



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister Mary Valeria Wagner, SSND
December 4, 1923 – August 20, 2017

BALTIMORE - Sister Mary Valeria Wagner died peacefully at Villa Assumpta on Aug. 20, 2017. She was 93 years old and a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 71 years. Sister Valeria taught for 52 years and gave 17 years of community service in Baltimore at Corpus Christi, St. Ann's and St. Pius X Catholic schools.



Mary Edna Wagner, seventh of the nine children of George and Mary Rose Knodle Wagner, was born in Emmitsburg, Md. on Dec. 4, 1923. Named Mary in honor of her mother, she was baptized and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1923. Mary Edna wrote in her autobiography, "When I was old enough, I started school at St. Mary's School, Hagerstown, Md." She was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 12 years of grammar and high school at St. Mary's, graduating in 1943.

On August 30, 1943, Mary Edna entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame, receiving the bonnet at St. Mary's. She said, "I was thoroughly convinced that this was the order for me." She studied at the Notre Dame Training School for two years while a candidate. She entered the novitiate on July 16, 1945, receiving the name, Mary Valeria. Sister Mary Valeria professed her first vows on July 31, 1946.

Sister Valeria's education continued at Fordham University, N.Y. where she earned a Bachelor of Science in 1957. She received a Master of Education in reading from Loyola College (now University), Baltimore in 1978.

Sister Valeria was first missioned to St. Rita's School, Brooklyn, to teach second grade (1946-57). She taught grades one and two at Corpus Christi School (1957-66) and St. Ann's School (1966-73) both in Baltimore. In 1973, Sister Valeria went to St. Pius X School, Baltimore where she remained until she retired to Villa Assumpta. For more than 40 years at St. Pius X School, she taught kindergarten and the primary grades as well as worked as a volunteer (1973-2014).

Sister Valeria was completely dedicated to her mission as an educator. She made every day an adventure for her students, encouraging them to express their creativity. She was patient with the children, listened to their stories and enjoyed being with them. She continuously strove to keep God's love before them and to make God alive in their lives.

Sister's extra curricular activities were as unique and innovative as her classroom teaching. She worked with Girl Scouts and Brownies, attended basketball games, and took part in skating and bowling at children's birthday parties. She was renowned for her recycling and collecting activities, amassing a gigantic aluminum ball and being named Recycling Educator of the Year.

A second ministry was Sister Valeria's life as the professional clown, "Waggs." As Waggs, she entertained children and senior citizens. One elderly woman said, "I love it. It's like being at the circus." Sister Valeria said, "I get a really good feeling from the people."

In describing her ministries as a teacher, clown and friend, Sister Valeria quoted the words of Mother Theresa, "The candle consumes itself as it serves others by its burning."

A wake service was held on Tuesday, Aug. 29 and the Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated on Aug. 30. Both services were held in the chapel at Villa Assumpta. The Mass was concelebrated by Rev. Roman Kovacheson OFM Cap., chaplain at Villa Assumpta and Mgrs. Rick Hilgartner, pastor of St. Joseph Church, Cockeysville, Md. and student of Sister Valeria. Mgrs. Thomas Baumgartner, former pastor of St. Pius X Church was present at the liturgy. Sister Valeria is survived by a niece and nephews.

Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic Midwest Province, c/o Development Office, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, Conn. 06897 or online: www.amssnd.org