

In Loving Memory

Sister Clara Ruesch



Birth
January 20, 1925

Baptism
February 8, 1925

Profession
August 5, 1944

Death
January 31, 2019

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
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 Clara (formerly Mary Myron) Ruesch, 94, died on Thursday, January 31, 2019, at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She, along with a twin brother, was born to Leo and Mary Anne (Huser) Ruesch of Vesper, Wisconsin. She was baptized at St. Joseph's Church in Aldorf, Wisconsin, on February 8, 1925.

As a child, Clara enjoyed the outdoors and took every opportunity to be outside. She would spend time with her brothers in the fields or in the forest picking flowers. Her father gave her the nickname "Clarichka," which was eventually shortened to "Keg." In her autobiography she reflects on her nickname, "I don't know why I was called Keg for I was somewhat thin and did not have a keg-like appearance." Eventually, Clara's mother told the family the nicknames would have to stop and that Clara was to be called by her proper name.

When Clara was 6 1/2 years old, she and her twin brother Clement attended Synder District school. It was a one-room school with eight grades and 18 students. Clara enjoyed school. With an attentive ear, she listened to fairy tales, moral tales and poems. She also liked to color and draw. Clara also received religious training through the examples set by her parents. Her mother would hear her children's morning and evening prayers, and carefully prepare her children for the instructions they would receive from their pastor twice a month.

During the summer, Clara would attend vacation religious school, where she would hear stories about saints and learn hymns. Clara would also look after her twin sisters, wash dishes or pick beans during summer breaks from school.

Starting in seventh grade, Clara attended Sts. Peter and Paul School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. Since Clara's oldest brother James had a job there, it was easy for him to drive Clara to school every day. It was at Sts. Peter and Paul that Clara met the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and in eighth grade, she was asked if she had ever considered becoming a sister. She quickly answered, "No," but in her mind answered, "Yes, often."

In January 1939, Clara's father died, leaving her mother to care for 12 children. It was at this time that Clara became serious about becoming a sister, and she expressed her desires to her mother. She reflects in her autobiography, "When I saw how uncertain life was, how short, I decided to make my life worth while and prayed much to our Blessed Lady for light." In September 1939, Clara entered the aspiranture at the Academy of Our Lady in Chicago.

She recalls in her autobiography how after dissecting a frog in biology class, she didn't want to throw it away. "I did not have a place to keep it in our orderly aspiranture quarters, so I put it in a corner behind the piano in our study hall. Somehow I promptly forgot it. Only weeks later, when Sister M. Theodora spied it during music class did I have to claim it with embarrassment. No one could understand why I did a thing like that, but maybe the frog recalled carefree hours spent wading and playing in a creek on the farm."

continued

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Sister Clara Ruesch



Clara entered the candidature in Milwaukee in September 1941. She professed first vows in August 1944 and became Sister Mary Myron. She later returned back to her given name of Clara Mary.

After first vows, Sister Clara taught second grade at Christ King School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. In 1953, she earned her bachelor's degree in social science from the former Mount Mary College (now University) in Milwaukee. After receiving her degree, she was missioned to St. Francis Xavier, Superior, Wisconsin, where she taught second and third grade.

During the summer of 1954, Sister Clara underwent thyroid surgery and spent the next two years recuperating and working in housekeeping at Notre Dame of Elm Grove. After this period, she was missioned to St. Henry's in Watertown, Wisconsin, where she taught fourth grade for five years. She continued teaching until 1970, serving at St. James, Mukwonago, Wisconsin (1961-1962); St. Elizabeth, Milwaukee (1962-1964); Notre Dame, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin (1964-1967); and returned to St. Henry in Watertown (1967-1970). In her autobiography, Sister Clara reflected upon her second time at St. Henry, "Here I experienced some teacher gratifications as I could see former pupils as they matured into young adulthood. Many of them proved to be a credit to their parents and teachers. It was interesting to meet former pupils and learn how they are adapting to life."

In 1969, during her 25th Jubilee, Sister Clara traveled to Rome and Munich to learn more about Catholic church and SSND history. After her return, she served as a sacristan, tutor, librarian and worked in the print shop at Notre Dame of the Lake in Mequon, Wisconsin. In August 1974, she served in the learning center at St. John's School, Marshfield, Wisconsin. She served at St. John Kanty, Milwaukee, as librarian and media specialist and at Sacred Heart School, Allenton, Wisconsin, as a catechetical assistant.

Sister Clara returned to Notre Dame of the Lake in 1979, where she was engaged in the host bakery and also served doing general work. From 1983-1987, she served as the housekeeper at the Marshall Street motherhouse in Milwaukee and then went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin, where she was engaged part time in community service. She fully retired in 2012 to Notre Dame of Elm Grove where she had been serving in prayer and presence.

Sister Clara enjoyed making art, and she signed up for as many art classes as she could. She encouraged others to pursue their passion for making art by saying, "Don't wait till you become a Michaelangelo. Express yourself the best you can artistically." Sister Clara also enjoyed gardening and spent a great deal of time admiring the flowers and tomatoes she planted. She was involved in sharing her family history and remembered her family members by sending handmade cards for every special occasion.

Sister Clara was a woman of love, prayer, adventure and fully embraced life. She expressed, "Throughout all of these experiences, God blessed me with a caring, loving community and family and God loved and guided us in our trials and joys."

*This remembrance was compiled from
SSND archival information.*

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