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*FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
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Sister M. Honora Elsen, SSND
Former teacher, director, pastoral minister and administrator

Mankato, Minnesota – Sister M. Honora Elsen, 99, died December 29, 2017, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, Minnesota. She served as a high school teacher, postulant and vocation director, motherhouse administrator and visitor to the elderly.

Sister Honora was born August 27, 1918, on a family farm just outside Loretto, Minnesota, and was baptized Cecilia Elizabeth the same day at SS. Peter & Paul Church, Loretto. Cecilia entered first grade at SS. Peter & Paul School in 1923. As a young child she already knew that she wanted to be a sister and looked forward to entering the aspiranture at Good Counsel in Mankato following eighth grade. In 1935, she entered the SSND candidature and the next August, Cecilia was missioned to St. Matthew, St. Paul, to do her practice teaching in grade three. This was the only time that she taught elementary students. Cecilia returned to the candidature in spring to prepare for reception. On July 21, 1937, she was given the name Novice Mary Honora, in honor of a former teacher, Sister M. Honorine Gonnoring.



Following profession in 1938, instead of a teaching assignment, Sister Honora was sent to Mount Mary to major in home economics. Afterwards, she was missioned to Good Counsel Academy where, in addition to home economics, she also taught religion and English. She had additional responsibilities involving supervision of boarders in study hall, dormitory and dining room. She remained at Good Counsel until 1954 and, as she gained experience, she assumed responsibility for several extra-curricular activities including Sodality, Catholic Students Mission Crusade (CSMC), Mother-Daughter Tea, Senior Tea and Laywomen's Retreats. In 1949, she earned her master's degree in home economics from Stout Institute in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Sister Honora's next teaching assignment was at St. Michael High School, St. Michael, Wisconsin, where she again taught home economics and religion from 1954 to 1962. She earned a master's degree in theology from Notre Dame in 1961. In 1962, she became postulant directress and vocations directress for the Mankato Province. From 1966 through 1970, she was the full-time vocations directress, traveling to schools and parishes. She also visited the homes of young women interested in joining SSND. Sister Honora became motherhouse local leader in 1970 and, in 1971, returned to high school teaching at St. Mary's High School, New England, North Dakota, until 1976. She spent the 1976-77 school year as food service director for Good Counsel Academy and then completed her final stint as a home economics teacher, this time at Notre Dame High School, Cresco, Iowa (1977-81).

In 1981, Sister Honora began parish ministry work, serving one year at St. Wenceslaus Parish, New Prague. Sister Honora then asked to care for her elderly mother in her home at Loretto in 1982. While caring for her mother, she became actively involved in Loretto parish life, joining the religious education staff and the choir, and serving as a Eucharistic Minister. She returned to Good Counsel in 1987 and served as motherhouse community leader with Sister Sylvia Borgmeier until 1990.

Sister Honora moved to St. Paul in 1990 and became a volunteer pastoral minister to the elderly at St. Mary's Home. She was part of a team who worked under the direction of Sister Mary Martin Tobias

offering a variety of services. She viewed her time at St. Mary's as a "way of being a sign of God's love, not only to the residents, but also to the staff members. I still feel I am an educator as I help bring persons to the fullness of their potential, even those nearing 100."

Beginning in 2002, Sister Honora again called Good Counsel "home." For several years, she helped in the sacristy and volunteered in the development office. She continued her hobby of embroidering dish towels and pillowcases for the Craft Fair. She was a dedicated Minnesota Twins fan, and enjoyed fishing when she had the chance. Always positive, gracious and grateful, she possessed joy and excitement about life. Her family members were very important to her and were frequent visitors at Good Counsel.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held January 4 in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in Good Counsel Cemetery. She is survived by two sisters-in-law, Eileen Elsen and Betty Elsen, 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, John and Elizabeth (Becker) Elsen, her sister, Sister M. Flavia (Marie) and her brothers Nick, John and Al.

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