

# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister M. Jonelle Rein



**Birth**  
June 24, 1935

**Baptism**  
June 30, 1935

**Profession**  
July 17, 1955

**Death**  
October 24, 2023

**Burial**  
Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Cemetery

*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

Sister M. Jonelle Rein, 88, died peacefully at Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota, Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 7:05 p.m. Sisters had been visiting and praying with her in the weeks leading up to her death.

Sister Jonelle, the sixth child of 12, was born on the family farm near Searles, Minnesota, June 24, 1935. A week later, she was baptized Shirley Helen at St. John's Church in Searles. In a reflection for her 60th Jubilee, she commented, "I was born into a family of eight boys and four girls – this was a good beginning of community." In the fall of 1941, she enrolled as a first grader in St. John's School, where School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) taught her. A memorable encounter with SSND happened the summer before her school days. An aunt had invited Shirley to her home in St. Paul, and came to Searles, to accompany Shirley on the train ride to St. Paul. Two School Sisters of Notre Dame were also on the train and Shirley sat with them for a while. She later wrote, "All their attention was given to me. I sat on their laps asking questions and pouring out stories as any child would do. The St. Paul depot came too soon. I would rather have stayed with the sisters than visited my aunt. From then on, my little mind kept repeating 'I'm gonna be one just like them.'"

When Shirley was in the fourth grade, the family moved to Madelia, Minnesota, and she continued her education at Mater Dolorosa School, which was also staffed by School Sisters of Notre Dame. After completing sixth grade, Shirley moved in with an aunt and uncle in New Ulm, Minnesota, and helped take care of two young cousins; other family members moved to various locations. She continued her education in New Ulm, where Sisters of Christian Charity taught her. After a few months, Shirley was reunited with her family and completed seventh and eighth grades in St. Paul, at St. Bernard School, which was under the care of the Sisters of St. Benedict. Shirley's cousin, Sister Monica Grathwohl, encouraged her to attend the aspiranture at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota.

Shirley became a freshman at Good Counsel Academy in fall 1949. She commented that her time in the aspiranture gave her "a little bit of the Notre Dame way of living." After her graduation in June 1953, she worked at the American Linen Laundry in St. Paul, and earned enough to pay all the expenses associated with becoming a candidate of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Shirley entered the candidature in the fall of 1953 and was received into the novitiate July 16, 1954. She was given the name Sister Mary Jonelle, going by Sister Jonelle. She professed first vows in 1955, and spent the next year with her classmates at St. Albertus Hall in St. Paul, where they took college classes in preparation for their teaching ministry.

Sister Jonelle taught primary grade students in several Minnesota Catholic Schools. Her initial teaching experience covered the years 1956-61 at St. Mark School, Shakopee. She continued this ministry at Holy Rosary, North Mankato; Sacred Heart, Heron Lake; St. Mathias, Wanda; Lonsdale-New Market-Veseli Catholic School (twice); Providence School, South St. Paul; St. Francis

*continued*

# In Loving Memory



*Sister M. Jonelle Rein*



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Xavier, Sartell; St. Michael, Morgan; St. Isidore, Litomysl; and Northeast Regional Catholic School, Minneapolis. A creative teacher, she taught in self-contained, non-graded and departmental classrooms and wrote about her teaching method, “When teaching, I’d keep things fun and interesting – they didn’t realize they were learning.” She was also responsible for sacramental programs whenever she taught grade two. An active member of the parishes where she was stationed, she helped with the Renew program and Bible study classes. Sister Jonelle completed her BA degree from Mount Mary College (now University) in 1966 and earned a master’s degree as a reading clinician from Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, in 1974. During her years of teaching, she often volunteered for the Good Counsel Learning Center, Mankato, Minnesota, summer sessions.

While teaching at Northeast Regional Catholic School in Minneapolis, Sister Jonelle moved to her family home in St. Paul, in 1987 to care for her mother. This became a full-time ministry from 1988 until 1990. From 1990 through 1994, Sister Jonelle assisted at the St. Matthew Daycare Center in St. Paul. She turned her attention to the elderly in 1994, serving as a member of the Sisters Care team in St. Paul, until 2007 and then as part of the West 7th Street Community Center until 2015. Commenting on her experiences as a caregiver, she wrote, “Working with the elderly in their homes or apartments, my motto was ‘Don’t start with the broom or the dishcloth. Sit down, visit, see how life is going for them. Then work.’”

In 2015, Sister Jonelle retired from caregiving and moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, where she fully participated in community life and activities. She moved to Shakopee, Minnesota, in the fall of 2022.

Sister Jonelle was a prolific, detailed and organized crafter, often reusing materials to create works of art. She contributed many of her creative works to the annual SSND Craft Fair and enjoyed engaging with craft fair visitors. She enjoyed spending time with her family and they enjoyed being with her. She listed both her SSND Jubilee trip to Europe and trips with her family as high points in her life. She wrote, “I have been so blessed with the wonderful gift of sisters I have known and lived with through community, education, retreats and vacation.”

The Funeral Mass for Sister Jonelle was held October 31, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, with Father Joe Fogal as presider. Visitation and Sharing of Memories preceded the Liturgy. Burial in the Good Counsel cemetery in Mankato followed.

Sister Jonelle is survived by her brothers, Kenneth (Georgia), Thomas (Linda), Everett and Kevin (Gail) Rein; 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, John and Dora (Grathwohl) Rein; her sisters, Doris Gleisner, Mary Jane Schmitz and Lavonne Poeschl; and her brothers, Dennis, John, Cletus and Phillip Rein.

*By Mary Kay Ash, SSND*