

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Edwin Lanners



Birth
August 24, 1933

Baptism
August 27, 1933

Profession
July 21, 1954

Death
October 9, 2023

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 Edwin Lanners, 90, died at Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota, October 9, 2023. Sisters had been visiting and praying with her in the days leading up to her death.

Sister Mary Edwin, the second child and only daughter in the Lanners family, was born on the family farm near St. Leo, Minnesota, August 24, 1933. Three days later, she was baptized Dorena Ann Sophie at St. Leo Church. She wrote about her early childhood: "I walked and talked and was spoiled at an early age – so the story goes." In September 1939, Dorena enrolled in first grade at St. Leo School, St. Leo, Minnesota, where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). She wrote, "From my early years, I admired and loved the School Sisters of Notre Dame." Remembering a special time, she recounted: "The summer of 1941, Grandma and Grandpa Tholkes took me along to Good Counsel, to visit their daughter, Sister Anne Marie, then a candidate. It was a thrill never forgotten." In grade school, Dorena showed strong talent as a pianist and competed in piano contests. The prize for one of them was the opportunity to play on the Cedric Adams show on WCCO radio in Minneapolis.

When Dorena completed eighth grade in 1947, her parents wanted her to continue her Catholic education, and she became a freshman boarder at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota, that fall. She commented, "Each year, I loved and appreciated the place and all in it more and more. Sunday, June 3, 1951, was graduation day. It was on that memorable eve that I asked my parents, in the middle of a Mankato street, 'Can I be a sister?'" She later learned that, from the time she was a young girl, her father had prayed a rosary for her at every Mass that God might call her to be a sister.

On August 28, 1951, Dorena returned to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, to enter the candidature. As a second-year candidate, she taught a large kindergarten class at SS. Peter & Paul School, Mankato. She was received into the novitiate July 20, 1953, and given the name Sister Mary Edwin, the name of one of her brothers.

Following profession of first vows in 1954, Sister Mary Edwin began a ministry that would encompass classroom teaching, school administration, development work and parish ministry in Minnesota and South Dakota. Sister Mary Edwin's first assignment was teaching first graders at St. Felix, Wabasha, Minnesota (1954-58). In 1958, she and Sister Petrine Schmitz opened the school in Mankato's newest parish, St. Joseph the Worker. They were the only two teachers, and grades one and two were the only grades. The classrooms were not ready, so the sisters taught in improvised classrooms in the auditorium and rectory basement. In 1959, Sister Mary Edwin was called on again to help open a new school, St. John the Baptist in Savage, Minnesota, where she taught grade one and was the music director until 1961. In many of her assignments, she served as parish organist.

continued

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Lanners*



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Sister Mary Edwin continued her educational ministry at schools throughout Minnesota; Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Paul (1961-70), another school that she helped open; St. Martin, Rogers, where she was also the principal (1970-73); St. Joseph, Red Wing (1973-75); St. Michael, Madison, where she was principal (1975-79); and St. Peter, Canby, where she was principal (1979-83). In 1983, Sister Mary Edwin began a five-year ministry as junior high teacher and development director at St. Mary's, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. After a sabbatical year (1988-89), she returned to St. Mary's for one more year as development director. In 1989, she moved to Springfield, Minnesota, and served as principal of St. Raphael School until 1992. After working one year in the Good Counsel Education Center, Mankato, Minnesota, she was the principal at St. Francis School, Benson, Minnesota, until 1995. Her final ministry in Minnesota was a third round as development director at St. Mary's, Sleepy Eye (1995-97). When she left St. Mary's to move closer to home, the pastor thanked her for starting the development program and establishing a strong connection with St. Mary's alumni. She began the school endowment fund and created ways for alumni and parishioners to be involved with St. Mary's School. She was also instrumental in helping to begin a city food shelf in Sleepy Eye.

Sister Mary Edwin earned a BA from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, in 1964 and a certificate from the Omaha Educational Development Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, in 1983.

In 1997, Sister Mary Edwin moved to Clear Lake, South Dakota, to help care for her elderly mother. She tutored in special education classes at the Deuel School in Clear Lake, South Dakota, for one year and then was the administrator at St. Lawrence School in Milbank until 2000 and at Holy Rosary School in Kranzburg until 2003, both in South Dakota. She next served in parish ministry at St. Mary's Parish in Clear Lake until 2009. Sister Mary Edwin continued her service as a minister of presence at Earth Rise Farm in Louisberg, Minnesota, and then as a volunteer at the Community Clothesline in Rochester, Minnesota. In 2013, she returned to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota, and continued her volunteer ministry until moving to Benedictine Living Community – St. Gertrude's, Shakopee, Minnesota, in the fall of 2022.

Sister Mary Edwin considered her nine years at Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Paul, to be a missionary experience. She was able to accompany students on a trip to Mexico, and arranged for school children to spend time on her family's farm. Family was important to Sister Mary Edwin, and she looked forward to time spent with family members.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Mary Edwin was held Friday, October 13, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, Minnesota, with Father John Kunz as president. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the Liturgy. Burial in the Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery followed, Mankato, Minnesota.

Sister Mary Edwin is survived by her brother, Ralph and his wife, Christine Lanners; her sister-in-law, Lynda Lanners; 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, Alexander and Regina (Tholkes) Lanners; and her brothers, Dennis and Edwin Lanners.

By Mary Kay Ash, SSND