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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2017

SISTER VALERIA (ISABEL MARIE) THEIS, SSND

Mankato, Minn –Sister Valeria (Isabel Marie) Theis, 87, died Tuesday, March 21, 2017, in Notre Dame Health Care, Mankato, Minnesota. Her SSND ministry included teaching junior high grades in Catholic schools, coordinating religious education programs and parish pastoral ministry.

Sister Valeria was born August 1, 1929, on the family farm near Marytown, Minnesota. The ninth child and seventh daughter in the family, she was baptized ten days later at St. Mary of the Purification Church in Marytown and given the name Valeria Veronica. In 1934 Valeria began first grade at St. Mary of the Purification School, with School Sisters of Notre Dame as her teachers. After completing eighth grade in 1942, she enrolled as an aspirant at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato. Two of her sisters (Luverna and Georgia Rose) had preceded her to the aspiranture and two of her mother's sisters (Sisters Leander and Jeanette Lenzmeier) and her father's aunt (Sister Maximilla Theis) were already School Sisters of Notre Dame, so she was very familiar with sisters.



Valeria entered the SSND candidature in 1946, spending the year as a college student. The following year she taught fourth grade at St. Matthew School, St. Paul. Reception into the novitiate was scheduled for July 1948, but because of a congenital back problem, she was advised to go home. After back surgery in 1951, she was given clearance to re-enter the candidature and did so on December 30. Her sister, Annabelle, was already a candidate, and both Valeria and Annabelle were received into the novitiate in July 1952. Both were given forms of their parents' names: Valeria became Sister Isabel Marie and Annabelle became Sister William Marie. Later both returned to their baptismal names.

Following profession of first vows in 1953, Sister Isabel Marie began her teaching ministry with a focus on junior high students. She taught at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul (1953-54); Assumption, Cresco, Iowa (1954-56); St. Matthew, St. Paul (1956-61), where she had previously taught as a candidate and as a lay teacher; St. Michael, St. Michael (1961-63); St. Joseph, Red Wing (1963-65); Sacred Heart, St. Paul (1965-66); Blessed Sacrament, Waterloo (1966-68); St. Mary, Worthington (1969-71); St. Peter, Canby, where she was also the principal (1971-77); St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul (1977-82); and Shakopee Area Catholic School (1982-83). She earned a bachelor's degree in English from the College of St. Catherine in 1961 and a master's degree in education from Loyola University, Chicago, in 1971.

From 1983 until 1988 she cared for her mother, who lived in Shakopee, and coordinated the religious education program at St. John the Baptist, Jordan until 1991. She then resumed her junior high teaching ministry at Holy Childhood School, St. Paul, until 1996, when she became family life coordinator at St. Francis de Sales Parish. From 1998 until 2000, Sister Valeria served as a receptionist at the Griggs-Midway Building in St. Paul. In 2000, she began ten years of service in parish pastoral ministry at St. James and St. Francis de Sales parishes.

Sister Valeria moved to Good Counsel in 2010. She used her seamstress skills as she worked in the sewing room for several years. In addition to mending, hemming and a variety of other services for sisters, she also designed fleece hats and crocheted booties for the annual Craft Fair.

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While living in St. Paul, Sisters Valeria and Annabelle developed a special bond with an immigrant family. The sisters provided child care and helped prepare the children to receive the sacraments. The family faithfully continued to visit the sisters in Mankato, often attending Sunday Liturgy with them.

The Funeral Liturgy, with Father Andrew Olsem as presider, was held Friday, March 24, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in the Good Counsel Cemetery. She is survived by nieces and nephews and their families and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents William and Isabel (Lenzmeier) Theis, her sisters Lucille Pauly, Jeanette Wolf, Georgia Rose Theis, Jean Marie (Luverna) Theis, SSND, Alice Kopp, Annabelle Theis, SSND, Evelyn Theis and Marjorie Theis (both of whom died in infancy), and her brothers Harold and Alvin. Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame Retirement Fund, c/o Resource Development, 170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato, MN, 56001-3138, or online at www.ssndcentralpacific.org/Partner/Donation.

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