



Sister Julita Jelen, SSND
April 27, 1916 – April 18, 2019



CHICAGO – Sister Julita Jelen, SSND, died at Resurrection Life Center on April 18, 2019, shortly before her 103rd birthday. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 84 years.

Stella Jelen was born in Chicago on April 27, 1916, the oldest of six children of Thomas Jelen and Julia Handzel, both Polish immigrants. She attended St. John Cantius School where she learned to love her SSND teachers, and knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. After graduation from St. Stanislaus Commercial High school, Stella entered the candidature in Milwaukee following the example of her aunt. She was received into the novitiate on August 1, 1934, receiving the name Sister Julita. She was professed on August 2, 1935, and was assigned to St. Gabriel School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. She taught first grade students for thirty-one years, including St. Gabriel; St. Theresa Chinese Mission in Chicago, Illinois; St. Mary, Burlington, Wisconsin; Sacred Heart, Grand Rapids, Michigan; St. John Nepomuc, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Christ the King, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin; and St. Malachy, Horicon, Wisconsin.

In 1960, Sister Julita and two companions opened a new school, St. Bruno, in Dousman, Wisconsin, where she served as both principal and teacher. This ministry was followed by assignments as teacher at St. Alphonsus and St. Anthony in Chicago, and St. Benedict in Blue Island, Illinois.

In 1975, Sister Julita became principal at St. Michael School, Chicago, which had been founded by Mother Caroline in 1862. Julita was the last principal there when the school closed in 1981.

In June of 1981, Sister Julita went to St. Columba School in Chicago (Hegewisch), where she was principal for ten years. Semi-retired, she remained at St. Columba, ministering

to the homebound and elderly, and volunteering as librarian and tutor in the school. She was also very influential, with Sister Mary Margaret Murphy, in promoting the SSND Associate program in the area.

Always very devoted to small children, Julita authored two publications for them, *The Poor Little Rich Man* and *The Little Flower of Jesus*.

A quote from Sister Julita in *The Chicago Catholic* newspaper in 1983: “I really think that every person is gifted. Sometimes I think all the children need is a little caring and comforting. I say to them, ‘You are special. You have so many gifts,’ and they open up like flowers.”

In December of 2015, Sister Julita moved to Resurrection Life Center in Chicago.

Visitation was held on Friday, April 26, at Resurrection Life Center, and later at Mater Christ Church in North Riverside, Illinois, where the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated that evening. The theme of the liturgy was “It is with the LITTLE ONES that I find my JOY.”

Interment was on April 27 at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Alsip, Illinois.

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