

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister John Martha Knybel, SSND
Educator, Librarian



Sister John Martha Knybel died on March 14, 2017, at the age of 92. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 70 years.

Dolores Lorraine Knybel was born on June 18, 1924, in Chicago, Illinois, the first of three daughters of John Knybel and Martha Pociask. She was baptized at St. John Cantius Church on Chicago's north side, in the area known as *Wygiana Polska*, Expatriate Poland.

In her particularly creative autobiography she wrote, "At the age of seven I started my traveling days that lasted for ten years. In the morning my mother would put me on a street car for a ride that lasted about forty-five minutes," after which she would join the other St. John students in the area who were walking to school, attesting to the high value her parents placed on a Catholic education. At St. John Cantius, she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Dolores attended St. Stanislaus Kostka High School, also taught by SSNDs. One of her favorite activities—among many in which she participated—was helping as a library aide for three years.

During her senior year, Dolores had a part in a play about the life of Mother Caroline, and just before the performance, one of the Sisters asked her if she was interested in SSND. This got her to thinking about religious life, but despite her interest, her parents refused their consent at first. After high school, she worked for a year in an office and attended evening classes at De Paul University.

Dolores entered the candidature in Milwaukee, along with four other “Stanislites” on September 4, 1944. She was received in 1946 and given the name Sister Mary John Martha. She was a novice during the centenary year of SSND in North America (1947), and her group of novices was “always on show,” as she wrote. She was professed in 1947, and took final vows in 1953.

In her first years of ministry, from 1947 to 1958, Sister John Martha taught primary grades in two ethnically Polish schools in Milwaukee, St. Mary Czestochowa and then Ss. Cyril and Methodius. After those nine years, she became a teacher and librarian at Cardinal Stritch High School in Chicago. Until 1997, she continued to minister as a librarian/teacher/media specialist in SSND Chicago schools, including her alma mater, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and finally at the Academy of Our Lady for 26 years. In addition to her library work, she taught English, history, religion, typing, business subjects and computer “whenever they needed a teacher for these courses.”

Her love of books and of education had led her to complete a B.A. in English and Social Science at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee in 1952, and a Master of Library Science from Rosary College in River Forest, Illinois, in 1962. As she wrote,

I learned from my early school days to make every student in my class feel as though she belongs and is an important asset to the group. I have made it my daily practice to go out of my way...to show interest in each student. Someday I hope to hear Our Lord say to me, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

When Sister John Martha left the Academy of Our Lady in 1997, she applied for and accepted the position of receptionist at Resurrection Life Center in Chicago, where many Chicago SSNDs are cared for, serving in that ministry for 14 years, while living with the Resurrection Sisters, on the same campus with RLC.

Sister John Martha died on March 14, 2017 after a short time at Presence Holy Family Long Term Acute Care Hospital in Des Plaines, Illinois. Visitation was held at Resurrection Life Center and then at Mater Christi Church in North Riverside, Illinois, on March 20. The wake service at Mater Christi was followed by the Mass of Christian Burial. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Alsip, Illinois. She is survived by many nieces and nephews, and their children and grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province, c/o Development Office, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, Connecticut 06897 or online: http://atlanticmidwest.org/ways_to_make_gifts.html