



## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Mary Butzer

Sister Mary Butzer (formerly Margaret Marie), 84, died at her St. Paul apartment on Monday, July 9, 2018. She was the sixth child of 12 born to John and Frances (Rock) Butzer in Mankato, Minnesota, on July 7, 1934. She was baptized Mary Frances two weeks later at SS. Peter & Paul Church.

Mary wrote, “Being the sixth child in a family of 12 had distinct opportunities for obtaining knowledge and sharing it. My father was a general practitioner and my mother a registered nurse, who read voraciously and insatiably. Dictionary games at meals kept all of us alert and determined to find words for the next family meal.”

She continued, “My dad played a great but silent part in my vocation. He never said a word to me about entering the School Sisters of Notre Dame, but this was his one big wish for me, as he often mentioned it to his patients in the sisters’ infirmary and asked them to pray for me.” Mary also remembered, “It was Dad, who when I was exasperated at age four that no one would listen to me, told me there was a greater Friend who would always listen.”

Mary started first grade at SS. Peter & Paul School in 1940, where her teachers were School Sisters of Notre Dame. She admired her teachers and imitated them at home, “teaching” her younger siblings. After eighth grade, she attended Good Counsel Academy as a day student, where she grew to love her teachers even more. Her first vocational choice was to be a mother and nurse but, as she wrote, “the sister idea kept creeping in.” She made the decision to enter SSND at Christmas of her senior year. Her father signed the entrance papers immediately when she gave them to him. She entered the SSND candidature in August 1952.

Mary was received into the novitiate in July 1953, and given the name Sister Mary Gretchen, her younger sister’s name. However, a few months later, her name was changed to Sister Margaret Marie by SSND leadership in Milwaukee, because Gretchen was not considered a saint’s name. She later returned to her baptismal name of Mary. She professed first vows in 1954, and spent the next year as a student in St. Paul. She then began a teaching ministry that encompassed the next 35 years of her life. She taught primary and middle grade students at Holy Childhood, St. Paul; Crucifixion, La Crescent, Minnesota; St. Francis De Sales, St. Paul; St. John the Baptist, Dayton, Minnesota; St. Mary, Madelia, Minnesota; St. Peter, Canby, Minnesota; St. Benedict, Strasburg, North Dakota (where she taught upper grades); St. Joseph-St. John, Mankato, Minnesota; St. Stanislaus, St. Paul, where she was involved in a program that brought religious education into the home; SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato; and St. Casimir, St. Paul. With the exception of her first school, she was also responsible for the music in the school and/or parish. During her years of teaching she earned a B.A. from St. Catherine’s College in 1962, and a M.Ed. from the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, in 1973.

As much as she loved children and teaching, Sister Mary also held a special spot in her heart for the elderly. Growing up, she was close to her grandparents.

Birth  
July 7, 1934

Baptism  
July 22, 1934

Profession  
July 21, 1954

Death  
July 9, 2018

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

*continued*

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*Sister Mary Butzer*



While she was teaching at SS. Peter & Paul, she cared for her mother. In 1991, she became a member of the pastoral team at Good Counsel's St. Joseph Hall Health Care and served as organist for Good Counsel liturgies. She counseled sisters, companioned them during emergency care, planned their birthday parties, visited as often as possible and prayed at their deathbeds. During this time, she completed work for a Master of Arts in pastoral skills from Seattle University in 1994.

In 1995, Sister Mary transitioned into parish work, serving first at St. Joseph, Montevideo, Minnesota, as pastoral associate and CCD coordinator until 1997 and then with the Delano, Minnesota, Catholic community as a parish minister until 2004. One of her responsibilities there was leading wake and burial services, a practice that she continued into retirement.

Sister Mary retired from active ministry in 2004 and spent one year at the SSND folk art house in Oakdale, Minnesota. In 2005, she moved to Graham Place in St. Paul and endeared herself to residents and others whom she met. Music continued to hold a high priority in her life. She assisted with hospitality at Notre Dame Center by serving as a driver. One of her retirement ministries was reaching out to others through the use of e-mail and social media. Within minutes of receiving e-mail messages, she often responded to them with her special brand of encouraging humor. Her family regarded her as the "glue" that held them together, and she stated, "It would take many pages to tell how many people have a place in my life." Throughout her life, she struggled with health issues and was especially pleased to be able to celebrate her 80th birthday and 60th anniversary of religious profession, both in 2014.

In her 2014 Jubilee Reflection, she wrote, "I know my own plans were often interrupted by God's plan, Plan B. Once I understood this amazing fact, I grew to know God's plan was the better one every time. I decided this was the faith aspect I would eventually follow even if I did not understand it. I know everything became a wonderful life packet as I accepted Plan B."

The funeral liturgy, with Father Joseph Fogal as presider, was held Wednesday, July 18, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel. A prayer service of remembrance preceded the funeral liturgy. Burial of her cremains followed in the Good Counsel Cemetery. A memorial service was also scheduled at her St. Paul apartment building, Graham Place, on July 27. She is survived by her brothers Paul, Karl, Luke, Stephen and Thomas; her sisters, Susan Henning and Gretchen Jewison; 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, John and Frances (Rock) Butzer; her brothers, Jack, Mark and Matt; and her sister, Judy Small.

*By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND*

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