



Birth
May 23, 1928

Baptism
May 27, 1928

Profession
August 6, 1948

Death
April 16, 2020

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 Melmarie Stoll

Sister Melmarie was born to Peter and Elsa Stoll, the fifth of seven children. She was baptized the following Sunday, May 27, and received the name Elizabeth Louise, although she was always called Betty growing up. At five years of age, Sister Melmarie joined her three older brothers and an older sister in starting her school career. She attended the public school for kindergarten and then to St. Anne's School, in Milwaukee, for her entire elementary education. The School Sisters of Notre Dame instilled in her the desire to become a sister.

After graduating in June 1942, Sister Melmarie entered the first phase of religious life in the Aspiranture. Two years later, she entered the Candidature for six months, but for reasons of health returned home and attended Messmer High School for one year. In January 1946, Sister Melmarie was back at the (former) Motherhouse in Mequon, Wisconsin, continuing preparations for religious life.

In August 1946, Sister Melmarie was sent to St. Francis, Milwaukee, to teach second grade. She then served as a primary teacher at Holy Assumption, West Allis, Wisconsin, for 10 years followed by serving as a special education teacher for the blind for 45 years, and then as an administrator. Sister Melmarie completed her master's level studies in special needs education in 1969, at Michigan State University, in East Lansing.

Sister Melmarie (Mel) was a pioneer in the education of blind and visually impaired children. Sister Mel, as she was affectionately called, was a first grade teacher at Holy Assumption School in West Allis, Wisconsin, when a blind child, was placed in her classroom. At that time, few visually impaired students received their education alongside sighted peers. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee sent Sister Mel to Catholic University to receive training as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI), and in 1958, the Resource Room for the Blind was created at Holy Assumption.

Over the years, her students included those from numerous socio-economic backgrounds, faiths and ethnicity. All participated as fully as possible, given their varying needs, in the general education classroom and received support and braille instruction within the Resource Room. Sister Melmarie followed the Expanded Core Curriculum before the term was coined. She had a gift for recruiting others to work with her students: occupational, music and art therapists; high school and college students. Her students received instruction in proper etiquette and even dancing! She inspired others to follow in her footsteps as TVI's.

Because her students were fully mainstreamed, they needed access to braille copies of textbooks. Volunteers were recruited to become transcribers (some through a letter to Mrs. Griggs, an advice columnist in the Milwaukee Journal). Thus, Volunteer Services for the Blind, now known as ABLE (Auditory and Braille Literacy Enhancement) began in a home basement. The Resource Room closed in 2003, after 45 years of leadership from Sister Melmarie. She will be

continued

In Loving Memory

greatly missed by many. Cheryl Orgas, executive director of ABLE and a former student of Sister Mel's, said Sister was like a second mother to her. Sister concluded her full time ministry at Holy Assumption in 2003. Over the next seven years, she volunteered around the community and at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, Wisconsin.

In 2010, Sister Melmarie resided at Notre Dame Elm Grove, Wisconsin. In 2011 she moved to Our Lady of the Angels in Greenfield, Wisconsin.

Sister Melmarie was proud of her family. Two of her brothers, Father George and Father Jerry, answered the call to the priesthood. All three girls, Sister Ara Coeli, Marie Gabriel and Melmarie entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Her brother Ed died in the Korean War, and her brother, Tom, married and had five children.

Many of Sister Melmarie's students were faithful and so grateful that the friendship lasted a lifetime. One virtue well lived and often shared by Sister Melmarie was, "faith is seeing light with your heart, when your eyes see only darkness." Sister Melmarie died April 16, 2020, at the age of 95. She is survived by nieces, nephews. Preceded in death by her parents Peter and Elsa, brothers George, Edward, Thomas and Jerry and sisters Rosemary (Sister Ara Coeli, SSND) and Margaret Mary (Sister Marie Gabriel, SSND) A Memorial Mass and celebration of life will be planned at a later date.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND

Sister Melmarie Stoll

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