



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Dominic Klaseus

Early in the afternoon of December 21, 2021, Sister Mary Dominic Klaseus died in Notre Dame Hall, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. She had experienced declining health in the weeks previous to her death, and sisters were taking turns praying with her in her final days.

The first child of the Klaseus family, Marilyn Helen was born on February 26, 1928, in St. Joseph Hospital, Mankato. She was baptized two weeks later at SS. Peter and Paul Church. Marilyn grew up in the shadow of Good Counsel Hill, in Duke's Addition and in 1933, she entered kindergarten at SS. Peter & Paul School, where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

In sixth grade, she admired and respected her teacher, Sister Clarentia Trautner, who asked her at the beginning of summer vacation what she planned to do when she was older. Sister Dominic described what happened next: "In my surprise I blurted out, 'Be a sister like you are!' She wasn't amazed, but I was. As I walked home, I must have meditated for the first time. My main interests in life were reading and athletics. In an effort to have my cake and eat it too, I had always planned on being a librarian or a physical education teacher. Religious life had never occurred to me." By the time she was in the seventh grade, she had definitely decided to become a sister, but didn't tell anyone until after eighth grade graduation when her parents asked her about high school plans. Her father, in particular, vehemently opposed her choice, "and decided that four years at Loyola High School would change my mind." Marilyn, however, chose courses that would be needed for her future as a teacher. She credited Sister Clarentia with mentoring her vocational choice, encouraging daily Mass attendance and fostering a love for the Sacred Heart. When Marilyn was a junior, her sister, Jean, was born, which Marilyn saw as a blessing in regard to her vocational choice. And shortly before graduation, "there was a complete capitulation on the part of my parents."

In 1946, Marilyn entered the SSND candidature in Mankato to prepare for her life as a School Sister of Notre Dame. As a second-year candidate, she taught 54 fourth grade students at St. Matthew School in St. Paul. On July 18, 1948, she was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Dominic. She professed first vows on July 19, 1949, and shortly after began her teaching ministry at Holy Childhood School in St. Paul, where she stayed until 1951. She continued teaching middle and upper grades at St. Felix, Wabasha; St. Mary, Worthington; and Sacred Heart, St. Paul, all in Minnesota. From 1963 through 1965, in addition to teaching eighth grade, she was also principal at St. Benedict School, Strasburg, North Dakota, a dual role that she continued at St. John the Baptist School in Mankato, Minnesota. She earned a B.A. in English and education from the College of St. Catherine (1958); an M.S. in elementary education administration (1971) and an Education Specialist degree (1978), both from Mankato State College (now Minnesota State University).

In 1969, the four parishes of Mankato agreed to establish a new school for all seventh and eighth grade students. Sister Dominic became the principal of this cooperative venture, named Fitzgerald Middle School in honor of the then current bishop of the Winona Diocese. Sister Dominic called her years at

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Birth
February 26, 1928

Baptism
March 11, 1928

Profession
July 19, 1949

Death
December 21, 2021

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

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Fitzgerald, “the Camelot of my educational experiences.” The staff developed a curriculum tailored to the needs of pre-adolescent students and expanded the basic curriculum offerings to include art, music, basic woodworking, sewing and food preparation for all students. Sister Dominic was recognized as an outstanding educational leader and was the right person to inaugurate the middle school concept in Mankato.

In 1977, Sister Dominic took on a new challenge, administrator of the Lonsdale-New Market-Veseli (LNMV) Area Catholic School consolidation, with school buildings in all three towns. When she left LNMV in 1987, the following tribute appeared in the local paper, “We have all witnessed and benefited from her strong belief in a good parochial school education; her unbounded zest and energy when it came to our school and its many fund raisers; and her keen love of God and (the) conviction to pass it on to us and our children through our Area School and CCD programs.”

Following her 10-year stint at LNMV, Sister Dominic applied for the administration position at St. Timothy School, Maple Lake. An introductory article in the local paper stated that her primary reason for accepting the position was educationally based, “I really believe in excellence in education for our children in the more rural areas. The value system of the rural population and their schools are from where the country’s and the church’s leadership will come.” In recognition of her leadership at St. Timothy, she was selected in 1988 as the distinguished principal from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Region VIII.

In 1993, she moved into a new area of ministry. “I always said that while I still had energy and enthusiasm, I wanted to work with our retired sisters.” The position of health care administrator at Our Lady of Good Counsel opened; she applied for it and was accepted. Following a semester of gerontology studies, she began work in the St. Joseph Hall Health Care Center, Our Lady of Good Counsel, in January 1994. In her administrative role of management and supervision, she saw herself first as an advocate for the retired and ill sisters. When the decision was made in 2000 to construct a new health care wing for sisters, Sister Dominic donned a hard hat and became the communication person between SSND and the construction workers.

When Notre Dame Health Care was finished and Theresa and Isidore Halls were renovated, Sister Dominic turned in her hard hat and focused her attention on the volunteers who offered their services on Good Counsel Hill. She also became the moderator for the Good Counsel Auxiliary and the bedroom coordinator for hospitality. For many years, she was the designated tour guide for Hill facilities. With her Mankato background and strong “people skills,” she served as an ambassador for SSND to the local Mankato community.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Mary Dominic will be held in the spring to allow for out-of-state family to attend. She is survived by her sister, Jean (Jack) Burkard; nieces and a nephew; and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Clarence and Agnes (Roerig) Klaseus; and her brother, Dick.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND