

In Loving Memory

Sister Joan of Arc Rockenbaugh, SSND



Birth
October 13, 1921

Baptism
October 30, 1921

Profession
July 30, 1943

Death
January 14, 2012

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

Gertrude Lois Rockenbaugh was born October 13, 1921 in Patterson, La., to Mathilde (Talbot) and Henry Rockenbaugh. Lois, as she was known, was their second child and only daughter. Lois and her four brothers attended public elementary school there. Joan observed, "Even though I was not educated in Catholic schools, I received very good training from my Catholic parents."

Her father and grandfather were employed in the cypress lumber industry. The closing of their mill in 1929, forced Mr. Rockenbaugh to seek employment in a sugar refinery in New Orleans. Lois moved with the family but soon returned to her grandparent's home where she finished her elementary education. Lois rejoined her family in New Orleans in 1934.

Lois enrolled in St. Mary's Commercial School in Redemptorist Parish. She recalled, "At first I did not like the sisters at all, but scarcely had three months of school passed when my attitude changed. The sisters (SSND's) were very kind to me. I began to think that someday I might become one of them."

This quiet wondering grew. Lois told her parents of her desire to enter religious life as she finished the three-year commercial course. She wrote, "On account of my mother's illness, I had to wait two years. At age 17, I left for our motherhouse in St. Louis." She finished regular high school at the motherhouse in St. Louis. The next two years were spent at Notre Dame College, St. Louis in preparation for teaching. She entered the novitiate in 1942.

As Sister Mary Joan of Arc, she pronounced her first vows in 1943. Later, Sister Joan earned a bachelor's degree in French and a master's degree in administration. She began her 52-year teaching ministry among children and young adults, mostly in Louisiana, and then in Texas.

For 19 years, Sister Joan taught elementary school children at St. Anthony School in Baton Rouge. One of the students at St. Anthony's described how Sister Joan prepared the class for confirmation through a three-day retreat at home. It was during the quiet time of the retreat this student discovered her own desire to dedicate her life to God as a woman religious.

Sister Joan taught in other Louisiana schools: Immaculate Conception in Marrero; Sacred Heart in New Orleans and St. Joseph, Ponchatoula. She returned to Baton Rouge to teach for four years at Redemptorist Junior High. Sister Joan expressed her overall approach to this ministry, "During my years of teaching I always tried to bring out the best in my students. I never accepted work that was not neat and clean. In my places of ministry, I firmly believed it was God's will that I be there."

During the weekends and summers of all these years, Sister Joan offered her skills when an invitation went out or when she saw a need for religious instruction and reading, but most often to offer her talents in food preparation and friendly service. During a decade of summers, Sister Joan

continued

In Loving Memory



*Sister Joan of Arc
Rockenbaugh*

To make a memorial gift,
please visit our secure
online donation page [here](#)>

For more information,
contact info@ssndcp.org.

www.ssndcentralpacific.org



**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

spent the whole time in charge of the kitchen at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Miss. She also assisted for several summers in the motherhouse kitchen, Dallas.

About her last 16 years of teaching, Sister Joan said, “In 1979, I was invited to teach handicapped students in the vocational department at Notre Dame of Dallas. In my later years there I was food service manager for our school cafeteria. I trained students for future employment. We prepared and served lunch to the students and faculty and cleaned the kitchen after lunch.” The school’s administrator described how important Sister Joan’s role was with initiating and developing food service in the school’s curriculum. The young adult students studied recipes, prepared menus, assembled meals and restored the preparation area to perfect order. Sister Joan challenged and trained them in a loving way. As a result, many were prepared to accept positions in the food industry on leaving the school setting.

Finally, Sister Joan could merge the interest and skills initiated by her mother at home, with the education she chose as a calling. She was acclaimed by students, school staff, and the Diocese of Dallas as “teacher of the year” in 1993.

Communities in which Sister Joan ministered eagerly anticipated her week’s turn of tasty meal preparation. After Sister Joan retired from teaching, while residing at Wynhoven apartments, Marrero, La., she shared her delight in cooking and socializing, as “resident-volunteer.” In 1999, Sister Joan was honored by the Archdiocese of New Orleans, ministry to the elderly as “volunteer of the year.”

Her health required a move to St. Mary of the Pines, in Chatawa, but Sister Joan continued to come to serve! “Community Service” read her missioning document and she served enthusiastically. Sister Joan was never more delighted than when she could assist in preparing treats for the sisters.

On January 14, 2012, Sister Joan was called home to God. Morning prayer and visitation for Sister Joan were followed by the Mass of Christian Burial on January 18, at St. Teresa Church in Chatawa. Rev. Edward Balsler was presider for the Mass. Sister Joan’s parents and three brothers, Wilfred, Jesse and George preceded her in death. She is survived by her brother, Gerard Rockenbaugh of Slidell, La. along with nieces and nephews. Gerard, along with many nieces, nephews, and friends, honored the life of Sister Joan by their presence. She was buried in the Chatawa Cemetery.

May she rejoice in the fullness of eternal life.

By Sister MarieClare Powell, SSND