



Birth
January 26, 1919

Baptism
February 2, 1919

Profession
July 28, 1938

Death
May 6, 2020

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove,
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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

In Loving Memory

Sister Helen Siwicka

Sister Helen received the gift of life on January 26, 1919, with her twin sister Stella was born immediately after her on the same day. The twins joined their family that included two older brothers, Leone and Al. They were baptized the first Sunday after they were born at Sacred Heart Parish in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sadie, the youngest in the family was born six years after Helen and Stella.

When Helen and Stella were six years old, their dad took the girls on a sled to go to the bazaar at the parish. "All of a sudden Dad wondered why the sled felt lighter. I was sitting on a snow bank about a half a block away." Helen loved her dad dearly and recalled this to be a humorous incident.

In the summer, the family moved kitchen supplies into the basement where it would be cooler to eat. Helen's dad mended their shoes. Helen skipped over to her dad and he would say, "Oh, Helen, let us dance." Helen loved to dance and still did this often even at 101.

The first home the family lived in was two miles from church. That was too great a distance to walk in Michigan's severe weather, so they had a new home built which was one block from the parish school. Helen's parents fostered much love and care. Her Mom would read and share faith stories of her family and people in Poland. Her parents loved their native tongue so dearly and that was the language spoken in the home. The story that left a great impression on Helen was the "Little Flower of Jesus." Helen strived to become a saint like the Little Flower.

Helen's Dad was employed at a furniture store and stood on a concrete floor. Her mother would have a pan ready with warm water in the basin for her Dad to soak his feet. That was Helen's earliest example of Holy Thursday. At supper time the family enjoyed a beautiful meal communicating about the day. In the month of May and October the family prayed the rosary before a picture of the Lord.

The teachers at Sacred Heart Parish were the School Sisters of Notre Dame. When Helen was in fourth grade, Sisters Marcelia and Euthymia asked her to help them with church work. Helen did church work until she completed the ninth grade. Helen would rap at the tabernacle door and ask, "Jesus, are you there?" And then she danced with joy. The seed for Helen's vocation was nurtured both by the family and school community.

Sister Helen was 15 years old when she entered the SSND Motherhouse in Milwaukee. Sister Helen received a bachelor's in education and social studies from Mount Mary University (formerly Mount Mary College) in Milwaukee. Sister spent forty years teaching primary grades and the communion classes. She ministered in Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan.

Sister Helen loved the opportunities that the SSND Community had given her for personal growth. She spent the summer of 1983 in Rome and visited Munich and Regensburg, Germany, and Assisi, Italy. In 1987, Helen attended a three

continued

In Loving Memory

week SSND Heritage Workshop with sisters in Wilton, Connecticut.

Sister Helen worked for three years with Gabriel Richard Institute, teaching communication skills with a team of three men, 1971-1974. In 1976-1978 she had an Ecumenical Ministry with the Christian Center Church in Huntington, Indiana.

In 1979, Helen prepared herself to minister with the elderly, terminally ill and homebound. After completing her CPE and taking a summer course on the Sacraments, she became certified as a member of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains in September 1980. Sister had another enriching experience living intercommunity at Ancilla Domini Convent in Milwaukee from 1983 till 1998 when she formed community at Notre Dame of Elm Grove.

Sister lived life to the fullest enjoying classical music, dancing and traveling. Her hobbies were knitting, crocheting, acrylic painting and poetry.

Sister enjoyed time with her family and the other sisters. She would often come to the dining room dancing and taking time to tell the staff she was praying for them.

Sister Helen was born to Eternal Life May 6, 2020, age 101. Survived by her sister, Sadie, nieces, nephews, and the SSND community. Preceded in death by her parents Isidore and Stephanie, her sisters, Stella and Leone and her brother Al. A Memorial Mass and celebration of life will be planned at a later date.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deuzen, SSND

Sister Helen Siwicka

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