

In Loving Memory

Sister Alexius Portz



Birth
January 14, 1924

Baptism
February 7, 1924

Profession
August 11, 1949

Death
December 13, 2020

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 Alexius (born Marjorie Ann) was the only girl and the last of four children born to Joseph Portz and Caroline Noll Portz in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on January 14, 1924. Her family belonged to St. Joseph Cathedral where she was not only baptized on February 7, but where she also attended 12 years of Catholic education. She graduated June 2, 1942. The Sisters of St. Dominic from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, were her teachers and she often thought of being a sister during those years.

After her high school education, her parents urged her to go on to college. So, she did a thorough study to find the best place to begin her studies. She finally chose to study at St. Catherine's College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and completed two years there. Then she attended four 12-week summers at Iowa State Teacher's College, Cedar Falls, Iowa, earning a B.A. in kindergarten and primary education with a minor in music. She taught for two years in the public school in Lanesboro, Minnesota, and for one year at Lincoln School in Rochester, Minnesota.

Sister Alexius first met the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1946 when she went to visit her Jesuit brother who was stationed in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Now, at the age of 23, she could fulfill her childhood dream by entering the community of the Schools Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), which she did on August 31, 1947. She also continued to study for her Bachelor of Science degree in education with a minor in English and History at Mount Mary College (now University). She was received into the community on August 10, 1948, and professed on August 11, 1949.

For 23 years, Sister Alexius taught in grades one to five and played the organ. She sometimes taught piano lessons in the following schools; St. Nicolaus, Freedom, Wisconsin, St. Joseph, Galion, Ohio, St. Francis Xavier, Superior, Wisconsin, St. Joseph, Peoria, Illinois, St. Mary, Greenville, Wisconsin, St. James, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Our Lady of Lourdes, Marinette, Wisconsin, and St. John, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. From that time on, her services were as an organist and music teacher for 10 years at Notre Dame of the Lake and then she was organist at Visitation Convent, Elm Grove, Wisconsin, for eight years. From 1990 to 2018, she was organist and piano teacher at Notre Dame of Elm Grove (NDEG), Elm Grove. She especially loved her time spent with about 50 piano students.

One of her interesting stories comes out of the summer of 1959 when she volunteered to take on a ladies' choir in Bessemer, Michigan. While she was there she learned to do needle work, from that time on she helped in the tapestry room at the former motherhouse at NDEG in the summers.

Another story comes out of an experience she had at St. James, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The parishioners were trying to add to the building fund and she learned how to collect labels, box tops, bottle caps, trading stamps and old coins. This was the beginning of a hobby she carried with her. She was always saving cans or whatever and she'd turn them in for her favorite charity.

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Once she got involved with raising money to buy five digital keyboards for the patients at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. She got other piano teachers enthusiastic about her campaign. She even got the parents to pay their children for practicing piano so they could use that money to donate to her project.

Sister Alexius' love for children and music created a powerful energy to bring music into their lives. She was enthusiastic about this work right up to the day, when she was 94 years old and just couldn't do it anymore. She must be wrapped up in the choirs of angels in her new life now.

The celebration of Sister Alexius's life was December 28, 2020, at Notre Dame of Elm Grove with the burial in the Elm Grove cemetery.

By Sister Elise Zettle, SSND

Sister Alexius Portz

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of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

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