



# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Janet (George Marie) Druffel

Sister Janet (George Marie) Druffel, 88, died peacefully on December 30, 2022, at Benedictine Living Community in Shakopee, Minnesota.

On September 15, 1934, George and Hilda Druffel welcomed their second child and first daughter to the Druffel farm just outside Colton, Washington. A week later, she was baptized Janet Gertrude at St. Gall's Church in Colton. Two daughters and a son would complete the family in the coming years.

In 1940, Janet entered first grade at Holy Guardian Angel Grade School in Colton. A comment by Sister Rosella Kreuzer, Janet's first and second grade teacher, led to her first thought of becoming a sister. Sister Rosella, a Washington native, deplored the fact that, with one exception, all the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), in Washington were from the Midwest. Janet wrote, "Our parish had many religious to its credit, but none of them were School Sisters of Notre Dame. I thought I must do something about this." As with many girls, the thought of becoming a sister faded away and, by seventh grade, she no longer had any interest.

Following her Confirmation and subsequent graduation from eighth grade in 1948, however, the idea resurfaced. As a ninth grader, Janet was in the first class of students in the newly opened Notre Dame Academy in Colton. Janet thoroughly enjoyed her four years at the academy and in March 1952, she wrote to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Mankato, Minnesota, requesting admittance into the candidature. Her younger sister, Alice, was an aspirant at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Therefore, Alice accompanied Janet and two others to Mankato in August, "acting as our guide and teaching us all the tricks that make a train trip all the more delightful."

Janet spent one year as a SSND candidate and was received into the novitiate in July 1953. She was given the name Sister George Marie in honor of her father, but later returned to her baptismal name. She professed first vows in 1954. Following a year of study, she began her educational ministry at St. Peter School in New Haven, Iowa, and then returned to her home state, teaching at Holy Family School in Clarkston, Washington (1956-62).

In 1961, Pope John XXIII asked all religious communities in the United States to send ten percent of their membership to Latin America for mission service. Formally known as the Mankato Province (now Central Pacific Province), of School Sisters of Notre Dame responded to this call by accepting three missions in Guatemala. Sister Janet volunteered and was one of the first three SSNDs sent to Guatemala. To prepare for her trip, she completed her bachelor of arts degree at Holy Names College, Spokane, by taking an intensive Spanish course in the summer of 1962. On August 20, Sisters Avila Lipetzky, Renelle Kohler and Janet left Mankato, Minnesota, for Nahualá, Guatemala, to work in a mission sponsored by the Diocese of Spokane. The sisters were enthusiastically welcomed by the citizens of Nahualá. Sister Janet taught in Nahualá for one year and then returned to Minnesota for health reasons.

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Birth  
September 15, 1934

Baptism  
September 23, 1934

Profession  
July 21, 1954

Death  
December 30, 2022

Burial  
Our Lady of Good Counsel

*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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Marie) Druffel*



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*Central Pacific Province*

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through education

After teaching a year at John Ireland School in St. Peter, she returned to Nahualá, Guatemala, where, two years earlier, one of the missionary priests had begun a program of radio instruction to teach religion, health and agriculture to the people of the area. The radio school, known as Voice of Nahualá, grew steadily and in 1966, Sister Janet became its director. Under her guidance, the initiative became an independent non-profit organization in 1971. She described the radio's purpose, "Essentially we hope to preserve all positive values of the Mayan-Cakchiquel and Mayan-Quiche Indian cultures and to promote the appreciation of these values." Daily broadcasts included classes in speaking Spanish, reading and writing in Quiche and Spanish, agriculture, health, social studies, civics, natural sciences and religion, as well as several hours of music and entertainment. During her years in Nahualá, Sister Janet prepared experienced personnel for self-sustaining operations. In 1990, she transferred leadership to a lay board of directors.

Sister Janet returned to the U.S. for a sabbatical in 1990 and completed her masters' degree in religious studies from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. In 1991, at the request of Bishop William Skylstad of Spokane, Sister Janet was awarded the Honor of the Cross: Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, the highest honor that can be given to Catholic laity. During the 1991-92 school year, she taught at De Sales High School in Walla Walla, Washington. She also traveled to Mankato, Minnesota, where she helped sisters during the summer, attended province meetings and became reacquainted with sisters before she returned to Guatemala in late 1992.

For some time, Bishop Julio Cabrera of the Quiche Diocese had been requesting Sister Janet's assistance in restoring Radio Quiche to its true purpose after operating many years as a commercial station. With the approval of the Mankato Provincial Council, she accepted this challenge and remained with Radio Quiche until she moved to Mankato, Minnesota, in 2015. Throughout her years in Guatemala, she actively participated in SSND activities and projects.

In a 2014 Jubilee reflection, Sister Janet commented, "I went to Guatemala thinking I would teach the people, but found that I learned more about culture, life and Christianity from the Mayans there." She involved family, friends and Washington parishioners in her efforts by sharing her experiences through letters and visits. In her retirement years at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, she enjoyed visiting with sisters, was an enthusiastic participant in Notre Dame Hall activities and was an original member of the Singing Hills Chorus.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Janet was held January 5, 2023, in the Windermere Chapel, Shakopee, with Father John Kunz as presider. Sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. Sister Janet specified that her cremains would be returned to Guatemala for burial. She is survived by her sister, Polly, nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents George and Hilda (Greif) Druffel; her sister Alice, SSND; and her brothers, Don and Jim.

*By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND*