edmund Laurent, 88, died Monday, March 10, 2014, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato. Her health had declined over the past few months and she entered Hospice in late January.

Sister Mary Edmund, the fifth of seven children, was born November 10, 1925, on a farm near Hamel, Minnesota. Twelve days later she was baptized Virginia Mae at Holy Name Church. When Virginia was five, she moved with her family to a farm near Corcoran, Minnesota. One year later she began first grade at French Corcoran District 64 School, just across the road. With the exception of third grade, when she attended SS. Peter & Paul School in nearby Loretto, she received all of her elementary education at this public school. She described her religious education: "I did attend vacation school at Corcoran for nine summers. It was here that the School Sisters of Notre Dame prepared me for my first Communion and confirmation."

In addition to the example of her parents and the encouragement of her pastor, Sister Mary Edmund attributed her vocation to an unusual source: "Miss Lola Schmit, our public school teacher. She was the first to draw my attention to the fact that I had a vocation." Following eighth grade graduation, Virginia enrolled in the aspiranture at Good Counsel for her freshman year. She wrote, "The following summer, August 28, 1942, I joined the happy ranks of the candidates."

Virginia was received into the novitiate in July, 1944, and given the name Sister Mary Edmund. Following profession in 1945, she was assigned to be a home service sister at All Saints, Madison Lake. She later recalled one of her experiences, "I remember making sister and bishop costumes for a special school play given in 1947 to commemorate the centennial of the coming of the School Sisters of Notre Dame to America." Sister Mary Edmund also had six recipes published in the *Notre Dame Centenary Cookbook* that same year.

Sister Mary Edmund spent her succeeding years of religious life as a home service sister in several locations: St. Joseph, Spokane; Christ the King, Omak, Washington; Good Counsel Convent; St. Peter, Hokah; St. Mary, Worthington; St. Benedict, Strasburg, North Dakota; and Holy Rosary, North Mankato. In 1966 she began home service work at Good Counsel Academy, and it was there that her life's mission took a new direction.

In her words, "My first exposure to cake decorating happened in the spring of 1968 when I joined a four-lesson decorating class at the Mankato YWCA. My enthusiasm grew and I found myself eager to take advanced classes. My decorating career began in 1969 and over the years I taught hundreds of students through evening adult classes and my own private school, as well as being a travelling teacher in several states. In 1986 I taught cake decorating to 240 students in Japan as part of a five-month college semester class at Notre Dame Women's College in Kyoto." Known locally as "The Sugar Nun," Sister Mary Edmund was featured multiple times in *Mankato Free*

Birth
November 10, 1925

Baptism
November 22, 1925

First Profession
July 22, 1945

Death
March 10, 2014

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

continued

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Press articles. The headlines from some of the articles provide a summary of her cake-decorating reputation: “The Sugar Nun: she puts the icing on the cake” (1973); “Baker specializes in sugar daddies (mommies too)” (1976); and “Nun sweetens lives by decorating cakes” (1987). The *St. Louis Review* captioned its article “Possibly the Sweetest Nun Anywhere, This S.S.N.D.’s Hobby Ices Many Friendships” (1979).

Setting up shop in Isidore Hall on Good Counsel Hill, she welcomed countless visitors, many of whom would become her students. She commented about her teaching, “I’d rather teach it than do it. I suppose it’s working with people. They get caught up in the enthusiasm of creating.” Sister Mary Edmund spent up to 40 hours decorating a wedding cake and an additional 70 to 80 hours on the figurines, which she modeled to look like the actual couple. In 1976, she was a founding member of the International Cake Exploration Soci  t   (ICES) and served on its board for a number of years. She won numerous awards for her decorating skills and in 1989 was inducted into the ICES Hall of Fame. At that time she wrote, “I am grateful for the 22 years of service I have been able to give through the great art of cake decorating, as well as for the many lives I have been privileged to touch. I pray that my love of decorating shared throughout the years may live on in my students.”

About the same time, Sister Mary Edmund realized that she was burning out as a cake decorator. She stated, “It [cake decorating] has gone from a hobby into a job with responsibilities. But I still love it.” However, she decided in 1989 to make a clean break from cake decorating and apply her artistic skills in another field. She sold her equipment and began working as a flower arranger in a Shakopee floral shop. While working in Shakopee, she found a new calling, that of ministry to the elderly. She was a companion to an older woman in Shakopee until 1996 and, in 1997, moved to St. Raphael Convent, Crystal, where she continued the same ministry. In 2004 she wrote, “I visit at Northridge Care Center on a one-to-one basis with eight to ten residents three times a week. I listen to their stories and share jokes from my scrapbook. I’ve chosen to volunteer there because I see a great need. I know what a difference my presence makes in the lives of these special residents, as well as their families and the staff.”

In 2005, Sister Mary Edmund retired to Good Counsel and continued to express her creativity in a variety of ways. She began making cards using feathers and other natural items and embellished them with hand-painted designs.

The funeral Mass for Sister Mary Edmund, with Father Bernard Steiner as presider, was held March 14, in Good Counsel Chapel. Burial of her remains in the cemetery will follow at a later date. She is survived by sisters Dorothy Ende, Beverly Laurent, and Elaine Weir, brother-in-law Chester Kottke, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Edmund and Roseabelle (Berthiaume) Laurent, brother Edward, and sisters Ruth Phillips and Arlean Kottke.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND