

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Paul Holdmeyer

Sister Mary Paul Holdmeyer, 91, died in her sleep in the early morning of December 18, 2023, at Mercy South Hospital, St. Louis.

The fifth of seven children, she was born to Mary (Frankenberg) and Paul Holdmeyer, October 14, 1932, in the family home near Washington, Missouri. She was baptized the following day at St. Francis Borgia Church and named Leona Eleanor. Her oldest brother died at birth and a younger sister died four months after birth. The five surviving children grew up on a small farm in the Washington area.

Leona attended St. Francis Borgia Grade and High School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The example of her teachers and her two aunts, Sisters Coletine and Assisi Frankenberg, as well as her cousin, Sister Eleanor Francis Frankenberg, confirmed her desire to become a sister.

She entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, August 31, 1950, and pursued college courses for a year-and-a-half. She was then missioned to St. Francis Solanus, Quincy, Illinois, to teach fifth grade. She returned to the motherhouse and entered the novitiate July 29, 1952, and was given the name Mary Paul in honor of her mother and father. She professed first vows July 31, 1953, and final vows July 31, 1959.

Newly professed, Sister Mary Paul was sent to teach second grade at St. Jude Academy, San Diego, California. The next year, she returned to St. Louis to complete the course work and to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Science at the former Notre Dame College in December 1955. In January 1956, she began her lengthy career as a secondary math and science teacher. She taught in Illinois at St. Anthony High School, Effingham and St. Paul High School, Highland. In Missouri, she taught at Notre Dame High School, Cape Girardeau; Hannibal Catholic High School, Hannibal; and Rosary High School, St. Louis. In 1967, she received a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Illinois in Urbana, Champaign, Illinois.

Her teaching ministry was interrupted from August 1974 to August 1979 when she answered the call to be the novice directress for the former St. Louis Province. She returned to teaching, spending 10 years at St. Paul High School, Santa Fe Springs, California, and 17 years at St. Francis Borgia High School, Washington, Missouri.

Sister Mary Paul was presented with the "Outstanding Educator Award" by The Rotary Club of Washington Missouri in 1993. The science laboratory at St. Francis Borgia Regional High School was dedicated in her honor in 2003, in recognition of her 50 years of service to Catholic education. Sister Mary Paul was the recipient of the 2007 Catholic Women Awards sponsored by the St. Louis Archdiocesan committee on Women in the Church in the teacher category.



Birth
October 14, 1932

Baptism
October 15, 1932

Profession
July 31, 1953

Death
December 18, 2023

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
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

continued

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In 2006, she moved to St. Louis and taught at the Notre Dame Tutorial/Learning Center on the Sancta Maria in Ripa campus for three years and then became a laboratory assistant at Notre Dame High School for six years. After 55 years in Catholic education, she retired at Sancta Maria in Ripa in 2015. Three years later, she was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri. She was transferred to Mother of Perpetual Help Residence, St. Louis, in 2020. She celebrated her 70th anniversary of religious profession in the summer of 2023.

In mid-December 2023, Sister Mary Paul died peacefully in her sleep at Mercy South Hospital, St. Louis, in the early morning of December 18, 2023. She was a participant in the Rush Religious Orders Study, which is a collaborative study with Rush University and other U.S. medical centers that involves 1,100 religious clergy (nuns, priests and brothers).

Funeral services were held December 29, 2023, at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis. The reading of her biography and sharing of memories preceded the celebration of the Mass of Resurrection with Rev. Ralph Parthie, OFM, as president. Family members, friends, colleagues, former students, SSND and SSND associates attended the funeral services. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery, St. Louis.

Sister Mary Paul was preceded in death by her parents, Mary (Frankenberg) and Paul Holdmeyer; her brothers, John, Melvin and Victor; and her sisters, Rose (Eugene) Kleekamp, Mary (Othmar) Voss and Rita Holdmeyer. She is survived by her sisters-in-laws, Edith Holdmeyer and Arlene Holdmeyer; nieces, nephews, friends, SSND and SSND associates.

Sister Mary Paul was an excellent science and math teacher and loved to see the faces of her students discover or understand something. She was a delightful community member with a ready smile. She had an excellent sense of humor and a playful spirit. May she now rejoice in God's loving embrace and peace as she is reunited with her family members who have preceded her into eternal life.

By Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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