



In Loving Memory

Sister Margaret Mary Janke

Sister Margaret Mary Janke was born September 23, 1930, in Milwaukee, as the first and only child of Elmer and Mary Janke. She was baptized four days later at the St. Joseph's Hospital chapel and given the name Dorothy Mae.

When Margaret Mary was six, her parents enrolled her in the first grade at St. John de Nepomuc School in Milwaukee. The week before Sister Margaret Mary received her First Holy Communion she had contracted a case of pneumonia. She recovered sufficiently to receive her First Communion with the class on April 16, 1939. Five years later, October 11, 1942, she was confirmed, taking the name Elizabeth.

On Sister Margaret Mary's sixth birthday, the seed of her vocation was planted. A neighbor lady took her to the parish rectory. The pastor remarked to her, "You will be a sister someday," and she never forgot that remark. In eighth grade, she made a definite decision to enter the Juniorate. Her parents thought that this was not advisable as she was an only child. They sent her to Holy Angel's Academy in Milwaukee.

Sister Margaret Mary met a new order of sisters but she remained determined to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame. On June 8, 1948, after graduating, Sister Margaret Mary applied for admission to the candidature. After a year, she was sent to St. Joseph's in Appleton, Wisconsin. After two years, she was received on July 25, 1950.

Sister Margaret Mary started teaching students in intermediate and junior high in various parishes in Wisconsin and Illinois from 1949 through 1969. She was administrator at St. Peter and Paul in Milwaukee from 1969 until 1975. Students remember her as kind, fair and generous. For one year, Sister Margaret Mary taught history full time at Messmer High School and for the next six years she taught part time while caring for her mother. After her father died in 1971, her mother needed more care so Margaret Mary moved in the family home with her mother. She taught History during the summer at Mount Mary College (now University). She lived with her mother until she passed away in 1991.

While Sister Margaret Mary lived with her mother and after her mother died, Sister Joyce Merten visited her almost every week. Sister Joyce shared that she enjoyed the visits as Margaret Mary was an excellent cook and made delicious meals which always included a salad. She also had very definite opinions and was not shy about expressing them to Sister Joyce or anyone else.

Sister Margaret Mary knew everyone in the neighborhood. She walked daily with her black lab and stopped to visit and listen to their stories of their joys and sorrows. She was a great conversationalist in her kind and caring way.

Sister Margaret Mary often told the story of her 50th Jubilee celebration. She

continued

Birth
September 23, 1930

Baptism
September 27, 1930

Profession
July 31, 1951

Death
April 8, 2020

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

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would not have a grand celebration being an only child and not having much extended family. Sister Joyce took Sister Margaret Mary to visit her sister, Betty Gaiser, who lives in Indiana. During the visit, Betty, Sister Joyce's sister planned a surprise Jubilee celebration with her adult children so that Sister Margaret Mary would have memories to share. She was thrilled with the decorations, meal and cake. She was the guest of honor! Sister Margaret Mary was forever grateful to the family and Sister Joyce for a wonderful time.

She did substitute teaching for a year and for the next seven years enjoyed being at Thomas More High School working in staff-school services, which meant that she was manager of the bookstore. Sister Rita Krusell, who also worked at St. Thomas More, contacted some of her colleagues to share about her. Here are some memories from Ann Marie, Spanish Teacher, and Richard Dorn, Guidance Counselor, at Thomas More, "She enjoyed the students, faculty and staff alike. No matter what the crisis was, she was always composed and could not be flustered. She never complained, even when things became complicated and tough. Quite a feat for someone who dealt with high school students day in and day out. She was a ray of sunshine in every day. Gone are the books, for the most part. Computers have replaced them but no one has replaced Sister Margaret Mary. We miss her presence and her spirit. She was one of a kind."

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Jeanne Cissne, History Teacher said, "Sister Margaret Mary brought energy, creativity, and friendliness to her particular corner at the end of the first floor hallway; the bookstore. Students looked forward to seeing her leaning against the store counter, eager to greet them for a chat. She expanded the store hours and inventory. It was nice and handy to see the bookstore open for business on a daily basis. It was also nice to see her design ideas for Thomas More sports wear and to have Thomas More school supplies ready. A strong and gregarious personality, Sister Margaret Mary is fondly remembered by those of us who stopped by for one of those chats."

Sister Margaret Mary retired in 2000, and sold the family home and moved to Notre Dame of Elm Grove in 2004. She was so proud of her part time work at the provincial offices switchboard from 2004 until 2011. Everyone who came in was graciously welcomed and directed to the appropriate office.

In 2011, Sister Margaret Mary retired fully and enjoyed time with the other sisters, reading and sleeping later. She would often come to the dining room in mid-morning to relish the quiet, gaze at the beauty outside and enjoy a cup of coffee. She knew most of the employees, engaged in conversation and told them that she would pray for them. She was a good listener and had stories to tell.

The last years at Notre Dame Elm Grove on Theresa 2 (the floor she lived on) were special to Sister Margaret Mary. She was always so grateful for the care that she received. She had her quiet times, especially when the staff gave her the early morning coffee as she would watch the sun rise in the east.

Margaret Mary, thank you for gifting us with your life and all the love you shared! We love you! Rest in Peace!

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND

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