



Sister Margaret Kenyon, SSND
June 9, 1933 – January 8, 2019



Wilton, Connecticut – Sister Margaret Kenyon died at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, late on the evening of January 8, 2019. Sister Margaret was a professed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 65 years.

Margaret Kenyon was born on June 9, 1933, in Teaneck, New Jersey, and baptized by a Sister of St. Joseph at the hospital, because the doctors were worried about both her and her mother. Her parents were Charles Kenyon, from West New York, and Marie Setzer from New York City. Three brothers, Ray, Don, and Gerard, and one sister, Carol, born when Margaret was a candidate, completed the family.

Margaret enrolled in Madonna School in Fort Lee, New Jersey and graduated from the eighth grade in 1947. She started high school at St. Luke's, and went to Holy Angels Academy as an aspirant for the next three years, graduating in 1951.

Margaret became a candidate on August 28 that year, moved to the novitiate in July 1953, and had her first profession in July 1954. At her reception, she received the name Charles Garnier, after one of the North American Jesuit martyrs. Her final profession took place on July 29, 1960, at Villa Assumpta in Baltimore.

Then began for Sister Charles, 33 years of teaching elementary school, at Blessed Sacrament, Baltimore; OLPH, Tampa, Florida; St. Ann, Baltimore; St. Peter, Philadelphia; St. Anselm, Brooklyn; Madonna, Fort Lee; and St. Leo, Irvington, New Jersey. In 1987 she gave one year of service as an aide at Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton, and the next year enjoyed the SSND Interprovincial Renewal Program in Chattawa, Mississippi.

Sometime during these years, Margaret brought a group of black children to a public swimming pool, where they were denied access. As Sister Jeannette Blatz told the story at Margaret's funeral, she did not rant or rave. However, two weeks later she arrived with the same group of children, and this time they were welcomed into the pool. Jeannette asked, "Wouldn't we like to know what was said or done to bring about that change?" and added, "Margaret was a gentle woman, but she could be forceful and persistent. Typically, Margaret did what she could do with what she had and did it well." She was motivated by her love of children and the conviction that God had called her to work with them.

Thirteen more years of grade school teaching followed in Sister Margaret's typically generous, typically unsung, and typically wonderful SSND life. They were spent in New Jersey – Immaculate Conception School in Montclair; All Saints in Perth Amboy; and St. John in Bergenfield. Care for her mother at the family home in Hillside, New Jersey, was also Margaret's ministry for several years. It was lived with all the love and generosity she had always shown.

Margaret became a devoted member of the Associate program as companion sister to Marie Ciccone in 2004. From 2005 to 2007, she was a member of the Atlantic-Midwest Province Formation Community in Medford, Massachusetts, and a volunteer at Mission Grammar School in Roxbury. Then Margaret went to Villa Notre Dame to give congregational service.

The Vigil Service for Sister Margaret took place at the Villa on the evening of January 14. Sister Jacci Glessner presided. Her four siblings, their spouses, and many nieces and nephews and family friends and relatives were present. Father Robert Crofut celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial on the morning of January 15. Burial followed at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel, Connecticut.

Sister Jeannette Blatz gave a homily that ended with this tribute:

Margaret spoke well of other people, and was admired for not criticizing anyone. Her sensitivity and kindness, her ability to do what she could with what she had, would, I think, prompt Jesus to say, "Let her come to me. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."