



# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister M. René Lorentz

Sister M. René Lorentz, 101, died Saturday, April 2, 2022, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. Sister René’s autobiography concluded with, “Please come, dear God, when I am most ready.” In the week prior to her death, sisters prayed with her as she approached the moment when she would be “most ready.”

On Pentecost Sunday, June 6, 1920, Sister René, the first child of Peter and Elizabeth Lorentz, was born in Mankato, Minnesota. She was baptized a week later at SS. Peter & Paul Church and named Mary Catherine. Two years later, a baby brother, Leonard Peter, was born, but lived only six weeks. Another daughter, Betty Anne, was born when Mary Catherine was seven.

Mary Catherine admired her School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) teachers at both SS. Peter & Paul School and Good Counsel Academy and hoped one day to be one of them. She was very aware of religious vocations: her mother’s sister was Sister Mary Philip Leonard, SSND; and an uncle, Quirinus Leonard, and great uncle, Peter Leonard, were Jesuits.

On June 6, 1937, Pentecost Sunday, Mary Catherine graduated from Good Counsel Academy. She entered the SSND candidature in August. As a second year candidate, she taught 45 second and third graders at St. Francis de Sales School, St. Paul. She was received into the novitiate in 1939, and was given the name Sister M. René, with her patron being one of the North American Jesuit martyrs.

After profession of first vows in 1940, Sister René was assigned to study social studies at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. She commented, “What a unique way for God to answer my prayers to be a fourth grade teacher with a college major in math!” During the school year she lived at the Franciscan motherhouse in Dubuque and spent holiday time with the SSND in St. Donatus, Iowa. From 1941 through 1943, she taught ninth grade in the newly established St. Agnes High School, in St. Paul. She completed her bachelors degree in 1942 with a major in history and a minor in sociology. In 1943, she experienced several “firsts” as a teacher at St. Mary’s School, New England, North Dakota, “My first experience with a medium-sized community, with boarders, with students from the prairie land, with the load of six different high school subjects.” She remained in New England until 1947, when she returned to St. Agnes. In 1952, she moved to Don Bosco High School, Gilbertville, Iowa, for three years. After five summers of study, she earned an masters in history and education from Loras College (Catholic University branch) and Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in 1951. In 1955, she again returned to St. Agnes, where she stayed until 1958.

On a province questionnaire, Sister René had indicated an interest in studying philosophy, so she spent the 1958-59 school year studying in the Sister Formation Program at St. Louis University. The 1959-60 school year was a “dream come true” as she taught at Good Counsel Academy, her alma mater. During that school year, she was asked to go on for further study to enable her to teach in the formation college at Good Counsel. The fall of 1961 found Sister René again as a student, this time at Catholic University of America working toward a doctorate in history, with political science and education as minors.

Birth  
June 6, 1920

Baptism  
June 13, 1920

Profession  
July 22, 1940

Death  
April 2, 2022

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.*

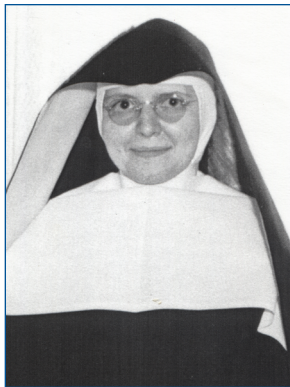
Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger  
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame  
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

*continued*

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This degree was completed in 1963. In addition to the academic courses, Sister René listed several fringe benefits to studying in Washington, D.C.: attending President Kennedy's inauguration with Sister M. Eunice Silkey; taking a senatorial tour of the White House; attending two sessions of Congress; and viewing the Supreme Court in action. She was also able to take trips to Williamsburg, Monticello, Mt. Vernon, the Statue of Liberty and the United Nations, where she attended two general sessions.

After four months of research for her doctoral dissertation, Sister René began teaching postulants, novices and sisters in the Mankato Campus of Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, in 1962. Former students in her logic, ethics, and various history courses remember her insistence that research assignments be completed on 3x5 cards. In 1965, she was appointed dean of the Mankato Campus, a position she held until 1972. Then, she returned to high school teaching, serving until 1975 at St. Mary's, New England, for a second time. In 1975 and in 1979, she was elected to Mankato Provincial Team leadership as Coordinator of Apostolate. At the conclusion of her second term, she wrote, "I am grateful for the privilege of working with the other team members and for the countless graces received in serving sisters throughout the province. Prayer support was ever a felt blessing in the inevitable ups and downs of provincial administration."

When Sister René completed her term in provincial administration in 1983, she again became a high school teacher, this time at De Sales High School in Walla Walla, Washington. In 1989, her teaching ministry took a different direction as she taught history and English as a Second Language (ESL) to Divine Word seminarians in Epworth, Iowa. She treasured this time with multi-cultural students. In 1993, Sister René became a member of the SSND Interprovincial Novitiate Community based in Notre Dame Hall, St. Louis University, St. Louis. She taught history and ESL part time at St. Louis University until 1996, when the novitiate community, moved off the university campus. Sister René then moved north to her final teaching position, as a teacher of social studies and religion to fifth and sixth grade students at All Saints School, Madison Lake, Minnesota. She successfully adapted her teaching methods to that student level, so much so that one year each class member selected her as the one they would call for help on the "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" TV program. In 2005, at the age of 85, Sister René moved "home" to Our lady of Good Counsel, and reflected, "Retirement environment agrees with me. I'm grateful to be a resident, community member, pray-er, and roving card player." A faithful letter-writer, she stayed in contact with many former students.

As Sister René reached and surpassed milestone birthdays and Jubilee celebrations, she continued to express her gratitude to God and the SSND community.

Funeral services included a Prayer of Remembrance and a Funeral Liturgy, with Father Joe Fogal as presider, on Wednesday, April 20, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel. She is survived by a nephew, Tom Carroll, cousins, including Sister Katherine Scheurer, SSND, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Peter and Elizabeth (Leonard) Lorentz, her sister, Betty Carroll, and her brother who died in infancy.

*By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND*