



## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Veronica De Cleene

Sister Veronica (formerly Marie Christine) De Cleene, 84, died on Monday, August 6, 2018, at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She was the ninth of 13 children born to William and Christine (Scray) De Cleene of De Pere, Wisconsin.

During her childhood, Veronica, or Vonnie as she was commonly known, lived on the family farm located outside of De Pere. Besides farming, her father also worked at a stone quarry to support his large family. When she was 7 years old, Vonnie entered St. Mary's Grade School in De Pere, where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame for eight years. Her sister, Mary, became an SSND while Vonnie was in grade school. Around the same time, one of her brothers was killed in New Guinea during World War II. After Vonnie graduated from grade school, her father became ill and died, putting pressure on the large family to make ends meet.

Vonnie attended East De Pere High School for three years. During the summer before her senior year, she considered her future and prayed for guidance. After talking to a priest and her sister, Mary, she entered the aspiranture at Academy of Our Lady in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. She spent a year at the Academy before entering the candidature on August 31, 1952. She was received on July 8, 1953, where she initially received the name Marie Christine; she later reverted back to her baptismal name. Sister Vonnie professed first vows on July 13, 1954.

Sister Vonnie received a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mary College in 1959 and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa, in 1973.

Sister Vonnie ministered in education for nearly all of her 60 years as an SSND. From 1955 to 1964, she taught primary grades at St. Boniface in Milwaukee. From there, she taught intermediate grades at St. Peter and Paul, St. John Nepomuc and St. Leo, all in Milwaukee. She served as principal at Leo Community School in Milwaukee from 1970 to 1975. Sister Vonnie then went to northern Wisconsin where she served as principal and junior high teacher at St. Joseph in Oconto. From 1981-1982, she was a junior high teacher at Our Lady Help of Christians in Saginaw, Michigan, and then returned to Wisconsin in 1982, to teach junior high at Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in Sun Prairie.

In 1987, Sister Vonnie served the Concord Community in Milwaukee in service ministries and worked as a staff secretary and teacher at Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee. From 1988 to 1992, Sister Vonnie served women at the Shade Tree ministry in Milwaukee, where she was coordinator of child care. She began working at Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services in 1992, where she served as coordinator of education and curriculum from 1992 to 2003 and as a teacher/volunteer tutor from 2003 to 2009. Since her retirement in 2007, Sister Vonnie has served through volunteer ministry and by her prayer and presence.

During her 60th Jubilee celebration, Sister Vonnie reflected, "I celebrate God's many blessings to me over the past years and God's grace to answer that call. I have been blessed by being able to serve and be with people of another culture

*continued*

**Birth**  
November 25, 1933

**Baptism**  
November 26, 1933

**Profession**  
July 13, 1954

**Death**  
August 6, 2018

**Burial**  
Notre Dame of Elm Grove  
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 Veronica De Cleene*



than mine. In being with them I have experienced great faith and belief in God in their everyday lives. This faith that I have observed has encouraged me to develop a stronger belief in God in my everyday life! My faith has increased by example. I am blessed.”

The funeral Mass with Father Robert Stiefvater as presider, was held Saturday, August 11, at Holy Family Chapel at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, followed by burial at Notre Dame of Elm Grove Cemetery. Sister Vonnie is survived by her sisters, Judy Johanski, Joyce De Cleene, Alice Morrell, Helen Verhasselt and Loretta Verhasselt; nieces and nephews; and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers, Leo, Harold, Howard, Al, and Vic; and her sisters, Bernice Strem, Sister Mary De Cleene, SSND, and Rita Boucher.

*This remembrance was compiled from  
SSND archival information*

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