



**Mary Irving, SSND**  
**Aug. 12, 1934 – March 11, 2019**



**BALTIMORE** - Sister Mary Irving, SSND, died peacefully on March 11, 2019, at Villa Assumpta in Baltimore, Maryland. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 64 years. Sister Mary taught in the Baltimore area for nearly 20 years, was a lecturer and adjunct faculty member at a number of universities and was an activist who spoke out for Catholic feminist theologians. She lobbied for full rights for women in the Church. She received the 1986 National Women's Ordination Conference award as a prophetic figure who contributed to the enablement of women.

Mary Mina Irving was born in Boston, Massachusetts on August 12, 1934. She was the first child of Russell F. and Rose J. Ago Irving. Mary was baptized at the Church of St. Ignatius in Chestnut Hill. Her brother, Russell, was born two years later.

Mary's education began in public schools. She received her first Holy Communion at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Brookline. After a family move to Roxbury, Mass., Mary enrolled at Mission Grammar School where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Mary recalled in her autobiography, "While I had a vague desire to become a sister, it was in the eighth grade that I definitely decided on a particular order: the School Sisters of Notre Dame."

Mary graduated from Mission High School in June 1952. On August 28, 1952, Mary received the bonnet in the SSND convent chapel in Roxbury. Mary was a student at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland (now University) for the two years of candidature. She entered the novitiate and was given the name, Sister Mary Jane Valois on July 10, 1954. Sister pronounced her first vows on July 30, 1955.

Sister Mary Jane Valois' first mission was St. Matthew School in Baltimore where she taught fourth and seventh grades (1955-60). She taught freshmen classes at Notre Dame

Preparatory School (1960-68) and high school students at St. John Religious Education Center, Columbia, Md. (1968-73).

Mary graduated from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland in 1960 with a Bachelor of Arts in Latin and French and a Master of Arts in French in 1968 from Assumption College, Worcester, Mass. She received a Master of Pastoral Theology in Spirituality from Weston College School of Theology in 1975. Mary also earned a Doctor of Ministry in Religious Studies from the Catholic University of America in 1994.

Mary was a lecturer and adjunct faculty member at a number of universities including St. Mary Seminary and University, Baltimore; Creighton University, Omaha, Neb. and Washington Theological Union, Silver Spring, Md. She was part of Women in Seminary Education who identified, supported and set direction for the future growth of women involved in seminary work.

Mary was an activist who spoke out for Catholic feminist theologians. She lobbied for full rights for women in the Church. She received the 1986 National Women's Ordination Conference award as a prophetic figure who contributed to the enablement of women.

Mary had a deep concern for social justice. She was part of the task force on the homeless for the Council of Women Religious in Washington, D.C. Mary, the proper Bostonian woman, took a public stand with a group of sisters to protest at the White House for the homeless poor in Washington and ended up overnight in jail. She based her decision on the words of Daniel Berrigan, "You don't walk away from evil. You have to keep pushing it backward by your action." The harrowing experience gave Mary a powerful sense of peace and community.

In her later years, Mary maintained a private practice in spiritual direction and facilitation. She was devoted to ministry to women. Another of Mary's many talents was her musical ability. She participated in the Chorus of the Washington National Cathedral and was a choir member at Baltimore Carmel.

The Christian Wake service was held on March 25, 2019. A Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated in the chapel of Villa Assumpta on Tuesday, March 26 with friend, Rev. Joseph Muth as celebrant. Interment followed at Villa Maria Cemetery, Glen Arm Rd., Glen Arm Md. Mary is survived by her niece, Rosemary Colvin; cousin, Nancy J. Ago and friends. 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](http://www.amssnd.org)

