



In Loving Memory

Sister Sylvania (Rae Ann) Borgmeier

Sister Sylvania Borgmeier, 81, died Thursday, March 5, 2020, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. She had suffered a massive stroke the preceding day. Family members and sisters kept vigil with Sister Sylvania in her final days.

Sister Sylvania was born October 3, 1938, in Mankato and baptized Sylvania Ann two weeks later at SS. Peter & Paul Church, Mankato. Sister Sylvania's great grandfather, Frank Borgmeier, was among the original group of Catholic pioneers who settled in the Mankato area in 1854. It was his homestead that Sylvania's father farmed.

Sylvia attended SS. Peter & Paul Grade School and Loyola High School, graduating in 1956. During her high school years, she prayed about the question, "Can I become a sister?" Sylvia described her response, "It was time now as I graduated to choose my life vocation. I chose the sisters who had taught me, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and entered the community on August 28, 1956." At her reception into the novitiate on July 16, 1957, she was given the name Sister M. Rae Ann, a combination of her parents' names. She later returned to her baptismal name. Following profession in 1958, she continued her college education and spent the second semester as a student teacher at Holy Rosary in North Mankato, Minnesota.

In August 1959, Sister Sylvania received her first teaching assignment: intermediate grades at St. Michael School, Prior Lake, Minnesota, where she remained until 1965. She continued her teaching ministry at St. Matthias, Hampton, Minnesota (1965-67); Guardian Angel, Colton, Washington (1967-70); St. Bartholomew, Wayzata, Minnesota (1970-71); and St. Anne, Wabasso, Minnesota (1971-74). From 1974 through 1978, she served as religious education coordinator at St. Mary's Parish, Worthington, Minnesota. She earned a B.A. in elementary education in 1968 from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, and an M.E. in religious education from Fort Wright College, Spokane, Washington, in 1973.

Sister Sylvania described her next ministry as, "My call to Africa began with the call of the Church in the 1960s for religious communities to send 10% of their active personnel to assist Third World developing countries. . . . When our (former) Mankato Province was invited to teach at the Upgrading Centre in Kisii, Kenya, I began to look at this call in my own heart." She joined the province missionary support group and spent the summer of 1976 at the Rio Bravo mission in Guatemala, where she experienced another culture and participated in missionary activities. She continued, "Realizing that I was not so adept in learning Spanish, I decided to offer myself to go to Kenya, an English-speaking country. When my commitment to Worthington [Minnesota] ended in 1978, I received a call from our provincial council to go to Kenya." She had participated for two summers in a missionary preparation program prior to this new experience and felt ready, at the age of 39, to answer the call to mission.

In late August 1978, Sisters Sylvania and Carola Redig from Milwaukee, arrived in Nairobi, Kenya. Before beginning a study of the Kiswahili language, they were

continued

Birth
October 3, 1938

Baptism
October 23, 1938

Profession
July 17, 1958

Death
March 5, 2020

Burial
Our Lady of Good Counsel
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

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*Sister Sylvia (Rae Ann)
Borgmeier*



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able to visit the various locations where SSND were ministering. In December, she moved to Nyaburu, a mission compound with several schools near Kisii, Kenya. Sister Sylvia began teaching in St. Francis Upgrading Centre, which was founded to help Kenyan sisters get a basic education to enable them to be further trained for ministry in parishes, schools and health care facilities.

Sister Sylvia remained in Kenya until 1983, when she returned to the United States following a five-month sabbatical in the Holy Land and participation in the SSND Rome Renewal program. Back in Minnesota, she was the religious education coordinator for St. Ann Parish, Janesville, until 1987, and then served as Community Leader for three years at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. In 1990, she was asked to return to Africa and help open the new African novitiate in Sunyani, Ghana. She lived in community with two other professed sisters and five novices and also worked in the diocesan religious education office. In January 1995, she became the postulant director in Kisumu, Kenya. In 1996, the sisters in Africa became a district in the congregation. Each country chose an area leader who would form the district council. Sister Sylvia became the area leader for Kenya, while continuing as postulant director.

In Sister Sylvia's words, "After 11 years in our formation community and seven years as part of our leadership council for Africa, I felt a call to 'come apart and rest awhile.'" From September 2004 until July 2005, she spent time with her family and friends and participated in a House of Prayer program in Texas. Responding to a new need in Africa, she returned in the summer of 2005, this time to parish ministry in The Gambia. In August 2007, she was elected to the district leadership council and moved to Accra, Ghana. Following the formation of the Province of Africa in 2011, she moved to Nigeria, where she served as director of temporary professed sisters. When she celebrated her 75th birthday in 2013, she knew that it was time to return to Mankato, Minnesota, and she became a member of the Central Pacific Province in July 2014. She reflected on her ministry in Africa: "In my heart I knew that I had touched the hearts and lives of so many of our sisters, novices and postulants across Africa, as well as the people I loved and knew in Kenya, Ghana, The Gambia and Nigeria. We had journeyed together to become one heart and mind in the Province of Africa. I will forever treasure their companionship on the journey."

Living at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Mankato, Minnesota, she volunteered with the Simon Ministry at St. John the Baptist Parish, joined the SSND Earth Committee and the diocesan Social Concerns Committee. She also became a lector and Eucharistic minister, and provided assistance in several areas on the Hill. She was grateful for the proximity of her family and enjoyed being with them.

The Memorial Mass for Sister Sylvia, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was scheduled to be held on March 16, in Good Counsel Chapel, Mankato, but was postponed. Sister Sylvia requested a green burial and was buried in Good Counsel Cemetery the morning following her death. She is survived by her sister-in-law, Ginger; nephews and their families; and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Ray and Anna (Hutterer) Borgmeier, and her brother, John.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND