

In Loving Memory

Sister Doris (M. Myra) Welter



Birth
August 3, 1933

Baptism
August 6, 1933

Profession
July 21, 1954

Death
December 30, 2024

Burial
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

Early in the morning of December 30, 2024, Sister Doris Welter completed her earthly journey. She had been recently diagnosed with terminal cancer, had entered hospice and had indicated that she was ready to respond to God's final call.

On August 3, 1933, the Dominic and Agnes Welter family, residents of St. Michael, Minnesota, welcomed their second daughter whom they named Doris Mae Veronica. Another daughter and three sons rounded out the family. Doris commented in her autobiography, "My parents had prayed for children for many years, and with my older sister's birth (Marion in 1932) we followed each other closely." She described her family life, "Mom and Dad did not have to preach the faith as we saw it lived out in their lives. I am deeply grateful for a religious home where God was very important."

In the fall of 1939, Doris enrolled as a first grader at St. Michael Catholic School where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). When Doris graduated from eighth grade in 1947, St. Michael High School was not yet in existence. Her parents strongly believed in Catholic education and wanted their children to attend a Catholic high school, so Doris continued her education as a boarder at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota. During her high school years, she thought about being a sister but recalled, "Every time I thought of it, I pushed it out of my mind. I remember telling God that there were plenty priests and sisters in our relationship already." On her mother's side alone, she had seven great-aunts, an aunt, and two cousins who were SSND with the surname Hackenmueller. The week before graduation in 1951, however, she realized that she was being called to SSND.

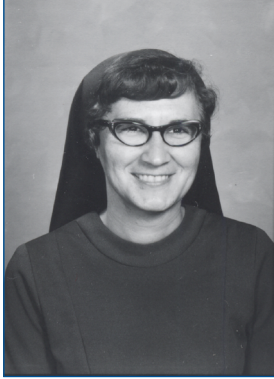
Doris entered the SSND candidature in 1951. During her second year, Doris taught her first class, 47 second and third grade students, at St. John the Baptist in Mankato. She later wrote, "I really loved teaching and preparing children for First Reconciliation and Eucharist. I knew that I had chosen the right vocation of giving my life in helping to spread the Good News of Jesus as a School Sister of Notre Dame."

She was received into the novitiate in 1953 and given the name Sister M. Myra. She later returned to her baptismal name. Following profession of first vows in 1954, she began a 41-year ministry in elementary Catholic education. Her first assignment involved teaching second graders at Blessed Sacrament School in Waterloo, Iowa, where she stayed until 1961. Sister Doris then taught at Assumption School in St. Paul where, along with teaching first and second grades, she was the sacristan and did church work, visited sisters who were patients at St. Joseph Hospital across the street, provided religious instruction to children on Saturday afternoons, and attended college classes on Saturday mornings to earn her degree. She completed her bachelor's in education from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, in 1964 and her master's degree in education from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1969.

From 1965 through 1968, Sister Doris taught primary grade students at St. Paul School, Comfrey, Minnesota. Her next assignments combined teaching and school administration: Sacred Heart, Eden, South Dakota (1968-70); Immaculate Conception-St. Joseph, Gilbertville and Raymond, Iowa (1970-74); St. Mary, Worthington, Minnesota, and St. Anthony, Lismore, Minnesota

continued

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(1974-84); St. Francis Xavier, Sartell, Minnesota (1984-86); Holy Childhood, St. Paul (1986-88); and, after a year's sabbatical, John Ireland School, St. Peter, Minnesota (1989-95.) The consolidated school in Raymond had only primary grade students, and teaching during part of the school day was nongraded to meet the children's needs. Sister Doris commented, "I loved this most exciting time in education with innovations to meet the needs of children in new ways."

When she was asked to go to St. Mary School in Worthington to set up a nongraded program, she initially had mixed feelings but wrote later, "I loved all the places that I was at but now realize that my most favorite place was the ten years that I was with this exceptional parish and school community of St. Mary in Worthington."

Throughout her years in education, Sister Doris received excellent recommendations, highlighting her spiritual and academic leadership. Her colleagues cited her love for children, parents and teachers; her energy; her love of fun; her daily example of being a dedicated follower of Jesus; her leadership and her kindness and thoughtfulness.

In 1995 Sister Doris was invited to Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, to be a community leader with a focus on pastoral ministry, a position she held until 2002. She remarked, "Those seven years of ministry with our elder sisters taught me so much." Sister Doris' final parish ministry was at St. Raphael, Crystal, Minnesota, from 2002-2009. She ministered to people who were hospitalized, homebound, bereaved, or in care centers. She also organized monthly events for senior citizens that included fun and relaxation as well as spiritual enrichment. When she left St. Raphael, the pastor wrote, "So many people in our care centers and hospitals have been touched by her spirit and love of God. So many parishioners have been blessed with the caring and sharing she has done for everyone."

Sister Doris returned to Good Counsel Hill in 2009, this time as a volunteer in several capacities: pastoral ministry, community service and outreach to the broader Mankato community. Along with Marsha Murphy, she was co-coordinator of the Sister-Friend program, which invited Mankato area families and individuals to partner with retired sisters. Throughout her years as a SSND, she appreciated the opportunity to travel, especially visiting her sister, Kathryn, who taught in Germany, and the Rome Renewal program in 1979. She also experienced life in a developing country when visiting her brother, Lloyd, who worked in El Salvador.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Doris was held Monday, January 6, 2025, in the Windermere chapel, Shakopee, with Father Jerry Hackenmueller, her cousin, as presider. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy.

Sister Doris is survived by her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates, including her sister, Marion Welter, SSND, her younger sister, Kathryn Welter, her niece and nephews and their families. She was preceded in death by her parents, Dominic and Agnes (Hackenmueller) Welter, and her brothers LeRoy, Harold and Lloyd.

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