



Birth
December 21, 1927

Baptism
January 8, 1928

Profession
August 6, 1948

Death
January 28, 2021

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery,
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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 Margaret Elsen

Margaret was born on December 21, 1927, in Milwaukee, the sixth child of William Peter Elsen and Irene Mae (Boileau) Elsen. She was baptized on January 8, 1928, at St. Leo Church and received the name, Margaret Agnes. Now there were three girls: Jane Gerich, and Suzanne Ullrich, Margaret and three boys: William, Richard, and Gerry. Sadly, a couple of months later, God chose to take nine-year-old Gerry to heaven. Over six years passed before Mary Ann (Pederson), the last of the clan, completed the family.

School began for her when she attended the Auer Avenue Public School for kindergarten and first grade. When she was old enough to walk a longer distance to school, she attended St. Leo School staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). She received her First Holy Communion in fourth grade and was confirmed in the seventh grade. Her graduation was in June of 1941 on the same night that her oldest brother was getting his Master's Degree. Her parents planned to hurry from one graduation and dash over to Marquette University for another and just in time. She said that was a memorable and hectic night.

Next, she attended Messmer High School. She says, "It was during my senior year that two sisters in particular, Sisters M. Celine Diedrich and M. Madeleine Sophie Flammang, proved by their example, that life as a sister was a happy one. Now, more interested in the sisters, I noticed they all had a peaceful air about them not shown by many other people. I decided on April 28th to enter the convent."

Sister Marge knew that her parents would be as surprised as she was about the religious vocation she had chosen. She was not comfortable about announcing her decision. So, she asked her two sister friends to tell her parents about her life's plan. By this time, she had already signed up and the sisters had begun to make her candidate's dress. Her mother thought it would be a good idea to attend college first and her father told her years later that he was okay with her decision. She entered the candidature on August 28, 1945. Marge loved the candidature and in the second year she was sent to St. Patrick, Menasha, Wisconsin. She taught 49 second graders. Sister M. Bernetta, Superior and Principal, and the other eight sisters gave her great assistance in furthering her spiritual and educational life.

After her novitiate, a time for getting closer to Christ, she pronounced her triple vows on the feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, 1948, and her final vows were made in the Marian Year (1954). She notes, "Could there have been a better set of dates?"

Sister Marge taught grades six and seven at St. Peter School, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, for five years. Her second assignment was to St. Anne School, Milwaukee, just sixteen blocks from home. But her parents moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, the next year. She taught grades five, six, and seven over a period of eight years. During this time, she also had the assignment of training altar

continued

In Loving Memory

boys and she took classes at Mount Mary College (now University) to complete her Bachelor's Degree in sociology.

In the summer of 1960, Marge was transferred to Messmer High School, Milwaukee. About this assignment, she says, "I did not like to leave grade school, but I could think of no better place to go than my own alma mater, the place of many happy memories. Time there was short-lived, for the next year I was sent to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. After a year-and-a-half, the work for a Master's Degree in sociology was finished and I was on my way to New York for a semester's postgraduate work at Fordham University."

During her time in Washington, DC., Marge's father died and her father had told his children not to travel to the funeral, and her mother wanted them to abide by his wishes. However, faculty members, fellow student-priests, brothers, sisters and laity decided they would celebrate her father right there in Washington. The Mass was scheduled for the same time as his Burial Mass was celebrated. A Redemptorist priest from the sociology faculty offered it in the crypt of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, adjacent to the campus. Her oldest brother, Bill, was working for the State Department, and with his wife they attended in the crowded little chapel. He said he now realized what it meant to have a religious in the family.

When her studies were complete in 1963, she served at a variety of places until her retirement at the age of 66. She taught in high school, she was in campus ministry for 11 years, she taught in colleges for 10 years, she served in the diocese of Saginaw, Michigan, marriage tribunal for two years and was pastoral associate for St. Mary Parish, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. Following this ministry, she volunteered at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, for about a dozen years.

Sister Marge had much to contribute. She loved being with people and was interested in having an energetic conversation. She had many friends and looked ahead with enthusiasm. Well done good and faithful servant. We will miss you. A memorial Mass was celebrated February 4, 2021 in Notre Dame of Elm Grove Chapel.

By Sister Elise Zettel

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