

In Loving Memory

Sister Thomas Marie LeBlanc, SSND



Birth
August 17, 1934

Baptism
August 19, 1934

Profession
July 21, 1954

Death
August 13, 2012

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

After several weeks of “waiting,” our beloved Sister Thomas Marie LeBlanc, 77, died peacefully Monday, August 13, 2012, in Notre Dame Health Care Center, Our Lady of Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. Members of the nursing staff were with her when she died; her sister Suzanne and nephew Joseph had been at her side from late the previous evening until the early morning of the day she died.

Sister Thomas Marie, the oldest of four children, was born in Little Falls, Minnesota, on August 17, 1934. Two days later at her Baptism in St. Mary’s Church, she was given the name Mary Ann. Her father’s occupation as a manager for Western Union prompted the family to move twice during Mary Ann’s childhood. In 1936 the LeBlanc’s moved to Worthington, where Mary Ann attended public school through grade six. In 1945, the family moved to Red Wing and Mary Ann attended St. Joseph Catholic School taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. After completing her freshman year at Red Wing Central High School, she became a sophomore aspirant at Good Counsel Academy, Mankato, in September 1949. An article in *Echoes*, the academy newspaper, described her as a person who would “give and give and give.”

Mary Ann graduated from Good Counsel Academy in 1952 and entered the SSND candidature that fall. Her class was the first to have one year of formation in the candidature and postulancy before reception into the novitiate. Mary Ann was received into the novitiate in 1953 and given the name Sister Thomas Marie. Following profession in 1954, Sister Thomas Marie and her class pioneered another program – the SSND Juniorate on Summit Avenue in St. Paul. As student sisters they completed two quarters at Diocesan Teachers’ College, and another two quarters at the College of St. Catherine. Sister Thomas Marie earned a BA in social studies and elementary education from the College of St. Catherine in 1962, and an MA in sociology from St. Thomas College in 1969.

In August 1955, Sister Thomas Marie began her teaching apostolate at SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato, where she taught primary grades for three years. Several teaching and/or administrative assignments followed, including St. Francis, Buffalo; Immaculate Conception, Forsyth, Montana; St. Albert, Albertville; Sacred Heart, Heron Lake; St. Francis Xavier, Sartell; John Ireland, St. Peter; St. Martin, Rogers; St. Andrew, St. Paul; St. John, Jordan; St. Joseph, Hopkins; Corpus Christi, St. Paul; and Holy Childhood, St. Paul. She also taught in three schools in Washington State: Guardian Angel, Colton; Christ the King, Omak; and St. Mary, Chewelah.

As a child, Sister Thomas Marie had been a Girl Scout and she continued her interest in this organization throughout her adult life. She became a Girl Scout leader at St. Andrew School in the 1970s and was granted the Gold Award by the Girls Scouts of St. Croix Valley in 1978.

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

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

In 1985, Sister Thomas Marie moved from fulltime classroom ministry to new areas of service. For a time, she served as a home health aide and then worked in pastoral ministry at Madonna Towers in Rochester and St. Therese Home in New Hope. She also taught or tutored at Guadalupe Area Project (GAP) in St. Paul, St. Raphael in Crystal, Calvin Academy in Mounds View, the Mexican Multicultural Charter School in St. Paul, the Jewish Community Center in Roseville and M.O.R.E. Multicultural School in St. Paul.

During her jubilee year in 2004, she reflected on her SSND life for an article in the *St. Cloud Visitor*. She remarked that her heart had always been in the classroom, and stated, “I am a teacher.” She felt that she had especially made a difference in students’ and parents’ lives during her first teaching assignment at SS. Peter & Paul. On September 17, 1957, a fire broke out in school just before dismissal time. The alarm was sounded and the building was evacuated according to procedure. When the children assembled outside, one second grade class was missing. Sister Thomas Marie reentered the building and helped bring that class to safety.

Throughout her years of active ministry, Sister Thomas Marie maintained an interest in a variety of activities. When listing her teaching assignments, she invariably added “cook.” She loved to cook and was a good cook. She enjoyed crafts, especially making cards featuring artistic stamping and quilling. This interest in crafts led her to become part of the summer program at GAP for a number of years. She loved to travel, and often organized trips for herself and others. Her Girl Scout experience nurtured her love of the outdoors and nature – and camping trips. All animals were special to her, especially dogs, and many times she was a house sitter and dog sitter for friends. She had a good background in music and enjoyed both singing and playing the organ. All forms of *chocolate* held great appeal for her. Above all, her friends recall her gratitude and love for her family, and importance of God in her life.

Her funeral Mass, with Father Bernard Steiner as presider, was held Thursday, August 16 (the day before her birthday), in Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel Cemetery. She is survived by her sister Suzanne and her brother James, her niece and nephews and their families, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Oliver and Viola (Buelke) LeBlanc and her brother Thomas.

May Sister Thomas Marie, who so appreciated all of God’s creation, now proclaim forever the greatness of God throughout both heaven and earth!

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND