



Sister Mary Ann Tantalo, SSND
May 1, 1914 – May 8, 2019



Wilton, Connecticut – Sister Mary Ann Tantalo, SSND, died on May 8, 2019 at Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton, one week after her 105th birthday. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 71 years.

The fifth of 10 children of Lorenzo Tantalo and Josephine Cocuzzi, both immigrants from Italy, Mary Ann was born on May 1, 1914 and baptized at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Rochester, New York. Reared in a Catholic home, Mary Ann recalled that the children were greatly influenced

by their saintly Grandmother Prudence, who came to visit daily and cared for them on Sundays while their parents were at Mass.

Mary Ann attended public school and in her autobiography, fondly recalled Miss Martin who gave religious instruction to the public school children. After graduating from Public School 43, Mary Ann went to John Marshall High School, where the majority of the teachers were Catholic. She remembered that her Latin teacher advised the Catholic students to follow Mass in Latin because this would not only help their studies but also give them a greater appreciation for the Mass.

After studying business at the School of Commerce, she did stenographic work and bookkeeping at two businesses and then worked for ten years at Amour and Company. Mary Ann wrote that “she always had the desire to enter religious life but put off making the decision.” When she was 27 years old, on the advice of her confessor, she tried to contact the Sisters of St. Joseph. Upon receiving no response, she looked in the phone book for a convent near the Rochester train station.

At St. Joseph Convent Mary Ann met Sister Edward Wille, SSND, who told her she had just one year to decide, since the entrance age was 28. The materials about the Congregation, including the life of SSND Founder Mother Theresa Gerhardinger, appealed to her, and Mary Ann decided to enter SSND. On August 28, 1945 she received

the bonnet in the convent chapel at St. Joseph's and then spent two years in the Teacher Training School at the Candidature. She remembered the "fine example of my teachers."

At Reception on July 16, 1947, Mary Ann became Sister Mary Prudentius, a name she had requested in honor of her beloved grandmother. After a tranquil Novitiate, she was professed on August 3, 1948, and missioned to St. Rita School in Brooklyn, New York. Between 1949 and 1974, "Prudie," as she was fondly called, taught at OLPH in Tampa, Fla; St. Leo, Baltimore; St. Theresa, Trumbull, Conn; St. Margaret Mary, Rochester; St. Brigid, Westbury, NY; and St. Stephen-St. Edward, Warwick, NY. She loved that country school and became principal there.

During these years of teaching, Mary Ann introduced individualized instruction that allowed each child to progress at his/her pace. With an eye to the future and ahead of her time, she also took courses in computer technology. After enjoying the Jubilee experience in Rome and Bavaria, she returned to Warwick and asked to return to teaching, her first love.

For the next 25 years, Mary Ann served at Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester, where she was librarian and media specialist, as well as teacher of math for most of that time. In 1999, Mary Ann retired and move to Villa Notre Dame. Here she helped in the finance office until her vision diminished and she was no longer able to read. With her usual comfort with technology, she researched and used the aids provided by the Society for the Blind, among them a talking computer.

With these she was able to fulfill her ambition to write the history of her family. She spent a year and a half on *Without Papers*, the story of her grandparents' emigration to Rochester, her parents' large and lively family, their courage and integrity and wonderful contribution to life in the U.S. Mary Ann visited her relatives in Italy to gather material for the book, with which she hoped to inspire young people. The book was published and is a beautiful tribute to Mary Ann and her inspiring immigrant family.

Mary Ann was delightful in community life, humorous and kind, interested in everyone.

Sister Evelyn Breslin presided over the wake service at Villa Notre Dame on the evening of May 9. Mary Ann's sister-in-law, Ann, nieces Marlene and Joanne, and nephew Fred and his wife Karen were present for the wake and funeral. Joanne spoke touchingly about the family's love for Mary Ann. Fathers Bernard McIniff, S.J., and David Leopold, her students, and Thomas Elliott, CSC, Villa chaplain, concelebrated the Liturgy of Christian Burial on May 10. Burial was at St. Mary Cemetery, Bethel, Connecticut.

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