

# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Mary Adelyn Vokal

Sister Mary Adelyn Vokal, 90, died on Wednesday, July 26, 2023, just one day prior to her ninety-first birthday and during her seventieth Jubilee year, at Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota.

The oldest child and only daughter of three children in the Vokal family, Sister Mary Adelyn was born July 27, 1932, on the family farm west of Silver Lake, Minnesota and named Elizabeth Joanna, but was always known as Betty. She was baptized at Silver Lake's Czech parish, St. Joseph, August 1.

Sister Mary Adelyn described her home as "solidly Catholic." The family spoke only Czech at home, so when six-year-old Betty entered first grade at St. Joseph School, she did not know any English. For part of the day her first grade teacher sent her to the third and fourth grade teacher, Sister Rose Hrdlicka, a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND), who was Czech. Sister Rose taught Betty how to speak and write English. In her autobiography, Sister Mary Adelyn wrote: "[SSND at St. Joseph] were great sisters who wanted to help so much. I secretly wanted to grow up and be a sister like them and help others in need."

Beginning in fourth grade, Betty took piano and organ lessons from Sister Perpetua Pavlicek, SSND. From sixth grade on, she played at Sunday Masses, funerals, weddings and weekday Requiem Masses during the summer when Sister Perpetua was attending summer school. Due to her mother's ill health, she also helped by doing daily farm chores from an early age.

Betty graduated high school in 1950, earned salutatorian honors and received a college scholarship to the college of her choice. She chose to attend St. Teresa College in Winona, Minnesota, and continued her music education there. Her childhood desire to become a School Sister of Notre Dame stayed with her and, in August 1951, she entered the SSND candidature in Mankato, Minnesota.

After a few weeks, a sister was needed to teach first and second grades at All Saints School, Madison Lake, Minnesota. Because she already had one year of college, Betty filled that need and was also responsible for church music. When the school year ended, she returned to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, and found out that, instead of the usual two years in the candidature, her year at Madison Lake would be her only year as a candidate. She entered the novitiate in July 1952 and received the name Mary Adelyn, a form of her mother's name, choosing to go by Sister Adelyn.

Following profession of first vows in 1953, Sister Adelyn began her Catholic school ministry at St. Stanislaus, St. Paul, where she stayed until 1958, when she was sent to Immaculate Conception, Lonsdale, Minnesota (1958-64). She completed her B.A. degree from St. Catherine's College in 1964 and furthered her education by taking classes at MacPhail School of Music in Minneapolis. She returned to St. Stanislaus (1964-66) and then taught at St. Joseph, Silver Lake (1966-69) and St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul, where she was the principal

*continued*



Birth  
July 27, 1932

Baptism  
August 1, 1932

Profession  
July 19, 1953

Death  
July 26, 2023

Burial  
Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Cemetery

*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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(1969-71). Her years in Silver Lake were shortly after her mother died and she was able to assist her father and brothers, especially on weekends, by cleaning, baking and making hot meals.

In 1971, Sister Adelyn felt drawn “to experience the way of living as a religious sister in a stricter mode of prayer life.” She was accepted into the Carmelite Monastery in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, where, after six months as a postulant, she was received as a novice. Her director for this “most beautiful year” was Sister Miriam of the Holy Spirit, the poet known as Jessica Powers. However, toward the end of her novitiate year, membership in the community sharply declined and she had to decide to either transfer to another monastery or return to SSND. Her father’s increasingly poor health was a factor in her decision to return to SSND in the summer of 1973.

Sister Adelyn applied for a parish minister position at Sacred Heart Parish, Rolette, North Dakota and was hired. During the 1976-77 school year, she taught at St. Michael School, Madison, and then returned to Rolette for one year. She then taught briefly at St. Michael in Madison, St. Francis de Sales in St. Paul and St. Matthias in Hampton, Minnesota. In 1982, she again answered a need for a parish minister in North Dakota, this time at St. Mary’s Parish in Munich. She commented: “I served in the Fargo Diocese for 14 very happy and rewarding years. I truly treasured those years serving the parishes in choir work, teaching religious education classes, giving piano lessons to students qualified to help with parish music, and other activities.” One of the priests with whom she worked, wrote, “Sister Adelyn has been a very valuable asset in our parishes. Perhaps her best work has been in the field of education. She instituted and directed a most effective CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine] program personally training teachers.”

Sister Adelyn answered another need in 1992, when she resumed her Catholic school ministry at St. Peter, Canby, Minnesota, where she taught upper grades and served one year as principal. She worked with the pastor and principal, Fr. Paul van de Crommert, to help revitalize the school. From 2000-13, she moved to St. Aloysius, Olivia, Minnesota, where her job description encompassed a wide range of responsibilities including church music, scheduling, liturgical minister training, being a resource person and various aspects of church work. After one year of volunteer work at St. Anne, Wabasso, Minnesota and neighboring parishes, she retired to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, in 2014. She continued her music ministry as organist for morning and evening prayer in Notre Dame Health Care until shortly before her move to Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota, in the fall of 2022.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Adelyn Vokal was held Monday, July 31, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, with Father Paul van de Crommert as president. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. Burial in the Good Counsel cemetery followed. She is survived by her brothers, Joseph and John Vokal; her nephew, Michael Vokal; and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Adela (Zeik) Vokal.

*By Mary Kay Ash, SSND*