

In Loving Memory

Sister Virginia [Mary de Porres] Orth, SSND



Birth
March 25, 1936

Baptism
March 29, 1936

Profession
August 3, 1957

Death
April 23, 2016

Burial
Sancta Maria
in Ripa Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

*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

The oldest of six children and the only girl was born to Catherine (Schier) and William Orth on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1936 in Burlington, Iowa. She was baptized four days later on March 29 at St. John the Baptist Church in Burlington and named Virginia Ann. Five brothers would follow her into the Orth family.

When she was 14 years old, she was afflicted with polio. Her brother, James, also contracted polio and died within three days. Virginia was in an isolation ward for three days, spent two weeks in the hospital and three months in bed. She felt that she was spared because God had some special work for her to do.

Virginia attended St. John the Baptist Grade School and Burlington Catholic Central High School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She loved to play school and take the role of the teacher.

She had been thinking of entering the convent, and during her high school years, it was the example of her teachers which gave her the courage to mention it to her parents. With their blessing, she made plans to enter the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa on Sept. 1, 1955. However, she was in a car accident in July and broke her arm and shoulder. This delayed her entrance several weeks and she arrived on Sept. 23, 1955. After a year of college courses, Virginia was received into the novitiate on Aug. 1, 1956 and given the name, Mary de Porres. She professed first vows on Aug. 3, 1957 and final vows on Aug. 3, 1963.

Following her profession, Sister Virginia dedicated 48 years to Catholic education. She was an elementary teacher at St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles, Missouri; St. Mary and St. Vincent in Keokuk, Iowa; St. Anthony, Quincy, Illinois and St. Charles, DuBois, Illinois. She was principal at St. Charles, DuBois, Illinois; St. John the Baptist, Burlington, Iowa; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Fonda, Iowa; Immaculate Conception, Montgomery City, Missouri.

She received a bachelor's degree in history from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis in 1963 and a master's degree in elementary education from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville in 1974.

In 2005, she began eight years of ministering as a volunteer at Holy Family Parish, Hannibal, Missouri. After a short stay at Theresa Center in St. Louis, Sister Virginia returned to her home state to help care for a brother and to do volunteer services for the Burlington Area Catholic Parishes.

In March 2016, she was diagnosed with lymphoma. She did not tolerate well the chemotherapy treatments and made a decision to discontinue them. She died peacefully at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis on April 23, 2016. Two sisters were keeping vigil with her as she gave her life to her God.

continued

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The wake/vigil was held at Theresa Center on April 27, 2016. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Clyde Grogan presiding. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. Relatives, classmates, friends and SSNDs attended the funeral services.

Sister Virginia is survived by three brothers: John, William and Michael and a sister-in-law, Mary Rose Orth, all of Burlington, Iowa. She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, James and Ronald.

Sister Virginia was a quiet, unassuming and reserved person. A gentle woman, she was remembered as a happy teacher. She enjoyed country music and playing cards. Family members were very important to her. In her spare time, she relaxed with crossword puzzles and reading. In March, she celebrated her 80th birthday. May she now rest in God's peace as she enters into eternal life with her God!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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