

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Yvonne Nohava



Birth
January 14, 1917

Baptism
January 15, 1917

Profession
July 22, 1938

Death
January 6, 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. Yvonne Nohava, 100, died Saturday, January 6, 2018, at Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, Minnesota. As she grew weaker over the past several months, she entered hospice and sisters and staff were keeping vigil with her in the days before she died.

Sister Yvonne, the sixth child of Francis and Mary Nohava, was born on January 14, 1917, in Lonsdale, Minnesota, and baptized Ludmilla Catherine the next day at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Lonsdale. She was known as Lillian. Her twin sisters, Rose and Mary, were born the next year. When the twins were about 18 months old, another child, Francis, was born. Their mother died shortly after his birth, and he died about two weeks later. Their father, a hardware dealer whose store was next to the family home, resolved to keep the family together if at all possible.

In 1923, when she was six, Lillian began first grade at Immaculate Conception School where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. She wrote in her autobiography, "I loved the sisters and never knew any other desire than to become one myself." In 1926, her father remarried, and Sister Yvonne recalled, "We loved our new mother very much and well did she take the place of our mother, for she brought much joy and sunshine into our home." Lillian attended Immaculate Conception through tenth grade. She also grew in her love of nature and its creator as she took long walks with her father through country woods and hills.

In 1933, as a high school junior, Lillian attended Bethlehem Academy in nearby Faribault. She attended Good Counsel Academy for her senior year, and it was on the eve of her graduation that she told her oldest sister of her desire to be a sister. She was hesitant to tell her parents because of the sacrifice it would involve, but her father responded with, "God has given us nine girls and he shall receive them back as he desires." Lillian entered the SSND candidature in August 1935, and, following a year of preparation, taught second grade at St. Agnes, St. Paul. She was received into the novitiate in 1937 and given the name Sister M. Yvonne.

After profession of vows in 1938, Sister Yvonne spent a year as assistant infirmarian in the motherhouse infirmary. The next year, Sister Yvonne began a long, successful ministry as an educator. She taught primary grades at St. Michael, St. Michael (1939-42) and junior high at St. Stanislaus, St. Paul (1942-46). She taught upper grades and was principal at St. John Nepomucene, Winona (1946-52), and had the same responsibilities at St. John, Mankato (1952-58). During these years, she earned a B.S. in Chemistry from Mount Mary College in 1949 and an MS. Ed in Chemistry from Creighton University in 1954.

In 1958, she returned to St. Michael as a teacher of high school science and remained there until 1964. She taught science and math at Loyola High

continued

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**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

School, Mankato (1964-69); Good Counsel Academy, Mankato (1969-1978) and St. Agnes High School, St. Paul (1978-89). Chemistry and physics were her two main subject areas, and she was able to instill a love for science in her students. Because of her deep interest in science, she started science research clubs at schools where she taught. She received a letter of commendation from the Minnesota Academy of Science for her promotion of scientific research, education and understanding. In 1972, she received the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Teacher Award, and in 1973, she was given a Teacher Award of Excellence by NSTA and the Engineers Council for Professional Development.

Sister Yvonne made a strong impression on her students. One wrote, “I remember the first time I saw Sister Yvonne, when I was a freshman at Good Counsel. She was always wearing a lab coat over her SSND outfit, even when she was not in the classroom. I was impressed by how professional she conducted herself, her intelligence and her caring, outgoing manner.” Sister Yvonne became the adviser for students who entered science competitions. She taught students more than the principles of scientific investigation; she encouraged them and challenged them to be optimistic and to persevere – even when the experiments didn’t work as planned. For Sister Yvonne, according to another student, “There was no such thing as a ‘failed experiment.’ There was always something to learn, even from our mistakes.” One of her student’s research projects won high awards at a Nobel Conference in London, and others earned awards at various International Science and Engineering Fairs in the US.

After fifty years, Sister Yvonne retired from classroom teaching in 1989. She came to Good Counsel Hill where she served as a driver and taught in the Learning Center until 1999. In 2001, she looked back at her teaching ministry and commented, “There’s nothing like teaching. For me there couldn’t have been anything else. You have a chance to touch lives and you learn a lot from students, too.”

Sister Yvonne appreciated the opportunity to help care for her twin sisters, Sisters Rosemary and Lillian, in their declining years and spent many hours with them daily. She was also devoted to other family members encompassing several generations, and they to her.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held Thursday, January 11, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel Cemetery. A prayer service of remembrance preceded the funeral liturgy on Thursday morning. She is survived by her sisters, Julie Washa and Theresa Zitzow, 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, Francis and Mary (Jirik) Nohava, her sisters, Agnes Hincks, Josephine Mamer, Catherine Frank, Sister Lillian (Rose) Nohava, Sister Rosemary (Mary) Nohava, Magdalen Nohava, and Leona Tupa and her brothers, William, John (who died at age 14), Francis (who died in infancy), Francis and John.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND