

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Honora Elsen



Birth
August 27, 1918

Baptism
August 27, 1918

Profession
July 22, 1938

Death
December 29, 2017

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. Honora Elsen, 99, died Friday, December 29, 2017 in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, Minnesota. Up until about a week before her death, Sister Honora experienced good health, participating fully in Notre Dame Health Care activities, so even though she was 99, her death was somewhat unexpected.

Sister Honora was born August 27, 1918, on her family's farm just outside Loretto, Minnesota, and baptized Cecilia Elizabeth on the same day at SS. Peter & Paul Church, Loretto. Sister Honora wrote, "I have always been proud of the fact that I was baptized on my birthday."

Cecilia entered first grade at SS. Peter & Paul School in 1923, and was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She later wrote, "I grew to love the sisters more and more as school days passed." As she grew older, she continued, "My early decision that I would be nothing else but a sister like my own teachers was becoming stronger. . . . My older sister entered the aspiranture at Good Counsel when I was 11. How I envied her." Two years later, Cecilia entered the aspiranture, and following high school graduation in 1935, she entered the SSND candidature on her birthday, August 27. In August 1936, Cecilia was missioned to St. Matthew, St. Paul, to do her practice teaching in grade three. This was the only time that she taught elementary students. Cecilia returned to the candidature in spring to prepare for reception. On July 21, 1937 she was given the name Novice Mary Honora, in honor of a former teacher, Sister M. Honorine Gonnoring.

Following profession in 1938, instead of a teaching assignment, Sister Honora was sent to Mount Mary College in Milwaukee to major in home economics. For the next two years, she attended classes at Mount Mary and came to experience the unity of SSND, as there were student sisters from all areas of the country in residence. She earned her degree in home economics in 1940 and was missioned to Good Counsel Academy where, in addition to home economics, she also taught religion and English. She had additional responsibilities involving supervising the boarders in the study hall, dormitory and dining room. She remained at Good Counsel until 1954 and, as she gained experience, she assumed responsibility for several extra-curricular activities including Sodality, Catholic Students Mission Crusade (CSMC), Mother-Daughter Tea, Senior Tea and Laywomen's Retreats. She considered it a blessed experience to live in the motherhouse with its opportunities for spiritual growth. In 1949 she earned her master's degree in home economics from Stout Institute in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Sister Honora's next teaching assignment was at St. Michael High School, St. Michael, where she again taught home economics and religion from 1954 to 1962. She earned a master's degree in theology from Notre Dame in 1961. In 1962, she became the postulant directress

continued

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*Sister M. Honora
Elsen*



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and vocations directress for the former Mankato Province. She appreciated the opportunity to work with young women who answered God's call to religious life. From 1966 through 1970, she was the full-time vocations directress, traveling to schools and parishes. She also visited the homes of young women interested in joining SSND. Sister Honora became the motherhouse's local leader in 1970 and in 1971, returned to high school teaching at St. Mary's High School, New England, North Dakota, until 1976. She spent the 1976-77 school year as food service director for Good Counsel Academy and then completed her final stint as a home economics teacher, this time at Notre Dame High School, Cresco, Iowa (1977-81).

In 1981, Sister Honora began parish ministry work, serving one year at St. Wenceslaus Parish, New Prague, Minnesota. Sister Honora then asked to care for her elderly mother in her home at Loretto in 1982. While caring for her mother, she became actively involved in Loretto parish life, joining the religious education staff and the choir, and serving as a Eucharistic Minister. She returned to Good Counsel in 1987 and served as motherhouse community leader with Sister Sylvia Borgmeier until 1990.

Sister Honora moved to St. Paul in 1990 and became a volunteer pastoral minister to the elderly at St. Mary's Home. She was part of a team who worked under the direction of Sister Mary Martin Tobias, and offered a variety of services. She viewed her time at St. Mary's as a "way of being a sign of God's love, not only to the residents, but also to the staff members. I still feel I am an educator as I help bring persons to the fullness of their potential, even those nearing 100."

Beginning in 2002, Sister Honora again called Good Counsel "home." For several years, she helped in the sacristy, volunteered in the Development Office and other areas, and enjoyed her Loyola Catholic School third grade pen pals. She continued her hobby of embroidering dish towels and pillowcases for the Craft Fair. She was a dedicated Minnesota Twins fan, and enjoyed fishing when she had the chance. After moving to health care, she daily scanned the paper for interesting news and the Family Circus comic, writing notes on small pieces of paper to share at breakfast. She was also known for her repertoire of jokes. Always positive, gracious and grateful, she possessed joy and excitement about life. Her family members were very important to her and were frequent visitors at Good Counsel.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held January 4 in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel Cemetery. She is survived by two sisters-in-law, Eileen Elsen and Betty Elsen, 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 Elizabeth (Becker) Elsen, her sister, Sister M. Flavia (Marie) and her brothers Nick, John and Al.

This remembrance was prepared by Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND.