



Birth
May 18, 1917

Baptism
June 3, 1917

Profession
August 1, 1941

Death
December 19, 2015

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

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Robertus Hanlen, SSND

While World War I was raging and the United States was being drawn into it, a small baby girl was born in St. Louis, Missouri on May 18, 1917. She was the fourth of seven children born to Bridget (Murphy) and James Hanlen. Her three older siblings were boys; therefore, the mother considered her a special blessing. She was baptized on June 3, 1917 at Immaculate Conception Church and named Rosemary. Another brother and two sisters would also join the family. Her faith-filled parents instilled a love of prayer, trust in God and special devotion to Mary into the lives of their children.

When Rosemary was 5 years old, she was enrolled in the primer class at Immaculate Conception School staffed by the Sisters of Loretto. Following graduation, her parents enrolled her at St. Alphonsus (Rock) High School. Her older brothers had gone to Rock Grade School and the parents were impressed with the education they received from the School Sisters of Notre Dame. At the end of her freshman year, Rosemary realized that she was being called to be a religious. Her brother, Robert, was a seminarian at the Redemptorist Seminary in Kirkwood, Missouri. The two frequently shared about religious life.

When she graduated from high school, the United States was in the midst of the Depression. Rosemary realized she needed to help her parents and decided to find employment in order to earn the money needed to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was fortunate to find a secretarial position in a mail advertising company where the employer and all the employees were Catholic. This helped to confirm her decision to enter religious life.

Rosemary entered at Sancta Maria in Ripa on August 28, 1937. After two years of Junior College, she was missioned to teach 33 primary children at Holy Ghost, St. Louis, Missouri, preparing them for their first Holy Communion. She was received into the novitiate on July 31, 1940 and given the name, Mary Robertus in honor of her brother. Profession of first vows was on August 1, 1941 and final vows on August 1, 1947.

She received a bachelor's degree in history from Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1951 and a master's degree in elementary education from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri in 1964.

Sister Robertus ministered in elementary education for more than 45 years. She taught at St. Mary's Assumption, New Orleans, Louisiana; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Indio, California; St. Engelbert and Immaculate Heart of Mary in St. Louis, Missouri; St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles, Missouri; St. Joseph, East St. Louis, Illinois; St. Teresa, Belleville, Illinois; St. Francis of Assisi, Teutopolis, Illinois. She was principal at St. Teresa, Belleville and St. Helen, Fresno, California. She ministered as a Director of Religious Education at Sacred Heart, Dexter, Missouri for one year. During the last five years of her teaching career, she set up and taught in the computer lab at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in St. Louis.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Robertus Hanlen



In 1988, she became a staff member of the Notre Dame Missions Office for five years. She then did volunteer ministry in several of the province offices, usually entering computer data. In 2002, she was missioned to Veronica House and then to Anna House in 2005. She died peacefully at Anna House at 3:30 a.m. on December 19, 2015.

The wake/vigil was held on December 22, 2015 at Anna House and Theresa Center. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Edmond Fitzgibbon presiding. A nephew from Tennessee, Tom Hanlen, his wife, Sandra, and daughter Lindsey attended the funeral Mass. Other relatives in the state of Washington and in Maryland were not able to attend but were present in spirit and prayer. Sister Robertus was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers: John Hanlen, Sr.; Richard Hanlen; Rev. Robert Hanlen, CSSR; Eugene Hanlen; and her sisters Virginia Patterson and Mary Lou Hanlen.

Sister Robertus participated in the TEC (Teens Encounter Christ) retreat movement. She attended 15 TEC weekends with high school students. An excellent math teacher, she enjoyed working math problems. She was a vibrant and engaging teacher and made a lasting impression on her students. Her Irish humor and ability to tell stories held their interest and gave them the desire to learn. She was an avid reader until her eye sight prevented her from reading. As her eye sight and hearing began to fail, she became quieter and relied more on her life of prayer and trust in God. She loved the Christmas novena and it was incorporated into the wake service. Her Advent of waiting for God is over and may she now rejoice in her new life as she beholds her God face to face!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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