



In Loving Memory

Sister Ruth Karnitz

The parents of Sister Ruth both came from Germany, but they met each other through a friendship Herbert Karnitz made with Joseph Plum in Milwaukee. It happens that Joseph was a Catholic whose older sister was Mary. Because of this meeting, Herbert was converted to Catholicism and he met his future wife, Mary Plum. They eventually married at St. Leo's Church, Milwaukee.

Sister Ruth was born on February 27, 1938, and was baptized at St. Francis Church on March 20. She was baptized on March 20, 1938, at St. Francis Church. Her sister, Joanne was born in 1941 and her second sister, Mary, was born in 1946.

Birth
February 27, 1938

Baptism
March 20, 1938

Profession
July 23, 1958

Death
January 16, 2021

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

Ruth attended school at St. Leo Parish where she first became acquainted with the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). She says, "The sisters who taught me had a great influence on my life and I have many happy memories of my grade school years." She believed that the sisters were very progressive teachers because they did so many interesting and challenging things. She loved the blessing they gave at the end of the day. "It always seemed to say that the sisters truly cared about what happened when we left school."

When she completed her elementary school years she was very convinced that she should go to high school at the aspiranture at the former motherhouse on Milwaukee Street. However, her parents felt that it was too early for her to leave home. Then they received some information saying that the girls could attend as a day school. So, Ruth was given permission to attend. There were nine girls in the class and Sister Ludmilla, whom they loved, was appointed mistress. Then, Sister Ludmilla was called home by God and a new plan was made. Now she and three others of her class would attend school at St. Mary's, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

When her high school years ended, she went to the former Motherhouse for her candidature, novitiate and first year of juniorate. It was the time when the community was constructing our new Motherhouse at the farm property purchased in Mequon. They started with the novitiate unit and the novices were the first to leave Milwaukee even when the building was still progressing. She says, "It was our class who bore the brunt of the move to the new Motherhouse at Mequon. We had the privilege of being the last to take vows in the old Motherhouse. I have memories of becoming an expert in assembly line procedures. I remember straw mattresses, the leaky roofs in the old final vow dorm where we slept, and round dancing in the novitiate dorms which had been vacated, as well as struggling to stay awake during class. We often laughed as we had to make do with less and less furniture as things were moved to Mequon."

*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

The next move was to Mount Mary College (now University) for a second year of studies. This was followed by being sent to her first mission to teach middle grades at St. Nicholas in Milwaukee, followed by St. Benedict, Blue Island, Il-
continued

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linois; St. Ann School, Milwaukee; and St. John Nepomuc School.

After ten happy years of teaching, she was sent to St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, to complete work on a degree in theology which she had started at Marywood in Scranton, Pennsylvania. At the end of the first year, she discovered that she was being given an obedience to St. Joseph, Oconto, Wisconsin, as coordinator of religious education. This was the beginning of 17 years working as a director of religious education. Following four years in Oconto she was sent to Gladstone, Michigan, where she would be for eight years.

In 1982, she felt called to be closer to family in Phoenix since her father's health was deteriorating. She found it hard to leave, but she followed God's call to Our Lady of the Valley for one year, then to St. James, a new parish in Phoenix, where she worked for six years. At that time our community leaders asked for volunteers to give a year of service to our retired sisters in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, so she responded to that for a year at Visitation Community and then moved back to Phoenix. Within a short time, the Vice Chancellor of the diocese called to offer her a position as auditor of the Marriage Tribunal which she happily held for 23 years. She says, "I especially enjoyed working with people whose marriages had ended 30 or more years ago and who had difficulty finding witnesses. It took a lot of prayer, ingenuity and detective work, but sometimes it was almost miraculous how witnesses turned up and we were able to bring the case to a successful conclusion."

The last five years she was also assigned to be the coordinator of the Appellate Court. She set up courts for cases and did follow-ups in Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Gallup and Tucson. At the end of her years of service, the diocese held a retirement Mass. She was so awed with the event. Her friend, Bishop Thomas Olmsted was celebrant and the auxiliary bishops and other priests were concelebrants.

She was so grateful for being able to serve in Phoenix where she could be with both parents until they died. During that time, her sister Mary was suffering from various forms of cancer. She lived in New Jersey and Sister Ruth would visit her and did what she could to support her before she died. Later, when she returned to Elm Grove, her sister Joanne who lived in Michigan, became ill with leukemia. Again, she reached out to her in her suffering.

Throughout her life, through the pain of carrying out her obedience, or in living with a variety of personalities that stretched her, she was steadfast to her call. She was sustained by knowing that God was with her and by remembering that "Christ became obedient unto death for us, even to death on the cross." She touched many lives profoundly and gladly. From Mary's Magnificat, "He who is mighty has done great things for me," Sister Ruth has drawn strength for the hard times through the years; God has been with her through it all. She enters now into the joy of life eternal. Her funeral was celebrated at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Elm Grove, on Tuesday January 26, 2021, with burial in the Elm Grove cemetery.

By Sister Elise Zettel

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of Notre Dame
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