

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Eric Militzer, SSND



Birth
November 14, 1918

Baptism
November 24, 1918

Profession
July 28, 1938

Death
June 14, 2012

Burial
Notre Dame of
Elm Grove Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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 Mary Eric's *being* was as dynamic as her actions and she was a woman of action who used her many talents with generous abandon. Taking a cue from the readings she chose for her funeral Mass and celebration of her life, which took place on June 18, this obituary will focus on three aspects of Mary Eric's life: family, ministry, and community.

"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

John 21:17

A second daughter was lovingly welcomed by Erich Otto Militzer, a staunch Lutheran from Thuringia, Germany, and Elizabeth Roetto from Missouri, whose parents had come from the Piedmont area of Italy; and Hildegard, her 3 ½ year old sister, who had been promised a little brother and greeted her new sibling with, "Is he a girl?" Gertrude Anna Marie was baptized in St. Michael's Church, Milwaukee, on November 24, 1918, ten days after her birth.

Mary Eric described her home as a happy and busy one with her parents owning, in turn, a grocery store, a camera shop, a bakery and another grocery store. She began school at St. Elizabeth's, attended St. Leo's for a short time, and completed grades 3-8 at St. Boniface.

A significant experience for young Trudi was the three-month trip her family of four made to Europe in 1929 to visit the Militzers in Germany and Roettos in Italy. She describes it in her autobiography: "That trip had a great effect upon my life. I knew who and where my roots were. I understood the joy of being with German Lutherans and Italian Catholics and witnessed the good in each of them. I was proud of them and proud to be of them. This also gave me a broader view of the world and made me eager to see more of it, to meet more people, and to love them."

Gertrude had a two-year scholarship to St. John Cathedral High School but, felt called to enter the convent after the first year. She became a junior candidate and entered the SSND candidature in 1935. At her reception into the novitiate in 1937, she was given the name Mary Eric. She said she would bear the name not only in a worthy manner, but also with great love and pride, since it was her dad's name. She was professed in July 1938.

Throughout our lives, we strive to do whatever [God] tells us, to respond affirmatively to God and [God's] action in us. *You Are Sent*, C 47.1

It is evident in the list of Sister Mary Eric's ministry experiences, that she was a woman of many talents and great generosity. Her service as an intermediate and junior high educator began at St. Francis Xavier, DePere, Wis., from 1938-1946 and from 1946-1949 at St. Mary, Kickapoo, Ill. She offered to go to China, but when that didn't happen, she accepted with joy the call to be in the first missionary group to go to Guam in 1949. There she was a teacher, musician, administrator, principal, and wore many "hats" (or veils). She had understood that her assignment to Guam was a lifetime commitment, so returning to the States after 15 years in 1964, took some adjusting, along with other challenges that followed Vatican II.

Having moved to secondary education while on the island, Sister Mary Eric taught at Messmer High School in Milwaukee and then served as vice-principal

continued

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Sister Mary Eric Miltzer



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there, until a new adventure opened for her in 1968. She became one of the early directors of educational television in the Milwaukee archdiocese and after four years was invited to the Chicago archdiocese. Educational television colleagues from Chicago sent letters complaining that she was leaving them when she was elected to the provincial council. She was highly respected and loved by her friends in the Windy City.

As a provincial councilor (1979-1987), she led the search for a new motherhouse when Notre Dame of the Lake was sold. There are probably no committees of the former Mequon/Milwaukee Province that Mary Eric did not serve on. She was creative, and an initiator who also followed through; she was exact but not demanding. She always had more options. She held on with a firm grasp, but was also free to let go. After her service in leadership, Mary Eric spent a year on a Franciscan Study Pilgrimage. Of that experience she wrote, "This is truly what God had ordained for me. I praise God for his goodness to me."

Though approaching 70, she was not ready for retirement. Her next assignment was to open a development office for the Milwaukee Province. "I continue to respond to the moment, to pray, to dream, to plan, to accomplish, and to love as I serve," reads her autobiography. In 1992, Sister Mary Eric retired from a regular job and began many happy years of volunteer ministry.

**"This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God,
but that God has loved us." 1 John 4:10**

**"Awed by the mystery of God's action in our midst,
we gratefully celebrate life." *You Are Sent*, C7.6**

Mary Eric loved and celebrated life! She was always ready for a party, was a gracious hostess, a creative cook and her manhattans were the best — sweet or dry, according to your taste. She loved to go to movies, especially the dollar ones. Community was important and she knew it was important to plan and mark the calendar for local assemblies, monthly days of prayer, monthly celebrations of Eucharist, as well as celebrations for birthdays *and* namedays.

She lived *You Are Sent*, our constitution, with love and gusto and believed that "Our living together in faith, a prophetic sign of the church, is a service to God's people." C8.1 For Mary Eric, Eucharist was the center of her vowed life. She celebrated it and lived it. One of her great joys was driving the car carrying the Eucharist from the Adoration Chapel at Notre Dame of the Lake to Visitation convent in Elm Grove on Holy Saturday, 1982.

In her last weeks, Mary Eric lived the words we so often read from *You Are Sent*: "We are drawn anew into Christ's self-emptying, into the mystery of ongoing redemption." C33.4 "Slowly, irresistibly, God draws us more deeply into himself, transforming us into his image." C31.4 Indeed, her loving God did that for her.

We are grateful for the years Mary Eric shared with us — for her being and doing for SSND, the church and the world. May she enjoy being completely one with the God she loved and served.

A visitation and wake service were celebrated June 18, 2012, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at Holy Family Chapel, Notre Dame of Elm Grove. Sister Mary Eric is survived by her sister, Hildegard Gigl, nieces and nephews: Grace (Jim) Fabisch, Jim (Deb) Gigl, Tom (Diane) Gigl, Bob (Marta) Gigl, Joan Gigl (Reuben Bankier), grandnieces and nephews, great-grandnieces, other relatives, friends and the SSND Community.

By Sister Mary Jacqueline Buckley, SSND