

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Vincella Lake



Birth
January 15, 1942

Baptism
February 1, 1942

Profession
July 30, 1962

Death
August 29, 2024

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
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

Sister Mary Vincella Lake, 82, passed away peacefully at Mary Queen and Mother Center, St. Louis, in the early morning of August 29, 2024, as a fellow sister prayed with her.

The only child of Marie (Bresnahan) and Harry Lake, she was born on January 15, 1942, in St. Mary's Hospital, St. Louis. She was baptized at Most Blessed Sacrament Church, St. Louis, on February 1, 1942, and named Marie Frances.

Marie attended Blessed Sacrament Grade School, which was staffed by the Incarnate Word Sisters. She applied to Rosati-Kain High School where she met the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. During the summer following her junior year, she began to seriously consider what she wanted to do with her life and realized that she wanted to be a religious sister.

Marie received the candidate veil at Sancta Maria in Ripa on August 25, 1960. She was received into the novitiate on July 29, 1961, and named Mary Vincella. This pleased her father very much because Vincent was his middle name. She pronounced first vows on July 30, 1962, and final vows on July 30, 1967.

Sister Vincella earned a bachelor's degree in history from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, in 1964 and a master's degree in history from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri in 1996. In 1997, she notably received the "Keeper of the Dream Award" from Lincoln University Student Government Association. This award is given to those who try and keep the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. alive and in practice.

Sister Vincella was a teacher for 32 years in elementary and secondary schools. She began her teaching career at St. Luke (1964-1965) in Belleville, Illinois. Throughout St. Louis, she taught at Immaculate Heart of Mary (1965-1972), Our Lady of Sorrows (1972-1973), Notre Dame High School (1973-1976), St. Aloysius (1977-1978), Rosati-Kain High School (1998-2003) and De LaSalle Middle School (2003-2005). She also taught at Notre Dame High School (1973-1976) in Quincy, Illinois as well as Helias High School (1978-1982) in Jefferson City, Missouri. She was sent to California several times, teaching first at Bishop Conaty High School (1976-1977) and then Verbum Dei High School (1982-1989) in the Watts section of Los Angeles. She continued at Verbum Dei High School as the campus minister from 1989-1991. As a lover of sports, she sought training to become the coach of the school's football team.

Returning to the Midwest in 1992, Sister Vincella served as the Director of the Newman Center at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, a position she held for five years. Once a week, she hosted a radio program entitled "Jazz Music with Sister Vi." She also had a great love of opera music and appreciated the rap music of her students in California.

continued

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In 2005, while awaiting her next ministry, she served as a substitute teacher at St. John the Baptist High School in St. Louis for one year. In addition, because of her love of pets, she worked at PetSmart. This was followed by two years of serving as the site coordinator for the YMCA School Age Child Care program at Gateway Elementary School (2006-2008) in St. Louis. She served as an assistant coordinator for Intercommunity Housing (2008-2009) in St. Louis. In 2009, she became a staff member in the Advancement Office at Rosati-Kain High School. Four years later, she transitioned to volunteer status in the Advancement Office (2013-2021) and also became a volunteer for the Magnificat Program for Marian Middle School (2013-2021).

After a period of discernment, Sister Vincella moved to Mother of Perpetual Help Residence in St. Louis in February 2022. In June 2024, she was diagnosed with cancer and chose to receive hospice care. As her health needs increased, she was transferred to Mary Queen and Mother Center in mid-July 2024. She passed away peacefully at 6:20 a.m. on August 29, 2024.

Funeral services were held at Theresa Center, Sancta Maria in Ripa, on September 4, 2024. Visitation and sharing of memories preceded the celebration of the Mass of Resurrection with Rev. Michael Joyce, C.M. as president. Sister Joanne Hanrahan, SSND, gave the reflection. Relatives, extended family members, friends, classmates, colleagues, School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates were in attendance. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery.

Sister Vincella was preceded in death by her parents, Marie and Harry Lake. She is survived by her relatives, friends, former students, School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND Associates.

As a teacher of social studies and religion, campus minister, coach, director and volunteer in various ministries, Sister Vincella challenged those with whom she served to respect, protect and nurture all of God's creation and to be an advocate for peace. She was a creative and dedicated member of the Shalom, Justice and Peace Committee for the SSND Central Pacific Province.

Sister Vincella had a quick wit and delightful sense of humor and found reasons to celebrate. Former students attest to her "motherly" care and concern for them. She had a great love for cats and enjoyed their companionship. May Sister Vincella now rejoice as she celebrates her new life with her family and her loving God.

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND