



**Birth**  
July 7, 1919

**Baptism**  
July 13, 1919

**Profession**  
August 2, 1940

**Death**  
May 5, 2020

**Burial**  
Sancta Maria in Ripa  
Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri

*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 Irene Kalapinski

The second daughter and fourth child of 10 children was born to Stella (Preczewska) and John Kalapinski in Detroit, on July 7, 1919. She was baptized on July 13, 1919, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Detroit and named Irene Dorothy. She had five sisters and four brothers. Her early childhood days were touched by the Great Depression and the Kalapinski family moved several times in an effort to find the means to support the family. They moved from Detroit to Jackson, Mississippi, to East St. Louis, Illinois, and finally to St. Louis. Although they experienced great poverty, her faith-filled Catholic parents kept the family intact.

Irene attended eight schools before finishing her elementary education. At Holy Angels, East St. Louis, Illinois, she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. From early childhood, she wanted to become a sister. After graduating from St. Vincent de Paul Grade School in St. Louis, she asked her parents for permission to enter the convent. Her parents needed her to help the family financially and said "no." She worked babysitting and later at Emerson Electric Company on the assembly line. After three years, her father had secured a good job and she renewed her request. Her parents consented and she entered the candidature on September 1, 1937.

Since she had no high school education, she was enrolled at Notre Dame High School. However, she found studies very difficult and was assigned to assist in the Ecclesiastical Department. She was received into the novitiate on August 1, 1939, and given the name Mary Maxima. She professed first vows on August 2, 1940, and final vows on August 2, 1946. She later returned to her baptismal name.

Sister Irene completed high school when she was in her 20s. This was embarrassing for her as she attended class with teen-agers. After receiving her high school diploma, she entered Notre Dame College and received a bachelor's degree in art in 1963.

Sister Irene taught elementary children for 39 years. In Missouri, she taught at St. Michael, Shrewsbury; St. Joseph, Farmington; St. Martin of Tours, St. Gabriel and St. Liborius, St. Louis; Sacred Heart, Rich Fountain; and St. Francis Borgia, Washington. In Illinois, she taught at St. Francis Solanus, Quincy and St. Henry, Belleville. In Iowa, she taught at St. Mary and Sacred Heart in Fort Madison. She also taught at St. Gerard Majella, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Christ the King, Corpus Christi, Texas. She did community service at St. Elizabeth Day Nursery, St. Louis, and the Academy of Notre Dame, Belleville, Illinois. She was an occupational therapy aide at Villa Gesu, St. Louis, for seven years and served as the postmistress at Sancta Maria in Ripa for 10 years.

Legally blind, Sister Irene used her sense of touch to make various craft items, which were sold in the gift shop at Ripa. She also enjoyed gardening and was involved in crocheting mats out of plastic bags for the homeless.

*continued*

# *In Loving Memory*



*Sister Irene Kalapinski*



She was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, in 2014. In July 2019, she celebrated her 100th birthday. For a short time, she was at Elizabeth House and then she was transferred to Anna House. She died peacefully on May 5, 2020 at Anna House. Sister Irene would have celebrated her 80th jubilee of religious profession this summer.

A simple prayer service was held at Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery on May 11, 2020. Sisters from Ripa and The Sarah Community; her sister, Maxine Bratton, nieces, nephews, extended family members were in attendance. She was preceded in death by her parents; her sisters: Elizabeth Lewis, Margaret Reynolds, Dolores Manahan and Clede Vanderverter; her brothers: Edward, Thomas, John and Timothy. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at a later date.

As she enters eternal life, may Sister Irene be filled with joy as she beholds the beauty of her Creator and sees her God face-to-face!

*By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND*

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