



Birth
Feb. 19, 1947

Baptism
March 9, 1947

Profession
July 18, 1967

Death
Feb. 13, 2016

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

In Loving Memory

Sister Phyllis Kernz, SSND

Born in Neillsville, Wisconsin on Feb. 19, 1947, to Phillip and Irene (Keane) Kernz, she was baptized Phyllis Ann at St. Mary Church in Neillsville. She was the oldest of eight children. In her autobiography, she noted that her siblings – Therese, Jeanne, William, Edward, Richard, Susan, and Kristine Ann – “made life interesting and never a bore.” She attended elementary school at St. Mary’s Neillsville where she had Sister Grace Curtin as her teacher for four of the eight grades! Wanting to stay close to home, she attended Neillsville Public High School for three years. In high school, Phyllis joined “Future Teachers of America” – an early start for a lifetime educator. For her senior year, Phyllis chose to enter Caroline Academy, Mequon, Wisconsin, the aspiranture of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. As a postulant and novice, she took her college studies at Notre Dame of the Lake, Mequon campus and as a professed sister at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee.

Phyllis entered the SSND candidature on Aug. 22, 1965; was received into the novitiate on July 17, 1966 and professed first vows on July 18, 1967. Sister Phyllis received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1970. She completed a master’s degree in religious education at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1980.

Her initial 12 years of ministry were as an elementary teacher. Her school missions were located in Wisconsin at: St. Michael, Milwaukee; SS. Peter and Paul, Wisconsin Rapids; Holy Family Consolidated School, Marinette; and St. Paul, Bloomer. During one of the years at SS. Peter and Paul, she taught 39 seventh graders! During her time at Holy Family, she became active in the charismatic renewal program in the Green Bay Diocese. While teaching at St. Paul in Bloomer, she made plans to study for a master’s in religious education. She said, “I studied religious education because I saw so many not getting any religious training.”

In 1980, she began a new ministry as director of religious education. She directed religious education and faith formation for nearly 28 years at the following parishes: St. Paul, Bloomer, Wisconsin; St. Joseph, Red Wing, Minnesota; St. John Vianney, Bettendorf, Iowa; Sacred Heart, L’Anse, Michigan; and St. Mary, Peshtigo, Wisconsin/SS. Joseph & Edward, Porterfield, Wisconsin. While in Iowa she studied and earned a certificate in spiritual guidance. At Sacred Heart Parish she directed Whole Church/ Whole Community Catechetics, took care of sacrament preparation for children, and adult formation, including RCIA.

After a brief stay at St. John de Nepomoc, Milwaukee, Sister Phyllis went to Spirit House in Rochester, New York. There she was diagnosed with frontal lobar, early onset dementia. It was then that she who loved to dance began her “Dance of Surrender.” Sister Phyllis retired in 2009 and joined the Notre Dame of Elm Grove community where she served through prayer and presence – helping in the sewing room, learning piano, detaching from things gathered over the years. In 2011, she moved to memory care at Our Lady of the Angels community in Greenfield, Wisconsin.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Phyllis Kernz



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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

Phyllis always loved nature. In her youth she planted a cash crop of cucumbers on a .25 acre of land and earned \$200. She knew all the hiking trails in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and along the Mississippi River where she served. She knew where to find marvelous waterfalls hidden away. At one point she enjoyed snowshoeing the trails. This led to her interest in photography. She wanted to capture the beauty she observed in order to share that beauty with others. She loved photographing birds. At L'Anse she kept a great porch garden. At Our Lady of the Angels she grew tomatoes and peppers in a raised garden bed.

Phyllis always had a sense of adventure and fun. For her side trip after the Silver Jubilee program in Rome, Phyllis chose to travel to Africa, to visit classmate, Sister Joan Marie Van Beek who was head of a conference/retreat center in Ghana. Phyllis loved the children, the music and the colorful culture. When the 45th reunion of her Caroline Academy class was held in Florida, most of the classmates stayed at a hotel but Phyllis stayed at the home of Vicki Borowski-Dunn because they had a piano! A more recent adventure was a trip to Coolsville, Ohio with Sisters Elise Zettel and Judene Marie Studer to visit Sister Joan Marie at Sacred Heart Retreat Center.

The Caroline Academy graduation group and those who entered the postulancy are a supportive, caring group of women who like to keep in touch with each other. Phyllis kept many a photo from occasions when the group gathered. Two special friends to her were Linda Steele-Barrington and Kathy Geldon-Andrzejewski. They became her "lunch buddies" – taking her to lunch every couple of weeks for as long as she was able. Many classmates from all over the country have sent special thoughts as we bid farewell to Phyllis.

Sister Phyllis Kernz died on Feb. 13, 2016 at Our Lady of the Angels, Greenfield, Wis. She was 68. She was preceded in death by parents, Philip and Irene Kernz, and brother, Richard Kernz. She is survived by siblings, Therese (David) Witkowski, Jeanne Stankey, William (Emily) Kernz, Edward (Jeriann) Kernz, Susan (Douglas) Oldam, Kristine Kernz, nieces, nephews, and the SSND Community.

Phyllis loved life and loved people. Gradually she had to let go of all she loved – music and dancing; baking and sewing; gardening and crafts; and yes, people, too. Now, we rejoice because she is WHOLE again; able to bask in God's love for her.

This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information and the eulogy presented by Sister Judene Marie Studer, SSND.