



Birth
June 17, 1924

Baptism
July 2, 1924

Profession
July 28, 1944

Death
May 3, 2020

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

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Teresa Martin Caronia

Sister Teresa Martin was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on June 17, 1924. She was the second of five daughters born to Mary (Triola) and Anthony Caronia; an only son, Frank, died before Lena was born. In baptism she was given the name "Lena." Her parents were first generation Americans who befriended fellow Italian.

The Caronia family grocery stood in the shadow of four Catholic churches: St. Michael, St. Alphonsus, St. Mary's Assumption, Notre Dame de Bon Secour and was neighbor to St. Vincent Orphanage. A Catholic atmosphere figured largely in the Caronia life. Teresa wrote, "My mother went to Mass every morning. She thought highly of the sisters. She sacrificed to send us to Catholic schools. When Rosalie, who was just 13 months older than I, was ready to start first grade at St. Alphonsus School, Mother asked the sisters if I could start school with Rosalie. So it happened that Rosalie and I went all through grade and high school together. When we, with some friends, decided to go to the public high school our parents, feeling we would change our minds after a week, did not object. After three days, when our dad picked us up, he stopped at Redemptorist High School and told us to go in and register! Sister Alma Luchtefeld who registered us was the first School Sister of Notre Dame we had ever seen."

As far as her discernment goes she said, "I had a postulant as my freshman English teacher. (Postulant Frances became Sister Francesca Fritz). As I look back, I think that was the beginning of my thinking about becoming a nun. I had contact with the Mercy Sisters in my elementary schooling and knew many of the Daughters of Charity at St. Vincent's. But I felt that if I were to become a Sister it would be a School Sister of Notre Dame."

And so in August 1941, she entered the candidature of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Louis. Following three years of spiritual and professional preparation, Lena was received into the congregation and given the name, "Mary Teresa Martin." Her sister, Anna Mary, followed her to the candidature two years later.

After profession of vows in 1944, Sister Teresa Martin taught for 21 years at St. Anthony School, Baton Rouge. First as a teacher of primary school children, then in the last few years she became the school's principal.

Teresa was highly regarded as an organizer and as an instructional leader. She was engaged another ten years as elementary school principal in Chalmette, Louisiana and in New Orleans. Recognized as a professional for her ability in teaching children the art and skills of reading, Sister Teresa's expertise was sought in 1977 as a consultant in the Archdiocese of Dallas education department. She was also educational consultant to Texas' San Angelo and Amarillo Dioceses. Sister taught educators in summer courses at the University of Dallas as well as informally enabling many beginning teachers.

continued

In Loving Memory



*Sister Mary Teresa Martin
Caronia*



In 1981, Sister Teresa was asked to apply her compassion and her organization abilities as Community Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Mary of the Pines Retirement Home in Chatawa, Mississippi. She continued this work with retirees when, in 1983, she accepted the position as manager of Nazareth Inn II in New Orleans. Her sister, Sister Anna Mary, was administrator of Nazareth Inn I.

In 1999, Sister Teresa Martin and Sister Anna Mary resided on New Orleans West Bank as retirees themselves. “Retiree” was just a name for they still volunteered and were on call to minister at nearby hospitals and nursing homes.

During the 1990s, Teresa was asked to reflect on her most enjoyable, rewarding, interesting ministry. Teresa cited, “My years as a primary teacher. With little children there was always a happening that added sunshine to a rainy day. It was sad to watch them break away from home then wonderful to watch them as they made friends and got excited about learning – especially learning to read.”

In 2014, both Sister Teresa and Sister Anna Mary retired to St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa. Sister Anna Mary died there in 2015. Sister Teresa Martin, with thirty other SSND, moved from the St. Mary of the Pines Campus in Mississippi to a senior housing facility, St. Anthony’s Gardens in Covington, Louisiana in the autumn of 2019. There the following months saw her continued decline until her peaceful death early afternoon on Sunday, May 3, 2020.

Sister Teresa Martin is survived by her sister, Margaret Molaison of Covington, Louisiana and a number of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, a brother Frank who died before she was born, and her sisters: Rosalie, Anna Mary, and Frances.

In accord with the gathering restrictions of the pandemic, a private burial took place at St. Mary of the Pines Cemetery, Chatawa, Mississippi on May 6, 2020. The School Sisters of Notre Dame and the family will announce a memorial service at a later date.

By S. Marie Clare Powell, SSND

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