

## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Teresa [Mary John Eileen] Mahony, SSND



Birth  
October 26, 1944

Baptism  
December 31, 1944

Profession  
July 30, 1964

Death  
June 25, 2012

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

Sister Teresa Mahony crossed over the threshold into a new and glorious life on June 25, 2012. Proud of her Irish heritage, the words of the late Irish poet, John O'Donohue come to mind. "Her crossing over is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience of life that intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up." Those who had the privilege of being with Sister Teresa as she was moving toward her last transition will never forget her immense fortitude, her strong courage and her persevering love. These virtues were not new to her. She had forged them in the cup of her life where she met sadness, tragedy, betrayal, reconciliation, trust and delight. From the beginning of life, her heart was "passionately engaged and woken up."

Teresa Irene Mahony was born on October 26, 1944 in Woodside, New York, the second of the three children of John Timothy Mahony and Eileen Breen, who was from County Cork, Ireland. Her two sisters, Eileen and Kathy, were always close and Tracy treasured the times they got together at Christmas and on vacations. She was especially grateful for their loving attention during her last illness.

Tracy, as she was affectionately called by many, spent her first twelve years in New York and then her family moved to Menasha, Wis. There she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Mary's grade school. The move, she wrote in her autobiography, "was an adjustment from big city living to small town living, but I did not mind the move. I was thrilled to live in our own house and to be surrounded by nature, something I have always loved." After three years her family moved to St. Joseph, Michigan and Tracy finished her high school education at St. Joseph Catholic School, conducted by Adrian Dominican Sisters.

When she was little, Tracy decided that she would be a sister when she grew up. When she "grew up," however, instead of nourishing this desire, she fought against it for three years. Finally, due to the influence of one of her high school teachers, she decided to enter the convent. Recalling her teachers in Menasha, she decided to enter the Notre Dame Postulancy on August 19, 1962, nearly 50 years ago. That same summer her older sister Eileen was entering the Congregation of St. Agnes.

At her reception, Teresa was given the religious name, Mary John Eileen but in later years, she returned to her baptismal name. She professed first vows on July 30, 1964 and final vows on July 27, 1969. Sister Teresa received a bachelor of arts in English from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1968 and a master of arts in religious studies from Mundelein College, Chicago in 1976.

From the very beginning, Tracy was a gifted teacher. She loved children, no matter what age, and gave herself completely to the care of them. Her early years found her teaching in the primary grades and her latter years found her once again engaging with small children as a positive source of life and inspiration. Sister Teresa's service as an educator spanned 47 years. Her

*continued*

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*Sister Teresa Mahony*



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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD  
THROUGH EDUCATION

ministry locations included: St. Joseph, Wauwatosa, Wis., 1965-66; St. James, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966-69; St. Adalbert, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969-71; Diocese of Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971-74; St. Adalbert, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971-76; St. Leonard, Muskego, Wis., 1976-80; Messmer High School, Milwaukee, 1981-84; Divine Savior/Holy Angels High School, Milwaukee, 1984-91; SSND Provincialate, Milwaukee, 1991-93; Divine Savior/Holy Angels High School, Milwaukee, 1993-2005; Academy of Learning & Leadership, Milwaukee, 2005-10; and Milwaukee College Preparatory School, Milwaukee, 2010-11.

In 1971, after Vatican II's call to update, dioceses were in the process of developing new religious education programs. The bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan, requested that Tracy study in Louvain, Belgium. When she returned, she developed and implemented a religious education program in the diocese. This work eventually led her into pastoral ministry, where not only children and parents were the recipients of her dedication, expertise, and knowledge, but parishioners came to know her and experience the many gifts she offered the community.

Her next call was back to Wisconsin where she ministered in a parish as Director of Religious Education. The community of faith welcomed her and she shared her experience and wisdom not only as an educator, but as a friend. One friend recalled Tracy's gentleness and kindness after the loss of her 10-year-old son in a fire. "Without her, I could not have made it through the hardest time in my life."

Sister Teresa brought her typical manner of care and a keen interest in the welfare of her students as she responded to her next call — to teach theology in high school. Often she would agonize with and find ways to support a student in a difficult or sad situation. She took the words of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger seriously: "Talk to God more about your children rather than talk to your children about God." Tracy was passionately engaged with and her heart opened to each of "her children."

Tracy was called to leadership in the SSND community as a provincial councilor. During those years she served her sisters with the same kind of kindness, compassion and dedicated service she had shared in her other ministries.

During the last few years, she enjoyed calling herself "Grandma." She felt that her call was not so much to teach, as to embody a gentle, kind and unconditional presence to the staff and children at Milwaukee College Prep Academy. They valued her so much that the school named the new library in her honor and dedicated this year's yearbook to her.

Sister Teresa had a full and rich life in mission. We pray for us, as she would wish for each of us, a favorite Irish blessing: "Sure, and may there be a road before you and may it be bordered with roses, the likes of which have ne'er been smelt or seen before, for the warm fine color and the great sweetness that is on them." Amen.

Sister Teresa is survived by her sisters, Sister Eileen Mahony, CSA and Kathryn (David) Karecki, other relatives, friends and the SSND Community.

*By Sister Susan Ann Adrians, SSND*