

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Odilo Brinker, SSND



Birth
May 5, 1919

Baptism
May 6, 1919

Profession
July 31, 1942

Death
August 21, 2012

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

On May 5, 1919, the seventh child was born to Mary Elizabeth [Hilke] and Henry Brinker in Washington, Mo. She was baptized the following day at St. Francis Borgia Church and named Anastasia. She grew up on the family farm with seven brothers and four sisters; another sister died in infancy. The children walked the 2 ½ miles to the one-room district public school. They received religious instructions from a lay teacher and the pastor of the parish.

When Anastasia was in the seventh grade, she became critically ill with pneumonia and pleurisy and was taken to St. Francis Hospital staffed by the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis from Springfield, Ill. She received the last sacraments and her parents were told she probably would not live. However, God had other plans for her. Anastasia was deeply impressed with the devotion, dedication and cheerfulness of the sisters and the idea of entering religious life was sparked within her. After graduation from eighth grade, she stayed at home and helped on the farm. Her mother often told her that she was the eighth boy of the family because she worked more outside than inside the house.

Shortly before her 20th birthday, she told her parents of her intention to enter the convent. Her mother did not object but said she should have a job away from home for a while. She worked in a shoe factory for several months as she discerned what community to enter. She knew little about the different religious orders and initially was attracted to the Carmelites, Poor Clares or Pink Sisters. However, her mother did not think she could live the life of a cloistered religious and took her to meet the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Washington, Mo. Anastasia did not want to be a teacher but would be happy as a “house” sister.

She entered the candidature on August 30, 1939. After five months, she was missioned to Sacred Heart, Valley Park, Mo. as housekeeper. She was received into the novitiate on July 30, 1941 and given the name Mary Odilo. Profession of first vows was on July 31, 1942, and final vows on July 31, 1948.

For the next 53 years, she served the community in the kitchen or school cafeteria, laundry, garden, and general housekeeping. In Illinois, she was missioned to St. Mary, Alton; St. Francis, Aviston; Notre Dame High School, Quincy; and the Academy of Notre Dame, Belleville. In Missouri, she served at St. Boniface, Koeltztown; St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles; St. Mary, Cape Girardeau; and Villa Gesu, St. Louis. She also served at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Miss. When Villa Gesu closed in 1999, she was missioned to Veronica House. In December 2011, she was transferred to Anna House. On August 21, 2012, she suffered cardiac arrest and died at Northwest HealthCare Center, Florissant, Mo. around 10:35 a.m.

Visitation and a prayer service were held at Anna House and Theresa Center on August 26, 2012. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Ed Fitzgibbon as presider. She is survived

continued

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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

by two sisters, Olga [Ray] Kreienkamp of Kirkwood, Mo. and Margaret Shade of Jefferson City, Mo.; four brothers, Orville [Irene], Henry [Grace], Leonard [Agnes] and Odilo of Washington, Mo.; nieces and nephews and their families. Many relatives, friends and SSNDs attended the wake and funeral services. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery.

During her 28 years at Villa Gesu, Sister Odilo ministered in the kitchen and dining room, helped to strip furniture, worked in crafts and ceramics in the occupational therapy department and outside in the garden and yard. She was in charge of the dining room for 19 years and this allowed enough time for her to plant and maintain a large garden for the sisters. Many of the craft and ceramic items she made were sold in the Gift Shop at Villa Gesu and later at the holiday craft fair at Veronica House. She often kept vigil at the bedside of our sick and dying sisters. She was a prayerful woman, a hard worker, and a very self-sacrificing person.

Sister Odilo celebrated her 70th Jubilee of religious profession this past summer. This was one of her happiest days and she marveled at the many relatives who came to share this joy with her. Even though her poor eyesight no longer allowed her to work with her hands, she was cheerful and would always greet a person with her smile. In her autobiography, she included a few lessons she learned from home: *“Life is precious; work hard but always retain happiness and humor in all you do for the Love of God; little obstacles borne with patience build character.”* May she receive God’s welcome as a good and faithful servant and enjoy eternal happiness with the family members who have preceded her and the SSNDs she so faithfully assisted by her love and prayer!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND