



Sister Celine Marie Flynn, SSND
September 9, 1936 – January 9, 2019



Wilton, Connecticut – Sister Celine Marie Flynn died at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton on the early morning of January 9, 2019. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 55 years.

Mary Helen Flynn was born in Newark, New Jersey, on September 9, 1936, the only child of John Joseph Flynn from Ireland, and Ellen O’Hara of County Roscommon. “My good Catholic parents saw to it that I was baptized on October 18, at St. Rose of Lima Church, also in Newark,” she wrote in her autobiography. When she was five, Mary Helen started first grade at St. Francis School in Union City, New Jersey.

In October of her eighth grade year, Mary Helen was transferred to St. Peter School, Newark, where she met SSND for the first time. “I had never heard of this order of nuns until then,” she wrote. After graduation, “My main interest was Commercial Studies...so I went to Saint James High in Newark for my four years.” During her junior and senior years, Mary Helen worked at Saint James Hospital part-time and during the summer as an assistant dietitian. Her first position after graduation was four years with the Industrial Electronics Corporation, Newark, as a clerk typist. Later, she was typist and relief secretary at an insurance company; her last job before religious life was with the Retaining Ring Company in Irvington, where she had diversified duties—relief operator on switch board, Dictaphone operator, as well as taking shorthand and using an IBM Electric Typewriter-Calculator.

After several years in the workforce, Mary Helen answered her calling and entered the congregation on September 8, 1962, at the new Motherhouse in Wilton, Connecticut. Reception into the novitiate, at which she received the religious name Mary Celine, was followed a year later by first profession on August 8, 1964, and then final profession on July 26, 1969. Studies in Business-Education at Boston University earned Sister Celine a

Bachelor of Science degree in 1973. At Fordham University she was awarded an M.S. in Secondary Education Administration and Supervision in 1977.

St. Mary Business School in Buffalo, New York, one of the province's oldest missions, was Celine's first obedience for two years. At another business school, St. Joseph High School in Rochester, New York, she completed two more years. At Our Lady of Perpetual Help Business School in New York City, Celine served for 19 years, first as a teacher and then as principal for 15 years. In May 1986, the province newsletter *Communiscope* published a lengthy article by Celine called, "Justice in the Market Place." It delineated OLPH's vision of its graduates as women in a secular business society focused on "integrity which encompasses fair dealing, honesty, love, respect, truthfulness and forthrightness."

After five years as a pastoral associate at St. Cecilia Parish in Iselin, New Jersey, Celine returned to teaching business subjects at Berkeley College, and then at the Cittone Institute in Edison, New Jersey.

In August 1993, the council asked Celine to become Wilton's director of Development. She began working with Sister Mary Dooley, Wilton's first director, before Mary left this ministry in January 1994. Together they walked through the Octoberfest, the Christmas appeal, the Tree of Life, and traveled to meet the Area Guilds--all for a smooth transition. Celine saw this responsibility as a "sacred trust."

In this role, Celine felt enriched by the constant contact with our sisters. Her admiration for our retired sisters was her main reason for making the video, "Come and Journey with Us as We Celebrate Life." Shown at the Area Guild meetings, the video revealed how involved the retired sisters were in the life of the province and congregation.

Next, for seven years, Celine served as director of Religious Education at St. Michael Parish in Greenwich, Connecticut. Here, as in all her ministries, Celine made many good friends who got to know SSND and the Motherhouse through her.

Sister Theresa Lamy, VND Local Leader, presided at the Vigil Service on January 17. Father Reginald Norman, Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton, presided at the Mass of Christian Burial, on January 18. He was joined by Father John Serio, SDB, who had worked with Celine at St. Michael and become friends with her. Burial followed at St. Mary Cemetery, Bethel, Connecticut.