



Birth
September 11, 1935

Baptism
October 6, 1935

Profession
August 1, 1955

Death
February 5, 2022

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery,
Chatawa, Mississippi

*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 Mary Alice (Mary Josene) Reitz

The oldest of four children was born to Idamae (Martin) and Raymond Reitz on September 11, 1935, in Cleveland. She was baptized on October 6, 1935, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church and named Mary Alice. A sister and two brothers would complete the Reitz family.

When she was three years old, her father's work brought the family to the St. Louis area. Mary Alice attended St. Michael the Archangel Parish School in Shrewsbury, Missouri, where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). When she was in the seventh grade, she felt drawn to religious life. The lifestyle and kindness, joy and dedication of her teachers inspired her and she wanted to become a teacher like them. During eighth grade, two aspirants from Sancta Maria in Ripa visited the school and talked to the students about vocations and the SSND aspiranture. This confirmed Mary Alice's desire to become a religious sister.

Mary Alice wished to enter the aspiranture but her parents felt she was too young to make such a big decision. She enrolled at St. Francis de Sales High School for her freshman year. As a sophomore, she transferred to Notre Dame High School. Seeing her continued desire to become a religious sister, her parents consented and in her junior year, she entered the aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa. During her senior year, she accelerated and entered the candidature in January.

Mary Alice received the candidate's bonnet on January 23, 1953, and began her college education at the former Notre Dame College. In September, she was missioned to St. Gertrude, Krakow, Missouri, to teach first, second and third grades in one classroom. She was received into the novitiate on July 31, 1954, and given the name Mary Josene. She professed first vows on August 1, 1955, and final vows on August 1, 1961. She later returned to her baptismal name. Sister Mary Alice was awarded a bachelor's degree in education from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1965 and a master's degree in theology from St. Mary's University, San Antonio, in 1975.

For 19 years, Sister Mary Alice taught children in the elementary grades at St. Mary, Fort Madison, Iowa; St. Joseph, Illmo (Scott City), Missouri; Immaculate Conception, Liberty, Texas; St. Francis of Assisi, Brookhaven, Mississippi; St. Gabriel, New Orleans; and Holy Rosary, San Antonio. In the mid-1970s, she combined her teaching experience with her theology degree and began serving in parish ministry and religious education at Sacred Heart, New Orleans; Our Lady of the Valley, Phoenix; Sacred Heart, Texarkana, Texas, and St. Anthony, Casa Grande, Arizona.

In 1986, she was invited to be on the staff at Association for Independent Living (AFIL), a program for mentally challenged adults in Dallas. In 2004, she moved with 15 of the residents who were ready to live independently to a condominium facility, Storey Lane Chateau, as the resident supervisor and manager of the program. Sister Mary Alice spent over 20 years ministering to this special group of adults. She treasured these years as a special gift that enabled her to use her God-given talents, to grow and experience friendships

continued

In Loving Memory

within a respecting, caring community, loving and appreciating each other. From them, Sister Mary Alice learned what it meant to give unconditionally and to give one's best to any task.

In 2009, she retired in Coppell, Texas, where she continued to serve in volunteer ministry. In 2014, she moved to the former St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Mississippi, and performed community service. In 2019, she moved with other community members to St. Anthony's Gardens, Covington, Louisiana. She passed away on Saturday, February 5, 2022, as two sisters and the wellness nurse kept vigil at her bedside.

Sister Mary Alice chose to have a green burial and was buried in the SSND Cemetery in Chatawa, Mississippi. A memorial Mass was celebrated on February 17, 2022, at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Covington, Louisiana, with Father Rodney Bourg, pastor, as celebrant. She is survived by a sister, Waline Schieman, and a brother, Martin Reitz. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Gerald.

Sister Mary Alice was remembered as a calm, gentle, kind and generous person. She was genuinely interested in others and her ready smile exhibited a sense of peace. Her sense of humor, joy and organization endeared her to the intellectually disabled adults she supervised and with whom she lived for so many years. As a community member, she was an example of a mature, loving person who was attentive to the needs of others. She was an example of a person who was grounded in her union with her God. May she now rejoice with her God as she receives her reward for all the loving care she gave to God's special children.

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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