



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Laura Funk

Sister Laura was born on February 11, 1927, in Menasha, Wisconsin. Her father was Walter Funk who was Irish, French and Native American and was born in Hilbert, Wisconsin. Her mother was Anna Elizabeth Huber, born in Menasha where they were married and raised their family.

Sister Mary Laura (also known to her family as Lois) is one who said, “yes to the joys and inevitable tensions of creating and recreating community each day ... loving others and bearing their burdens.” (*You Are Sent #7*) This quote from the School Sisters of Notre Dame constitution can be descriptive of Sister Laura’s life. Those who knew her well say that she would help out in any way that she could, “Remember how she shopped for our necessities for many years?” She was also generous in giving to others freely. She was trusting and childlike in her manner and she had an uncanny way of getting people to do something for her.

It is believed by her community that she never said an unkind word, nor did she agree with anyone who did. One of her favorite sayings was, “Let’s get this show on the road.” Literally, she loved to travel and she would gladly be on the road for any good reason. Her favorite sport was swimming, she loved being in the water. She is also known to be faithful to the friends that she made, such as her classmates and her friend Toddles whom she met when she was in second grade.

Sister Mary Laura’s autobiography begins, “My life really began at the age of twelve. Although born on February 11, 1927, it was not until 1938, in the month of May, that, together with my two brothers, I received Baptism. This meant that the six of us (three girls and three boys) had now all received this life-giving sacrament. It was during this memorable year that I also made my First Holy Communion.”

In the sixth grade, young Lois changed to the Catholic School, St. Mary School in Menasha. She loved her teacher, Sister Vincent de Paul Obremski. She says, “Due to her many kindnesses, in short, her Christ-like charity, I can very easily say this was truly my favorite grade. I owe much to her splendid example and her great influence on my life then and later...She was instrumental, to a great extent, for my vocation.” However, it was not until she graduated from high school that she gave it any thought. Her parents had not given it any thought either and they were “severely shocked” when she announced her choice. She professed August 6, 1948.

Sister Mary Laura was proud of her Native American heritage. Her first assignment as a professed sister was teaching intermediate grades at Holy Childhood, Harbor Springs in Michigan for twelve years.

In 1976, Sister Mary Laura moved to Menasha and taught at the school which she had attended as a child. In 1990, she began living with her father to care for him. Three years later, he died at the age of 103. She stayed on in her family

Birth
February 11, 1927

Baptism
April 30, 1939

Profession
August 6, 1948

Death
August 5, 2020

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery 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

continued

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home and offered her services as a substitute teacher in the area. She called her little community “Great Spirit Community.”

Following this assignment, she was sent to Cook’s Valley, Wisconsin, a farm community for two years; and then she taught at St. Boniface, Milwaukee for five years. She notes in her biography, “Mission life ... has been most interesting, as well as challenging, with God’s variety of people.”

What a life of joyful giving, and peacefully loving others! Again, as *You Are Sent* tells us, “In our vowed life we find strength in unity and love, security in God’s providence, and direction in God’s will.” (21) May she now rest in God’s embrace. She is survived by her nieces, nephews and the SSND community. Preceded in death by her parents Walter and Anna, her sisters, Patricia and Virginia “Ginny” and her brothers Eugene, Robert and Donald. A private Mass will be planned.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Duerzen, SSND

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