

# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Donna Fischer



**Birth**  
August 9, 1935

**Baptism**  
August 25, 1935

**Profession**  
August 2, 1954

**Death**  
October 10, 2018

**Burial**  
Sancta Maria in Ripa  
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 Donna Fischer, 83, died on Wednesday, October 10, 2018, at Anna House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri. She was the oldest of four children born to Agnes (DeGuire) and Aloysius Fischer in St. Louis. She was baptized at St. Cecilia Church in St. Louis on August 25, 1935, and named Donna Marie.

When she was eight years old, her father and uncle began a small grocery and meat market. After nine years, they had to sell the business, and her father returned to being a meat-cutter in another store. He was there a short time when he suffered a massive heart attack and died instantly. This was traumatic for the family. Donna's mother remained single for 15 years and then married James Seals. His three children, Virginia, Dolores and Carl, blended with the Fischer children to form a new family.

During Donna's childhood, the family moved several times in St. Louis. Her first two years of elementary education were at St. Anthony of Padua School, the next three years at St. George's School and the last years at St. Francis de Sales School, where she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. When Donna was in eighth grade, her teacher invited several girls to come to Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, for a day of recollection and to spend the day with the aspirants. Donna had always wanted to be a teacher. Her visit to Sancta Maria in Ripa confirmed this desire and also ignited her desire to be a sister. Her parents initially thought she was too young but seeing her determination, they consented to Donna entering the Aspiranture.

By taking extra courses, Donna graduated from high school after three years and entered the candidature on August 28, 1952. Reception into the novitiate was on August 1, 1953, and she was given the name Mary Rose Michelle. She professed first vows on August 2, 1954, and final vows on August 2, 1960.

Following first profession, she was a classroom teacher for 27 years. She taught middle grades at St. Dominic, Breese, Illinois, for five years and at St. Peter Cathedral, Belleville, Illinois, for six years. In 1965, she received a bachelor's degree in English and speech from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis. She was then missioned to Notre Dame High School, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, for five years; Helias High School in Jefferson City, Missouri for four years; and Rosary High School, St. Louis, for seven years. She received a master's degree in English from Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, in 1975.

During these latter years, she began to experience chronic back pain, which necessitated a lighter teaching load and several surgeries. By teaching part time, she was able to assist with the high school retreats. After training in spiritual/retreat direction, Sister Donna was a staff member for high school retreats at Pallotine Retreat Center, St. Louis, for one year.

From 1982-1986, she was co-director of the vocation office for the former St. Louis province. Since she had experience with women's prayer days, she felt

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*Sister Donna Fischer*



called to work with adults in the area of spirituality on a parish level. She ministered in religious education for adults at St. Mary Magdalen, St. Louis, for five years. She then obtained a position as pastoral associate at Sacred Heart, Valley Park, Missouri. During the 16 years at this parish, she coordinated the adult faith formation program, was a member of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Team, was an advocate in the annulment process and taught in the elementary school. Due to hearing loss, she received a cochlear implant but continued her spiritual and retreat direction ministry of bringing healing, peace and reconciliation to others.

In September 2018, she fell and fractured her femur. She was in rehab at Anna House when she was admitted to the hospital. She was placed on hospice and brought back to Anna House on October 5, 2018. She died peacefully early in the morning on October 10, 2018.

Sister Donna was a gentle woman, an excellent listener and a spiritual companion to many. She was a role model for others. She manifested a heart that was compassionate, encouraging and supportive. Her physical limitations did not prevent her from ministering to God's people. Through the years of pain and suffering, she remained positive and hopeful.

The wake service was held at Theresa Center on October 11, 2018. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with her former pastor from Valley Park, Rev. Robert Rosebrough presiding. A reflection was given by Sister Ann Marie Bonvie, SSND. Burial was in the Santa Maria in Ripa cemetery. Family members, community members, classmates and numerous lay friends attended the funeral services. Their presence was truly a tribute to the influence Sister Donna had been in their lives.

She is survived by her sister Clara Weppner of St. Peters, Missouri, and a brother Aloysius Fischer, Jr. of Mt. Clemens, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother Warren Fischer. Free from pain, may Sister Donna now rejoice in her new life with the God she loved and served so faithfully!

*By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND*

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