



In Loving Memory

Sister Rose M. Ernst

Sister Rose Ernst, age 98, passed away November 16, 2017, at Our Lady of the Angels in Greenfield, Wisconsin. She had served the School Sisters of Notre Dame for the past 79 years and left a lasting impact as a teacher, principal, pastoral minister and director of religious education.

Born in Liebau, Germany, to parents Ignatius and Wilhelmina (Leder) Ernst, Rosa was named for St. Rosa whose feast day was celebrated the day after her birth. Her mother added Maria because of her great devotion to the Mother of God. Rosa Maria was the middle child of five.

After World War I, Rosa Maria's parents looked for a new way of life and moved to the United States. They settled in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and continued their business as horticulturalists, establishing greenhouses.

School was incredibly important to Rosa Maria, who first encountered the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. John's in Marshfield. Despite the fact that she could not speak English until the fourth grade, she was a good student. Sister Herman Joseph, one of Rosa Maria's teachers, encouraged her to enter the convent, which she did in 1936. Of this experience, she reflected, "Again, I found the candidature challenging, but I had a great devotion to the Holy Spirit and Mary, and I enjoyed the good life of convent living." Rosa Maria made her first vows in 1938, receiving the religious name Christa Maria.

She began her teaching ministry in St. Aloysius in West Allis, Wisconsin. At the same time, she earned her bachelor's in social studies from Mount Mary College and a master's in education from Marquette University, both in Milwaukee. She also received four government grants to study journalism at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, Savannah State in Georgia and the University of Wisconsin in Madison. These experiences helped Sister Christa Maria in her years as a high school teacher.

Sister Christa Maria continued teaching at St. Aloysius, and also taught at St. Elizabeth, Our Lady of Peace, Marinette Catholic Central High School, Holy Name Central, St. Mary, McDonnell Central High School, Columbus High School and St. James, all in Wisconsin.

Vatican II brought many changes to Sister Christa Maria's life. She returned to her baptismal name, Rose, and after much prayer and discernment, she asked to leave traditional classrooms and become involved in religious education programs. She received a certificate in theology from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, to prepare for her new ministry.

She began her new ministry as a coordinator of religious education at St. Paul in Sandwich, Illinois. St. Paul was her brother's parish, and he felt Sister Rose could organize the religion program. She developed the program for grades 1-12, and held Bible study and catechetical sessions for adults. All of this work stopped when the DeKalb, Illinois, motherhouse, where Sister Rose lived, was sold.

Sister Rose returned to Wisconsin, helping another sister open the curriculum library at Mount Mary College, and taking classes there, as well. She was encouraged to continue working in religious education, and opened programs at St. Mary's in Richland Center, St. Joseph's in East Bristol and St. Joseph's in

continued

Birth
August 29, 1919

Baptism
September 14, 1919

Profession
July 28, 1938

Death
November 16, 2017

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

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She served as a pastoral minister in St. Henry in Watertown, Wisconsin, before beginning her service in prayer and presence at Notre Dame of Elm Grove in Wisconsin. She served there for nine years before moving to Our Lady of the Angels in Greenfield, Wisconsin.

Throughout her life, Sister Rose found time to relax by doing needlework. One of her framed pieces says, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever."

Sister Rose is survived by her two sisters, Anna and Angela and numerous nieces and nephews. Her parents, Ignatius and Wilhemina, and brothers, Joseph and John, precede her in death.