



Birth
Aug. 7, 1923

Baptism
Aug. 10, 1923

Profession
July 22, 1944

Death date
Feb. 27, 2016

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

In Loving Memory

Sister Dolores [Mary Kenneth] Schmitz, SSND

Sister Dolores Schmitz, 92, died unexpectedly yet peacefully Saturday, Feb. 27, 2016, in Notre Dame Healthcare, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. She participated in the retreat which concluded Thursday afternoon. On Friday, she excitedly told Sydelle McCabe, pastoral minister, "I'm going home!" And on Saturday morning, she died.

Sister Dolores was born Aug. 7, 1923, near Raymond, Iowa, and baptized Dolores Frances three days later at Immaculate Conception Church, Gilbertville. She was the fifth of the family's 13 children. She wrote of her family, "My parents, Leo and Martha Schmitz, were devout Catholics and gave to their children a deep love for the church. It was in my family life with Mother, Dad, my brothers and sisters, that I learned the meaning of love, respect, and affirmation. It was in my home also that the foundations were laid for a life of deep faith and prayer. We were a close family, always ready to help each other."

Dolores attended Immaculate Conception School in Gilbertville, where she graduated from eighth grade in 1937. In the fall of that year, she enrolled in Good Counsel Academy in Mankato as a freshman aspirant. In March 1940, her father died suddenly, leaving her mother to care for the family. Dolores wrote, "Mother was always the 'valiant woman,' but more so after Dad's death when it was her responsibility to take care of the thirteen of us."

Following high school graduation in May 1941, Dolores entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame candidature on Aug. 28. She took college classes during her first year in the candidature and, as a second-year candidate, taught third grade at SS. Peter & Paul School, Mankato. She was received into the novitiate in July 1943, and given the name of one of her brothers, Sister Mary Kenneth. She later returned to her baptismal name. She professed first vows in 1944 and began the first of her three SSND ministries, that of teacher, mainly of junior high students. For the next 19 years she taught in the following schools: St. Felix, Wabasha; St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul; Holy Rosary, North Mankato; Assumption, Cresco, Iowa; SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato; SS. Peter & Paul, Loretto; St. Mary, New England, North Dakota; Blessed Sacrament, Waterloo, Iowa; St. Gertrude, Raleigh, North Dakota; and St. Stanislaus, Winona. She earned a bachelor's degree from the College of St. Catherine in 1952.

Sister Dolores' second ministry, Director of Religious Education (DRE), began in 1965, when she was on the staff at Fitzgerald Religious Education Center in La Crescent. She had prepared for this ministry by earning a Certificate in Theology in 1959 from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, and a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) certificate in 1965 from the College of St. Mary, Omaha. In 1966, Sister Dolores became the DRE at St. John Catechetical School, Minnesota Lake, where she stayed for four years. Her final DRE position was at Christ the King Catechetical Center, Medford (1971-1983).

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Dolores Schmitz



St. Mary Parish, Waverly, Iowa, was the setting for Sister Dolores' third ministry: pastoral outreach with special attention to the elderly, homebound, infirm, those with special needs, and the dying. Beginning in 1983, she immersed herself into parish life. One of the pastors with whom she served wrote in 2002, "I want to congratulate Sister Dolores. For almost one-third of her years of ministry she has served St. Mary's Parish in a magnificent way. She has been in homes, hospitals and care centers, ministering to many people – Catholic and non-Catholic – in their times of need. She has also touched lives of our people with special needs and reaches out to many of our poor and elderly." In various articles about her Waverly ministry, parishioners noted her compassion. One article states, "Let us learn from the example of Sister Dolores and live our lives with more compassion, simplicity, and reverence. Compassion is her main theme. She cares for the person no matter their rightful place in society (sounds like Jesus). Her faithful presence in people's lives brought many to see Jesus and the church." Sister Dolores described her commitment to compassion, "We need to come back to a church of compassion and love. Like Jesus." In 2004, Sister Dolores was recognized by the Iowa State Knights of Columbus with the "Religious of the Year" award. She was the first woman to receive this award.

After 25 years at St. Mary's, Sister Dolores retired to Good Counsel in 2008. Before she left Waverly, she was featured in an article with the headline, "Good-bye 'Saint' Dolores." The article began, "There is no way to know for sure how many lives Sister Dolores Schmitz has touched in her 25 years at St. Mary's Catholic Church." In that article, Sister Dolores talked about how the church changed during her years of ministry – and how she changed as well: "What changed most personally was my prayer life. When I went to the convent, I prayed words. But [my prayer] became a relationship with God. You don't need words if God's really your friend."

After Sister Dolores moved to Good Counsel in 2008, one of her favorite places was the library. Never without a book, she claimed to have read most of the large-print books available and was on the lookout for more. She stayed in contact with family and former parishioners, who especially remembered her at Christmas. She in turn generously shared her gifts with the Sisters in Notre Dame Hall. Family members visited as often as they could, something that she truly enjoyed and appreciated.

The funeral Mass for Sister Dolores, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held Thursday, March 3, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato, with a vigil service the evening before. She is survived by nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Leo and Martha (Tegeler) Schmitz, nine brothers, Reynold, Leo, Robert, Irvin, Louis, Paul, Gerald, Norbert and Kenneth, and three sisters, Sister Helene Schmitz, SSND, Esther Overmann and Mary Rose Carpenter.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND

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