

# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Mary Ambrose Peters



**Birth**  
May 10, 1931

**Baptism**  
May 24, 1931

**Profession**  
August 2, 1954

**Death**  
May 23, 2020

**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 Mother's Day, May 10, 1931, the third child and first girl was born to Catherine (Heinkebein) and Theodore Peters in Leopold, Missouri. She was baptized on the same day and again on May 24, 1931, at St. John Church, Leopold, Missouri. She was named Bernice Marie (Berniece Mary). The Peters family lived on a large farm three miles from Leopold. Here, she spent many happy days with her six brothers and two sisters. She grew up with a great love of nature and had many daring adventures with her brothers.

Bernice attended Leopold Public Elementary School. After months of begging, her parents consented to her attending St. Mary High School in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. With several other children, she made the daily 39-mile round trip. At St. Mary's, she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. In her senior year, one of the sisters asked her if she ever thought of becoming a sister. She replied, "Yes." The sister told her that two candidates were coming from Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, the next day for a vocation talk and encouraged Bernice to attend. She was struck by the Candidate's closing remark: "Girls in the world will tell you that they love a man, well, I do to. His name is Jesus Christ." These words remained with her during the following months and she decided to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Bernice spent two years convincing her parents that she really wanted to go to the convent. Towards the end of the second year, while splitting wood and thinking of the Candidate's words, she missed her aim and the ax hit her finger. She took this as a sign and when the bone healed, she told her mother that she was going to enter. Her mother consented and she entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa on August 30, 1951. She was received into the novitiate on August 1, 1953, and given the name, Marie Ambrose. Profession of first vows was on August 2, 1954, and final vows on August 2, 1960.

Sister Marie Ambrose received a bachelor's degree in history from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1956 and a master's degree in history from St. Louis University, St. Louis, in 1967.

Sister Marie Ambrose taught for 10 years at Holy Family, Freeburg, Missouri; Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, and Notre Dame High School, Quincy, Illinois. She was a principal for 27 years at Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Louis, Missouri; Duchesne High School, St. Charles, Missouri, and Notre Dame Elementary School, St. Louis.

Sister Marie Ambrose was a tutor in the Notre Dame Tutorial Center at Sancta Maria in Ripa for seven years and a teacher in the Notre Dame Learning Center for two years. She was the building coordinator for Maria Center on the Sancta Maria in Ripa campus for 11 years. She performed volunteer service at Sancta Maria in Ripa for five years. In 2010, she was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri, and then to Anna House in 2011. She passed away in the early morning of May 23, 2020 at Anna House.

*continued*

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*Sister Mary Ambrose Peters*



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a burial service was held at the switchboard entrance to Sancta Maria in Ripa on May 29, 2020. She is survived by two brothers, Theodore and Mark of Marble Hill, Missouri, and a sister, Bonnie Diebold of Dresden, Tennessee. Family members, classmates and sisters gathered for the burial prayers. She was buried in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at a later date. Sister Marie Ambrose was preceded in death by her parents; her sister, Marjie Ann Eftink; her brothers: Francis, Ambrose, Januarius and Matthew.

In 1987, Sister Marie Ambrose was honored at the National Catholic Educational Association convention as one of the 40 outstanding Catholic educators in the United States. At that time, she shared these thoughts regarding Catholic education: "I believe that the Catholic schools of the future will be vital in providing the moral stability, the sense of the sacred, the direction of scientific research for our country. The secret to how effective these schools will be is locked in the heart of each parent, teacher and pastor. The value these persons place on the Catholic school and the sacrifices they are willing to bring to keep it vital will spell the success or failure for the system."

She is described as an excellent educator, administrator, a good listener and a firm but fair disciplinarian. During her years at Notre Dame Elementary, she secured support from the local business community for scholarships for financially needy students. When she resigned from her position as principal, the Sister Marie Ambrose Peters Scholarship Fund was established.

Sister Marie Ambrose was deeply devoted to her family and friends. She shared her talents as an educator, principal, tutor and Maria Center coordinator with her colleagues and those who were touched by her ministry. May she now rejoice with her God and family members who have preceded her into eternal life!

*By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND*

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