



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Regina Miller, SSND

Born on a farm in Galion, Ohio on Nov. 4, 1919, to Frank and Rose (Brown) Miller, she was baptized Rita Clara at St. Joseph Church in Galion. She was the 11th of 12 children in a family blessed by loving parents. Six boys and four girls had preceded her and four years later another girl came into the family. She considered the life on the farm as a true gift. Her mother was very religious and her father was a convert. Rita wrote of her upbringing, “Church devotions and functions were always a must in our family, regardless of the obstacles we had to overcome to attend them.”

They worked, played and prayed together and were taught the ideals of respect, responsibility and obedience – all grounded in their Catholic faith. Rita attended St. Joseph School where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. From first grade onward, Rita grew to love, appreciate and admire her teachers.

When Rita was in third grade, her family experienced tragedy, as her father began showing dreadful symptoms which years later were diagnosed as Huntington’s disease. For 15 years, the family was saddened by the changes in her Dad – physically, mentally and in personality. After her father’s death in 1940, four brothers and two sisters were eventually stricken with the disease. The unspoken question haunting her and her siblings was, “Am I next?” Rita prayed, “Lord, You have called me to do your work. I can’t do much for you if I get H-D.” Her prayer was answered. She remained well.

Though Rita had thought about entering the convent since her first Communion day, in eighth grade she began to search for reasons to ignore her religious vocation. Her mother was having a difficult time caring for her father, so Rita really questioned if God would expect her to leave her mother with all she had to do to care for her dad. Rita decided to stay home for high school, and hoped God would stop “calling her.” She attended Galion Senior High and became involved with new friends and new activities. After two years “God’s voice seemed louder than ever” and there was an unrest in her. She was dissatisfied with herself, with a sense that she had been fleeing from God’s call. She entered the SSND candidature at the Milwaukee motherhouse in 1936.

Rita was amazed that she could cope with so many totally new things in her life, and she was sure God was rewarding her for responding to his call. She spoke of the “angels” who helped her with the “firsts” along the way, including her first train ride through two train stations, Dearborn and Union, and her first taxi cab ride. When she arrived in Milwaukee and was timidly knocking on the motherhouse door, the cab driver came out of his cab, took her inside to the inner glass door, rang the doorbell, and waited with her until the door was answered.

When Rita began her novitiate, she received the religious name Mary Regina. She professed first vows on July 20, 1939. Sister Regina received her bachelor’s in English from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1959. She

continued

Birth
November 4, 1919

Baptism
November 16, 1919

Profession
July 20, 1939

Death
October 16, 2015

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

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earned her master's in elementary education and administration from Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa in 1970.

Her ministry as an educator spanned 57 years. She taught students in grades three to eight and was also a school principal. The schools she served in Wisconsin were St. Anne, St. Augustine, Holy Cross and St. Nicholas in Milwaukee and St. George in Kenosha. She was sent to Indiana in 1982 to St. Mary School in Alexandria, where she worked as a full-time teacher until 1990. She continued to serve the school as a part-time aide for six years. Sister Regina retired in 1996 and joined the Notre Dame of Elm Grove community where she served through prayer and presence.

At the end of her autobiography, Sister Regina shared that as a School Sister of Notre Dame, she experienced three definite convictions:

1. God is faithful with his presence and in his love for me.
2. Peace is the reward for generously paying the price that friendship with Jesus demands.
3. I have indeed chosen the better part.

Yes, dear Sister Regina, you have. Please, remember us, your companions still on the journey. Thank you for your gentle, loving presence. Praise God, for the blessing of you.

She died on Oct. 16, 2015 at Notre Dame of Elm Grove in Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She was 95. Sister Mary Regina Miller is survived by her loving extended family of nieces and nephews, dear friends and the SSND Community. Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame Retirement Fund, c/o SSND Mission Advancement Office, 13105 Watertown Plank Road, Elm Grove, WI 53122-2291.

This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information and the eulogy presented by Sister Joan Emily Kaul, SSND.

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of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

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THROUGH EDUCATION