

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Beth Schraml



Birth
October 25, 1951

Baptism
November 11, 1951

Profession
January 12, 1974

Death
January 17, 2019

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

Sister Mary Beth Schraml, SSND, 67, died Thursday, January 17, 2019, at Mayo Clinic Health System Hospital, Mankato, Minnesota, as a result of a massive brain hemorrhage from which there was no chance of recovery. Family members and her local community were present with her at the time of her death.

The youngest of four children, Sister Mary Beth was born in Mankato on October 25, 1951. She was baptized Jane Geralyn at All Saints Church, Madison Lake, Minnesota, where the Schraml family lived on a farm just north of town. She wrote, "It was a blessing to grow up on a small lakeshore farm just outside Madison Lake where the beauty and wonder of creation surrounded us. Our home was filled with love and laughter, music and singing, faith and faithfulness, high expectations and encouragement." She continued, "Mom and Dad didn't talk much about love, but we saw it in the way they cherished and honored each other. They didn't talk much about faith, but we saw it in their fidelity to Mass, the family rosary, service to our parish, and helpfulness to the sisters at school."

Jane followed her brothers and sister when she enrolled at All Saints School in 1958. She wrote, "Daily contact with the sisters at school was another blessing. I loved the sisters who taught us, was intrigued by their dedication and cheerfulness, and often thought about religious life." Her fourth-grade teacher, Sister Joan Herbrand, died in May, and the Schramls brought Jane and several classmates to Our Lady of Good Counsel for the wake. This was Jane's first memory of Good Counsel Hill, and she commented, "It was love at first sight."

As an eighth grader, Jane asked her parents if she could attend Good Counsel Academy, but her dad said that she would go to Loyola High School, as her older siblings did. He said, "I know what you're thinking – we'll send you up there [Good Counsel] and then you'll walk across the street and become a nun." That was exactly what she was thinking, even though she hadn't said anything about it. She spent four years at Loyola, especially enjoying chorus – "I began to realize the gift song is for me and can be for others" - and journalism, serving as co-editor of "The Loyolan" as a senior. During her senior year, she did make plans to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame postulancy, which she did on August 23, 1970. Jane spent two years as a postulant, attending college classes and learning about SSND life. She became a novice in July 1972 and asked to be known as Sister Mary Beth. She wrote, "I chose the name for Mary and Elizabeth – always feeling close to Mary, and having learned that 'Beth' in Hebrew means 'house, home, dwelling place,' and hoping to become a dwelling place for God and all those God places in my life."

On January 12, 1974, Sister Mary Beth professed first vows. After profession, she took college classes for a semester and then began her decades-long ministry of teaching young children. She taught at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul, Minnesota (1974-76); Blessed Sacrament, Waterloo, Iowa (1976-78); St. John the Baptist, Vermillion, Minnesota (1978-79); St. Joseph/Notre Dame, Cresco,

continued

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Iowa (1979-88); and at St. Mary's in the Winona, Minnesota, Catholic School System, where she was also assistant principal (1988-90). In 1990, she became teacher of grades one and two at her home parish, All Saints in Madison Lake, Minnesota, where she stayed until 2005. From 1999 until 2005, she was also principal at All Saints. In 2005, she moved to her ministry at Loyola Catholic School, Mankato, Minnesota, serving initially as a first grade teacher (2005-07), then as principal of the primary unit (2007-2016), and finally, as Mission Integration Associate. During her years in the classroom, she earned a B.A. in education and theology from Mount Mary College in 1976, and an M.S. in child development and early childhood education from Wheelock College, Boston, in 1993.

Sister Mary Beth often wrote about the joys of teaching. "I have always considered it a great blessing to have found my niche in ministry early on, loving school as a student and loving it as a teacher. It was a blessing to spend 33 years of my life as a classroom teacher, with little children who delighted and challenged me every day. Their profound thoughts nourished my faith and prayer again and again. Over the years, wherever I served I found myself falling in love with the parish, the school, the community, my colleagues, and most of all, the children."

Another important aspect of Sister Mary Beth's ministry was liturgical music. She commented, "Everywhere I have served I provided prayer experiences, planned school liturgies, played guitar and led in song." She was often part of the liturgical music combos at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, and assisted with liturgical planning for Jubilee celebrations.

As a School Sister of Notre Dame, Sister Mary Beth was involved in vocation ministry and was active on the province vocation committee. Other SSND involvement included the Global Connections Border Experience (2008) and the English Language Camp in Budapest, Hungary (2011).

At Loyola, she was described as "personifying the heart and soul of our school." She made it a special point to integrate the spirit of both St. Ignatius of Loyola and Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger into the daily life of the school. One of her favorite daily responsibilities was greeting students as they arrived in the morning. As the official "tour guide," she was often the face of Loyola for new families. She also was the bridge between Loyola and the School Sisters of Notre Dame, keeping sisters informed of activities at the school through a weekly newsletter that always concluded with day-brightening anecdotes.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Joseph Fogal as presider, was celebrated Thursday, January 24, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, with burial in the Good Counsel cemetery. Visitation and Vespers were held the evening before. A memorial Mass was also celebrated in the Loyola School Chapel Wednesday afternoon. She is survived by her sister, Marie Groebner (Jerry); and her brother, Gary; nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Francis and Lorraine (Fasnacht) Schraml; and her brother Gayle and his wife Sandy.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND