



Birth
May 19, 1924

Baptism
June 8, 1924

Profession
July 22, 1945

Death
November 28, 2013

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

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Martin Tobias, SSND

Sister Mary Martin Tobias, 89, died Thursday, November 28, 2013, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. Her death on Thanksgiving Day echoed her life of gratitude: "I want you to know of my deep gratitude to the School Sisters of Notre Dame for all that has been given me."

Sister Mary Martin was born May 19, 1924, in Red Wing, Minnesota, and baptized Patricia Jane at St. Joseph Church on June 8. Patsy, as she was called, and her sister Frances, four years older, grew up in a loving family environment. Sister Mary Martin wrote, "My parents were faith-filled people, setting us an example in our earliest years of love for God, strong faith, and a generous concern for others. An outstanding trait I witnessed in my parents was their generosity and kindness toward each other."

Patsy attended St. Joseph School for eight years, beginning in 1930. "The School Sisters of Notre Dame were my teachers and friends." Before her graduation from eighth grade in 1938, she faced more adversity than some people experience in a lifetime. In early 1934, Frances died suddenly, the result of a burst appendix. Two and one-half years later, in September 1936, her mother died. Fourteen months later, in December 1937, cancer claimed the life of her father. Sister Mary Martin later wrote about this time in her life, "This, too, was very difficult for me – to lose all three in so short a time. My father prepared me for this in a mature and sensible way. He taught me many lessons in his last months of life, lessons of values and living faith in action."

Patsy moved to Prescott, Wisconsin, in June 1938, after her eighth grade graduation, to live with her mother's sister, Frances Clemens. Sister Mary Martin described this next stage of life, "My aunt was a woman of great integrity, courage – and was in every way a truly valiant woman. Together we made adjustments and lived a simple, frugal life – never in want, but we experienced what it meant to be brought low. Her prayer life, her sense of humor, her high ideals were the inspiration that kept me growing in God's ways. I owe everything to this woman."

When Patsy graduated from Prescott High School in 1942, she "felt a very strong call to follow Jesus and to be part of the ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame." She entered the candidature in August, taking college courses in preparation for teaching. As a second-year candidate, she taught primary grades at SS. Peter & Paul School, Mankato. She was received into the novitiate in July 1944 and given the name Sister Mary Martin. Following first profession in July 1945, she began 29 years of teaching and administration in Catholic schools in Minnesota and North Dakota. She taught primary grades at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul (1945-53) and earned a Bachelor of Arts from the College of St. Catherine in 1951. She continued as a primary teacher at St. John, Mankato (1953-54) and St. Agnes, St. Paul (1954-57). In 1957, she helped open St. Anne School, Bismarck, North Dakota, and stayed for four years. As teacher and principal, she opened another new school, St. Mary of the Lake, Plymouth, in 1961. In 1967 she

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Martin Tobin



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returned to Bismarck where she was principal for three years. Her final Catholic school experience was as principal, first of Sacred Heart, and then of Sacred Heart-St. John, St. Paul (1969-74), where one of her major tasks was the consolidation of Sacred Heart with St. John.

In 1972, Sister Eunice Silkey, the provincial leader, invited Sister Mary Martin to work with her on plans for activities and education for retired sisters. She studied gerontology in the succeeding summers, and in 1974 she became the province retirement director. She focused her energy on helping retired sisters remain as active as possible, and began PEP (Personal Enrichment Program) as a means to accomplish this. Classes and activities on many subjects were offered for senior sisters. In addition, Sister Mary Martin conducted workshops on aging, grief and other topics for the province. In 1978, she became director of the Good Counsel Health Care Center and continued her many-faceted work with retired sisters.

In 1984, while still director of SSND retirement, Sister Mary Martin began pastoral care and grief work at Queen of Peace Hospital, New Prague. She was also a presenter in the hospital's education programs. During her four years at Queen of Peace, Sister Mary Martin's impact was keenly felt. In 1988, the hospital's newsletter, *Peace Profile*, headlined her open house farewell gathering article, "Teaching, Caring, Sharing . . . The many facets of Sister Mary Martin." She was instrumental in developing the hospital's Hospice program.

Sister Mary Martin became the SSND pre-retirement director in 1988, living at Sacred Heart in St. Paul and exploring alternate housing for semi-retired sisters. Sister Mary Martin's next ministry – pastoral care and mission integration at St. Mary's Home – began in 1989. Again she focused on making elderly people's last years as meaningful as possible. She described her years at St. Mary's as "grace-filled, happy years, especially because of journeying with the dying through hospice."

In 2003, Sister Mary Martin came to Good Counsel, supposedly to retire. She stayed active, "finding time for community service, more opportunities for prayer, time for leisure and for renewing friendship with my sisters." Drawing on her experience at St. Mary's, she suggested and helped implement the highly successful Mission Integration Program at Good Counsel. Sisters and staff meet quarterly to share the SSND vision and mission.

In September 2013, Sister Mary Martin was diagnosed with incurable pancreatic cancer, and she suddenly found herself on the "other side" of the hospice program with which she had so much experience. In her final months she continued to express gratitude for her blessings, as she looked forward to that "wonderful 'Going Home.'"

The funeral Mass for Sister Mary Martin, with Father Ted Hottinger, S.J., as presider, was held Wednesday, December 4. She is survived by cousins, friends and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Emil and Mary, and her sister.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND