



Birth
Dec. 21, 1916

Baptism
Dec. 31, 1915

Profession
July 23, 1942

Death
May 11, 2016

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 Marian [M. John Dominic] Blong, SSND

A daughter was born to Nicholas and Anastasia (Thill) Blong in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Dec. 21, 1916. She joined a sister and brother. The family debated about many possible names but a plain Christian name was finally chosen. The baptismal record at St. Boniface Church, Milwaukee, read Mary Anne Blong.

She described her parents as “staunch Catholic, making our home a place where we learned to pray, work and play.” While her early years were spent in Milwaukee, Mary Anne enjoyed time in summer with her grandparents in Port Washington, a town she often referred to, identifying fondly and proudly with her many Luxembourg relatives.

After completing elementary school with the Dominican Sisters at St. Gall’s, Mary Anne went on to Messmer High School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. It was during this time that, while she and her mother were visiting a friend of the family, the friend remarked to her mother, “You had better watch this child; she will do something in her lifetime but it is hard to tell what it will be.” This turned out to be the stimulus to make her think “What will I do?”

It was some time after this that the idea of being a religious sister occurred. After her high school graduation she entered Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, where she was again taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She went there with the goal of preparing to be a teacher and entering the convent. Mary Anne received her bachelor’s degree with a major in mathematics and minors in chemistry and physics, but it was only after graduating from the college and teaching for a year at St. Leo’s School in Milwaukee that she actually entered the SSND candidature in 1939 at the former Milwaukee motherhouse.

She taught mathematics and chemistry at the motherhouse during that first year as a candidate. The following year she taught mathematics at Longwood Academy in Chicago, where she was known as Sister Marian. At her reception into the novitiate on July 22, 1941, she was given her religious name, M. John Dominic. She professed first vows on July 23, 1942. She completed her master’s degree in mathematics at Marquette University, Milwaukee in 1948. Sometime after the Second Vatican Council, she changed her name to Sister Marian.

Sister Marian ministered in education for 66 years. She taught high school science and math classes. Additionally, she served in some locations as vice-principal and community leader. She taught at the following Wisconsin high schools: Notre Dame, Chippewa Falls; St. Mary, Port Washington; St. Joachim, Pittsville; Sacred Heart, Sun Prairie; Messmer, Milwaukee; and St. Mary, Burlington.

Those who knew her during these years remember her as extremely competent but caring greatly about the persons whom she served. The most recent evidence of this was the avalanche of cards she received for her 99th birthday from students she had in Pittsville, still devoted to her after more than 60 years. The question here is how this “city kid,” as she characterized

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Marian Blong



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herself, developed such strong bonds with these young people in this small farming community? Her answer: she took the time to listen to them and learn their interests and needs.

The larger part of her ministry involved working with adolescents, not only as a teacher but as an administrator in high schools. She was a common sense person, calm in emergencies, fair with students, and no-nonsense, with a wonderful sense of humor; and always available to help students work through their problems. Sister Margaret Mary Janke likened Sister Marian “to a chocolate covered egg, firm on the outside but a marshmallow within.”

One did not need to be there to know how much she was valued. If you were to meet a graduate, you would hear stories about Sister Marian along with a concerned “How is Sister Marian?”

In 1976, Sister Marian joined the Mount Mary Community. Even though she was nearing retirement age at that point and was not in good health, she was able to use her many talents for almost 30 more years. It was during her time as registrar that the office transitioned from hand-typed record-keeping to computerized files and her organizational skills assured that every Mount Mary graduate could be confident her records would be accurate. Later her role in institutional research enabled her to use her sense of curiosity to track down any information, no matter how obscure, sought by her colleagues.

Living in a large community for many years, Sister Marian shared her many gifts with her sisters but certainly one most valued was her talent in providing delicious home cooked meals. While the sisters enjoyed all her menus, Sister Marian’s favorite was her famous chop suey.

Sister Marian had a special gift for friendship. We daily saw her devotion to Sister Mary Briant Foley, her friend of many years. We know she kept contact with many former students, colleagues and relatives – many of whom have expressed their gratitude. In the words of Irene Schey, a longtime friend and Mount Mary colleague: “It was a delight and privilege to know Sister Marian and to be her friend. She had great strength and vigor of character and personality, and such insightful intelligence.”

When Sister Marian retired in 2005, Dr. Patricia O’Donoghue, Mount Mary president at that time, in a memo wrote: “Today Mount Mary College had one of its great treasures move to Elm Grove, Sister Marian Blong... Her sisters there will benefit from her wit, her zest for her life, and her wisdom. She will join them in celebrating her faith and her SSND charism, just as she did every day on this campus.”

Sister Marian moved to Notre Dame of Elm Grove and began a ministry of prayer and presence which continued until her death on May 11, 2016. She was 99. Sister Marian is survived by nieces and nephews, cousins, loving extended family, many friends, former students and the SSND Community.

I personally know that the “wisdom” mentioned of Sister Marion was often sought by others, including myself, and I am personally grateful for advice I received from her over the years. I think we all could tell that family friend of long ago – “Yes, she did something great with her 99 years – something great for us and something great for God!” Thank you, Sister Marian.

This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information and the eulogy presented by Sister Ellen Lorenz, SSND