

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Salesia Muckensturm, SSND



Birth
Aug. 2, 1918

Baptism
Aug. 3, 1918

Profession
Aug. 18, 1938

Death
Oct. 23, 2016

Burial
Sancta Maria
in Ripa Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

*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

On Aug. 2, 1918, the fourth of eight children was born to Rosa (Reeb) and Joseph Muckensturm in Belleville, Illinois. She was baptized the following day at St. Peter's Cathedral and named Aurelia Mary. The family of seven girls and one boy learned early to help with all the household chores and to care for the younger children. They enjoyed their free time playing with their cousins who lived nearby.

Aurelia's father died suddenly in a coal mining accident when she was in the third grade at St. Peter Grade School. This was a very difficult time for her mother who had lost both her parents and husband within 11 months and now was left alone to care for eight children ranging in age from 13 months to 13 years. A woman of faith, her mother was determined to keep her family together. She sewed all their clothes, baked and did laundry for others. When the older girls finished 8th grade, they went to work to help to support the family.

From her earliest years, Aurelia wanted to be a sister like her two aunts who were Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. However, her eighth grade teacher, a School Sister of Notre Dame, encouraged her to go the aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa. While she was in the SSND aspiranture, her two older sisters entered the Poor Handmaids. Aurelia was drawn to SSND and after three years, entered the candidature on Aug. 28, 1935. As a second year candidate, she taught grades 3 and 4 at St. Aloysius in St. Louis. She was received into the novitiate on Aug. 17, 1937 and given the name Mary Salesia. She pronounced first vows on Aug. 18, 1938 and final vows on Aug. 18, 1944.

For the next 50 years, Sister Salesia ministered in elementary education. She taught primary children at St. Mary, Keokuk, Iowa; St. Joseph, Ridway; Holy Angels, East St. Louis; St. Mary, Eldorado; St. Francis, Aviston and St. Michael, Radom in Illinois. For 12 years, she ministered at St. Joseph, Ponchatoula, Louisiana.

After 20 summers of college courses, she received her bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1956 from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, Missouri. She was also granted a master's degree in elementary education in 1973 from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Illinois.

During these years of elementary teaching, Sister Salesia often had class sizes that ranged in the 50s and 60s with combined grades. She was principal at St. Mary, Eldorado for three years. During her last teaching assignment at Radom, Illinois, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. After surgery and recuperation, she returned to Radom and taught for another six years. In 1988, the parish celebrated her Golden Jubilee as a School Sister of Notre Dame.

During the previous eight summers, she had volunteered at Villa Gesu. She was asked to consider working at Villa Gesu. Although she loved teaching and found the decision a difficult one, she said "Yes" and began a new

continued

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career. She spent 11 years at Villa Gesu as a ward clerk and doing various aspects of community service. When the Villa closed in 1999. She was one of the pioneers to go to Meredith Memorial in Belleville, Illinois and remained there for eight years. She was sacristan, sewed for the poor and did volunteer work. As her health declined, she came to the motherhouse to retire. After six months, she was missioned to Anna House in July 2007. She died peacefully at Anna House on Sunday, Oct. 23, 2016 at 1:45 a.m.

The wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center on Nov. 1, 2016. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Edmond Fitzgibbon as presider. Her surviving sister, Rosella Lauzon of Belleville, Illinois; nieces, nephews, other relatives and SSNDs attended the funeral services. She was preceded in death by her parents; her sisters, Sister Valeda, PHJC; Sister Roseanne, PHJC; Olivia Schmid, Angeline Wittenauer, Marie Totterer and her brother, Anthony Muckensturm.

Early in life, Sister Salesia was taught the values of faith, family and loving service. She was a quiet, gentle, thoughtful, prayerful and grateful person. Her warm smile welcomed everyone. In her retirement years, she was always ready to lend a helping hand and participated in all the activities at The Sarah Community as her health permitted.

She was an excellent educator. When she was assigned to teach four grades in a room of 40 to 50 children, she relied on God and her own gifts to successfully complete the year. She taught primary children for 45 of her 50 years as an elementary teacher. Teaching the little ones and preparing them for the reception of the sacraments were great joys for her.

Like her mother, she loved to sew and in her later years, she made dresses and shorts for the poor in Honduras. Her missionary heart reached out to these little children. The joys, successes, difficulties, failures that she experienced during her 98 years of life drew her closer to God. May she now rejoice in her new life with her God and the family members who have gone before her!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND