



Birth
March 27, 1917

Baptism
April 1, 1917

Profession
Aug. 5, 1936

Death
March 4, 2016

Burial
Notre Dame of
Elm Grove Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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 Carolyn Stahl, SSND

Born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin on March 27, 1917, to Henry and Caroline (Trimberger) Stahl she was baptized Lorraine Sarah at St. Peter Claver Church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. She was the second of five children who shared a happy family life with their loving parents. Sister Carolyn recalled how she told her playmate about being born on a Tuesday. "How do you know that it was a Tuesday?" her playmate asked. "Well, I was there!" she answered.

Her mother, Caroline, and her father, Henry, were also there on that Tuesday, along with their first-born, Viola. Through the years, her other siblings followed: Augustine (Augie), Caroline, and Michael. All were healthy except little Michael. At about 6 months, he had convulsions. Spinal meningitis left him unable to talk, or at least, talk very little. Despite his attendance at St. Coletta's Institute for two years, his progress was very slow.

Mr. Stahl ran an implement and seed store a few blocks from home. Both parents were staunch German Catholics. They spoke only German at home. Sometimes, as an adult, Carolyn would slip in a German word or expression that did a better job for her than the English.

Lorraine was educated at Holy Name School in Sheboygan and taught by the SSNDs. Following elementary graduation, Lorraine surprised her mother by saying that she wanted to become a sister. In her 50th Jubilee autobiography, Sister Carolyn wrote. "Entering the convent was not easy for me. I almost died from homesickness. My mother gently reminded me that this was what I wanted. Then she simply announced on that first visiting Sunday that there was no room in the car for my return home. Would I like to try it until the next month's visiting day? ...and then, would I want to try it for a year? ... Sister commented: "It is now 50 years since I tried it...and I like it!"

She was received into the novitiate on July 31, 1936 and given her religious name, Mary Carolyn. She professed first vows on August 5, 1936. Sister Carolyn completed her bachelor's degree with a major in English and minors in history and speech at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee in 1952.

Sister Carolyn ministered for 54 years as an educator, initially serving at Catholic schools in Wisconsin: St. Anne, Milwaukee; Holy Redeemer, Madison; St. Boniface, Milwaukee; St. James, Mukwonago; Christ King, Wauwatosa; and Catholic Central Grade School, Appleton.

When she was missioned to St. James, Mukwonago, she did not know that the school was not finished. She would be teaching 60 students in grades 6, 7 and 8 in a large room in the basement of the rectory. She would be the principal, the teacher and the janitor in school and part-time cook and sacristan with three other SSNDs. When asked how she liked it, she exclaimed, "I loved it!" Part of loving it was her continual delight in teaching choral speaking and singing, plus putting on Christmas plays and spring plays with the students. They caught her enthusiasm in producing something so wonderful to see and hear.

She was called to serve in the U.S. Territory of Guam twice: from 1955-1962, she taught at St. Francis School and directed the aspiranture of SSND in Yona and from 1964-1981, she served as teacher and administrator at St. Francis

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Carolyn Stahl



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**School Sisters
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THROUGH EDUCATION

School in Yona for five more years prior to taking on the role of education consultant for 12 years with the Guam Penitentiary in Talofoto.

The next sentences written in her autobiography are written so simply, one almost misses the poignancy: “In 1955 I was called to Guam. My mother died 10 days before I left, leaving my 78-year-old father to live alone with our dear mentally handicapped Michael. Knowing that my siblings: Viola, Augie and Caroline, were so devoted to him was a great comfort. He was the bond that held them together. Nevertheless, I left Milwaukee with a broken heart.”

The first six years on Guam she taught junior high students and was in charge of the aspirants. Then in 1962 Typhoon Karen roared straight through Yona, ripping off roof tops, destroying buildings, uprooting everything in its path. After months of helping to clean up the soggy debris, she and the nine aspirants in her charge flew to the states where the aspirants would continue their formation at Notre Dame of the Lake in Mequon, Wisconsin. After a short two years, Guam called her back. Carolyn knew that this time, her tearful goodbye would be her final goodbye to her 87-year-old father.

During her last 12 years on Guam as the education consultant at the men’s penitentiary, Sister Carolyn taught basic education and GED, started a library, wrote a monthly newsletter and formed a men’s choir. For Christmas, she had the men dressed in gowns of serge donated by the sisters and modeled after a chasuble by a prisoner who had been a tailor. A brilliant three inch wide red ribbon ran down the front, adding its brilliance to the songs belted out by the prisoners to announce Christmas joy.

Upon returning to the states, Sister Carolyn relished a year’s sabbatical. She taught at Catholic Central Grade School and served in pastoral ministry at St. Joseph Parish in Appleton, Wisconsin for seven years. In 1989, she moved to Convent Hill (site of the former motherhouse) in Milwaukee where she ministered with SIS (Sisters Interacting with Seniors). She visited neighbors, was a Eucharistic minister and for nearly 20 years served on Tuesdays at “The Gathering” – a meal site at St. James Episcopal Church. Even when she came to Elm Grove in 2009, and at 92 years old, still arranged to get picked up once a week by one of the workers to continue serving her patrons.

Retiring completely in 2011, Carolyn could be seen walking the paths, enjoying the quiet rhythms of nature from the lawn chair, communing with the God she had so lovingly harbored as God’s indwelling presence. Struck down by a stroke, she suffered the loss of her most treasured possession – her speech. With speech therapy and a steel-like determination, she practiced, practiced, frustrated by the slowness of the process to get her speech back. But persevere she did and finally triumphed.

She died on March 4, 2016 at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She was 98. Sister Carolyn is survived by her sister, Viola Zajkowski; brother, Augie Stahl; nieces and nephews; dear friends and the SSND Community.

On her death bed these past weeks, Carolyn lost her speech again. Her conversation then would only be with the God of her heart. And finally the moment came for her birth into heaven where she could begin talking face to face with her indwelling God for all eternity. It was a Friday, and she knew it was a Friday because she was there!

*This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information
and the eulogy presented by Sister Marie LeClerc Laux, SSND*