



Birth
June 22, 1928

Baptism
August 5, 1928

Profession
July 29, 1950

Death
March 19, 2014

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 Mary Murphy, SSND

Mary Clare Murphy was the second child born to Clarence Richard and Mary (O'Phelan) Murphy, in St. Louis, Missouri. She was baptized in Blessed Sacrament Parish a few weeks after her birth on June 22, 1928. Mary thrived in this Irish family with her older brother Tom and a younger sister and brother, Pat and Jack.

As in many early 20th century families, she recalled, "playing hard under the watchful eye of my home-maker mother, with the best part of the day being around five o'clock when we scrubbed free of the day's play, took our posts on the front porch, to wait for dad to come home." Dr. Murphy had fairly regular hours for he was a dentist. "After the evening meal Dad's Irish stories held center stage. Then the family gathered for night prayer; I seldom got to lead for I would always add a litany of intentions—from the paperboy to the ice cream man."

The Murphy children attended Blessed Sacrament Elementary School taught by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word. Remembering these days, she wrote: "I liked school and usually ranked in the upper part of my class. But I still thought vacation the best part of the year. I received my First Holy Communion in 1937 and was confirmed the same afternoon. After this day, I could receive Communion daily since we lived so near the church."

Mary met the School Sisters of Notre Dame when she enrolled in Rosati-Kain High School, a school co-taught by SSNDs and by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In addition to the usual class schedule, she belonged to language clubs, sports organizations, sodalities along with participation in her home parish groups.

Mary's dependability and her person-related traits developed in her adolescent years. At 16, she worked in a department store to help pay school tuition. The following summer she ventured to use her experience and talents as a camp counselor. She was asked to return the next two summers as head counselor.

Mary recorded the first thoughts concerning her future, "It was during these camp sessions I sensed a strong desire to work with children. Vocation talks at school had presented the idea of religious life. But the repugnance for the picture of myself in religious garb and the sacrifices entailed made me fight the idea. Yet it seemed to haunt me. Toward the end of my senior year, I got the bright idea to attend St. Louis University where the social life would smother this urge forever. It couldn't be done. Toward the end of the university year, after consultation with the Sisters and my parents, I with thirty-seven others, donned the dress and cape of a candidate for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. During the first year as candidate, I finished my second year of college. The next year I taught middle-school Mexican children in Holtville, California."

Mary received the habit and the name, Novice Michael Ann in 1949 and professed her first vows in 1950. Sister Michael Ann's first assignment was to teach seventh and eighth grade youth at St. Francis de Sales School in

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Murphy



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St. Louis. After two years at this mission, the needs of the province—matched with her experience and talents—called her to full-time study to be credentialed as a home economics teacher. Subsequent to earning a bachelor's degree from Fontbonne College in St. Louis, she received a master's degree in home economics and in guidance from St. Louis University.

Launched with credentials, Sister Michael Ann's first assignment was as secondary teacher and dorm supervisor at St. Mary of the Pines boarding school in Chatawa, Mississippi. She rounded out a quarter of a century in the traditional secondary school at Redemptorist, Sacred Heart, and Chapelle High Schools in New Orleans, St. Gerard in San Antonio, and Mt. Carmel in Houston. In these she served as home economics teacher and guidance counselor, while also being involved in extracurricular activities, as moderator of student councils, cheerleaders and pep squads.

It was a momentous time for SSNDs when the world-wide congregation was to change their garb. Imagine trying to please 10,000 women with one pattern of dress! Sister Mary was chosen along with other home economics teachers to meet in Milwaukee to help design the change prompted by the second Vatican Council.

It seemed a natural progression from service in traditional programs to her next move of being principal and teaching nutrition, and childcare and development at the New Orleans, St. Vincent Home for unwed mothers. Around the time she became a licensed social worker she returned to her baptismal name, Mary. During 14 years, Sister Mary added social work to her homemaking and counseling skills at St. Vincent and at the Catholic Charities home for unwed mothers in Jackson, Miss. She then moved to New Orleans as manager of a group home, the Jesuit sponsored Boys Hope program for youth from dysfunctional families. Her service brought many expressions of gratitude from the board, the staff, the boys themselves and the neighbors.

Responding to the province's need for help at St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Sister Mary became director of food services there in 1993. She continued in this and other services such as sewing, cooking, driving and gardening.

Sister Mary had a great spirit and her desire to serve was strong despite health challenges she faced in the last couple decades of her life. She experienced a brief illness just a few days before she died on the feast of St. Joseph. May she rest in peace.

Sister Mary was preceded in death by her parents, her brother Tom and her sister, Mrs. Pat Longinette. She is survived by her brother John and his wife Marigene along with nieces and nephews, some of whom attended the funeral at St. Teresa Church in Chatawa on March 24, 2014. Rev. Brian Kaskie was celebrant.

By Sister MarieClare Powell