

October 14, 2019

Sister Mary Donald Miller, SSND
Educator; Administrator; Learning Center Founder

Mankato, Minnesota – Sister Mary Donald Miller, SSND, 92, died Monday, October 14, 2019, in Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. In her SSND ministry she served as an intermediate and upper grade teacher and school administrator and founded the Good Counsel Reading Center. She also taught college-level education courses and was a member of the initial formation team.

Sister Mary Donald was born on February 8, 1927 in St. Paul, Minnesota, and named Patricia. She entered the SSND candidature in 1945. She was received into the novitiate in July 1947, and given the name Sister Mary Donald, the name of one of her brothers.

Following profession of vows in 1948, she taught at St. Matthew School, St. Paul, Minnesota (1948-49), and then at St. Agnes in St. Paul for one year, followed by one year at St. Michael School, Madison, Minnesota. In 1951, she began a nine-year stint at St. Joseph, Red Wing, Minnesota.

Sister Mary Donald taught at Holy Rosary School in North Mankato, Minnesota (1960-62). She was a principal and eighth grade teacher at St. Casimir School, Wells, Minnesota, until 1966. She earned a bachelor of science in education from Mount Mary College (now University), Milwaukee, in 1957 and an MA in reading from Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, in 1964. SSND leadership asked Sister Mary Donald to be a part of the Education Department of the Mankato Campus of Mount Mary College on Good Counsel Hill in 1966.

Due to construction, a former residence hall at Good Counsel was vacated. Sister Mary Donald suggested that the building be used for a reading center, and with the help of many others, was able to open the Good Counsel Reading Center in June 1967. Sister Mary Donald directed the Learning Center until 1975. She also served in initial SSND formation 1973-75.

In 1975, Sister Mary Donald became principal at St. Stanislaus School in Winona, Minnesota. One of her favorite experiences was being selected Jack Frost in the 1991 Winona Winter Carnival. St. Mary's University bestowed upon her an honorary Doctor of Education degree, and she also received the Bishop's Medal of Service. It was in Winona that she became known as the "Shoe Nun," for every pair of Mason shoes she sold, the commission went to a tuition fund for needy school families.

In 1993, Sister Mary served as principal of Holy Rosary Intermediate and Fitzgerald Middle School. Beginning in 2005 and almost until the day she died, Sister Mary Donald remained active in some capacity with the Good Counsel Learning Center. Her last efforts were to help some of the Good Counsel nursing assistants with their citizenship studies. Her commitment to education and community was recognized in 2008 when she received the Mankato YWCA Woman of Distinction award.

The funeral liturgy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held October 21, 2019, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel. She is survived by nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and associates. She was preceded in death by her parents, Henry and Barbara (Smith) Miller, her sister, Marguerite Smith, and her brothers, Douglas, Fred, Tom and Don.

Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Resource Development, 170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato, MN 56001 or online at <https://www.ssndcentralpacific.org/give>.

