



Birth
August 21, 1921

Baptism
August 24, 1921

Profession
July 17, 1941

Death
May 5, 2017

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*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 Leonelle Schiferl, SSND

Born Florence Schiferl, on August 21, 1921 to Anna and Albert Schiferl in the town of Hewitt, Wisconsin, Sister Mary Leonelle was the youngest of 10 children. She had eight older siblings, four boys and four girls, Sister Mary Leonelle quipped in her autobiography, “If you surmise that I was a spoiled child, you guessed it right.”

At just a year-and-a-half, her mother became very ill and died. With the help of maternal grandparents and the care of her oldest sister, Anna, their father managed to care for their family and the family farm during trying circumstances. She wrote in her autobiography, “Prayer certainly was an important part of our lives. Every morning, on Saturdays and during vacation times, the three youngest would be sent off to Mass to pray for the rest of the family, because the others had chores to do. Then, I can remember how, after supper and chores were done, all of us would kneel, lean on our dining room chairs and say the rosary together. On weekdays, we would all be in school.”

Sister Mary Leonelle also noted that, “we were taught to share our gifts, more by example than by words. Produce from our garden and orchard were not only for the Schiferls, but also for our neighbors, including, of course, the Notre Dame Sisters and the priests. In addition, every time Dad would butcher an animal, the meat would be shared with others.”

She attended St. Joseph’s grade school in Hewitt. It was at school that she began to explore her vocation. She wrote, “My first thoughts of religious life took root when I was in Sister Hilaire Van Straten’s fourth grade. By the time I was in eighth grade, I was confirmed in my desire, so I told this to my sister Rita. She responded, ‘Me, too. Let’s go together and ask Dad.’ The obvious bonding between Rita and me only deepened throughout our lives.” After what she describes as a “heartbreaking” yes from her father, Sister Mary Leonelle and her sister Rita left for the Milwaukee Motherhouse.

She professed first vows in August of 1941, and was missioned to teach at Holy Angels in Gary, Indiana. She described her time there writing, “How blessed, too, and nurtured I was by the tender love and care of my sisters in community during those early years of my religious life. Our communities usually numbered 19 or 20. How I needed that support...in the 16 years I was stationed at Holy Angels.”

She continued ministry in education in Wisconsin at Holy Name in Sheboygan; St. Philip in Reed City; Immaculate Heart in West Allis; Holy Angels in West Bend; St. Killan in Campbellsport; St. James in Mequon; St. Philip in Rudolph and St. Mary Czestochowa in Milwaukee.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Leonelle Schiferl



Sister Mary Leonelle received a B.A. from Mount Mary University in Milwaukee and a master's in educational counseling and guidance from Marquette University. She taught for 28 years and served as an elementary school administrator for 15 years. She also served in administering medical records and parish ministry. God called her to leadership at Notre Dame of the Lake in Mequon, Wisconsin, from 1969 until 1973 and again in 1975 until 1983.

She served on Provincial Council during the trying periods of the move of the Milwaukee Motherhouse to Notre Dame of the Lake, in Mequon, Wisconsin to Marshall Street in Milwaukee and the relocation of sisters. She writes of this time, "the biggest blessings during these years were the opportunities I had to get to know and work directly with our sisters."

Sister Mary Leonelle finished her autobiography with a quote from scripture writing, "'make your home in me, as I make my home in you,' has meant very much to me, all my life." She is survived by nieces, nephews, dear friends and the SSND community. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers Winand, Ray, Leo, Herb, Ed and her sisters Anna, S. Ann Therese, SSND and Tina Schopin.

This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information.

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

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