



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Myles Schwahn

On the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, April 26, 2022, Sister Mary Myles Schwahn, 90, died in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. Sisters had been visiting and praying with her in the days leading to her death. Sister Mary Myles was a member of this year's 70-year Jubilee class.

Sister Mary Myles, the second daughter and second child in the Leopold and Katherine Schwahn family, was born November 3, 1931, in Emmons County, North Dakota. Two days later, she was baptized Adeline Marie at SS. Peter & Paul Church, Strasburg. Two sisters and two brothers would later complete the family.

While Adeline was still very young, the family moved into Strasburg, where her father became the town mechanic. Sister Mary Myles commented about one aspect of her family life, "Our kitchen was often filled with the sound of accordion music, especially when cousin Lawrence Welk came to Strasburg for a visit. He would join the men with his accordion and we had a joyful time singing and dancing."

Adeline entered first grade in 1936 at St. Benedict School, which was the name of the parish school, where her teachers were Ursuline Sisters from Belleville, Illinois. When she was in 8th grade, the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) replaced the Ursuline Sisters. In high school, Adeline experienced the effects of North Dakota's Anti-Garb law. In effect, her Catholic high school had become a public school, but sisters were allowed to teach in their religious habits. However, this changed when Adeline was a senior. The sisters were dressed in secular clothes. Sister Mary Myles later wrote, "As time went on, we all realized that clothes did not make any difference and everything continued as if it were a Catholic school." Following graduation in 1949, Adeline was asked by the county school superintendent to teach in a small school nine miles from Strasburg with 22 students in eight grades. She did this for one year, boarding with a family who had six children in the school. She prayed daily asking God to help her know what to do with her life. She felt a call to religious life and, in talking to her pastor, she learned that a good friend, Cerella Baumgartner, was thinking about entering the SSND in Mankato, Minnesota.

With the help of Sister Richard Anthony (Grace) Schutte, the principal at St. Benedict, Adeline and Cerella entered the SSND candidature in June 1950. This was an unusual entrance time, so the two of them were mentored by Sister Honora Elsen during the summer months. They joined the rest of their class in September. However, because of this "head start," and because both of them had taught a year prior to entrance, they were sent to teach in January 1951. They were received into the novitiate in July 1951, a year ahead of their entrance class. Adeline received the name Sister Mary Myles. She professed first vows on July 17, 1952. She then began her 22-year classroom teaching ministry with one year at St. Agnes, St. Paul, Minnesota; followed by service at St. Mary, New England (1953-57); St. Wenceslaus, Dickinson (1957-62); and St. Anne, Bismarck, all in North Dakota (1962-66); Immaculate Conception, Forsyth, Montana (1966-67); St. Joseph, Bismarck, North Dakota, where she was also the administrator (1967-69); and St. Dominic, Northfield (1969-74). She earned a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mary College (now University),

continued

Birth
November 3, 1931

Baptism
November 5, 1931

Profession
July 17, 1952

Death
April 26, 2022

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

In Loving Memory



*Sister Mary Myles
Schwahn*



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Milwaukee, in 1963, and a master's degree in religious education from Fort Wright College, Spokane, Washington, in 1973.

In the fall of 1974, Sister Mary Myles responded to a different call of church ministry – that of parish service in a variety of ways: religious education, family and adult education, parish administration and pastoral ministry. She served in the following locations: at St. Joseph, Mandan, North Dakota (1974-79) and Our Lady of Grace, Minot North Dakota (1979-84) in religious education; at St. Agatha, Howard, South Dakota (1985-88) in pastoral ministry; at St. Joseph, Orient, and St. Liborius, Polo, South Dakota (1988-2002) in parish administration; and at St. John-Assumption, Faxon Township, Belle Plaine, Minnesota (2002-2005) and Holy Redeemer, Renville, Minnesota (2005-2013) in parish ministry.

At Mandan and Minot, Sister Mary Myles organized all aspects of the family-centered religious education program, contacting and registering families, organizing the sessions and preparing all publicity. Following a sabbatical year at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, and three years of service as parish minister in Howard, South Dakota, Sister Mary Myles accepted an invitation from Bishop Paul Dudley to be the parish administrator in two mission parishes in north central South Dakota – Polo and Orient. At that time, Polo – and St. Liborius Parish – were struggling with declining population, and the parish priest had been withdrawn. Bishop Dudley said that the parishes would be closing in three years, which made Sister Mary Myles hesitant to accept the position. However, she agreed to an interview and knew right away that she wanted to stay. She and a priest who covered four parishes worked together to coordinate liturgy and religious education programs. In an article in the SSND publication, *Soundings*, she is quoted, “I love my work in rural ministry. There’s no place I’d rather be.” St. Liborius parish did not close in three years – Sister Mary Myles ministered there for 14 years, and the parish was still going strong when she left in 2002.

In partnership with Sister Donna Wermus, Sister Mary Myles’ final years in ministry were spent in the Diocese of New Ulm in Minnesota. She called her days in St. John-Assumption in Faxon Township, a very rural parish, “days of real joy and a slower pace.” The first resident sisters at Holy Redeemer in Renville, they essentially ran the parish. Sister Mary Myles devoted much time to visiting nursing home residents and homebound parishioners. She was also involved in the religious education program. She started a Bible study program and helped Sister Donna with ministry to Hispanic people.

Sister Mary Myles retired to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, in 2013 and volunteered in several areas until becoming a resident of Notre Dame Hall in 2018. She stayed in contact with family and friends and enjoyed their visits.

Rural ministry was key in Sister Mary Myles’ life and she asked that stalks of wheat be displayed for her Funeral Liturgy.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Mary Myles was held on May 10, 2022, in the Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, with Father Gene Stenzel as presider. A prayer service preceded the funeral. Burial followed in the Good Counsel cemetery. She is survived by her sisters, Kathy Reimer and Rose (Merritt) Powell, her brother, Larry (Maxine) Schwahn, 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, Leopold and Katherine (Nicholas) Schwahn, a sister, Imogene Schwab, and a brother, Alois.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash,