



Birth
July 27, 1929

Baptism
August 18, 1929

Profession
July 21, 1950

Death
March 5, 2023

Burial
Our Lady of 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

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Jacinta Simones

Sister M. Jacinta Simones, 93, died on March 5, 2023, at Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota. The School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) had been keeping vigil with her in the days before her death and were present with her when she died.

The youngest of the nine Simones children, Ellen Claire was born July 27, 1929 on the family farm north of Lakeville, Minnesota. She was baptized at All Saints Church in Lakeville, on August 18. She described her childhood, “Being the last child of this large family I was the recipient of much love and care. As a child I lived a carefree life, surrounded by nature and many pets. I loved the vast outdoors and being able to discover a multitude of flowers, birds and the secret hiding places of many wild animal families. I had many pet kittens who became listeners to my imaginative stories and dreams.”

Ellen attended Lakeville Public School, Lakeville, and received catechetical instruction on Saturdays and during the summer from the School Sisters of Notre Dame who lived in Northfield. She wrote, “I learned to love catechetical classes and enjoyed especially the stories of the lives of saints. I became an avid reader of the Golden Books of the Lives of the Saints.” Ellen completed eighth grade in 1943, and through the influence of her pastor, she was able to attend Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota, as a boarder. She overcame severe homesickness during her freshman year and graduated from Good Counsel Academy in 1947. Her older sister, Bernice had become a School Sister of Notre Dame and Ellen also decided to become a sister. She entered the SSND candidature in the fall of 1947. As a second-year candidate, she was missioned to Sacred Heart School, St. Paul, Minnesota, to teach third grade, an experience that she found “gratifying and rewarding.” Ellen was received into the novitiate in 1949, and given the name Mary Jacinta. She professed first vows on July 21, 1950.

Sister Jacinta’s first teaching assignment was SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato, where she taught first grade, was an assistant sacristan and taught Saturday catechetical classes. At times, she had almost 60 children in her class but found teaching to be a “rewarding joy.” In 1956, Sister Jacinta moved to St. Benedict School, Strasburg, North Dakota, to teach grades one and two. This was the era of the North Dakota anti-garb law when some Catholic Schools actually functioned as public schools but sisters could not be identified by their religious habits. Sisters wore secular clothing when they taught and religion was taught after school hours. Sister Jacinta taught four years under the anti-garb law and four years after the school once again became a Catholic school. In 1964, Sister Jacinta returned to SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato, where she taught primary grades until 1967. She also taught at the following Minnesota schools, moving up to intermediate and junior high grades: St. John the Baptist, Savage (1967-68); St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul, where she was also principal (1968-75); St. Michael, Prior Lake (1975-76); SS. Peter & Paul, Loretto (1976-77); St. John the Baptist, Savage (1977-84); Epiphany, Coon Rapids (1984-87); and Shakopee Area Catholic School, Shakopee (1987-89). One of Sister Jacinta’s favorite subjects to teach was art. She earned a B.A. in education from Mount Mary

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister M. Jacinta Simones



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College (now University) in 1960, and an M.A. in reading from Cardinal Stritch College, in 1972, both in Milwaukee.

In 1989, Sister Jacinta participated in the six-month SSND Interprovincial Renewal Program held in Chatawa, Mississippi. She reflected, “I consider this event one of the most important gifts of my life.”

Following this sabbatical experience, Sister Jacinta moved to the Center for Spiritual Development in Bird Island, Minnesota, in January 1990, to help with the cooking and general housework. She wrote, “This task was not new to me as I had already been doing volunteer work there for about 15 years on weekends and during the summers for groups attending workshops and making retreats.” A center staff member commented, “Sister Jacinta was an artist through and through. Her artistic flair showed itself in the small touches she added when she prepared food for a few or a crowd... first she fed your eyes with a bit of beauty in the presentation and then she fed your body and spirit through the care and love she poured into each meal she prepared. She saw God’s creation in nature as a source of beauty and life that enlivened her throughout her life. Her love of being out in nature, and in particular her love for the many creatures she encountered – pets, birds, etc. – all touched her with a sense of awe and connection to all of life.”

In the fall of 1990, Sister Jacinta was called back to the teaching ministry. She taught literature and art to Mankato’s Fitzgerald Middle School students until 1999, when she retired from full-time teaching. She soon found another outlet for her artistic nature. She was asked to help organize the center of fine arts (Folk Art Program) located in the convent in Oakdale and stayed there until the fall of 2001. She then began teaching art to junior high students at Trinity Catholic School in St. Paul, but illness forced her to retire.

In 2002, Sister Jacinta moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, where she continued using both her teaching skills (at the Good Counsel Learning Center) and her artistic talents (by helping with art activities for retired sisters). In her later years on the hill, she also volunteered in the Liturgy office. She moved to Windermere in Shakopee in the fall of 2022.

The funeral mass for Sister Jacinta was held March 13, 2023, in the Windermere Chapel, Shakopee, with Father John Kunz as president. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the liturgy. Burial in the Our Lady of Good Counsel cemetery in Mankato followed.

Sister Jacinta is survived by her nieces and nephews and their families and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Jacob and Caroline (Zeller) Simones; her sisters, Sister Marie Therese Simones, SSND (Bernice), Caroline Pieniondz, Lucille Wojnar, Gladys Dawson and Marie Ring; and her brothers, Kenneth, LeRoy and Rollie Simones.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND