

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Olivia Reindl, SSND



Birth
June 1, 1918

Baptism
June 8, 1918

Profession
July 20, 1939

Death
October 4, 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

Kathleen Agnes Reindl, the first of twelve children, was born in her grandmother's home on June 1, 1918, to Mary Olive (Murphy) and Frank Reindl in Waukesha, Wis. Because her mother was never very strong, Kathleen learned at an early age to help with housework, care for the little ones and cook simple meals. When she was in the third grade, her mother became critically ill. Kathleen was sent to ask the priest to come and anoint her mother. Mary Olive recovered but Kathleen came to understand what death could mean and also gained a new appreciation of what their mother meant to them.

The financial needs of a constantly growing family brought the Reindls from Manitowoc to Madison, where their father worked as a mechanic at the University of Wisconsin. This move also introduced Kathleen and the long line of Reindls to the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. James School. Kathleen was drawn to the sisters immediately. She wanted to enter the Aspiranture, but her father felt she was too young and her mother really needed her help. After graduation from Edgewood High School of the Sacred Heart, her parents consented to her leaving for the convent. On August 30, 1936 she entered the Candidature.

On July 18, 1938, Kathleen was received into the novitiate and given the name Mary Olivia. One year later, on July 20th, she professed her first vows and began 73 years of religious life. Sister Mary Olivia earned a B.S. in mathematics from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1950; an M.A. in psychology from Fordham University, New York in 1957; and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Loyola University, Chicago in 1965.

An educator and later a psychologist for nearly 50 years, Sister Mary Olivia began her ministry at St. John Baptist, Marshfield, Wis., 1937-38. At St. Leo, Milwaukee, 1939-50, sixth and seventh graders were her charge. Through her own admission, she wasn't the best disciplinarian, but she found community life beautiful. Next she taught math, chemistry and remedial English at the Academy of Our Lady in Chicago, 1950-55. She also helped moderate a drama group, which she reports, "I loved it, but it gave me gray hair." In her fifth year there she received the request to study clinical psychology at Fordham. Although it threw her for a loop, her response was, "If that's what the congregation wants." This was the beginning of many new experiences: studies at Fordham University, N.Y., 1955-57 and Loyola University, Chicago, 1957-60.

She devoted the next years of her life to combining what formal education had taught with what her life experiences had given. At Notre Dame of the Lake, Mequon, Wis., she was teacher and psychologist from 1960-62 and then at Notre Dame of Elm Grove (1962-71), she worked with both sister-patients and staff. After some months with the Sisters of St. Benedict, Middleton, Wis., she joined the Mount Mary College faculty. There, from 1971-83, she taught, counseled students and was chosen as local leader of the resident SSND Community. Of her next four years of service on the

continued

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Milwaukee Provincial Council (1983-87), she writes in her autobiography: “I look back on those four years with deep gratitude and a sense of awe at the way I saw God’s love and goodness revealed through my sisters.” She especially valued her travels to Guam, Saipan and Yap, commenting “In many ways my life has been changed by contact with the simple, beautiful life of the people who live on these islands.”

In 1987 she moved to St. Barnabas, Mazomanie, Wis. What began as a part-time pastoral ministry position grew, over the years, to include: directing religious education and the Rite of Initiation of Christian Adults, visiting the elderly and homebound, and (more than once) directing the parish during times when they were without a pastor.

Sister Mary Olivia retired in 2001, residing in Mazomanie until she joined the Notre Dame of Elm Grove community in 2005. There she wrote: “My memory has declined significantly and consequently it has become increasingly difficult to maintain behaviors and memories for any significant period of time. I am forced to live in the present moment most of the time and to try to deal with life as it is right now.” Always wanting to do whatever was asked of her, she willingly accepted her move to Our Lady of the Angels in 2011, being among the first group of sisters to live there.

Sister’s sense of humor remained encased in memory. Just two weeks before her death, when she was asked if she was still hungry, she completed her often-quoted, “I’ve had elegant sufficiency to suffonsify my sufficing appetite. More would be a vulgar superfluity.”

The grand part of her story is that she had become so imbued with the words of *You Are Sent*, “We trust one another, presuming the good will of each,” that consistently she saw beauty and good in others, in each present moment. Having faithfully lived the call of the prophet Micah (6:8), “to act with justice, to love tenderly, to serve one another, to walk humbly with God,” she wanted in her last days to go home. Now, dear Sister, you are home.

Sister Mary Olivia is survived by her brothers Gerald, John and David Reindl; her sisters Marguerite Jones and Mary Hausener; nieces, nephews, other relatives, friends and the SSND Community.

By Sister Joan Emily Kaul, SSND and Sister Pamela Moehring, SSND