



Birth
May 15, 1944

Baptism
May 28, 1944

Profession
August 1, 1964

Death
February 25, 2022

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
Cemetery, St. Louis

*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 Marie Juanita Will

On May 15, 1944, the third of five children and the first girl was born to June (Cornell) and Victor Will in Evansville, Indiana. She was baptized at St. Benedict Church on May 28, 1944, and named Helen Antoinette. Helen grew up with her brothers, Victor and Richard, and her sister, Janet; an older brother, Ted, was stillborn. Her family called her “Toni” and she described her childhood years as being a ‘tom-boy.’

When Helen was one year old, the family moved to St. Louis. Helen attended St. Francis de Sales Grade School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). In March of her eighth-grade year, Helen went to a day of recollection at Sancta Maria in Ripa. She met a girl who had signed up for the aspiranture and began to think seriously about religious life. With her parents’ blessings, she entered the aspiranture as a freshman the following year. Helen completed her high school education in three and a half years and entered the candidature in January of her senior year.

Plans were for Helen to receive the candidate’s veil at her home parish on December 31, 1961. However, because of the death of the pastor, plans were changed. The ceremony took place at Sancta Maria in Ripa on January 1, 1962. With her classmates, Helen was received into the novitiate in the investiture ceremony at St. Louis Cathedral on July 31, 1963, and was given the name Marie Juanita, in honor of her aunt. She professed first vows on August 1, 1964, and final vows on August 1, 1969.

She was awarded a bachelor’s degree in music theory from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1965 and a master’s degree in mathematics education from Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa, in 1977. Sister Marie Juanita ministered in elementary education for 33 years. She taught in Missouri at St. Joseph, Scott City; All Souls, Overland; Blessed Sacrament; Our Lady Queen of Peace, House Springs; St. Anthony, Sullivan; and St. Gabriel the Archangel, St. Louis. She taught in Illinois at St. Peter Cathedral, Belleville; and was principal at Sacred Heart, DuQuoin, Illinois.

In 2000, she served for seven years as a staff member in the finance office at Notre Dame High School, St. Louis. She joined the staff of The Sarah Community in Bridgeton, Missouri, as the SSND transportation coordinator in 2008.

Sister Marie Juanita enjoyed her hobbies of crocheting and gardening. She was an excellent music teacher and enjoyed being a choir member. During a sabbatical, she became interested in Native American heritage and grew to love the rituals and prayers of our indigenous ancestors. She was an avid fan of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team and the St. Louis Blues hockey team.

Sister Marie Juanita volunteer taught in the Immigrant and Refugee Women’s Program in St. Louis, providing individualized English language tools to foreign-born adults in their homes. During several summers, she volunteered as a tutor for children in the Osyka (Mississippi) Reading Program, a literacy program planned and taught by SSND from Chatawa, Mississippi, and St.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Marie Juanita Will

Louis. As transportation coordinator at The Sarah Community, she made doctor appointments for the sisters, scheduled drivers, kept an accurate record of appointment visits, etc. She crocheted a prayer shawl for each of the sisters at The Sarah Community.

Sister Marie Juanita died unexpectedly on February 25, 2022 at her home in St. Louis. A funeral service, including the sharing of memories and the Mass of Resurrection, was held at The Sarah Community on March 3, 2022. The following morning, the reading of her biography, sharing of memories and the Mass of Christian Burial was held at Theresa Center with Father Brad Modde as presider. Attending these funeral services were her sister, brother, and sisters-in-law, other relatives, classmates, friends, and SSND sisters and associates. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa Cemetery. A luncheon was served to the guests in Theresa Center auditorium.

She is survived by her sister, Janet (Dennis) White, her brother, Richard (Kris) Will, her sister-in-law, Bernadette Will, relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers, Ted and Victor.

Sister Marie Juanita was a kind and compassionate person and deeply appreciated by all who knew her. May she now rest in peace and be greatly blessed by our God for her years of ministry and for her gracious response to the needs of our sisters at The Sarah Community.

By Sister Carol Marie Willi, SSND

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