



**Birth**

March 31, 1918

**Baptism**

April 28, 1918

**Profession**

July 20, 1939

**Death**

October 29, 2017

**Burial**

Notre Dame of Elm Grove  
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

## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Mary Denis O'Reilly

**B**orn March 31, 1918, in Toronto, Canada, she was the fourth child in a family of 10 children. She was baptized and named Mary Victorine Theresa. Her family moved to Detroit in 1926, and she attended Holy Rosary School before transferring to St. Anthony's, Detroit, where she first met the School Sisters of Notre Dame. By the end of 10th grade, she entered the order. As stated in her autobiography in 1988, "I have always had a great desire to teach poor children, or slow or neglected children. I am now in my 49th year of teaching and I will never be able to thank God enough for all His Love."

Sister Mary Denis professed first vows in 1939. She ministered in education for 68 years, starting in 1936 and retiring in 1986. She served as a teacher and principal in elementary schools. For 13 years, she taught a course on diagnosing reading problems in children at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee. She served at the following schools: St. Joseph and Holy Cross, Milwaukee, and St. John the Baptist, Marshfield, Wisconsin; St. Ambrose, Chicago, and St. Benedict, Blue Island, Illinois; and Sacred Heart, Warsaw and St. Mary, Alexandria in Indiana.

When she retired in 2006, the parishioners of St. Mary in Alexandria honored her for her 24 years of service to the school. Sister Mary Denis earned a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee and a master's degree in education from Marquette University in Milwaukee.

In her Jubilee reflection from 2014, celebrating 75 years as a sister she wrote, "From the time I made my first Holy Communion, I wanted to become a sister. I had a special love for Blessed Theresa, SSND foundress, and I often prayed to her to help me find the way. I wanted to help children, poor children. During the 10th grade, I heard talks about the missions. Though I wanted to be a sister, the thought of leaving my four younger sisters was very hard for me. Eventually, with advice from Sister Raphael and help from my older brother, I prepared to leave my home in Detroit for the SSND candidature at the motherhouse in Milwaukee. I missed my family so much. Sister Rose Ernst was my guardian angel and helped me during this difficult time. My teaching years were always happy for me. I loved being with children. I retired at 88 years of age to Notre Dame of Elm Grove."

Sister Mary Denis was known for her ministry of letter writing, especially to sisters who were missioned to other states informing them of community matters and greetings. She loved parties and

*continued*

# *In Loving Memory*



*Sister Mary Denis O'Reilly*



making others laugh, and was very fond of St. Patrick's Day, which was celebrated with as much fervor as Christmas.

Sister Mary Denis died October 30, 2017, at age 99. She is survived by her sister, Sister Mary Brigid SSND, nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Francis and Mary and her sisters Helen Schulte, Rita Paulus, Catherine Tyll, Irene Costello, and her brother Francis.

*This remembrance was compiled from SSND archival information.*

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**School Sisters  
of Notre Dame**  
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD  
THROUGH EDUCATION