



Birth
March 9, 1927

Baptism
March 13, 1927

Profession
July 21, 1950

Death
January 2, 2015

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 Padua Unterburger, SSND

Sister Mary Padua Unterburger, 87, died at 3:30 p.m., January 2, 2015, in Notre Dame Health Care, Mankato, Minn. For the past few weeks, her difficulty in breathing required the use of oxygen, and on the morning of her death, she asked to be placed in Hospice care. Sisters from her Notre Dame second floor community gathered and prayed with her.

In her autobiography, Sister Padua wrote that on “March 9, 1927, Mr. and Mrs. Math Unterburger and their three sons welcomed me, the first girl, into the family. I was named Mary Theresa. Two more girls completed the family.” Mary Theresa was born on a farm near Pearl Lake in Stearns County, Minn. and was baptized at Holy Cross Church, Pearl Lake, on March 13. Matthias, her father, was a farmer, and her mother, Mary Schmitt Unterburger, a sister of Sister Marka Schmitt, SSND, was a homemaker.

In 1932, Mary began first grade at Holy Cross School, about a mile from their farm. She received her first Communion in May 1934, and was the only girl in her class. The family moved to another farm in October 1934. Sister Padua wrote, “We now had a school right on the farm where we lived, but our parents decided we would walk past that school and continue going to Holy Cross School.” She graduated from Holy Cross in 1942 but did not begin high school that fall. “I wasn’t successful in convincing Dad until a year later that high school was for girls.” The family moved to another farm closer to Kimball about that same time, and the Unterburger children were able to ride the bus to school. Sister Padua commented, “We liked that, but Kimball High School could never give us all we wanted. We missed the Benedictine Sisters.”

In a vocation publication, Sister Padua told her story: “I had Benedictine teachers through eighth grade. From the time I was small, I let my family know that I wanted to be a sister. I went to public high school in Kimball. In my junior year, my aunt, Sister Marka Schmitt, wrote to tell me that if I was still interested in becoming a sister, I should write to Mother Annunciata at Good Counsel. I was madder than a hatter at my aunt for what, I thought, was sticking her nose in my business! But, I wrote Mother Annunciata anyway! The day I stepped foot in the Aspiranture I knew I was in the right place.” Mary spent her senior year at Good Counsel Academy and graduated on June 8, 1947. She entered the candidature one week later.

She attended college classes during her first year in the candidature and spent her second year practice teaching at Immaculate Conception School, Gilbertville, Iowa, where she had 10 second graders and 31 third graders. Mary returned to Good Counsel in June, 1949 to prepare for reception into the novitiate. She was given the name Sister Mary Padua, with St. Anthony of Padua as her patron. She professed first vows in July 1950.

Sister Padua’s first teaching position was grades two and three at St. Felix, Wabasha, Minn. As she was preparing to start her second year there in 1951, she was transferred to St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul. One year later, she was

continued

In Loving Memory



*Sister Mary Padua
Unterburger*



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again assigned to St. Felix where she stayed until 1963. From 1963 until 1969, she taught primary grades at St. Mary, New England, N.D. After spending the 1969-70 school year at St. Francis de Sales, Sister Padua moved to St. Isidore School, Litomysl, Minn., to teach grades one and two. She wrote, "Since the children came from the Owatonna and Blooming Prairie School Districts, I suggested starting a kindergarten. Permission was given by the pastor, and I continued to teach kindergarten with the first and second grades." In 1982, after 12 years in Litomysl, Sister Padua continued her kindergarten teaching ministry at Crucifixion School, La Crescent, Minn., until 1984. Sister Padua then returned to St. Mary, New England, as teacher and elementary librarian until the school closed in 1997. Her final year of teaching, 1997-98, was at St. Bernard, Cologne, Minn. During her teaching years, Sister Padua earned a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mary College in 1962 and certification in library from Valley City State University, N.D. in 1987.

Sister Padua came to Good Counsel in 1998 and provided community service in a variety of ways. She helped with sacristy work and distributed the mail. She also used her library certification as the Good Counsel librarian. She developed her own version of a bookmobile, preparing a cart of books which she would take to sisters in health care. She typified the essence of a librarian, reading whenever she had a free moment. Even as she waited for sisters to come to her bookmobile – or as she waited for the elevator – she could be seen reading a book.

Sister Padua was also known for her knitting prowess. If she was not reading, she was knitting. She specialized in sweaters for infants and young children, displaying and selling many at Good Counsel's annual Craft Fair and in the Good Counsel Gift Shop. While often seen with a book or knitting needles, her prayer book and rosary were also constant companions. She also enjoyed a good game of cards.

The funeral Mass for Sister Padua, with Father Andrew Olsem as presider, was celebrated on January 8, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato. Because Sister Padua had requested that her body be cremated immediately after death, her remains were buried in the cemetery following the Mass. She is survived by her sister Bertha Moser, her brother-in-law Ray Buttenhoff, nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Math and Mary (Schmitt) Unterberger, brothers Carl, Clarence and Eugene, and a sister, Lucille Buttenhoff.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND