



“Through you I show my glory.”

- -Isaiah 49:3

SISTER ANNA LOUISE (MARY WILLIAM) WILSON, SSND

July 7, 1929

July 21, 1950

December 26, 2008



On Friday evening, December 26, 2008, after a brief illness, our beloved Sister Anna Louise Wilson was called home to God. Sister died peacefully at Good Counsel Convent, Mankato, Minnesota, at the age of 79. What a coincidence that her death should occur on the 18th anniversary of the death of her close friend and co-worker, Sister M. Giovanni Gourhan, with whom she worked at Guadalupe Area Project (GAP) for so many years! On learning that she did not have long to live, Sister Anna Louise said, “I’m not worried—I have God, my Guardian Angel and Giovanni.”

The Funeral Mass for Sister Anna Louise will be celebrated on Saturday, January 3, with Fr. James T. Schoenberger as president. Community Vespers will be prayed the evening before. Loving sympathy to her sister, Grace Marie Wilson, to all the members of her family, and to her Sisters in Community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents and by her brothers, Robert and William.

Anna Louise (also known as Babe) was the youngest of four children, and was born on July 7, 1929, in St. Joseph’s Hospital in Lewiston, Idaho. However, her home was in Clarkston, Washington, located across the river from Lewiston. Here she joined her parents, her Scotch-Irish father and her German mother, Aaron W. and Grace Cecilia (Mengee) Wilson, her brothers, Robert (Bobby) and William (Billy) and her sister Grace Marie (Dolly). Two weeks later she was baptized at Holy Family Church in Clarkston, and six years later she began school at Holy Family School, with School Sisters of Notre Dame as her teachers.

The Wilson’s home was located across the street from the Sisters’ back yard and just a block away from school. The girls were always good friends of the Sisters and in the evenings when the Sisters were outside for recreation, they would often go over to see them, and usually took a bouquet along or something from their garden.

Sorrow came to the Wilson family when, in February 1941, their brother William was killed. Some months before, he had enlisted in the army and was on the way back to camp after a furlough when he met with a car accident.

Upon her graduation from 8th grade in 1943, Babe, along with Dolly, came to Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota. Because of their great distance from home, they could not go home for vacations, so Father Scheid and the Sisters always made their Christmases very happy. Often Father Scheid would take them skating on one of the lakes near Mankato, and many times they were invited to spend an evening with the candidates.

Following graduation from the Academy in 1947, Anna Louise entered the candidature, and in July 1949 she was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister Mary William, after her brother, who had been killed in service. She took First Temporary Vows in July 1950.

Her early years of teaching found her serving principally in the first and second grades. For 20 years she taught in her home state of Washington in Colton, Spokane, Omak and Clarkston. In Mankato she taught at St. John, in St. Paul at St. Francis and St. Matthew, and in Shakopee at Shakopee Area Catholic Schools.

Her great love was her almost 30 years at GAP, founded by Sister M. Giovanni in 1967 as a school for dropouts. Sister Anna Louise was an important part of the community, a symbol of dedication. She was steadfast in her devotion to GAP and to the young people and adults who lived in the neighborhoods and who looked to GAP for their education and support.

Of her years at GAP, Sister Anna Louise wrote: "Giovanni and I hit it off right away. I admired the way she treated people, the way she helped people, and that is what I like to do. Teaching at GAP has always been satisfying, especially when the kids are proud of what they've done." When Sister Anna Louise retired from GAP in 2001, the Associate Director of GAP wrote of her: "She brought to GAP so many special things. She had a wonderful way of letting kids know that she cared about them. She was certainly loved here."

Very gifted in art, over the years Sister had the opportunity to earn a B.A. in Art from St. Catherine's, St. Paul, and an M.A. in Art from Notre Dame University. She also studied at Gonzaga University, Spokane, and Mankato State University, Mankato. She was licensed to teach art from kindergarten to college in the states of Minnesota and Washington.

Sister taught art on the elementary, junior and senior high, and college levels, and conducted adult and children's art classes and workshops, including workshops for teachers. She wrote an art curriculum for junior high which was used in Spokane and St. Paul Catholic and public schools.

She used her talents not only in the classroom, but she was generous in using this gift when called upon by many. She painted murals in restaurants in St. Paul, Shakopee, and Clarkston, and in schools throughout Minnesota. She designed many sets of all occasion cards. She designed logos for various companies, societies, church and school bulletins, illustrated advertisements for newspapers, designed parade floats, window displays, and she set up art shows.

She also designed buttons which were sold through the Governor's Commission on Human Rights in 1972, and painted designs on buildings and trucks. She painted and sold many portraits and other paintings. She also illustrated Sister Carleen Brennan's book, *Balloons and Band-Aids*, also a booklet for the National Conservation Society, and a workbook for children of Hmong and Hispanic adults taking English. Portraiture was her favorite area and oil painting was her favorite medium.

Over her many years of teaching, Sister Anna Louise loved the children she taught. "They are all God's kids," she said. Though an art teacher, she taught more than art. She was a caring teacher who believed and expected the best out of everyone. With her sense of humor, her winning smile, and her ability to relate to every student, she was a great teacher.

When she came to the Provincial House in Mankato in 2001, she continued to teach by tutoring in the Good Counsel Learning Center, and she taught art and did portrait painting. Most of all she taught by the kind of person she was, a very loving and loved teacher and community member.

Inspired by advice from her dad to "always do the best you can," another thing she learned from him was to think something good about everyone and then find out what it was. "I always had this thing that I wanted to help people. I really believe that God loves people very, very much."

In 1990, when Sister Giovanni was dying, she told Sister Anna Louise, "You take care of things here and I'll take care of things up there." She kept that covenant and now they are together forever with the God of Whom Anna Louise wrote as a young Sister, "How good is the good, good God – for the priceless gift He has given me in the vocation of a School Sister of Notre Dame."

Sister Mary Joyce Pietsch