



Birth
August 22, 1933

Baptism
August 31, 1933

Profession
August 2, 1954

Death
August 17, 2020

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery,
Chatawa, Mississippi

*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 Carolyn (Kay) Kolb

Kay was born to John and Mary Catherine (Graves) Kolb on August 22, 1933, in Banning, California. She was their second child, and daughter, and was baptized as Carolyn Jeanette. John had immigrated with his family from Germany and Mary Catherine from a farm in southern Illinois.

Kay experienced tragedy in her family's early years and wrote of it, "My mom and dad met each other in what sounds like a fairy tale. He worked in a bakery as a pastry chef and she as the candy maker. They fell in love and were married. They were able to buy their own bakery. Family and friends helped the young married couple with their first child, Agnes. Things seemed to be working out well. Then my mom began experiencing a rapidly worsening, undiagnosed paralysis. Six weeks after my birth, she died." The story book tale continues in Kay's words, "Family came to the rescue. My grandmother wanted us both to be brought back to the farm where my mom had grown up. However to make it easier on my grandmother, dad's brother, Karl, took three-year-old Agnes to raise with his family in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and I was to live with my grandmother, aunt, uncle and cousins. So I grew up on a dairy farm, a farm that included a peach orchard. When we were old enough, the boys all worked in the dairy, and all of us worked to harvest and grade peaches for shipping. When I was too young to be useful, my delight was to ride on the mule-drawn sled through the peach trees as the guys picked and filled baskets."

The sisters, Kay and Agnes, anticipated and cherished the summers they could spend together on the farm. Such summer visits happened as soon as Agnes was old enough to be put on the train with notes attached and watched over by the porter. Their father died suddenly in 1947, when Kay was 14 years old. Upon graduating from an elementary school near home, Kay was enrolled in St. Joseph High School in Cairo, Illinois. Her high school years seemed of the usual sort. Kay wrote, "I had the Notre Dame Sisters as teachers. I liked their spirit of community and the idea of women together doing something for the world." Another draw was probably that her aunt, Sister Rosana Graves, was a School Sister of Notre Dame.

Kay asked and was admitted to the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, on August 30, 1951. She was received into the novitiate on August 1, 1953, and given the name Miriam John, in memory of her father. She professed first vows on August 2, 1954, and final vows on August 2, 1960. In the late 1960s, she returned to the familiar 'Kay.'

She earned a bachelor's degree in English from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1956; a master's degree in English from St. Louis University in 1962, and a master's degree in Theology from St Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, in 1972.

After first profession, she was missioned to Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis. Here, for 13 years, she engaged teenaged girls in learning literature, history and religion. Sister Kay's next mission was as teacher at Rosary High School, also in St. Louis. There she was elected by the community as their Local Leader.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Kay Kolb



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All the while, Sister Kay pursued an ever broader and deeper understanding of scripture and the Church through formal theological studies as well as through non-credit courses in scripture and, in particular, the Documents of Vatican II. Sister Kay and a St. Louis classmate, Sister Pat Miller, were sharing their formal and self-learning materials related to scripture and the documents. Each saw the need and felt a compulsion to help fill the learning gap for adults who were missing the advantages of their study. They proposed to their provincial leaders that they assign some sisters to 'pastoral ministry.' About that same time, a letter from a parish priest in Denton, Texas, requested the province leaders to send a couple of sisters to assist as pastoral ministers in his parish. Sisters Kay and Pat were assigned to the Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton in 1971.

Through the decades, the parish program they initiated evolved into a diocesan lay ministries program. Sister Kay explained their work, "The program of study, prayer and dialogue was designed to familiarize Catholics with the principles by which they are called upon to live out their faith -- in the marketplace and in their families and the need to encourage others to do so." The Dorothy Day Award for Justice was given to them in recognition of Sisters Kay and Pat's involvement in "responding to the needs of the poor and speaking out in behalf of the oppressed."

Just as Sisters Kay and Pat's educational ministries had expanded from the classroom to the church parish, then to the diocese, it continued to be all-embracing. Their participation in the Parliament of the World Religions in Cape Town, South Africa, was an expression of their ever-widening involvement with and among God's people.

After 40 years of ministry centered in Denton, Sister Kay, in 2017, retired to the School Sisters of Notre Dame retirement home, St. Mary of the Pines, in Chatawa, Mississippi. In 2019, she moved from Chatawa to a senior living facility in Covington, Louisiana. It is there she died peacefully among her Sisters and friends in the afternoon of August 10, 2020, at St. Anthony's Gardens, in Covington.

Sister Kay was preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Agnes Weeks. A private burial took place at the Chatawa Cemetery, Chatawa, Mississippi on August 13, 2020. A memorial Mass was celebrated by Rev. Dean Robin at St. Anthony's Gardens on August 17, 2020. May our Sister Kay rest in peace!

By Sister Marie Clare Powell, SSND