

In Loving Memory

Sister Shirley [Mary Assunta] Kemper, SSND



Birth
October 22, 1924

Baptism
November 2, 1924

Profession
July 31, 1946

Death
May 9, 2012

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

On October 22, 1924, the fourth of eight children was born to Anna [Hanlon] and Fred Kemper in St. Louis, Mo. She was baptized at Holy Rosary Church on November 2, 1924, and given the name Mary Shirley. An older brother died when he was two years old and Shirley grew up with four brothers and two sisters.

Shirley attended Holy Rosary elementary school staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. She entered Rosati-Kain High School where she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. During a retreat in her senior year, she realized God was calling her to religious life. She confided in the newly professed Sister Mary Eda McCarthy who answered many of her questions about SSND. With her guidance and the help of a priest uncle, Shirley approached her mother for permission to enter the candidature. Several months later, her mother asked her if she still desired to enter religious life. When Shirley replied, "Yes," her mother gave her consent.

She entered the candidature at Ripa on August 26, 1943. During her second year of candidature, she was missioned to teach fourth grade at St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles, Mo. Received into the novitiate on July 30, 1945, she was given the name, Mary Assunta. Profession of first vows was on July 31, 1946, and profession of final vows was on July 31, 1952.

In 1955, Sister Shirley was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis. She received a Master of Arts degree in Spirituality through the Paul VI Institute in St. Louis in 1986.

Sister Shirley spent 31 years as an elementary educator. In Missouri, she taught at Immaculate Conception, West Alton; and Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Gabriel, Our Lady of Loretto, St. Michael, Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Andrew in St. Louis. In 1949, she was one of the pioneers to Santa Isabel in Los Angeles, Ca. She also ministered at St. Mary's Assumption, New Orleans, La; Christ the King, Corpus Christi, Texas; and St. Mary, Alton, Ill.

Following her years in the classroom, Sister Shirley gave community service for one year at the Caroline Conference and Retreat Center in the St. Louis motherhouse. She then served as a Director of Religious Education at St. David and Immaculate Conception, Arnold, Mo. for eight years and in pastoral ministry at St. Francis of Assisi, Teutopolis, Ill. for three years.

After a year of community service at Villa Gesu, she began a new career. Her next area of ministry was with the elderly as administrator/manager and then staff member for ten years at several residential care facilities of the Cardinal Ritter Institute: Rosary House, St. Elizabeth Hall and DuBourg House in St. Louis.

She concluded her ministry assignments as a receptionist for the Family Foot & Ankle Care Center for one year, an aide at Regina Cleri Retirement

continued

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Home for the St. Louis diocesan priests for two years, and a volunteer at the Cardinal Carberry Senior Living Center for eight years.

In July 2011, she retired to Veronica House. She was transferred to Anna House on May 7, 2012, and placed on hospice. She died peacefully on May 9, 2012, at 8:15 a.m. Her niece, Kathy Stucklik, and two Sisters were at her bedside as she gave her life to God on the feast of Blessed Theresa, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

The wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center on May 11, 2012. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Jim French, former pastor at St. David, Arnold, Mo., as the presider. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery.

Sister Shirley is survived by her sister, Lorraine Scott of New York who was unable to attend and two sisters-in-law, Barbara Kemper and Pat Kemper of St. Louis. Devoted nieces, nephews, and relatives from Connecticut, Florida and various cities in Missouri, as well as classmates, former parishioners from St. David, friends and SSNDs attended the wake and funeral services.

Sister Shirley was remembered as an outgoing, generous and loving person. Her family was extremely important to her and her presence at many gatherings added to the celebrations. Among her favorite activities were shopping, playing cards, eating ice cream and listening to the St. Louis Cardinals baseball games.

Her various ministries through the years crossed generations as she served the young and elderly. She described her life of service as *"The Lord is directing us into other ministries and wherever you can do your best work is where the Lord wants you."* Adaptable and flexible, she served the people of God with joy and compassion, touching the lives of many during her 66 years of religious life. She was graced with the blessing of Theresa in following Jesus as *"the way you walk, the truth you follow, the life you lead."* May she now be welcomed by her Risen Jesus, Blessed Theresa, her family, friends and all SSNDs as she enters eternal life!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND