



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister Elise Mary Saydah, SSND

August 6, 1927 – October 15, 2017



BALTIMORE - Sister Elise Mary died on October 15, 2017, the feast of St. Theresa of Avila. She was 90 years old and a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 60 years. Sister Elise Mary ministered as an educator and administrator for 58 years at St. Mary High School, Institute of Notre Dame and Notre Dame Prep School.

Norma Marcelle Saydah was born to the parents of Elias Abraham and Berthe Bosviel Saydah on August 6, 1927.

Elias was originally from Lebanon and Berthe was a native of France. Norma grew up in North Bergen, N. J. and was baptized at St. Michael's Church, Union City, N.J. She was prepared for her first Holy Communion and confirmation by the Gray Franciscans at St. Joseph's Church, in West New York, N.J. She attended Horace Mann School in North Bergen from the age of five until graduation in 1940.

Norma attended high school at the Academy of the Holy Angels in Fort Lee, N. J. Her years at Holy Angels were her first association with the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She said, "Their warm manner and sincere interest in the students deeply impressed me."

After graduation in 1944, Norma began college at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland (now University), in Baltimore. Describing her experience, she said, "As a boarder, I came into even closer contact with the sisters and realized what a tremendous work they were doing to bring us nearer to Our Lord and Our Lady." At graduation she received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in French.

After graduation in 1948, Norma worked as a proofreader with the General Foods Corporation in New York City to support herself and her mother. In 1953, she began to teach at her alma mater, the Academy of the Holy Angels. When her mother went to live with her sister and family, Norma was free to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She said, "It was the fulfillment of a desire which I had wanted since my college days."

Norma received the bonnet at Holy Angels on Aug. 29, 1955. As a candidate, she taught history and French at the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore. She was received into the

novitiate on July 13, 1956 and was given the name, Sister Elise Mary. Sister Elise Mary professed her first vows on July 26, 1957.

Sister Elise Mary began her career as a professed sister at the Institute of Notre Dame, teaching French and religion (1957-63). She was the guidance counselor at Notre Dame Preparatory School, Towson, Md. (1963-64). For the remainder of her career she alternated between the Institute of Notre Dame (1971-84, 1987-88) where she was a teacher of French, vice-principal and principal and St. Mary's High School, Annapolis, Md. (1964-71, 1984-87, 1988-2013). At St. Mary's, Sister Elise Mary taught French and religion, was assistant principal and administrative assistant. She earned a Master of Education degree from Loyola College (now University), Baltimore in 1971. Following her ministry at St. Mary's, Sister Elise Mary retired to prayer and presence at Villa Assumpta, Baltimore in 2013.

Sister Elise Mary worked in a school atmosphere for 60 years doing what she loved. She was a cutting edge teacher and a natural leader. Wisdom and peace grounded her and teachers "felt better knowing that she was in school." She had a spirit of determination, great sense of humor as well as the gift of gentleness and caring. A strong athlete, Sister Elise Mary inaugurated the women's basketball team at St. Mary's High, Annapolis and was its first coach. The Fleur d'Elise Cup was established to honor Elise at her jubilee and she awarded the trophy each year at the annual faculty-student game.

The Christian Wake service for Sister Elise Mary was held on Thursday, Oct. 19 and the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Friday, Oct. 20. The services were held in the chapel of Villa Assumpta. The Mass was concelebrated by Villa chaplain and presider, Rev. Roman Kovacheson OSF Cap. and Rev. Andrew Costello, C.Ss.R., longtime friend of Sister Elise Mary and Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Annapolis, Md. Internment followed at Villa Maria Cemetery, Glen Arm Rd., Glen Arm, Md. Sister Elise Mary is survived by her niece, Dolores Emmerich, grandniece, Heather Ballard and grandnephew, Richard Emmerich.

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