

In Loving Memory

Sister Cecile (David Marie) Schueller



Birth
August 8, 1934

Baptism
August 12, 1934

Profession
July 21, 1954

Death
May 24, 2023

Burial
Our Lady of Good Counsel
Cemetery

*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 Cecile Schueller, 88, died May 24, 2023, at Benedictine Living Community – St. Gertrude’s, Shakopee, Minnesota.

Sister Cecile introduced herself in her autobiography as, “The story of my life runs something like this – I entered the world as a third birthday present to my big brother, Bill. I was born in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, on August 8, 1934, the first girl of a family of six children, three boys and three girls.” Four days later, she received the sacrament of baptism at St. Mary’s Church and was named Cecile Marie. At the age of six, she enrolled as a first grader in St. Mary’s School, taught by the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, Minnesota. Before the year was finished, however, her father bought a business in Le Sueur, Minnesota, and Cecile continued her education at St. Anne’s School, where her teachers were the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Paul.

As an eighth grader sensing that she may want to be a sister, Cecile did not want to go to the public school. She and other girls in her class attended a class play at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato and met School Sisters of Notre Dame for the first time. She decided that she would like to attend the academy and, with the help of her pastor, was accepted as an aspirant in the fall of 1948, even though she “didn’t want to be a Notre Dame.” She soon learned to love the SSNDs – “I realized they were the sisters for me.” Cecile graduated from Good Counsel Academy in 1952. She entered the candidature that fall and spent the year taking college classes and learning more about SSND life. At her reception into the novitiate in 1953, she was given the name of one of her brothers – Sister David Marie. She later returned to her baptismal name.

Sister Cecile professed her first vows in 1954 and attended Diocesan Teachers College in St. Paul for another year of college. In 1955, she received her first teaching assignment: first grade at St. Michael School, Morgan. For the next 20 years, she ministered in elementary education: intermediate grades at St. Peter, Canby (1956-57); St. Mary, Shakopee (1957-59); and St. Paul, Comfrey (1959-61); and junior high grades at Sacred Heart, Heron Lake (1961-64) and St. Joseph, Grenville, South Dakota (1964-68). She served as principal at Grenville (1967-68) and St. Peter, Forest Lake, Minnesota (1968-75). Parish music was often part of her work. She earned a B.A. degree from St. Catherine’s College, St. Paul, in 1962, and an master of arts in human development with an emphasis on pastoral counseling from St. Mary’s College, Winona, Minnesota, in 1988.

In 1975, Sister Cecile enrolled in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program offered at Willmar State Hospital. While still a CPE student in 1976, she was hired as an “associate pastor” for St. Patrick’s Parish in nearby Kandiyohi, a position that she held until 1979. At the same time, she worked two days a week at the State Hospital.

When Sister Cecile finished her CPE coursework, she was hired as a chaplain for the Willmar State Hospital. In 1978, she was granted “full supervisor’s status

continued

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*Sister Cecile (David
Marie) Schueller*



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under the United States Catholic Conference, Office of Chaplain Services,” and was the first woman to receive this status. This qualified her to train clergy who were involved in chaplaincy work in a mental health institute. She was also certified as a chaplain by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education.

The Willmar Regional Treatment Center is on the same campus as the State Hospital, and Sister Cecile focused much of her time as a chaplain there. She developed a religious education program for developmentally disabled persons and worked as a counselor for persons dealing with substance abuse. She also worked with adults with mental health issues and adolescents with emotional and mental health issues. A 1981 Soundings article stated, “Speaking with Cele, you get the impression that she feels ‘impelled to prefer the poor.’ . . . Walking through just one hospital corridor with her, one realizes that these often-rejected people are deeply loved by her.” She spent much of her hospital time working with the chemically dependent in individual and group counseling and spoke about chemical dependency to groups in the Willmar area. She also served on various boards of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) and was a regional director for the NACC. Sister Cecile summed up her experience in a 2014 Jubilee reflected, “A blessing that I would like to share is the privilege the community gave me to work as a chaplain at a state-run psychiatric hospital. For close to 30 years, I worked with alcohol/drug addicts and mentally ill persons, as well as developmentally disabled adults. I experienced their pain, sense of worthlessness, and struggle as they faced their issues. I always believed these people were God’s special ones and that it was my calling to believe in them and to bring to them a sense of hope and God’s unconditional love.”

In 2005, Sister Cecile and her longtime community member and friend, Sister Nadine Touhey, moved to Owatonna at the invitation of St. Joseph Parish. In an Owatonna newspaper article, she was quoted as, “The parish had a dream to invite retired School Sisters to live in the parish and be available to spend time with shut-ins – homebound people who can’t go out anymore. We want to help those who need someone to come to them.” The two sisters did that – and more – in their 10 years in Owatonna. They retired to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, in 2015, and became active members of the Notre Dame Healthcare community. Sister Cecile stayed in close contact with her family and enjoyed visits from family members. She moved to Benedictine Living Community – St. Gertrude’s in the fall of 2022.

The funeral Mass for Sister Cecile was held June 1, in the Windermere chapel with Father John Kunz as presider. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. Burial in the Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery, Mankato, Minnesota, followed. She is survived by her sister, Penny Crymble; nieces and nephews; and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, William and Edith (Irwin) Schueller; her sister, Judy Blomberg; and her brothers, David, Edward and William Schueller.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND