



In Loving Memory

Sister M. Clarita Rathgeb, SSND

On June 5, 1918, the second child was born to Catherine (Cappel) and Michael Rathgeb in Alton, Illinois. She was baptized on June 16, 1918 at St. Patrick Church in Alton, and named Catherine Frieda. Her only sibling, Leonard, was 14 months older. When it was time for Leonard to attend school, he refused to go without Catherine. Mrs. Rathgeb begged the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Mary's to accept Catherine. She began her elementary education when she was only five years old. When the children began sixth grade, their father became seriously ill and died. Leonard and Catherine became closer to their mother after their father's death.

Birth
June 5, 1918

Baptism
June 16, 1918

Profession
Aug. 3, 1939

Death
Oct. 25, 2015

Sister Clarita
donated her body to
St. Louis University
School of Medicine

When they graduated from grade school, Leonard expressed his desire to enter the Josephinum Seminary in Worthington, Ohio to study for the priesthood. Catherine had registered for the aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis. Their mother suffered keenly from this separation of her two children but allowed them to follow their dreams. When Catherine graduated from high school, she longed to be a School Sister of Notre Dame but was concerned about her mother. After much prayer and a heart-to-heart talk with her mother, she entered the candidature on Aug. 29, 1935. The first two years were spent taking college courses; during the third year, she was missioned to teach third grade children at St. Engelbert's in St. Louis. She was received into the novitiate on Aug. 2, 1938 and given the name M. Clarita. Profession of first vows was on Aug. 3, 1939 and final vows on Aug. 3, 1945. Her brother Leonard was ordained on May 30, 1943 for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

Sister Clarita received a bachelor's degree in history from Arkansas State University, Conway, Arkansas in 1948 and a master's degree in education from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri in 1954.

Following profession, Sister Clarita served in Catholic education for 42 years. She taught at St. Joseph Grade and High School in Conway, Arkansas; Sacred Heart High School in New Orleans, Louisiana; Notre Dame Quincy High School, Quincy, Illinois and St. Gregory High School in Tyler, Texas. She was teacher and principal at: Holy Angels, Kinloch, Missouri; St. Bernadette and St. Dominic Savio in St. Louis, Missouri; St. Mary, Cape Girardeau, Missouri; and Holy Rosary, San Antonio, Texas. She taught junior high students at St. Henry, St. Teresa and St. Peter Cathedral in Belleville, Illinois; St. Dominic, Breese, Illinois and St. Louis, Nokomis, Illinois. In St. Louis, Missouri, she taught junior high at St. Hedwig, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Wenceslaus. She taught at All Souls, Overland, Missouri; St. Francis Borgia, Washington, Missouri and Immaculate Conception, Jackson, Missouri. She ministered in pastoral care at Mt. St. Rose Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri.

For 14 summers, Sister Clarita taught various classes in education at the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis, Missouri. Her favorite class was training the student teachers. As a principal, her schools were always open to young sisters who needed help in techniques and observation.

*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

continued

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In 1982, she was stricken with universal osteoporosis and arthritis. She endured six spinal surgeries and bone fusions, leaving only two original bones in her spine. She could no longer teach large classes but with the aid of an electric wheel chair, she tutored students at Notre Dame Tutorial/Learning Center for 16 years prior to her retirement at Veronica House, Bridgeton, in 2002. She was missioned to Anna House, Bridgeton in 2007. She died peacefully at Anna House on Oct. 25, 2015 at 11:20 a.m. Sister Clarita donated her body to St. Louis University School of Medicine.

A prayer service was held at The Sarah Community in Bridgeton, on Nov. 2, 2015. The memorial Mass was celebrated at Theresa Center chapel, Sancta Maria in Ripa, on Nov. 3, 2015 with Rev. Robert Leibrecht presiding. Sister Clarita was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Rev. Leonard Rathgeb. Cousins, friends and SSNDs attended the services.

She was a gifted educator and found great joy in working with the students. As a young teacher, her smile and enthusiasm inspired many of them. She often recalled with fondness her various teaching experiences. In 2014, she celebrated 75 years of religious profession. At that time, her “words of wisdom” were: *“What we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory God will give us later... We, too, wait anxiously for the day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he promised us – bodies that will never be sick again and will never die. We are saved by trusting.”*

Now, freed from pain, may Sister Clarita’s trust in God be rewarded by the new life she is experiencing with her God and her family members!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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

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THROUGH EDUCATION