



Birth
August 22, 1926

Baptism
September 5, 1926

Profession
July 22, 1945

Death
January 21, 2023

Burial
Our Lady of Good Counsel

*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 Eugene Braun

Sister Mary Eugene Braun, 96, died peacefully on January 21, 2023, at Benedictine Living Community in Shakopee, Minnesota. Sisters had been keeping vigil with her in the days before her death.

Sister Mary Eugene, the fourth of eight children in the Braun family, was born August 22, 1926, on the family farm northwest of St. Pius, North Dakota. At her baptism in the Church of St. Pius, she was given the name Helen. As an elementary school student, she divided her time between two schools. She attended public country school for grades one, three, and five, and St. Pius School for grades two, four, and six through eight. When a student at St. Pius, her teachers were School Sisters of Notre Dame, and she boarded at the school because it was too far to go back and forth daily. During her childhood there were hints about becoming a sister – she enjoyed dressing in black like a sister and playing school, something that her mother liked to see. She also commented, “From the age of eight until I left home, my greatest joy was to take care of children. After the younger members of our family were grown up, my aunts would call for me to take care of their children.” She wanted to work in an orphanage but realized that God had destined her for another type of service.

Her father would comment that he would like to see a priest and a sister come from the family and would tease Helen, saying, “Here’s our sister.” Helen had great devotion to the Blessed Mother and eventually felt that she was being called to become a sister. During eighth grade, her teacher told Helen that she would make a good sister, something that Helen discussed with her mother. Her mother, however, thought that Helen should finish high school first. Following her sophomore year at St. Pius High School, Helen decided in August to enter the candidature at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Mankato, Minnesota. Her mother gave her consent after telling Helen that she had wished to become a sister, but family circumstances did not permit it.

Helen entered the SSND candidature in August 1942, one day before her sixteenth birthday. Her calling was to be a home service sister, and she spent her first year in the candidature helping in the candidates’ dining room and the guest department. As a second-year candidate she assisted at St. Matthew Convent, St. Paul. She was received into the novitiate in July 1944, and given the name Sister Mary Eugene, after one of her brothers. Following profession of first vows in 1945, she returned to St. Matthew. In 1946 she was missioned to St. Mary, New England, North Dakota, where cooking and caring for 200 boarding students was her main responsibility. She moved to SS. Peter & Paul in Mantador, North Dakota, for the 1947-48 school year. In 1948, she was one of five sisters to open St. John the Baptist School and Convent in Dayton, Minnesota, and in 1950, she continued her pioneering ways by being part of the group that opened St. Joseph School and Convent in Montevideo, Minnesota, where she remained until 1953. Following a year in the motherhouse kitchen, she served in her home parish of St. Pius, where again she cooked and cared for boarders until 1956. Her final two mission experiences were in Minnesota at St. Felix, Wabasha (1956-58) and Assumption, St. Paul (1958-66). As a young

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Eugene Braun



home service sister, she had two recipes published in the 1947 SSND Centennial Cookbook: Glorified Rice and Ginger Snaps.

In 1966, Sister Mary Eugene was called to Good Counsel Hill to work with postulants by assisting with their household needs and to help in the sewing room, roles she held until 1975. The next two years were spent at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Winona, where she helped in food service. Good Counsel called again in 1977 and, this time, Sister Mary Eugene's area of service was the motherhouse laundry. A profile of Sister Mary Eugene published in 2000, estimated that she had laundered close to a half million sheets during her years in the laundry.

The caregiving skills that she developed as a child were called forth during this time. Dr. Charles and Lois Zwisler and their family lived below Good Counsel Hill, and their daughter, Ann, born with multiple handicaps, now an adult, needed constant care. Sister Mary Eugene became one of Ann's caregivers. Ann was blind and did not speak, but she knew when Sister Mary Eugene was there. She helped with Ann for more than eleven years and, after Ann died in 1989, Sister Mary Eugene composed a letter in Ann's name to her parents, sharing thoughts and words that Ann had not been able to say. Part of it read, "Now it is my turn to help all of you. From my place in heaven, I will watch over all of you."

Sister Mary Eugene's laundry service ended in 2003, but she continued to share her gifts with the SSND community in a variety of ways. An excellent seamstress, she made drapes to order and helped in the sewing room. She was famous for her pickles. She kept track of sisters' items in storage and, through it all, she said, "I've had such happy, fulfilling years." Guiding her were Mary's words at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you."

The funeral mass for Sister Mary Eugene was held Monday, January 30, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, with Father Joe Fogal as president. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. Burial of her remains in the Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery in Mankato will be held at a later date.

She is survived by her sister, Laverne Rios; 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, Peter and Bridget (Roeder) Braun; her sisters, Florence Voris and Mildred Hegel-Heinle; and her brothers, Ernest, Eugene, Henry and Louie.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND

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