



Birth
April 18, 1937

Baptism
April 22, 1937

First Profession
July 17, 1957

Date of Death
September 22, 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 Patricia [M. Carmeline] Sonnek, SSND

Sister Patricia (Pat, and formerly Carmeline) Sonnek, 76, died Sunday, September 22, 2013, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. She had been anointed earlier in the day with some of her family members present. Sister Pat had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease several years ago, but continued to live as actively as her illness allowed.

The second child and oldest daughter, Sister Pat was born April 18, 1937, on the family farm south of Easton, Minnesota. Four days later she was baptized Patricia Ann at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Easton. Nine more children would join the Sonnek family, with the youngest being born when Sister Pat was a novice. Two of the boys died when Pat was in grade school.

Pat described her first school experience in these words, "In the fall of 1943, just before the beginning of classes at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School conducted by the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, I became very ill and lay in a coma for several hours. As a result of this illness, I began school a month late. Because God spared me, my aunts often said, 'God has some special work for her.'"

Following eighth grade graduation in 1951, Pat went to Good Counsel Academy in Mankato for high school. Pat began to think about becoming a sister during her Good Counsel days. She wrote later, "The problem was, should I become a Franciscan sister or a Notre Dame sister? With the aid of Mary and the assistance of St. Joseph, Notre Dame was my choice before my graduation on June 5, 1955."

Pat entered the SSND candidature on September 3, 1955. Her year in the candidature was spent taking courses to learn both about religious life and to prepare for teaching. On July 16, 1956, she was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Carmeline. She wrote, "It was a great day, made especially great by celebrating my first name day on Reception Day." She later returned to her baptismal name.

After profession in 1957, Sister Pat spent the first semester as a student, living at St. Albertus Hall in St. Paul while taking classes through the College of St. Catherine and doing her practice teaching at St. Stanislaus School. She spent the second semester at Good Counsel and continued her college coursework. She completed her degree in 1967, earning a bachelor's in education from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee. In 1958, she was missioned to St. Felix School, Wabasha, where she taught primary grades for the next nine years. During the next four years she taught at St. Stanislaus, St. Paul; St. Matthias, Wanda; and St. Stanislaus, Winona.

In 1971, Sister Pat began classes to become an LPN. She earned her licensure in 1972 and for the next several years worked in health care at Good Counsel. In 1977 she attended Aquinas Institute in Des Moines for pastoral care. Unable to get a full-time pastoral care position, she continued nursing

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In Loving Memory



Sister Patricia Sonnek



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in Des Moines until 1980 when she moved to St. Andrew, St. Paul. For the next two years she worked as an LPN and as a chaplain for a nursing home.

Sister Pat's next move to Rochester, Minnesota, brought a variety of opportunities over the following 25 years. She worked as a public health nurse for 20 years, retiring in 2002. During those years, she was part of a Medications Options Program which served serious and persistent mentally ill adults living in Olmsted County. In 2000, she was given special recognition by her employers. The testimony in part stated, "Pat is extremely flexible in meeting agency and client service needs. She is reliable, dependable, and has outstanding communications skills with clients, as well as having a great sense of humor. Her commitment to clients and the agency is outstanding. She is out in all kinds of weather, seeing at least 14 clients a day. She works quietly but tenaciously. Her support to clients often gets them through from one day to the next." During her years as a public health nurse, Sister Pat also volunteered as a Tri-County Hospice roster nurse and as a grief support facilitator. She also worked at Assisi Heights. During her last five years in Rochester, she worked with Mayo Clinic Hospice and part time at Hancock Fabrics.

In her autobiography Sister Pat wrote, "A great hobby helped me fill the time between hospice services." That "great hobby" was quilting and crafting. At any given time, she had multiple projects in many stages of development, ranging from clowns to full-sized quilts. She was a major contributor to the annual SSND Craft Fair and served on the Craft Fair Committee for many years. She was also a lifelong Scrabble player. Her family and friends were important in her life, and she frequently used e-mail as a means of communication with them.

The words of St. Augustine, "My heart is restless until I rest in thee," were very important to her, and she had the phrase framed and hanging over her bed. These words tie in very well with her funeral theme, "My soul is thirsting for You, my God." May Sister Pat now find her thirst satisfied and her restlessness stilled as she rests in the arms of a loving God – possibly even wrapped in a heavenly quilt!

The funeral Mass for Sister Pat, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held Thursday, September 26, in Good Counsel Chapel, with a vigil service the evening before. She is survived by her sisters, Mary Detke, Ida Arnold, Kay (Wayne) Nacey, Carmel (Pierre) Leblanc, and Eileen (Ben) Youngblood; her brothers Bill (Helen) and Tom (Mary); her sister-in-law, Barb Dvorak; nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Matthew and Mary (Schimek) Sonnek, and three brothers, Roland, Duane and Kenneth.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND