



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Luke Baldwin

Our beloved Sister Mary Luke (born Mary Jane) was born in Sparta, Wisconsin, on August 17, 1923. Two days later, she was baptized at St. Joseph Cathedral in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Her father, Wallace Whitmore Baldwin, was a hotel manager and her mother, Mary Magdalen Sickinger, purchased women's clothing for Penney's. She had a brother, Fred, who was eight years older. With both parents working and her brother being so much older, she had a solitary childhood, even though she had a young nanny to care for her. When she was three, the family moved to La Crosse.

Birth
August 17, 1923

Baptism
August 19, 1923

Profession
July 31, 1947

Death
January 4, 2021

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

Little Mary Jane attended St. Joseph Archdiocesan School for her elementary school years. She went on to attend Aquinas Catholic High School, which was staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. As a graduation gift she received a camera which she really loved and often carried with her. The talent she developed with her camera became a significant part of her future. Her next step in her education was to get her bachelor's degree at Mount Mary College (now University), where she majored in English. This was the first time she became acquainted with the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). After graduation she was hired as a teacher of English in Cashton High School. At the same time, she was a weekly columnist for Our Sunday Visitor which she had begun while in college.

Following this one year of teaching, she decided that she was ready to enter the congregation of the SSND and so she entered the convent in Milwaukee on August 28, 1945, the feast of St. Augustine. There may be a coincidence in this because her life was now to change as new avenues of life opened for her, as happened in Augustine's life.

After her profession in 1947, she was assigned to teach English, religion and journalism at St. Mary Academy in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. During this time, she studied journalism at Marquette University in Milwaukee. In 1950, she was stationed in Chicago to teach at St. Michael High School. During this time, she studied to receive a master's degree in English at Loyola University receiving the degree in 1954.

In 1955, Regina Mundi College opened in Rome. It was the first to welcome women students. Sister Mary Luke was invited to register for classes which would give her a Master's Degree in Theology and Sacred Sciences. Her thesis was written on John Cardinal Henry Newman. This was a treasured experience for her, she became very close to him spiritually and he continued to inspire her through the rest of her life.

Upon her return to her province in 1957, she became the public relations director, editor and photographer for the province. She directed a number of new projects promoting our community at a time when we needed to build a new motherhouse. She started the Fathers' Club which organized the dads of our sisters, which then became a fundraiser for our building project. With another

continued

*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

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sister, Mary Hester, they started the magazine, “The School Sister,” which she edited. They activated a number of writers in the community and produced a very popular magazine. She did the photography herself. Meanwhile, she was also teaching theology to our young sisters and in 1967, she was a Novice Director.

Another huge change in life for her began in 1968, when she was elected to be a councilor on the General Council of the community. It was Mother Georgianne Segner’s council and the two of them became great friends through the years. It was during this time that the church was undergoing renewal through the works of Vatican II. This meant that religious orders around the world had to update their constitutions and way of seeing our mission to the world. Mary Luke, because of her background in theology and journalism, was on the committee of sisters to write a new constitution based on the new spirituality of Vatican II which has two major topics: “Incarnational Spirituality” and “Authentic Dialogue.” They also used feedback from the sisters of the province who wrote “position papers” on given topics. Mary Luke was at the heart of the group of three sisters who produced a new edition of our constitution. It was she who gave it the name, “You Are Sent” and who used a traffic picture she had taken of Chicago’s Dan Ryan on the front of the first edition.

Other ministries that followed her time in Italy were: she was the director of the Office of Communications of the Milwaukee Archdiocese under Rembert Weakland; she assisted Judith Best in her creation of Sturdy Roots; she worked in media services for non-profits; and she did volunteer services at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. Her photography is framed and is found in many areas of Notre Dame of Elm Grove. She had made a business with her pictures.

Sister Mary Luke had a zest for life. Until her dying day, she was busy. She would post an interesting article from a magazine and would give it to those she thought might be interested. She made personalized birthday cards for everyone in the house. It included a beautiful photo, a reflection from some obscure author, a poetic birthday blessing, a handwritten note and another blessing on the back. She loved telling stories from her rich background and we often wanted to record them for future generations. Her memory was sharp to the very end. We will miss her and the many subtle ways that she found to enrich community life. May she now enjoy her presence before her beloved with so many other SSND that she served.

The funeral for Mary Luke was celebrated January 19, 2021 with burial in the Elm Grove Cemetery.

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School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

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through education

By Sister Elise Zettel