



# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Laura Jean Spaeth

Sister Laura Jean Spaeth, 79, died peacefully on Sunday, February 5, 2023, at Trinity Woods, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In West Bend, Wisconsin, on September 15, 1943, Isadore and Lorraine (Hentz) Spaeth welcomed their ninth child, Arlene Mary. Three more children were born after Arlene, making the family complete with 12 children. Arlene was baptized September 19, 1943, at Holy Angels Catholic Church, West Bend, Wisconsin. The family grew up on a 90-acre farm in West Bend.

The entire family attended Holy Angels Catholic Grade School, where they were taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). The SSND were generous and kind to the family. They influenced Arlene's vocation as well as Arlene's sister, Gabriel Mary's. Arlene spent the first two years of high school in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and the last two at the new SSND motherhouse in Mequon, Wisconsin.

Arlene entered the postulancy on August 20, 1961, at Mequon, Wisconsin. The following year, on July 16, 1962, Arlene received the name, Laura Jean and began her year of novitiate. July 31, 1963, Sister Laura Jean pronounced her first vows and her final vows on July 31, 1968.

Sister Laura Jean earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1969 and a master's degree in scripture from St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, and a second masters in theology from Regis College in Toronto, Canada.

Sister Laura Jean's ministry experiences began as a primary teacher at St. John Baptist School in Cooks Valley, Wisconsin. The next year she taught intermediate grades at St. Leo School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1976, she was appointed principal and teacher at St. Francis Xavier School in Superior, Wisconsin. In 1979, she worked full time in the Justice and Peace Office in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1980, she began her ministry as Program Director at St. Anne, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1982, she was a resource person at the SSND Generalate in Rome. In 1986, she began her ministry as an administrator of the retreat house at the Wellsprings Renewal Center in Glens Falls, New York. Sister Laura Jean served as Provincial Leader of the former Milwaukee Province (now Central Pacific Province) from 1991 to 1995, and 1997. She served as General Councilor from 1998 till 2008, with the General Superior Sister Rosemary Howarth. Sister Laura Jean was campus minister at the Newman Center, in Rolla Missouri, from 2009-2012, and then in retreat ministry for the Jefferson City, Missouri, diocese. She then served as Provincial Councilor for the Central Pacific Province from 2015 to 2019.

Sister Laura Jean had a colorful life and enjoyed the new challenges which stretched her beyond who she thought she was. She was a searcher, never being satisfied. That led her to embrace new calls. This year, as she shared wisdom

*continued*

**Birth**  
September 15, 1943

**Baptism**  
September 19, 1943

**Profession**  
July 31, 1963

**Death**  
February 5, 2023

**Burial**  
Notre Dame of Elm Grove  
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

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*Sister Laura Jean Spaeth*



for her 60th Jubilee she wrote, “60 years stretched this shy rural girl into a global woman, enriched by numerous spiritual opportunities and multi-cultural experiences—a life described by the poet, Mary Oliver: (“My one wild & precious life”) (The Summer Day Magnificat).

The funeral mass was held, Monday, February 20, at Christ King Parish, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with Father Ralph Parthie, OFM as presider. A prayer of remembrance preceded the funeral. Burial followed in the Notre Dame of Elm Grove cemetery, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. Sister Laura Jean is survived by her sister, Lucy (David) Bingen; her brothers, Jerome (Diane) Spaeth, Tony (Mary Jane) Spaeth, Bernie (Trish) Spaeth, Ron (Helen) Spaeth, Richard (Judy) Spaeth; and her sister-in-law Ruth Spaeth. She was preceded in death by her parents, Isadore and Lorraine (Hentz) Spaeth; her sisters, Sister Gabriel Mary Spaeth, SSND, Mary (Lloyd) Verhaalen, Alice (Merlin) Adelmeyer; and her brothers, Hank (Laverne) Spaeth, and Charles Spaeth.

*By Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND*

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