



## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Evelyn (M. Rachel) Ulmen

Sister Evelyn Ulmen, 88, died on November 1, 2022, at Benedictine Living Community – St. Gertrude’s, Shakopee, Minnesota. Earlier in the day, she had been comforted by a music therapist singing familiar songs at her bedside. Community Coordinator, Sister Dianne Perry, and a member of the nursing staff, were with her at the time of death.

**Birth**  
January 19, 1934

**Baptism**  
February 4, 1934

**Profession**  
July 21, 1954

**Death**  
November 1, 2022

**Burial**  
Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Cemetery

Shortly before midnight on January 19, 1934, Edward and Gertrude Ulmen of Mankato, Minnesota, welcomed their third child, a girl named Evelyn Ann, shortened to “Evie.” She was baptized two weeks later at Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Mankato. Evelyn later wrote, “As I look back, I do believe my faith life started the day I was born with my faith-filled, down-to-earth, loving parents. By their actions and example, more so than words, Mom and Dad taught us of God’s love and the difference between right and wrong. I remember as a family going to church, not only on Sunday, but for all the novenas and extra devotions that were a part of life at that time.”

In fall 1939, Evie entered kindergarten at Ss. Peter and Paul School, Mankato, with School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) as her teachers. She wrote, “It did not take me long to fall in love with Sister Rosalie (Siebenaler), my kindergarten teacher, and the entire school setting. I loved every minute of grade school.” Evelyn attended high school as a day student at Good Counsel Academy, Mankato, and it was during her senior year that she began to consider religious life. She commented, “No one expected me to join the convent. My best friend fell off a swing when I told her.” Her parents were supportive of her decision. “I knew Mom and Dad were proud to have a religious in the family after they got over the shock and surprise that I was the one.”

Evelyn entered the SSND candidature in August 1952. Her class was the first class to experience only one year of candidature before entering the novitiate. In July 1953, Evelyn was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister M. Rachel. She later returned to her baptismal name. Following profession of first vows in 1954, Sister Evelyn and her entrance class members spent the 1954-55 school year at St. Albertus Hall in St. Paul. They continued college work at Diocesan Teachers College and St. Catherine’s College, “getting grounded in the basics of education and teaching, taking methods classes, and working at times with a cooperating teacher.”

In 1955, Sister Evelyn received her first teaching assignment, first and second grade at Sts. Peter & Paul School, Springbrook, Iowa. Beginning in 1957, she continued teaching primary grades at Blessed Sacrament School in Waterloo, Iowa, until 1963. She also taught at St. Andrew and St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul, Minnesota; All Saints, Madison Lake; Immaculate Conception, Gilbertville, Iowa; St. Mary, Worthington, Minnesota; Lonsdale-New Market-Veseli School; and John Ireland, St. Peter. She completed her bachelor’s degree in education from Mount Mary College (now University) in 1963 and earned a master’s as a reading specialist from Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, in 1973. Referring to this degree, she commented, “Reading was always a favorite pastime of mine.

*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

*continued*

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*Sister Evelyn (M.  
Rachel) Ulmen*



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School Sisters  
of Notre Dame  
Central Pacific Province

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through education

Teaching reading was my favorite subject.”

Describing her transition to secretarial work, she wrote, “In high school, I had taken commercial courses and was quite good at it. I turned to secretarial work, serving first at the Center for Spiritual Development in Olivia.” She then worked for the Catholic Charities diocesan branch office in Mankato. Living in Mankato allowed her to help care for her mother, a role that she treasured.

In 1989, she combined her secretarial skills with her educational background and became the school secretary at Holy Childhood, St. Paul. She enjoyed being back with children without the responsibilities of report cards, lesson plans and playground supervision.

With the election of a new Mankato provincial council in 1995, Sister Evelyn was asked to be the secretary for the four councilors. During her eight years of service, she provided valuable assistance in many areas. She succinctly summed up her experience, “Here I learned the ins and outs of province government.” Beginning in 2003, her ministry title was, “Community Service.” However, that service was focused on assisting Sister Lucille Matousek in the liturgy office in a variety of ways. Again, she learned from her work, “It was truly a growing experience, and many new insights were gained. Liturgy took on a new, exciting approach for me.” She also had more time for her favorite activities –reading, knitting and creating hardanger embroidery pieces.

Family was important to Sister Evelyn. She was able to travel extensively with her sister, Mary, and her husband. Her nieces and nephews visited often, and she assembled several photo books detailing family events.

Sister Evelyn retired from the liturgy office in 2015. As dementia slowly took its toll, she discovered a new outlet for her enthusiasm, the Singing Hills Chorus, which was formed in 2017 for people with dementia and their caregivers. A charter member, Sister Evelyn would often break into song when she met sisters and staff. When asked how she was feeling, her response often was “fine and dandy!”

The Funeral Mass for Sister Evelyn was held Friday, November 11, 2002, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, Minnesota, with Father John Kunz as presider. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. burial at Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery in Mankato followed later in the day. She is survived by nieces and a nephew and their families, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Edward and Gertrude (Landkamer) Ulmen; her sister, Mary Haley; and her brother, Paul.

*By Mary Kay Ash, SSND*