



**Birth**  
June 25, 1928

**Baptism**  
July 8, 1928

**Profession**  
July 17, 1948

**Death**  
February 4, 2021

**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

## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister M. Justin Wirth

Sister M. Justin Wirth, 92, died in her sleep Thursday morning, February 4, 2021, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota.

Sister Justin, the second child of four and the first daughter, was born June 25, 1928, in St. Paul, Minnesota. About two weeks later, she was baptized Rose Mary (later condensed to Rosemary) at the Church of St. Agnes. She wrote of her early days, "My carefree days of childhood were spent in the spirit of contentment, peace and love of a truly Christian home. Together, we lived and loved and laughed and prayed. My two brothers, one older and one younger than I, were my favorite playmates." She continued, "As a very small child, I heard my older brother, Jack, seriously explain to questioning friends that he was going to be a priest. So impressed was I by his five-year old spirituality that then and there I decided to become a sister." She did not waver from this decision.

Rosemary enrolled in St. Colombo grade school where she was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Her sister, Carol, was born when Rosemary was in eighth grade, and Rosemary later speculated that with her two brothers to leave for the seminary and she for Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, in the coming years, God was "providing a little one to be with Mother and Dad." Rosemary graduated from St. Columba in 1941, and then attended high school at St. Agnes. This was also her introduction to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and Rosemary struggled with feelings of, "grateful loyalty to the St. Joseph sisters and the desire to be a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND)." Following a novena to the Holy Spirit for guidance, she felt that she was being called to become an SSND. She spent her senior year in the aspiranture at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato and entered the SSND candidature in August 1945. As a first year candidate, she took college classes in preparation for becoming a teacher and, as a second year candidate, taught fourth graders at St. Matthew School in St. Paul. She was received into the novitiate on July 16, 1947, and given the name Sister Mary Justin.

Following profession of first vows in 1948, Sister Justin's first teaching assignment was at St. Mary, Madelia, Minnesota, where she stayed until January 1949, when she was sent to St. Nicholas, New Market. At St. Nicholas, she taught grades four - six and was responsible for the school and parish music until 1953. Her remaining teaching ministries included: Assumption, Cresco, Iowa; St. Mathias, Wanda; St. John, Mankato; St. Joseph, Red Wing; SS. Peter & Paul, Blue Earth, where she was also principal; Epiphany, Coon Rapids (principal); Good Counsel Academy, Mankato; and St. Casimir, Wells (principal), all within Minnesota. She thoroughly enjoyed teaching, especially language arts. In 1960, she earned a B.A. in English and history from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, and in 1970, an M.A. in liberal arts and theology from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, New York.

In the early 1970's, Sister Justin became involved with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement, and her subsequent ministries reflected this involvement. From 1973 through 1975, she was a retreat director at Immaculate Heart

*continued*

# In Loving Memory



*Sister M. Justin Wirth*



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Retreat House, Spokane, Washington, where she gave charismatic retreats and seminars. In 1977, she taught at St. Mary High School, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, and then in 1978, became the director of the New Ulm Diocesan Office for Spiritual Life and the Diocesan liaison to the Charismatic Renewal, a position she held until 1988. During this time, she served on the National Advisory Committee for Charismatic Renewal and on the Board for the New Covenant magazine. She also chaired the steering committee of the National Association of Diocesan Liaisons. She traveled throughout the United States and Canada, giving retreats, teaching seminars, training leaders and speaking at conferences. She co-authored two books on faith sharing – one for small groups and one for the Charismatic Renewal.

Sister Justin became the pastoral administrator for St. Michael Parish, Milroy, Minnesota, in 1988. This was a three-quarter position that allowed her to spend about one week a month continuing her work in Charismatic Renewal. An article in the Redwood Gazette profiled her dual role. In Milroy, she taught classes and directed parish services, following a schedule that led to long hours. She commented, “I love it here. The people are so gentle and so good, and so cooperative. It feels like home to me.” Concerning her role in the charismatic movement, she described it as, “an opening up of the person to the gifts of the Spirit and a willingness to use them in your daily life. It is marked by a personal relationship with Jesus and openness to the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, a deep reverence for the Word of God and Scripture, time for personal prayer and communal prayer, and the community of sharing of their faith and witnessing to others what God has done.” Sister Justin remained at Milroy until 1999. Following a sabbatical, she returned to Mankato, serving first in pastoral and spiritual care at Our Lady of Good Counsel and then at St. Joseph the Worker until 2008. She continued her outreach in the local charismatic community and in 2008, she moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Sister Justin, with a special interest in poetry, was a member of the Southern Minnesota Poets Society and received several commendations for her poems. The local Catholic Order of Foresters Court recognized Sister Justin for her role as chaplain and was very appreciative of her service to them. She also earned various certificates from the local TOPS organization and was an advocate of walking for exercise. One of her activities on the Hill was participation in brain fitness programs.

The Funeral Liturgy for Sister Justin will be held at a later date. She is survived by nieces and a nephew and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Mary (Gillen) Wirth; her sister, Carol Nadeau; and her brothers, Father Jack and Father Dick Wirth.

*By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND*