

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Margareta Bertrand



Birth
August 19, 1917

Baptism
September 2, 1917

Profession
July 22, 1940

Death
January 29, 2018

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. Margareta Bertrand, 100, died in Notre Dame Health Care at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, on January 29, 2018. After celebrating her 100th birthday in August, she experienced several periods of declining health, but would rally, often to the surprise of her caregivers. Sisters were keeping vigil with her in the days leading up to her death.

Sister Margareta was born in Clements, Minnesota, on August 19, 1917, and baptized Florine Mary at St. Joseph Church on September 2. When Florine was four, the family moved to nearby Morgan, Minnesota. Her parents valued education and were great readers, and her mother came from a family of musicians. Florine grew up loving to read and learned to play the piano, violin and saxophone. For first grade, she attended St. Michael School in Morgan, where she was taught by Franciscan Sisters from Milwaukee. The next year, the school closed after the sisters withdrew, so Florine went to public school. While in fourth grade, Florine was especially inspired by her teacher and decided to become a teacher herself. In 1927, St. Michael School reopened under the direction of School Sisters of Notre Dame and Florine entered fifth grade there. Following eighth grade graduation in 1931, Florine's parents offered her the opportunity to attend Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, but she preferred to stay home and attend Morgan Public High School. She later wrote of her school days, "My school life was fascinating, most pleasant, successful; my teachers seem to have inculcated into my very bones a thirst for knowledge, a love for study, the desire to do my best."

After high school graduation in 1935, Florine did attend Good Counsel Academy for post-graduate commercial courses. During that time, she was attracted to religious life, and told her parents in June that she would like to enter the candidature in August. Her father advised her to wait a year, and she spent that year working as a stenographer, first in Morgan, Minnesota, and then at St. Michael's Indian Mission in North Dakota. She entered the SSND candidature in August 1937. The following year, she did her practice teaching with third graders at SS. Peter & Paul School, Mankato, Minnesota. At her reception into the novitiate in 1939, she was given the name Sister M. Margareta. Following profession of vows in 1940, she taught grade two at St. Stanislaus, Winona, Minnesota, for one year.

The next year, when she was assigned to teach at St. Matthew High School, St. Paul, she discovered she really missed teaching primary grades. She remained at St. Matthew until 1947. She then taught at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul; Good Counsel Academy and Loyola High School, Mankato, Minnesota; and St. Mary, New England, North Dakota. In 1954, she moved to St. Felix, Wabasha, Minnesota, staying there until 1959. At that time, she was appointed directress of aspirants and social studies teacher at Good Counsel Academy, a position she held until 1965. She earned a B.A. in social studies from St. Catherine's College in 1948, and an M.S. Ed. in history from Creighton University in 1951. As a social studies teacher, she

continued

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challenged her students to learn as much as possible from current events while studying the events of the past. She was a life-long learner who wished to instill this same spirit in her students.

In March 1965, Sister Margareta was elected the fifth Provincial Superior of the Mankato Province. This was an era of change in many ways. In December 1965, the church completed the final session of Vatican II that produced wide-sweeping changes, many of which impacted religious life. Sisters began to dialogue not only on the local level, but also on the provincial and congregational level. Apostolic fields, in addition to formal education, were made available to sisters. The congregation invited sisters to prepare for the 13th General Chapter by writing position papers that would lead to the updating of the SSND rule and constitution. In her introduction to the position paper process, Sister Margareta encouraged sisters to renew themselves in the spirit of the SSND founders. The provincial chapter expanded its membership and meetings were open to observers. Many women religious began to question religious life and their commitment, which provided a major challenge to leadership. At the liturgy celebrating Sister Margareta's 100th birthday, her nephew, Father Paul Turner, summed up this time in her life: "We could not have known the challenges Sister Margareta would face. Sisters were making difficult vocational decisions, all of which she had to respect while holding the community together in hope."

Sister Margareta returned to teaching, her first love, in 1971. During the next 20 years, she taught at St. Agnes, St. Paul; Trinity, Dickinson, North Dakota; Cotter, Winona, Minnesota; Don Bosco, Gilbertville, Iowa; Lourdes, Rochester, Minnesota; and Guadalupe Area Project, St. Paul. In 1989, she received the St. Joseph's Award from Cotter High School. Sister Margareta was recognized for her involvement at Cotter as a teacher who "continues to help her students grow through searching and learning. Her enthusiasm for life and her humility has gained for her the respect and admiration of those who know her."

In 1992, Sister Margareta joined the staff of the Good Counsel Education Center and volunteered as a tutor for Loyola High School. After spending a year as a volunteer in Spearfish, South Dakota, from 1994-1995, she began her ministry of retirement and community service in August 1995. Her thirst for knowledge was seemingly never quenched, as she avidly read newspapers and news magazines and was willing to discuss current events with any and all she met. She delighted in talking with former students and had a special place in her heart for her nieces and nephews.

The funeral liturgy, with her nephew, Father Paul Turner as presider, was held Friday, February 9 in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel Cemetery. She is survived by her nieces, Sisters Mary and Catherine Bertrand, SSND, other nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Benno and Margaret (Neudecker) Bertrand, her sisters, Alice Turner and Agnes Bertrand, and her brothers Francis, Leo and Isidore.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND