

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Magdala Winter



Birth
July 21, 1927

Baptism
August 7, 1927

Profession
July 17, 1948

Death
February 26, 2024

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 Magdala Winter, 96, died at Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota, on Monday, February 26, 2024. Sisters had been visiting and praying with her in the days prior to her death as she awaited, in her words, “the time of my final call.”

In her autobiography, Sister Magdala described her day of birth: “July 21, 1927 was a day of mixed feelings for my father, older sister and four older brothers. In giving birth to me, my mother almost died. However, after receiving blood transfusions, we both survived.” A few weeks later, she was taken to the family’s parish church, St. Matthew in St. Paul, Minnesota, and baptized Janice Agnes. Two more sons and another daughter completed the family.

At age five, Janice began kindergarten at St. Matthew’s School. She later wrote, “At first kindergarten seemed the worst thing in the world. However, soon St. Matthew’s School became a very dear and familiar place, and the School Sisters of Notre Dame became my ideal. I grew to admire and love them more each day.” Janice attended St. Matthew’s through tenth grade, and then entered the aspiranture at Our Lady of Good Counsel Academy in Mankato for her final two years of high school.

Janice graduated from the academy in 1945 and entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) candidature three months later. As a second-year candidate, she taught third graders at St. Andrew’s School, St. Paul. On July 16, 1947, she was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Magdala. Sister Magdala professed first vows in 1948.

In 1948, Sister Magdala began her teaching ministry at Sacred Heart School, St. Paul, where she taught grade seven. After two years, she moved up to grade eight, but did not stay there long; after two weeks she was given the opportunity to continue her education at the College of St. Catherine (now University), St. Paul full-time and moved to St. Francis de Sales Convent, which was closer to the college. From 1951 until 1954, she taught grades five and six and was responsible for parish music at St. Mary’s in New Trier, a small town south of St. Paul. She remarked, “Now I was given an opportunity to put into effect the resolution to trust God entirely, for all was new to me. I had never lived in a country place, taught two grades, given music lessons, directed a choir or played the organ for any church service.” Things did work out well, however, and during her last year in New Trier, she added fourth grade to her teaching responsibilities when another teacher became ill.

In her next teaching assignments, Sister Magdala taught upper grade students at St. John’s, Mankato, Minnesota (1954-55), followed by high school students at Emmons Central High School, Strasburg, North Dakota (1955-58); Loyola High School, Mankato, (1958-65 and 1974-78); Columbus High School, Waterloo, Iowa (1966-71); St. Agnes School, St. Paul (1971-73); Brady High School, St. Paul (1973-74); and Our Lady of Good Counsel Academy (1978-80).

During her first years at Loyola High School, she taught zoology to SSND postulants during the school year and biology to student sisters during summer school at the Mankato Campus of Mount Mary College at Our Lady of Good Counsel. After serving as directress of aspirants at Our Lady of Good Counsel (1965-66), she served as a guidance counselor, while also teaching at Columbus, St. Agnes, Loyola High School and Our Lady of Good Counsel. Sister Magdala

continued

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Central Pacific Province

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earned a bachelor's degree from College of St. Catherine (now University) in 1951, a master's degree in education from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, in 1957, as well as a master's degree in counseling from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa in 1969.

Sister Magdala left Our Lady of Good Counsel Academy in early 1980 and spent the next three years in St. Cloud, Minnesota, working part-time as receptionist and liturgy coordinator at Holy Spirit parish. In 1983 she moved to Winona where she served at St. Stanislaus parish as a pastoral associate. While there, she coordinated the religious education program and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process, worked with the elderly, sick and dying, and taught Bible Study. She helped to create an organization for senior citizens of the parish called Harvest House. During this time, Sister Magdala was also a member of the SSND Health and Aging Committee.

In 1995 Sister Magdala became a pastoral minister at St. Joseph the Worker in Mankato and Holy Family in Lake Crystal. She again coordinated the RCIA program, helped supervise the religious education program and assisted with office work. She also began to minister twice a week with sisters in memory care at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Ministering to sisters in healthcare became Sister Magdala's full-time work in 1999. She commented, "I did this for nine years. This was a ministry that was very dear to my heart for I have had a love for the elderly from the beginning of my life as a School Sister of Notre Dame."

Sister Magdala retired from pastoral care in 2007, but continued to volunteer in various areas. She became proficient with the Print Shop computer graphics program, and for many years, gifted sisters with specially designed birthday cards, created welcome signs for new residents and designed decorative posters for special occasions.

In 1978, Sister Magdala had attended an interprovincial meeting in St. Louis, and learned about the SSND Associates. She shared word of this spiritual enrichment with Gen Ryan, a Mankato resident who was searching for a deeper spirituality, and invited her to explore this new SSND initiative. As a result, Gen became the first associate of the Mankato Province. Sister Magdala was also a trained spiritual director and provided spiritual direction for a number of sisters.

Sister Magdala's family was important to her, and she kept in touch with family members and enjoyed visiting with them.

Sister Magdala concluded her autobiography with these words: "I am truly grateful for my life as a School Sister of Notre Dame. . . . I have grown in God's love." And now she has answered her final call, "Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come."

The Funeral Mass for Sister Magdala was held Monday, March 4, in the Windermere Chapel. Visitation and Sharing of Memories preceded the Liturgy. Burial in the Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery in Mankato followed.

Sister Magdala is survived by a sister, Jane Krueger, nieces and nephews and their families, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND Associates. She was preceded in death by her parents Joseph and Mary Ann (Weirick) Winter, her sister, Sister Josine (Mercedes), SSND, and her brothers, Bill, Eugene, Jack, Joseph, Robert and Tom.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND