



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister Mary Theresa Prior, SSND
May 9, 1931 – June 24, 2018



Wilton, Conn. - Sister Mary Theresa Prior, SSND, died on June 24, 2018 at Villa Notra Dame in Wilton. She was a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 66 years.

Eileen Prior and her twin sister, Theresa, were born on May 9, 1931, and were baptized at St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Forest Hills, Massachusetts. Both attended Forest Hills Elementary School; Eileen and Theresa received First communion in second grade, and were confirmed by Archbishop Richard Cushing in eighth grade. Because there were no openings in the parish high school, Eileen and Theresa enrolled in Mission Church High School in Roxbury in 1945. Theresa stayed only one year, but Eileen stayed to “enjoy playing varsity basketball and being head of the dance committee,” in her junior and senior years. The four years ended with a “wonderful graduation.”

Sister Connie Carrigan, who interviewed her, quoted Theresa as saying,

I always wanted to be a teacher, and my twin wanted to be a nurse, and both of us wanted to enter the convent. She left first to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston and became Sister Eileen (my baptismal name). The following year, 1949, I took the train to Baltimore with 13 others from the Boston area and entered SSND. At my Reception two years later I got Theresa, my sister's baptismal name – a bit confusing for those who knew us.

Candidate Eileen taught second graders for two years. This ministry brought her a life-long friendship with Sister Frances Angermaier. With her first profession on August 2, 1952, she was missioned to St. John the Evangelist in Bergenfield, N.J., where she remained until 1960. She made her final profession of vows in 1958, and then spent the years 1960 to 1962 at St. Alphonsus, Brooklyn, NY. St. Leo, Irvington, N.J., where she

spent the next six years, “was a big place, and the rules in the convent and school were fairly strict, so I learned what I needed to quickly.”

During the summers, Theresa earned B.S. and M.S. degrees in Education from Seton Hall University, where she “very much enjoyed studying.” Later at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, she was awarded another M.S. as a specialist in Reading.

On her next three missions, Theresa served as principal and superior, from 1968 to 1976, at St. Luke, St. Stephen and St. Catherine of Siena, in Westport and Trumbull, Conn. Sometimes these roles were combined with being the 8th grade teacher, so she, at first, spoke of “a big and somewhat overwhelming” mission.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Theresa and her twin Sister Eileen Marie, CSJ, took yearly turns caring for their parents at their home in Roslindale, Mass. Theresa combined these years with teaching first at St. James, Springfield, N.J., and, during the 80s, at Mission Grammar School in Roxbury, Mass. Their father died in 1982 and their mother in 1983. Theresa wrote, “These years were a blessing and gifted time for me, as well as our family, and it was good returning to my roots.” Theresa experienced the closing of both the Mission Grammar and High School convents; she then lived with the Sisters of St. Joseph at Holy Name Convent in West Roxbury, where her sister was stationed. From there she continued to teach at Mission Grammar School; after 1983 and until 2008 she was the librarian.

Theresa moved to Villa Notre Dame in 2015 and sisters enjoyed her beautiful smile, witty remarks and sense of humor. After her health declined, Theresa returned from the hospital to Lourdes on comfort care. Her sisters Marie and Eileen Marie, CSJ, were with her the evening before she died and also on Sunday morning, June 24, “as her soul soared to God while they and several community members sang *O Mother of Perpetual Help*.”

At the vigil service on June 27, presided over by Sister Shawn Kavanagh, reminiscences of her life-long service of God as an SSND were shared. From Baltimore, members of Theresa’s devoted “crowd” – Frances Angermaier, Anita Saffran, Marian Sullivan and Regis Krusniewski – seemed to bring her community life full circle. Three nephews, one niece, and a sister-in-law joined Marie and Sister Eileen.

Father Tom Elliott, CSC, Villa Chaplain, presided over the Liturgy of Christian Burial the morning of June 28. Internment followed at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel, Conn.

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