In Memoriam 2018
Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois

Let us imagine that within us is an extremely rich place, built entirely of gold and precious stones...

Within us lies something incomparably more precious than what we see outside ourselves.

Let’s not imagine that we are hollow inside.

—St. Teresa of Avila, *Way of Perfection*

3 / Sister Mary Bernice Curtin · 11.26.17

4 / Sister Mary Alice Mannix · 5.3.18

5 / Sister Marion Sitkiewitz · 5.14.18

6 / Sister Mary Karla Fritz · 6.7.18

7 / Sister Mary Paulette Overbeck · 10.13.18
Sister Mary Bernice Curtin, OP

Martha Eileen, born to Henry and Helen Marie Spressor Curtin
April 26, 1932, Taylorville, Ill.

First Profession: August 5, 1952
Perpetual Profession: August 5, 1955
Entered into eternal life: November 26, 2017

St. Edward School, Chicago 1952-1953
Viatorians, Arlington Heights, Ill. 1953-1954
Sacred Heart School, Granite City, Ill. 1954-1960
St. Christina School, Chicago 1960-1972
St Dominic School, Quincy, Ill. 1977-1978
St. Agnes School, Springfield, Ill. 1978-1979
St. Frances Cabrini School, Springfield, Ill. 1979-1986
Alfred Fortin Villa, Bourbonnais, Ill. 1986-1998
St Thomas School, Philo, Ill. 1999-2000
St. Mary-Rogers Mem. Hospital, Rogers, Ark. 2000-2007
Sacred Heart Convent, Springfield, Ill. 2007-2017

“Her spirit survived on biblical wisdom, classical music, creative projects, and nature sounds of water and birds, while her human connections flourished on wit and adaptability.”
—Sister Judith Hilbing

Perhaps it was first within Sister M. Bernice’s family home in Taylorville that she honed the traits for which she would become known in community: wit and adaptability. Named Martha Eileen by her parents, she was a sort of “Martha” in community and ministerial life, serving the children she loved, doing kindesses for her sisters, and approaching all tasks with a quiet presence behind which hid her sly wit.

Sister M. Brendan recalled that Sister M. Bernice’s fellow teachers would ask her silly questions just to hear her witty response.

Her memorial card included this wisdom: “Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are The Most important work.” And it was to the work of forming and loving children that Sister M. Bernice gave the greater part of her ministry.

Sister M. Bernice loved creating visual art. Many of our sisters cherish the works she gave them, especially the carved images of St. Dominic she created over the years.

Throughout her life of teaching, mentoring, and serving the people of God, Sister M. Bernice faithfully cultivated a quiet presence in a culture of chaos. She reminded us that to do the same we need a “Mary heart” in a “Martha world.”
Sister Mary Alice Mannix, OP

Margaret Ann Mannix daughter of Ernest and Dorothy Corrigan Mannix, February 23, 1930, Little Falls, Minn.

| First Profession: | January 3, 1950 |
| Perpetual Profession: | January 3, 1953 |
| Entered into eternal life: | May 3, 2018 |

- St. Edward School, Chicago, 1950-1954
- St. Francis School, Jerseyville, Ill., 1954-1959
- Holy Angels School, Aurora, Ill., 1959-1963
- St. Augustine School, Lenox, Mich., 1963-1964
- St. Michael School, Duluth, Minn., 1964-1966
- St. Christina School, Chicago, 1966
- St. James School, Sauk Village, Ill., 1971-1973
- St. Peter School, Aurora, Ill., 1973-1975
- Our Saviour School, Jacksonville, Ill., 1976-1978
- Our Lady Queen of Peace School, Bethalto, Ill., 1978-1984
- St. John Neumann, Maryville, Ill., 1984-1987

“She turned her face to the wind and accepted the storms she had to walk through. She was a work in progress. She maintained a hope that there would always be forgiveness on the other side of anger.”

