



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Peter Eberhardy

Sister Mary Peter Eberhardy, 94, died on Thursday, August 30, 2018, at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She was one of nine children born in Hewitt, Wisconsin, to Peter and Anna (Schuster) Eberhardy. On April 13, 1924, she was baptized and given the name Marie Catherine.

Marie Catherine and her siblings were raised in a strict Catholic household. Attending Mass on Sunday or on holy days was never questioned, and the family prayed the rosary faithfully every October and during Lent. Members of the family would take turns leading the rosary. In her autobiography, Marie Catherine remembers, "Once when I led I skipped a few beads. That didn't work! When I thought we were finished, my dad said, 'Now we will make up those skipped.' He led the number of Hail Marys I skipped."

Marie Catherine attended the parish school, St. Joseph in Hewitt for eight years. She describes in her autobiography, "My life, simple as the most simple, really calls no day of my life outstanding or out of the ordinary." One notable event that impacted young Marie Catherine was the celebration of her uncle's first Mass. In her autobiography, she recalls, "However, when but seven and the time of Reverend Uncle's First Mass was nearing, there was excitement, for I had been chosen to be his bride. This custom is no longer continued but [at that time] symbolized a priest's marriage to the church. It was then mother says, that I made the remark, 'I was a bride once, never again.' Could it be that He had already cast His eyes upon me?"

Marie Catherine's grandmother passed away when she was in third grade; during the funeral she was introduced to her aunt, Sister Mary DeCruce, SSND. Marie Catherine had heard a great deal about Sister Mary but had never had the opportunity to meet her. After meeting and speaking with her aunt, Marie Catherine felt very convinced she wanted to become a School Sister of Notre Dame.

She began high school at St. John High School in Marshfield, Wisconsin. Only two years of schooling were available at St. John, so Marie Catherine entered the SSND candidature as a high school junior. She recalls, "My parents were not opposed but mother insisted that I would go about things myself for she would not encourage or place any hindrance to make certain that I was positive of my actions and desires." She continues, "My dear aunt Sister DeCruce lived at the Motherhouse on Milwaukee Street. She played an important role in my first few months. I was very homesick. I had never been away from home before." In July 1942, Marie Catherine was received as a novice and took the name Mary Peter after her father. She professed first vows on July 29, 1943.

After profession, Sister Mary Peter was assigned to teach at St. Leo in Milwaukee. She taught third grade for one year and fifth grade for five years. She then was called to teach intermediate grades and was in charge of the altar boys at All Saints in Chicago. Being in charge of the altar boys resulted in many meetings with the pastor. Sister Mary Peter recalls, "Those not desiring to be altar boys needed supervision and all wanted to be in charge to report the

Birth
April 5, 1924

Baptism
April 13, 1924

Profession
July 29, 1943

Death
August 30, 2018

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
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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‘talkers.’ I pointed to the crucifix and said, ‘He is in charge.’ There was not a sound. The teacher next door occasionally checked on the students and was amazed that all were occupied with their assignments. Later, when she inquired how this was possible, I merely told her that I pointed to the crucifix and said that He was in charge.”

In August 1952, Sister Mary Peter began teaching at SS. Peter and Paul in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, where she taught intermediate grades and was in charge of the altar boys for six years. During this time, she earned a B.A. in history from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee.

She was then missioned to Our Lady of Peace in Marshfield, Wisconsin, where she taught junior high students. It was here that she helped save the Blessed Sacrament from a fire that had started when a young child lit a match to see if the Three Kings had arrived on the eve of the feast of Epiphany. She recalls, “Father Lane, Sister Lucy Hoffman and I raced to rescue the Blessed Sacrament. The dry pine trees were engulfed in flames and the sanctuary full of smoke. I waved my shawl to clear the smoke so Father could see. He rescued the Blessed Sacrament but almost collapsed when he reached the fresh air.” Sister Mary Peter often cherished the thought of assisting in the rescue of the Blessed Sacrament.

Sister Mary Peter served at Our Lady of Peace for two years and then taught intermediate students at St. John Baptist in Marshfield for one year. Beginning in 1961, she returned to Chicago where she taught intermediate students at St. Margaret of Scotland. She returned to Wisconsin in 1966 to teach junior high at St. Mary in Burlington. From that point forward, she remained in Wisconsin, teaching at St. Agnes, Butler; and St. John Nepomucene, Prairie du Chien. She served as principal at St. Aloysius, West Allis; Notre Dame, Chippewa Falls; and St. John Nepomucene, Prairie du Chien. In 1976, she earned a master’s degree in elementary education from DePaul University in Chicago.

Sister Mary Peter retired from the classroom in 1997 and served as the school secretary at Holy Assumption in West Allis, Wisconsin. She also began a volunteer ministry with Havenwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and St. Mary’s Nursing Home, both in Milwaukee. In 2007, she joined the Notre Dame of Elm Grove community in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, where she served through prayer and presence.

A wake was held on September 5, 2018, at Notre Dame of Elm Grove followed by the Mass of Christian Burial with Father Tom Eichenberger, a longtime friend of Sister Mary Peter, as president. Burial was in Notre Dame of Elm Grove cemetery.

Sister Mary Peter has been a blessing to all whose lives she touched: her family, her community, her former students and her friends. She was a woman of prayer, a woman of adventure and a woman dedicated to education. She has now entered the banquet of eternal life to celebrate everlasting joy with Jesus and her loved ones.

*This remembrance was compiled from SSND archival information
and the eulogy written by Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND*