

# *In Loving Memory*

## Sister Rose Elaine Kessler



Birth  
October 17, 1933

Baptism  
October 1933

Profession  
August 2, 1954

Death  
July 17, 2019

Burial  
Chatawa Cemetery  
Chatawa, Mississippi

*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

**S**ister Rose Elaine Kessler was born in New Orleans, on October 17, 1933, to Arthur (Pete) Kessler and Victoria Garish. She was baptized in Holy Trinity Church and given her grandmother's name, Helena. She grew up with two older sisters, Lucille and Elaine.

Sister Rose Elaine attended St. Cecilia's Grade School in New Orleans. There, she was inspired by the kindness and example of the Marianites of the Holy Cross and wanted to do what they did. On completing the eighth grade, she asked her parents if she could prepare to be a Marianite, but they did not agree. They were worried that Sister Rose Elaine's fondness for the sisters, especially, Sister Madeline Sophie Hebert, had influenced her.

During her teen years, Sister Rose Elaine's family moved to Sacred Heart Parish where Father Tom Peyton, Congregation of Holy Cross, introduced her to Sister Elaine Schaeffler, SSND. She came to know all the sisters at the parish and this is how she decided which order she wanted to join.

Since her parents were still strongly opposed to the idea, they asked her to work for a year before entering. She worked one year for an insurance company. After this year, her parents finally consented. Sister Elaine Schaeffler accompanied her and three other New Orleanians to join a class of 59 candidates at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, to begin preparation for religious life and the teacher profession. At Reception, she was named Sister Rose Elaine and pronounced her First Vows in 1954.

Early in Sister Rose Elaine's religious life, she proclaimed New Orleans as her hometown and spent six years of ministry in Louisiana, mostly in New Orleans. Following Profession in 1954 she taught elementary schools in Chalmette and Bogalusa, Louisiana. In the 1960s, when school integration angered the Ku Klux Klan, the school was harassed by their violence in 1966.

Sister Rose Elaine's next ministry was serving as principal of Good Counsel Elementary School, followed by a mission to Ponchatoula, Louisiana. It was during her last year there that her mother passed away in May 1972 and less than a year later, she lost her father in March 1973.

Immaculate Conception School in Marrero, Louisiana, welcomed her for two years. Then she returned to Good Counsel School for nine years. For 14 years, until the school closed, she taught Social Studies to secondary school students at Seton Academy in New Orleans. The next three years found her at St. Stephen Elementary School.

Forty years after her profession, when Sister Rose Elaine reflected about her vocation and ministry, she said it was always a joy to be with children. Since she had been in formal education as either teacher or administrator, where she delighted in seeing youth grow into responsible adults who show concern for

*continued*

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others. She dedicated her life to fighting for the underdog. Before she retired, her future plans were to work with senior citizens, since she was one of them.

Instead, life took a very different turn for her when she served life's beginnings as principal for a high school for pregnant teens. St. Gerard Majella was a school with broad proclamation of the sanctity of life in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. She recalled of her time there, "Some of these girls go through the same fear that St. Joseph had when Mary was given Jesus. I don't know how they do it, but they are good mothers."

Sister Rose Elaine retired to St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Mississippi, to pray and be a presence among the elders. She hoped to be an informal educator who helps all to learn acceptance of diminishment that comes with advancing age.

Sister Rose Elaine was born to eternal life on July 17, 2019 at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Mississippi. She was preceded in death by her parents and her two sisters, Lucille and Elaine. She is survived by her nephew, Joseph Iwanowski, and her niece, Vicky Broom.



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