—Sister Judith Hilbing

Sister M. Alice ministered as a middle school, junior high, and high school teacher for 37 years, and as a director of religious education. It was, however, her ministry with persons with intellectual and physical disabilities for which she will be most remembered. At Blessed Sacrament Parish, Springfield; through her membership in the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry; and with Victorious Missionaries, she found a way to transform her own suffering into life-giving, healing balm.

It was her suffering and pain that created of her a compassionate, patient minister for others with physical disabilities and emotional pain. As Sister Rose Marie Riley said at Sister M. Alice’s funeral, whether it was despite or because of her own suffering “…she loved being with her special friends, whose gifts and talents are often hidden from our culture. She understood that with their mental and physical challenges they were differently-abled, not disabled. They knew that she loved them and they, in turn, loved her. Theirs was a mutual relationship of love, respect, joy, and empowerment.

“This was Sister M. Alice’s treasure trove. She taught me that the path to becoming fully human blossoms like spring when perceived weakness meets a loving welcome. Her treasure revealed a heart of great love.”
Sister Marion Sitkiewitz, OP

“In Sister Peter Claver”
Marion Lucy, born to Peter and Lucy Bonk Sitkiewitz, March 29, 1928, Chicago.

First Profession: January 4, 1951
Perpetual Profession: January 4, 1954
Entered into eternal life: May 14, 2018

Our Saviour School, Jacksonville, Ill. 1953-1957
St. Mary School, East St. Louis, Ill. 1957-1964
St. Thomas School, Newton, Ill. 1964-1966
St. Thomas School, Philo, Ill. 1966-1968
Hillsboro, Ill., Religious Education Center 1968-1969
Arcola, Ill., Religious Education Center 1969-1970
St. Lawrence O’Toole Parish, Matteson, Ill. 1978-1984
St. Francis Parish, Jerseyville, Ill. 1987-1991
St. Victor Parish, Calumet City, Ill. 1993-1995
Holy Cross Parish, Batavia, Ill. 1995-1996
Sister Thea Bowman School, E. St. Louis, Ill. 1997-2004
Marian Catholic, Chicago Heights, Ill. 2004-2013

Sister Marion ministered for most of her life as an educator. First, she was a primary school teacher, then spent many years as a religious education specialist in parishes in central and northern Illinois. She loved her early years in East St. Louis at St. Mary School and was happy to return there later in life as librarian at Sister Thea Bowman School. Her final years in active ministry were spent at Marian Catholic High School, where she was the speech team’s biggest booster and a frequent participant in alumni activities.

She often traveled with the MCHS speech team, but she was also an avid fan of the band, choir, and sports teams. She’d make signs to put on the kid’s lockers when the band was going to Grand Nationals or a team was going to state. It was one of the ways Sister Marion let the students know she cared for them.

Sister Marion bonded especially with those students who didn’t have the financial advantages of others. There was a soft spot in her heart for those pushed to the margins. She wouldn’t accept reasoned excuses nor any resignation that the situation was beyond our influence. She wanted something done—something to right the wrong.

“Her joy was contagious, and she was always willing to do anything she could to help.”
—Sister Kathleen Anne Tait
Sister Mary Karla Fritz, OP

Veronica Florence, born to Carl G. and Mary Anne Heimburger Fritz January 13, 1930, Herscher, Ill.

First Profession: January 4, 1954
Perpetual Profession: January 4, 1957
Entered into eternal life: June 7, 2018

Little Flower School, Springfield, Ill. 1954
St. John School, Carrollton, Ill. 1954-1956
Our Lady of Grace School, Chicago 1956-1958
St. Thomas School, Crystal Lake, Ill. 1958-1963
St. Peter School, Aurora, Ill. 1963-1966
Cathedral School, Springfield, Ill. 1966-1971
Sacred Heart School, Granite City, Ill. 1971-1977
St. Joseph School, Bradley, Ill. 1977-1978
Marian Catholic, Chicago Heights, Ill. 1978-1983
Benincasa, Riverton, Ill. 1990-1995
Jubilee Farm, Springfield, Ill. 2004-2005

“So, even as she lamented that she could no longer do anything, she was busy about doing the things she loved most, with and for the people who mattered most to her.”
—Sister Sharon Zayac

It was Sister M. Karla’s love and passion—for food, music, life, learning, the Universe, and us—that we lost so very unexpectedly on the day of her death.

