

In Loving Memory

Sister Joan (Miriam Michael) Markus



Birth
November 4, 1938

Baptism
November 6, 1938

Profession
July 31, 1958

Death
February 28, 2024

Burial
Body donated to St. Louis
University School of Medicine

*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

On November 4, 1938, twin girls were born to Genevieve (Kues) and Leo Markus in their family home in Aviston, Illinois. As she was premature and very fragile, Joan was baptized conditionally by her grandmother on the day she was born. Both girls were then baptized on November 6, 1938, at St. Francis of Assisi Church and given the names of Joan Catherine and Carol Catherine. Five girls and one boy were raised on the family farm in Aviston where the parents' care of the land and deep love of God and the Church were passed on to their children. Joan's twin sister, our deceased Sister Carol (Miriam Gabriel) and a younger sister, Theresa (Miriam Raphael) also entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

Joan attended St. Francis of Assisi grade school where she was taught by SSND. Attracted to religious life by the dedication, prayer, lifestyle and service of her teachers, Joan transferred from Aviston Community High School to the Aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis in her senior year.

Joan, and her twin, Carol, received the candidate's bonnet at their home parish in Aviston on August 29, 1956. Joan was received into the novitiate on July 30, 1957, and given the name Miriam Michael. She professed first vows on July 31, 1958, and final vows on July 31, 1964. Later, she returned to her baptismal name.

Sister Joan earned a bachelor's degree in theology from the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis in 1961; a master's degree in elementary administration from Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, Missouri in 1972; and a master's degree in religious studies from St. Louis University, St. Louis, in 1987. She also received a certificate in justice and peace studies from Maryknoll School of Theology, New York in 1985 and a certificate in pastoral care from Aquinas Institute, St. Louis, in 2004.

Sister Joan was a teacher for her first 11 years of ministry. She taught at St. Dominic Savio, St. Louis; St. Peter, Belleville, Illinois; and St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles, Missouri. She then became a principal at St. Henry, Belleville; St. Peter, Jefferson City, Missouri and Santa Isabel, Los Angeles, California. She served two years as the coordinator of education for the former St. Louis Province. This was followed by two years as the director of religious education at St. Paul, Highland, Illinois.

In 1982, she began a six-year term as the coordinator of social concerns for the former St. Louis Province. During the summer months, she coordinated the ACCS (Aid to Cross-Cultural Service) and GAAP (Global Apostolic Awareness Program) programs and experienced the plight of the poor in Honduras and Bogota, Colombia.

Beginning in 1988, she served as the director of religious education in the Belleville diocese for five years, and the director of education and formation in the San Angelo, Texas diocese for the next 11 years. Following a sabbatical, she was asked to become the administrator and local leader at the Academy of

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Our Lady in Chicago, Illinois. During this time, she assisted the sisters in their transition to Marian Village, a retirement residence in Homer Glen, Illinois.

In 2007, she was called to serve as the Provincial Leader of the former St. Louis Province. During her term, she assisted in the formation of the Central Pacific Province in 2011. She then served for two years as the secretary to the General Superior in Rome. Returning to the U.S., she became the coordinator of pastoral care and director of spiritual care at St. Joseph Hospital, Breese, Illinois. In 2018, she returned to Belleville as a retreat/spiritual director, while also serving as the area coordinator for the SSND associates.

As her health failed, Sister Joan was missioned to Anna House in 2022. She died peacefully on February 28, 2024, at Anna House. She gifted her body to St. Louis University School of Medicine.

A memorial Mass was celebrated at her home parish, St. Francis of Assisi, Aviston on March 16, 2024.

A prayer service was held at The Sarah Community on March 18, 2024. The memorial Mass was held at Theresa Center on March 19, 2024 with her cousin, Msgr. Bob Bussen from the diocese of Salt Lake City, Utah, as president. Reading of the biography and sharing of memories preceded the memorial services. Attending were her three sisters, Sister Theresa Markus, SSND, Julie Stockmann and Ann (Joe) Munie; extended family members, classmates, friends, Sisters and SSND associates. Sister Joan was preceded in death by her parents, Genevieve and Leo Markus, her brother, Richard and her twin sister, Sister Carol Markus, SSND.

Sister Joan was a gifted, prayerful and compassionate person. Her love of community and concern for the individual were very evident in her life. She expressed the desire to be remembered as “a person who cared about the marginalized and worked steadfastly for justice, especially for women in the church by empowering them through theological education and formation.”

May she now rejoice with her family members who have preceded her in death as she is welcomed into eternal life by her faithful God.

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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