

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Kenan Wolff



Birth
August 26, 1926

Baptism
September 9, 1926

Profession
July 29, 1948

Death
February 3, 2020

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
Cemetery, St. Louis, MO

*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 Kenan Wolff, 93, passed away peacefully on February 3, 2020, at Anna House, The Sarah Community, in Bridgeton, Missouri. She was the oldest girl born to Martha (Wicklein) and Victor Wolff on August 26, 1926, in St. Louis. She was baptized on September 9, 1926, at St. Boniface Church, Evansville, Illinois, and named Mary Jeanne. Two more girls, Jeanette and Janet, would complete the family. When Mary Jeanne was 11 years old, the family moved to Evansville, Illinois. Here the family worked in the chick hatchery business and also had a grain elevator.

Mary Jeanne attended St. Boniface Grade School under the guidance of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ from Ruma, Illinois. After graduation, she attended the local public high school in Evansville for two years. In her junior year, she transferred to the Academy of Notre Dame in Belleville, Illinois. Since the Academy was 30 miles from her home, she was a boarding student. After graduation, she remained in Belleville and became a student at LeClerc College for two years. Her years at the Academy and LeClerc College, which were staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, helped her to decide her vocation to enter the SSND congregation.

Mary Jeanne entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, on August 29, 1945. During her second year of candidature, she was missioned to Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Louis, to teach fourth grade. She was received into the novitiate on July 28, 1947, and given the name Mary Kenan. Profession of first vows was on July 29, 1948, and final vows on July 29, 1954.

She received a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1955, and a master's degree in secondary education from Our Lady of the Lake College (now University), San Antonio, Texas, in 1963.

During the first 16 years following profession, she taught in the south: seven years at Sacred Heart, New Orleans, Louisiana; seven years at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Mississippi; and two years at Redemptorist High School, New Orleans. She was also in charge of the boarders during her years at Chatawa.

In the 1960s, the St. Louis Province was divided and the decision was made for her to return to St. Louis from the south. Sister Mary Kenan taught at St. Francis Borgia High School, Washington, Missouri; Rosary High School and St. Francis de Sales High School, St. Louis; Academy of Notre Dame, Belleville, Illinois; Cardinal Stritch High School, Keokuk, Iowa. She was principal at St. Joseph High School, Farmington, Missouri, when the St. Louis Archdiocese made the decision to close the high school.

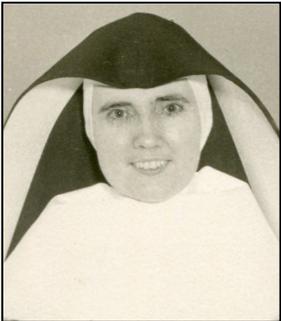
A career change in 1973 found her as a high school librarian and media specialist at St. Francis de Sales, St. Louis. Later, she would be a librarian at Notre Dame High School, St. Louis; Our Lady of Loretto High School, Los

continued

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Angeles; and St. Anthony High School, Effingham, Illinois. She was active in the Catholic Library Association and served as an officer on the local and national levels.

In the early 1980s, Sister Mary Kenan spent two summers in El Progreso, Honduras. This experience strengthened her love for the poor. She then spent two years in pastoral ministry among the poor at St. Philip, East St. Louis, Illinois. In the 1990s, she spent two years of volunteer service at St. Boniface and St. Andrew elementary schools in St. Louis. In 1996, she began a part-time ministry as archivist for the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois, a position she held until 2012. During this time, she volunteered at Meredith Home in Belleville, Illinois and was also a part-time driver for the sisters at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis. As her health declined, she was missioned to Veronica House in September 2015, and to Anna House in December 2016. She passed away peacefully at Anna House on February 3, 2020, as sisters prayed with her.

A wake and vigil service was held at The Sarah Community and Theresa Center on February 6, 2020. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Ralph Parthie, OFM as celebrant. A nephew, Ed Crony from Rochester, New York; a niece-in-law, Amy Crony and her son, Stephen from Edwardsville, Illinois, attended the services. Sisters, friends and associates were also present. Sister Mary Kenan was preceded in death by her parents and her two sisters, Jeanette Crony and Janet Wolff.

During her more than 70 years as a School Sister of Notre Dame, Sister Mary Kenan served in a variety of ministries as an elementary and secondary teacher, principal, pastoral minister, librarian, archivist, driver and volunteer. Her early years at the Academy of Notre Dame and LeClerc College held a special place in her heart and that of her family. They donated the shrine to Our Lady of Fatima that was located on the front lawn of the Academy grounds.

Sister Mary Kenan was a kind and gentle woman who sought to help others wherever she could. She was greatly respected for her ministry as a diocesan archivist. She embraced the numerous changes in her life and ministry. In her copy of "You Are Sent," she had a holy card with the prayer, "Grant, O Lord, that, leaving all things, I may follow You through the paths of hope." Her life of ministry illustrated this prayer.

Her favorite hobbies were reading, board games (Monopoly) and working crossword puzzles. As her memory failed, she relied more and more on the prayer, which concludes her autobiography, "Jesus, give me the grace, the courage and the strength to follow You in all I do."

May she now rejoice with her God and her family members who have preceded her into eternal life!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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