

January 5, 2018

*FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Lauren Huffman, Communications
314-633-7031 – office
lhuffman@ssndcp.org*

**Sister Brenda Penning, SSND
Former teacher, parish administrator and parish minister**

Mankato, Minnesota – Sister Brenda Penning, 83, died Thursday, December 28, 2017, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, Minnesota. She served as an elementary teacher, a parish leader and in SSND motherhouse administration.

Sister Brenda was born on January 22, 1934, on a farm south of Ashton, Iowa. The next day, she was baptized Dorothy Anna at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Ashton. She attended grades one through twelve at St. Joseph School in Ashton, where her teachers were Franciscan Sisters from Dubuque, Iowa. She graduated from high school in 1951 and remained at home to help on the farm for a few years.

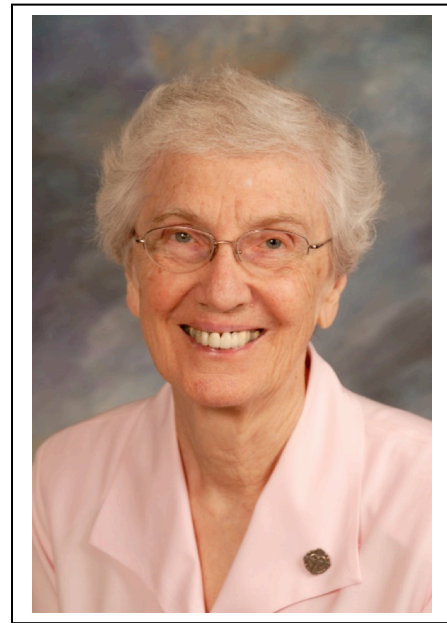
From December 1954 to March 1957, she worked in the newspaper office in Sheldon, Iowa, where she was a bookkeeper. In April 1957, she began work as an assistant secretary at SS. Peter & Paul parish office in Mankato, Minnesota. The next February, Dorothy worked as a long distance telephone operator. Even though this was her dream job, she was still restless and dissatisfied. She observed sisters bringing their classes to a nearby church, and after a reflection day followed by prayer and thought, she called Good Counsel, made an appointment with vocation personnel – and entered the SSND candidature in August 1958. She was received into the novitiate in 1959 and given the name Sister M. Brenda. Following profession of vows in 1960, she and her classmates remained at Good Counsel to continue their education.

In 1961, Sister Brenda began her teaching ministry at St. Donatus, Iowa, where she stayed until 1965. She also taught at Blessed Sacrament, Waterloo, Iowa (1965-68); St. Michael, Prior Lake, Minnesota (1968-70); Project Discovery, St. Paul (1970-72); Christ the King, Omak, Washington (1972-73); Holy Family, Clarkston, Washington (1973-77); and St. Mary, Worthington, Minnesota (1977-81). She earned a bachelor's from Mount Mary College in 1968 and a master's in pastoral ministry from Creighton University in 1983.

While teaching at Worthington, Sister Brenda became involved in broader parish activities including the Marriage Encounter team, the Beginning Experience support group, and the Parish Council and Liturgy Committee. In 1981, she became a pastoral minister and religious education coordinator at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Rochester, Minnesota, a position she held until 1983. She served as director of sponsored programs at Good Counsel Education Center from 1983 until 1987 before returning to pastoral ministry at St. Joseph in New Hampton, Iowa. In 1993, she became motherhouse community leader.

In June 1995, Sister Brenda received a letter from Bishop John Vlazny of the Winona Diocese, appointing her parish director of St. Anthony's Church, Lismore, and St. Killian's Church, St. Killian, effective in June. As the first parish director of the Diocese of Winona, Sister Brenda was responsible for the pastoral leadership of the parishes, and two diocesan priests were named sacramental ministers.

Sister Brenda served as parish director until 1999, when she became a pastoral associate at St. Joseph the Worker, Mankato. Following a sabbatical in 2002-2003, she was a parish minister in the parishes of St. Agnes and Immaculate Conception, Kellogg, and St. Felix, Wabasha. In 2008, she was invited to Good



Counsel for the position of coordinator of liturgical ministers, which involved recruiting, training and scheduling all who served in any liturgical role on the Hill. She worked in this capacity until 2013.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Joseph Fogal as presider, was held January 3, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial of her cremains in Good Counsel Cemetery. A prayer service of remembrance preceded the funeral liturgy. She is survived by her sisters, Theresa McCarty, Marian Penning and Christine Solko, nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Lawrence and Ann (Schwarz) Penning, her sisters, Mildred Schnurr and Helen Peplau, and her brothers Robert, Leonard and George.

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