



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province

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Joan Ann Durkan, SSND
Nov. 3, 1936 – Sept. 28, 2019



Baltimore – Sister Joan Ann Durkan, SSND died at St. Joseph’s Hospital on September 28, 2019. Sister Joan was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 65 years. She was an educator to students, an administrator, and later she shifted the attention of her ministry to seniors. She served predominantly in the Baltimore area and later in Wilmington, Delaware.

On November 3, 1936, Joan was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. to parents John and Catherine Ivers Durkan, natives of County Mayo, Ireland. Joan was baptized at the Church of the Holy Name, Prospect Park, Brooklyn two weeks later.

Joan began school under the direction of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Saviour’s School, Brooklyn. While in the second grade, Joan received her first Holy Communion and as a sixth grader, was confirmed by Bishop Raymond Kearney, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn. After graduation in 1950, Joan continued her education at St. Saviour’s High School. During her high school years, Joan prayed, “that I might know the vocation in which I might best serve God.”

Joan didn’t reveal how she reached her decision, but she said, “How happy I was when I received the candidate’s bonnet!” at St. Saviour’s Church on Aug. 28, 1954. Joan attended the Notre Dame Teacher Training School in Baltimore and described her candidature year as “wonderful.” Received as a novice on July 15, 1955, Joan was given the name, Miriam Catherine. Sister Miriam Catherine professed her first vows on July 27, 1956.

Joan attended Notre Dame Teacher’s College during the year 1956-57. She was then sent to Our Lady of Fatima School where she taught upper elementary classes for 12 years. She continued to teach at the upper elementary level at St. Leo’s School, Baltimore and

St. Mary School, Annapolis. In 1973, Joan became a teacher of French at St. Mark's High School, Wilmington, Del. She remained there until 1988 with the exception of two years at the Academy of the Holy Angels, Demarest, N.J.

Joan began a new ministry in 1988 when she became the director of a residence for women at Mary, Mother of Hope Shelter, Wilmington. Joan's ministry shifted to seniors at Shipley Manor, a senior living community in Wilmington where she directed and coordinated activities for 15 years. She gave community service to the province for several years and returned to Wilmington as an office manager until 2013. Joan came to Baltimore to become a member of the newly formed Notre Dame community at Hampton Lane, then moved to Villa Assumpta due to health issues.

Joan completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in French at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland (now University), Baltimore, Md. in 1966. She received a Master of Arts degree in French from Millersville State College (now University), Millersville, Pa. in 1976.

Joan was quiet and unassuming but a strong and determined woman. When she spoke, her words were filled with wisdom. Her insights and knowledge will be missed, especially at ACE, the Anti-Human Trafficking Alliance of Oxford, PA. Along with other Sisters and Associates, Joan was instrumental in the founding of ACE. She cared deeply about the vulnerable, was a strong advocate and touched many lives.

In her early autobiography, Joan wrote with all the fervor of youth, "I am anxiously awaiting the day when I will teach for Christ; through Him, with Him and in Him." Joan's life exemplified those words.

The Christian Wake Service was held on Thurs. Oct. 3 and the Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated on Friday, Oct. 4. Rev. John McCloskey OFM Cap., chaplain of Villa Assumpta was the celebrant. Both services were held in the chapel of Villa Assumpta. Interment followed at Villa Maria Cemetery, Glen Arm Rd., Glen Arm, Md. Sister Joan is survived by her brother and sister-in-law, John and Eileen Durkan and nieces and nephews.

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