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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sister Irene Bopp, SSND
Educator, Administrator

CHICAGO - Sister Irene Bopp died on May 14, 2017, at Resurrection Hospital in Chicago. A native of Chicago, Sister Irene was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 74 years, and an educator and administrator serving the Chicago area for 40 years. She also ministered in the Milwaukee area for more than 20 years. She was 93.



Irene Bopp was born in Chicago on March 15, 1924, the middle child of John Bopp and Catherin Bright, both immigrants from the German-speaking area of Russia. As she wrote, “Growing up in a happy German immigrant home with two sisters and six brothers was, for me, a very special blessing. I was blessed with parents who loved all their children very much and who taught us through example the importance of God and the Blessed Mother in our lives.”

Irene was baptized at St. Alphonsus in Chicago, and attended grade school there. Irene’s sister Rose, later Sister Gemma, entered the SSND convent in Milwaukee, as a candidate in 1933. Five years later, Irene entered the Juniorate at the Academy of Our Lady in Chicago. In 1940, after two years as a Junior, Irene entered the candidature in Milwaukee. At reception, she received the name Sister John Mary. She pronounced her first vows on July 29, 1943, and her final vows on July 29, 1949.

Sister John Mary’s first assignment was to Holy Cross, Milwaukee, as teacher of primary grades. “I knew that now my task of leading the little children to God was about to begin.” To her surprise and joy, she spent 17 years at Holy Cross. After a few years of learning from the other sisters, Sister John Mary was also frequently asked to give

teaching demonstrations and to assist the newly professed sisters in techniques of teaching. “I especially loved to help them in the teaching of religion,” she remembered.

Over the next many years, Sister Irene served as teacher and administrator at several Wisconsin and Illinois schools, and eventually as an education consultant for the Archdiocese of Chicago.

In 1960, Sister John Mary earned a Master of Education. In 1965, when the Milwaukee Province was divided, Sister John Mary chose to go to the Chicago Province to be close to her aging parents. In 1971, Sister John Mary volunteered to go to a new SSND mission to be formed in Thailand. However, she was asked by the provincial to consider being principal at St. Alphonsus. “‘Mother,’ I replied, ‘where am I needed most?’” Although the mission to Thailand never materialized, Sister John Mary served for seven years at St. Alphonsus and “fell in love with the place though it was a bit different being the principal of the school from which I graduated.”

Along with administration, Sister Irene also was a member of many parish organizations, including the finance committee, and served the also served the Chicago Archdiocese as secretary of the principals’ association and a member of the principal interview team.

In 1974, a Master of Fine Arts in Theology was added to her attainments. From 1979 to 1993, Sister Irene, as she came to be called, served as an education consultant in the Archdiocese of Chicago, working particularly with school boards, especially when schools were merging or being consolidated.

In 1993, at the invitation of the provincial, Sister Irene began the development office for the Chicago Province, a position she enjoyed and continued for ten years. In 2003, she moved to Resurrection Life Center in Chicago, where her lifelong cheerfulness was appreciated by staff and patients.

Sister Irene is survived by her sister Margaret Davidson, and by many devoted nieces and nephews and their families. Visitation was held at Presence Resurrection Life Center on May 25. The wake and Mass of Christian Burial were held at Mater Christi Church in North Riverside, Illinois, on the same date. Interment was on May 26 at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Alsip, Illinois. Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic- www.amssnd.org Midwest Province, c/o Development Office, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, Conn. 06897 or online:

http://atlanticmidwest.org/ways_to_make_gifts.htm

