



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister Phyllis Bradtke, SSND
April 8, 1926 -- April 19, 2018



CHICAGO – Sister Phyllis Bradtke, 92, died on April 19, 2018 at Resurrection Life Center in Chicago. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 80 years. Included in her ministry, Sister Phyllis was a teacher and administrator for 32 years, served at the Chicago Province and ministered to American Indian communities.

Sister Phyllis was born in Chicago on April 8, 1926, the third and youngest child of John Bradtke and Theresa Beitzel. She was baptized at St. Alphonsus Church.

Phyllis attended primary school at St. Alphonsus School. In the eighth grade, Phyllis became interested in religious life, but both her parents objected to the aspiranture, so she attended St. Alphonsus Commercial and then St. Michael High School, where she “enjoyed [her] studies, especially English, and lived a full social life.” Following graduation, she worked for a year and attended evening classes, where she read avidly in philosophy and theology.

Just five weeks before the date of entrance into the candidature in the Milwaukee motherhouse, Phyllis shocked her family with the news of her plans to enter there. “After brief opposition, both parents gave their consent,” and she entered in Milwaukee on August 28, 1945. As a candidate, she taught remedial English at the Academy of Our Lady in Chicago, while acting as “big sister” to the aspirants with whom she lived there.

On August 5, 1947, Phyllis entered the novitiate in Milwaukee, receiving the name Philip Neri, and was professed on August 6, 1946. Her first assignment was to teach grades six and seven at St. Mary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. She later recalled that at Christmas time, her superior gently advised, "Dear, I think you can ease up a little now on your pupils. You have them breathing together."

In 1950, Sister Philip Neri returned to her home parish, St. Alphonsus, Chicago, as an eighth grade teacher. For many years she continued her ministry as teacher, including St. Aloysius, West Allis, Wisconsin; Columbus High School, Marshfield, Wisconsin; Cardinal Stritch High School, Chicago, Illinois, where she also became principal; St. Michael, Chicago; St. Constance, Chicago; and Marion Catholic Central High School, Woodstock, Illinois.

New adventures were ahead for Sister Phyllis, especially after the formation of the DeKalb (later Chicago) province, of which she became a member at its foundation in 1965.

Among her ministries was work in Native American communities. In August of 1983, Sister Phyllis "realized a long-awaited dream" when she was chosen as a member of the new Interprovincial Cherokee Project in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where she spent three years with people of the Cherokee Nation, working in GED tutoring, a food pantry for the poor, catechesis, hospital and nursing home visiting, and involvement in two parishes.

Other ministries included local leadership of SSND retirement communities and the beginning of a development program for the province. A return to ministry in the Native community found Sister Phyllis first at St. Catherine Indian Boarding School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and later at Turtle Mountain Ojibway Reservation in Belcourt, North Dakota, where she lived with Benedictine Sisters in their monastery and "enjoyed the prayer/work rhythm of monastic life."

During her time in North Dakota, Sister Phyllis suffered a sudden and serious stroke. Through careful and persistent therapy, she gradually recovered the use of her right side, and was able to relearn the ability to walk. Through all of these experiences, she continued to search for and discover the will of God in her situation, confident that every situation offered something new to be learned about herself and the world around her. Her booklet of poems, "Fragments," puts some of these insights into clear expression.

A wake service was held for Sister Phyllis at Resurrection Life on April 25, 2018. The following day, visitation and the Mass of Christian Burial were held at Marian Village,

followed by burial at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Alsip, Illinois. She is survived by many nieces and nephews, and their children.

*“Much later now, at journey’s end,
I walk along the shore again.
Spirit-filled, at rest, content.
Limited, no more.”*

From the poem “Fiat,” by Phyllis Bradtke, SSND

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