She ministered nearly 30 years as a music educator in elementary schools throughout northern and central Illinois. In the 1970s she was principal, eighth grade teacher, and music teacher at Sacred Heart, Granite City. For five years she taught music at Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights. From the mid-1980s until her retirement in 2014 she served in a variety of community ministries including seven years as prioress and liturgist at Sacred Heart Convent, then later as director of dietary services. She was liturgist and hospitality coordinator at the Dominican Sisters’ ecology and spirituality ministry sites—Benincasa and Jubilee Farm—and remained active until her death.

In the midst of her declining health she was known to express her frustration with her inability to “do anything.” As Sister Sharon Zayac reminded us, “Karla...it was never about what you did. It was always and ever about how you did, and who you were for all of us as you did.”

Even in death she continued to lead us. She became the first Springfield Dominican participating in the “Rush Hospital Memory Project” to leave her brain stem for scientific research, and the second to select a green burial to reduce environmental impact.
Sister Mary Pauletta Overbeck, OP

Pauletta Madonna, born to Frank and Kathryn Petry Overbeck
January 4, 1915, Dieterich, Ill.

First Profession: January 3, 1935
Perpetual Profession: January 3, 1938
Entered into eternal life: October 13, 2018

Cathedral School, Springfield, Ill. 1934-1948
Little Flower School, Springfield, Ill. 1948-1965
St. Thomas Parish, Crystal Lake, Ill. 1965-1968
Holy Rosary Parish, Duluth, Minn. 1968-1974
St. Mary Parish, East Moline, Ill. 1974-1975
Sacred Heart School, San Diego, Calif. 1975-1978
Sacred Heart School, Redlands, Calif. 1978-1980
St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Chatham, Ill. 1980-1987
Sacred Heart Convent, Springfield, Ill. 1987-1990, 2010-2018
Ill. Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems 1990-2010

“At her funeral, Sister M. Pauletta’s friend, Father Richard Chiola, commented that even from beyond the grave she was doing what she did best—catechizing. It was true. She orchestrated just the message she wanted to leave with us, instructing her friends which texts she wanted read at mass and shared throughout the services.

For our contemplation she provided: “With hearts full of life we hold out our hands to receive the mystery of death—the gift of death—and sometimes we weep.”

She gave us the image of silver burning white hot in a fire to explain our need for God’s purifying attention.

“This day was made by the Lord, let us rejoice, let us be glad,” she had us singing at the close of the Mass of Christian Burial.

These were all final benedictions, of a type, from a woman who was blessed with a full ministerial life, and who after more than a century of life, was still teaching and catechizing, preaching, challenging and consoling.

Though most of her religious life was given to elementary education and religious education for children and adults, in 2010, 76 years after she began teaching, she retired from her position as secretary for Illinois Church Action on Alcohol and Addiction Problems where she had served for 20 years.

She, who kept the Light of Christ burning brightly for 103 years, has entered into the fullness of life, eternal life.

“...in that chair, every day around 2:00 a.m., sat a woman, who arose in the quiet of the early morning to pray...She had a list...of all those she placed before God.
—Sister Judith Hilbing
Those sisters who preach, remember, and eulogize our loved ones hold a special role in our congregation. They give us a final, communal way to grieve, hold, and remember the women who’ve traveled so much of their lives with us by virtue of our profession in this congregation. It is from their remembrances that these brief memorials are prepared. Thank you to:

Sister Barbara Blesse, OP
Sister Kathleen Cour, op
Sister Denise Glazik, OP
Sister Jean Patrick Ehrhardt, OP
Sister Mary Brendan Gibbons, OP
Sister Margaret Therese Hebert, OP
  Sister Judith Hilbing, op
Sister Rose Marie Riley, OP
Sister Kathleen Anne Tait, OP
  Sister Sharon Zayac, OP