



Birth
May 16, 1915

Baptism
May 30, 1915

Profession
August 3, 1939

Death
September 29, 2013

Burial
Sancta Maria
in Ripa Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

*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 Mary Alfred Michel, SSND

The oldest child was born to Eleanor Ann [Urban] and Frederick Michel on May 16, 1915 in St. Louis, Mo. She was baptized at Assumption Church on May 30, 1915 and received the name Eleanor Ernestine. A brother and sister completed the family. Her father, a printer by trade, was of German descent and her mother was of Bohemian descent.

At the age of five, Eleanor started kindergarten at St. Agnes School and hated it. During this time, her parents moved to St. Wenceslaus Parish and she was enrolled in the parish school. Needless to say, she was not looking forward to attending school. However, the strict but caring School Sisters of Notre Dame fostered a love of education in the young girl. She graduated in 1929 at the beginning of the Depression years. Her parents could not afford to send her to a Catholic high school and would not send her to a public high school. She continued her education by taking a commercial course at the Missouri Business School. This enabled her to find employment at a small manufacturing firm in downtown St. Louis.

When she was 12 years old, she visited Ripa with one of her teachers, Sister Berenice Ziska. Sister asked her if she would like to become a SSND. Eleanor replied, "I'm not good enough." Sister Berenice told her to pray that she would become good enough. Three years later, Eleanor sought the advice of Sister Berenice regarding a vocation to religious life. Eleanor was encouraged to wait until she was older because her parents were in need of her assistance. When she was 17 years old, Sister Berenice asked Mr. Michel to drive her and another sister to Ripa. Eleanor went along and that visit changed the course of her life. She writes in her autobiography, "As I walked up the front steps of the motherhouse I experienced such a feeling of peace and certainty that this is where I belonged. I cancelled the date I had for that evening – I had to think about this astonishing thought."

The following spring, she applied to enter. However, financial difficulties and the ill health of her mother required that she remain at home for another two years. With the improved health of her mother, she entered the candidature at Ripa on August 28, 1935. The first two years were spent completing her high school courses. During the third year, she taught third and fourth grade children at St. Aloysius Gonzaga School in St. Louis. She was received into the novitiate on August 2, 1938 and given the name Mary Alfred, a combination of her parents' names. She professed first vows on August 3, 1939 and final vows on August 3, 1945.

She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Webster College, St. Louis in 1955 and a master's degree in elementary education from St. John College, Cleveland, Ohio in 1963.

For 64 years, Sister Alfred ministered in education as teacher, principal, organist, tutor or clerical assistant. She taught elementary grades in Missouri at St. Mary, Cape Girardeau; St. Peter, St. Charles, Our Lady of Loretto, Jennings; St. William, Woodson Terrace; St. Dominic Savio, Affton;

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Alfred Michel



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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

Notre Dame Elementary, St. Louis. In Illinois, she taught at St. Louis, Nokomis; St. Henry, Belleville and St. Joseph, Ridgway. She also served as principal at Nokomis, Ridgway and St. William. After 46 years in the classroom, she returned to the motherhouse to be a part-time receptionist and bookkeeper at Notre Dame Preschool and a part-time driver for motherhouse residents. When the Notre Dame Tutorial Center opened, she taught summer sessions and later some late afternoon classes. She also contributed her secretarial skills in the Tutorial Center for 13 years.

In July 2003, Sister Alfred was missioned to Veronica House and was transferred to Anna House in December 2009. She died unexpectedly on September 29, 2013 at Anna House.

A wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center on October 2, 2013. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Len Kraus, SJ as presider. She was buried in the Ripa cemetery. Her parents, her brother Frederick and sister Audrey Gumz preceded her in death. Two nieces faithfully visited her. One of these, Kris Ahlemeyer, died two days before Sister Alfred. The remaining niece, Stephanie Nowell, family members and other relatives attended the funeral services. Former students, colleagues, friends and SSNDs were present to celebrate her 98 years of life.

Sister Alfred's most challenging time came when she was asked by Mother Theodosia Bettels to be organist and choir director in Nokomis while being principal/superior and classroom teacher. She had no formal training but had taken music lessons in grade school. With trust in God's help and a lot of hard work, she added this dimension to her ministry for the next 16 years in the various parishes where she served.

She was a gentle person and delightful companion to her sisters in community. An organized and practical person, she was also a wise educator of elementary children. Her tall and regal stature became severely bent in her last years of life. Dependent on others, she accepted her limitations with humility and humor. She was always pleasant and had a ready smile for those who visited or cared for her. She was one of the remaining participants in The Nun Study. An everyday heroine, may she now experience the healing touch of Jesus and the words He addressed to the crippled woman, "You are set free of your infirmity" [Luke 13:12] as she is welcomed into the loving embrace of her God.

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND