



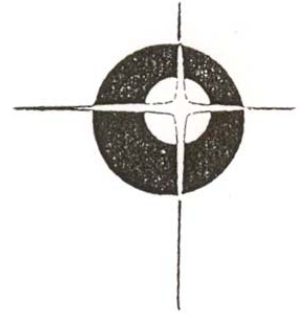
**“Trust in the Lord.”
--Psalm 37:3**

SISTER M. FLORENCE HESSE, SSND

June 30, 1908

August 9, 1933

October 7, 2008



Early Tuesday morning, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, our beloved Sister M. Florence Hesse, 100, died at Good Counsel Provincial House, Mankato, Minnesota. Her two sisters, Sister M. Bernita and Mary Ann Joos, had been with her most of Monday afternoon and evening. Celebrating both her 100th birthday and 75th SSND Jubilee this year, Sister Florence now continues her celebration in God's presence.

The funeral Mass for Sister Florence, with Father Bernard J. Steiner as presider, will be on October 9 at 10:30 a.m. The vigil service is at 7:00 p.m. the preceding evening. Following the Liturgy, burial will take place in our cemetery. Loving sympathy to her sisters, Sister Bernita and Mary Ann, nieces and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, as well as friends, colleagues and former students. She was preceded in death by her parents Bernard and Anna (Meuleners) Hesse, her brothers Rev. Harold, Louis, Bernard, Arthur and George; and sisters Lucille Davison, Margaret Steinhagen and Wilhelmina Hesse.

Sister Florence, the oldest of eleven children, was born June 30, 1908 (“the hottest day of June,” according to her autobiography) in a five-room cottage across from the Cologne, Minnesota, City Hall. She received the name Dorothy Mary at her July 2nd baptism at St. Bernard Church. Her father owned the local grocery store, and her mother had experience as a milliner.

Because of poor health, she did not start school until fall, 1915. An eager student, she wrote, “...those happy school days of mine. I had the great privilege of spending my days entirely under the guidance of the Notre Dame Sisters, who I learned to love more and more as I grew older, although I recall that the first time I expressed my intention of becoming one of them was the first day I entered school.” She was also grateful for the interest shown by her parents in their children's school work. Her father, a former teacher, “never tired of hearing of the studies, woes and difficulties” of his children.

The Hesse children also began the study of music at an early age; they played the piano, mandolin, violin and flute. Several also sang well, “so many a happy evening was spent, just the family circle round the cozy fireside.”

After her June 1923 eighth grade graduation, Dorothy became a boarder at Good Counsel Academy, where she finished high school in three years. She planned to spend one more year at home, helping at the store and continuing her music education, and then return to Good Counsel as a candidate. But once again, poor health intervened, and she spent several years regaining her strength. In those years, she helped out whenever she could, and also used her musical talents to provide piano accompaniment for silent movies at the local theater.

In 1928 Dorothy returned to Good Counsel, seeking admittance as a candidate. Mother Isidore asked her to wait one more year. She returned to Cologne, and it was

during this year that she offered to fill in at St. Bernard School when Sister De Britto Hackenmueller became ill – and one of Dorothy’s pupils was her own brother.

Dorothy received her “yes” from Mother Isidore in May 1929 and entered the SSND candidature in August of that year. The next year she and two classmates moved to St. Matthew’s in St. Paul for a year of teaching. On August 2, 1932, she was received into the Novitiate and given the name Sister M. Florence. After her Profession of vows in 1933, she was missioned to Lonsdale, where she (with her German heritage) found the Bohemian language and customs very interesting. Her experiences in Lonsdale proved invaluable when she was next sent to New Hradec, ND, also a very Bohemian town.

From this beginning, Sister Florence launched her educational ministry, serving as middle and upper grade teacher, principal and choir/music director in Springbrook (1942-46 and 1952-58), and Waterloo (1958-66), Iowa; and in Minnesota, St. Andrew, St. Paul (1947-52), Comfrey (1966-69), Vermillion (1969-79), and Cologne (1979-1987). While in Iowa, she served as an assistant to the province supervisor of schools and helped organize the Dubuque Archdiocesan School System and develop the diocesan educational handbook. She enjoyed her music work and wrote, “I am interested in boys’ voices, and have always encouraged boys in singing as well as serving at the altar.” And as parish musician and choir director, she was active in the liturgical life of the parish. She earned a B.E. in Education from Mount Mary College, and an M.A. in Education from Creighton University. She also represented the Mankato Province at several SSND Educational Conferences.

In a 2002 *Free Press* article, Sister Florence reflected on Christmas from the viewpoint of a retired teacher – which gives in a nutshell her commitment to teaching: “Music is such a key part of the celebration, but I think it goes without saying, we loved it. The anticipation of the season, the look in the children’s eyes when you told them the Christmas story was wonderful.”

In 1987 she retired from school ministry after 54 years, and moved to Good Counsel. She participated in many activities on the Hill, and was especially proficient in the art of crocheting.

Her years in retirement were as fulfilling as her years in teaching. She wrote in 2000, “My joy today in my retirement is the beautiful relationships that have continued from my first to the last mission I was at. The surprise visits, letters and remembrances are precious and so I’d like it said on the back of the memorial card: ‘Thank you to all who have been so good to me and I ask God to reward you generously.’ ”

How fitting that Sister Florence, who lived with fragile health in her early years, should live to be 100 years old! She celebrated twice this past summer – once with family and friends and once with her SSND community.

A quotation from *Trust and Dare* provided by Sister Florence sums up her life: “Trust in God and walk in His ways. Then He will also be with you—the infinitely good and merciful God.” May Sister Florence, whose life was devoted to praising God through her musical gift, now be singing (and accompanying) God’s praises forever!

Sister Mary Kay Ash