



In Loving Memory

Sister Lillia Langreck (formally Catherine)

Sister Lillia's life began in the Marshfield Hospital, a central Wisconsin city. Her parents were Henry Herman Langreck and Mary Ann Mueller. They named her Catherine. She was the fifth of seven children.

Her family lived on a farm outside of Neillsville, about 30 miles west of Marshfield, Wisconsin. The children attended a small one-room school having grades one to five in one room, the first grade was the row of desks closest to the windows. Harold, Herb and Florence (Sister Niva) were in the same room with her. She says that she began her love affair with poetry as they had to recite great poetry and she would have a head start on it because of hearing her older siblings recite it.

Birth
June 23, 1928

Baptism
July 8, 1928

Profession
August 6, 1948

Death
December 14, 2020

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery,
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

When she graduated from fifth grade, she attended St. Mary School in Neillsville, Wisconsin. She was a little nervous about going to school there because she would have sisters as teachers. Later, she related that when she grew up she wanted to be like Sister Justa, who was a model of enthusiasm and kindness. During her three years at St. Mary's she began thinking about being a sister herself. Her sister Florence had joined the religious community and now she wanted to begin by going to high school in the aspiranture. However, her father asked her not to leave home because her grandmother was dying and the family needed her support. The following year Catherine left home and traveled by train to Chicago on August 28, 1943. She was excited about "taking a peek at the wide, wide world" which was so different from the quiet countryside.

In 1945, she again left home by train after the summer vacation, but this time she was to go to Milwaukee where she would become a candidate. She felt a "foreverness" about going a step further in her process of pursuing her vocation. Here, during her walk in the garden that day, she spotted her sister Florence (Niva) who signaled her a greeting across the garden.

In the second year as candidate, she was sent with her classmate, Mary Brill, to St. Alphonsus, Chicago, where they taught second grade. She was first professed on August 6, 1948. Her reception into the community was a day of lilies, roses, a white veil and a new name, which was Lillia. She was thrilled that her patroness was the Blessed Mother. Sister made her first vows and soon after was sent, again, with Mary Brill, now Sister Angeleen, to teach grade one at St. Alphonsus. Half-way through the year she was asked to teach second grade (where she was more fitted to teach) and she did so for nine years.

Her second mission was transformative for her. She was sent to St. Francis in Milwaukee where she had the privilege of teaching in a more diverse classroom, as she said. She was grateful for this experience which broadened her realm of loving and reaching out to others of different races and cultures. Six years later, she was called to St. John in Marshfield, Wisconsin, regretfully leaving the city. She taught 11 years in the intermediate grades at this mission.

*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

continued

In Loving Memory

She returned to Milwaukee to St. Anne Parish where she would teach special education for four years, and then she worked there as pastoral minister for five years, beginning to develop her skills in a new direction.

In 1983, she decided she needed a sabbatical to reset the direction her services would take. She resided with our retired community of sisters in Chatawa, Mississippi, for a year. On her return she was hired for a year by TYME OUT, an SSND ministry that provided retreats for high schoolers.

In 1985, she began a very significant ministry, working for Milwaukee Achiever, a ministry sponsored by three Milwaukee Catholic colleges, which educated adults to read and to pass their high school examination. It was located in the school building of St. Michael Parish where recently there had been an influx of Hmong refugees. She was honored to reach out to them and a deep bond was formed with them through the next nine years.

Her last offering of self before retirement was to be the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Directory at St. Rose Parish, Milwaukee, which she did for six years. Her retirement meant that now she could reach out to the world in ways she hadn't had time for. She read, went to meetings and in whatever way she could, she reached out to speak about the many glaring needs of the time. She would write letters to the editor, make calls to representatives in the state and even wrote to the president. She instigated others to get actively involved to make the world a better place.

Doris Klein, CSA, said of her, "She was and remains a poet, a prophet and a profound voice challenging each of us to be a transforming presence in our world." She never stopped until God called her home at the age of 92. She let herself be God's instrument. A small, stooped and deaf woman with a spacious heart, a powerful voice and a passion for justice, peace and care of Earth - that was Sister Lillia Langreck.

Her prayer was, "Help us to find ways to transform our world so that all may live in peace. Help us to save Mother Earth and make it a sanctuary, a home for the poor, the sick, suffering, oppressed, the victims. We are all One."

Survived by her sister Sister Niva Langreck, SSND, nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and the SSND community. Preceded in death by her parents Mary Ann and Herman, her brothers Harold, Herbert and Robert her sisters Dorothy and Marie. The celebration of Sister's life was January 7, 2021, with burial in the Elm Grove cemetery.

To make a memorial gift,
please visit our secure
online donation page
www.ssndcentralpacific.org/donate



School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world
through education

By Sister Elise Zettel