



In Loving Memory

Sister Cynthia (Louis de Montfort) Brinkman

On April 29, 1936, the third of five daughters was born to Edith (Stevens) and Raymond Brinkman in Quincy, Illinois. She was baptized on May 10, 1936 at St. Francis Solanus Church and named Cynthia Frances.

Cynthia attended St. Francis elementary school staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. When she was 11 years old, she contracted rheumatic fever and was confined for six months. This was a difficult experience for the active, outdoors child. However, Cynthia believed that this was God's time to plant the seed of a call to religious life. After graduation from eighth grade, she begged her parents to attend the aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis. She completed her high school education in three years, which included a six-week summer school course.

Cynthia entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa on August 27, 1953. She was received into the novitiate on July 31, 1954 and given the name M. Louis de Montfort. She professed first vows on August 1, 1955 and final vows on August 1, 1961. She later returned to her baptismal name.

Sister Cynthia taught elementary children for 16 years at: St. Joseph, Cairo, Illinois and St. Teresa and St. Peter Cathedral, Belleville, Illinois. In Missouri, she taught at Immaculate Conception, Dardenne; Our Lady Queen of Peace, House Springs and St. Michael, Shrewsbury. She was principal at House Springs for three years. She taught secondary students at the Academy of Notre Dame, Belleville, for one year.

She received a bachelor's degree in English from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1964, and a master's degree in Theology from the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1971.

In 1972, Sister Cynthia was appointed the director of initial formation for the former St. Louis Province. The following year, she became a member of the newly established Retreat Team at Notre Dame Hall, St. Louis. In 1977, she answered the call to be director of initial formation in Honduras. Two years later, she was called to be a member of the St. Louis Provincial Council. After two terms (1979-1987) as a provincial councilor, she spent nine months as a hermit at the Cedars of Peace Hermitage in Nerinx, Kentucky. This period of solitude enabled her to integrate her experiences in Honduras and in provincial leadership as she deepened her desire for contemplative prayer.

For the next four years, she ministered in crisis intervention as a counselor for abused women and children at Children's Place, Malden, Missouri. She then became director at Casa Guadalupe Family Growth Center in Ellington, Missouri, a shelter for abused and homeless women and children.

After experiencing the death of her parents, Sister Cynthia entered the Clinical Pastoral Education residential program at Loyola University Medical Center in Chicago, in 1996. Having received her CPE certification, she returned to southeast Missouri in 1997. She ministered part time as hospice chaplain for Providence Hospice which served seven counties. With the closure of Providence

continued

Birth
April 29, 1936

Baptism
May 10, 1936

Profession
August 1, 1955

Death
January 19, 2021

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
Cemetery, St. Louis

*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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Hospice, she became a counselor at Casa Guadalupe and chaplain for the terminally ill in the four counties served by Whole Health Outreach. From 2014 to 2018, she was a volunteer with Whole Health Outreach.

She was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri, in December 2018. She was transferred to Anna House and passed away unexpectedly around 6:30 a.m. on January 19, 2021.

Sister Cynthia had expressed the desire for a natural (green) burial. That afternoon, after a short prayer service, her body was laid to rest at Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. Attending were her nephew and his wife, friends and School Sisters of Notre Dame. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at a future date. She is survived by her sisters: Barbara (Jay) Meyer of Quincy, Illinois; Katherine Wilper of Monroe City, Missouri; and Patricia (Wayne) Six of Westfield, Massachusetts. She was preceded in death by her parents and her sister Mary Lee Brinkman.

Sister Cynthia was sensitive to the many injustices experienced by the poor, especially those she witnessed in Honduras. She was a member of the School of Americas Watch group. In November 2003, she participated in a peaceful demonstration at Fort Benning, Georgia. The hope of the protestors was the closing of this Department of Defense facility, which trains U.S. backed Latin and South American military personnel. She was arrested with others for trespassing on government property - crossing the property line at Fort Benning during a peaceful demonstration. This was her second arrest. (In 1983, she was arrested and charged with trespassing while participating in a peaceful demonstration at General Dynamics headquarters in Clayton, Missouri.) Because this was her second offense, she was sentenced to six months in the Federal Correction Institution in Pekin, Illinois. During her time in prison, Sister Cynthia served as a symbol of hope to the women around her by her prayerful spirit, positive outlook and compassionate concern for each of them.

Sister Cynthia was an excellent educator, a faith-filled missionary, a retreat/spiritual director and counselor with a listening heart. Her years in provincial leadership and her cultural experiences expanded her vision of God's love for each person. She was an example of God's love in her ministry with the homeless and the dying. May Sister Cynthia now rejoice with her loving God as she enters eternal life.

By Sister Carol Marie Willdt, SSND

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