



**“As the deer longs for living water,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.”**

– Psalm 42:1

**SISTER MARCIA BURQUE, SSND**

February 29, 1932

July 17, 1952

October 15, 2011



Our beloved Sister Marcia Burque, 79, died suddenly and unexpectedly at 9:15 a.m., Saturday, October 15, 2011, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. Earlier in the week, she suffered a stroke and was hospitalized, but returned to Good Counsel in very good spirits Thursday evening. Her speech had been affected by the stroke, and she was looking forward to therapy beginning on Monday. However, her condition worsened considerably on Saturday morning. Sisters Rosae Brown and Marylyn Irrgang were with her when she died.

The funeral Mass for Sister Marcia, with Father Andrew Olsem as presider, will be Wednesday, October 19, at 10:30 a.m., in Good Counsel Chapel, followed by cremation. Burial in our cemetery will follow at a later date. The vigil service will be at 7:00 p.m. on October 18. Loving sympathy to her brother Verne and his wife Phyllis, her nephews Christopher (Jill) and Michael (Lindsay), and her niece Michelle (Adam) Sklader, her students and colleagues, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Napoleon and Christine (Schinko) Burque, and two brothers, Reginald and Douglas.

A leap-year baby, born in St. Paul on February 29, 1932, Sister Marcia was baptized Regina Diane at St. Mary's Church. She wrote in her autobiography, "According to Baby Book accounts, Baby was very naughty and cried through the entire ceremony, much to the distress of her godparents." Reg, her two-year-old brother, could not say "Regina," so she came to be called Diane. The family circle became complete as Douglas was born four years after Diane, and Verne in 1941. Their father was one of the first 300 employees of a new company, Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, and Diane said she "took great pride in bringing rolls of Scotch tape to my teachers."

Diane attended kindergarten and first grade at Eastern Heights Public School. In 1938 she began second grade at Blessed Sacrament School, taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph (CSJ). Describing the seeds of her vocation, she wrote, "I idolized my second grade teacher. . . . Students from the other second grade had drawn pictures of what they would like to be when they grew up. When some portrayed sisters, I thought, 'That's what I want to be, too.' During my grade school years I would tag along with Sister to church to make a triple visit: one to the Blessed Sacrament and one to each side altar. I loved to stay after school and help Sister and frequently I would go into church for my own private visits." Diane developed a love for Mary during her grade school years, which carried on through the rest of her life.

Music was very important in the Burque home. They all loved to sing "and harmonizing took some of the chore out of doing dishes." Diane's father played French horn in the 3M band. During her grade school years, Diane began piano lessons from private teachers in her home. In sixth grade she took lessons at St. Agatha's Conservatory in St. Paul, again with Sisters of St. Joseph as teachers. She commented, "I was very fond of my piano teacher and confided in her that I wanted to be a 'jolly sister of St. Joseph.'"

Completing eighth grade, Diane enrolled at St. Francis de Sales School for ninth and tenth grade, where she first met School Sisters of Notre Dame. She wrote, "Only God knows the important role these sisters played in influencing my vocation." In 1947, following tenth grade, Diane's family moved to Centerville, where her parents had purchased a pavilion with a large dance hall. With money tight, the family was unable to afford any of the Catholic academies such as Holy Angels or Good Counsel. Diane discovered, however, that a Catholic education was very affordable at a CSJ academy in Graceville, Minnesota, near the South Dakota border. Since she planned to become a CSJ, this seemed like a good fit. She discovered, however, that there were only thirteen students in her class! She did have excellent piano teachers, so her musical abilities continued to develop. During those years, Sister M. Villanova Hamerle, her homeroom teacher at St. Francis de Sales, wrote to her often, and by the time Diane was a senior, she had decided to join SSND. Sister Villanova contacted Diane when Diane returned to Centerville after graduation and accompanied her to Mankato in June to speak with Mother Annunciata and make other arrangements.

Diane entered the candidature on August 28, 1949, along with twenty-three others. She became a novice in 1951, receiving the name Sister Mary Marcia. On July 17, 1952, she pronounced first vows. She wrote, “Sparked with the enthusiasm of our retreat theme, ‘God Wills It. . .,’ I offered Him my all. God took me at my word, when, a few weeks later on August 6, my sixteen-year-old brother was killed when he was hit by a baseball.”

Sister Marcia began her education ministry, teaching middle grades at St. Joseph, Montevideo (1952-56). She continued this ministry at St. Nicholas, New Market (1956-63); St. Andrew, St. Paul (1963-65); St. Mary, Madelia, where she was also principal (1965-67); St. Joseph, Montevideo, again as principal (1967-69); New Ulm Area Catholic School (1969-72); and St. Bartholomew, Wayzata (1972-75). During this time, she completed college work at Viterbo in La Crosse, earning a degree in education. She also took master’s level classes in administration, religious studies, music and liturgy at several universities. While teaching at New Market, Sister Marcia was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, but because of prompt medical treatment, the symptoms were controlled and she was able to return to teaching the next fall.

In 1975, Sister Marcia discontinued teaching and served for one year as director of liturgical music at Holy Spirit Parish, St. Cloud. From 1976 until 1981, she was director of liturgy and music and worked in parish ministry at St. Catherine’s, Redwood Falls. She lived at St. Michael, Morgan, at that time, and also taught intermediate math in the school there. She felt the pull of education, and became a director of religious education, first at St. Peter, Forest Lake (1981-85) and then at Epiphany, Coon Rapids (1985-89).

While at Coon Rapids, she learned that a parishioner was giving piano lessons and had more students than she could handle. Sister Marcia agreed to take one student. “That planted the thought that teaching piano is what I would like to do in my pre-retirement years.” Knowing she would need updating, she entered the Piano Pedagogy Program at St. Catherine’s College. At this time, she returned to classroom teaching at Holy Childhood (1989-2000), where she was able to continue her classes at St. Catherine and become a certified piano instructor. In her later years at Holy Childhood, she taught classroom music and gave piano lessons through K & S Conservatory.

In 2000, Sister Felicia Bambenek, Good Counsel’s piano teacher, was no longer able to give lessons. In June of that year, Sister Marcia moved to Good Counsel and continued her piano lesson ministry on the Hill. She also served for five years as Learning Center secretary. At the time of her death, she was still active as the Hill’s piano teacher.

In whatever ministry she was engaged, Sister Marcia was held in high regard. The booklet commemorating the June 1975 dedication of the new St. Joseph Church, Montevideo, states: “While it would be unfair to single out any one of the good sisters and lay teachers over the years, many parishioners here hold a special place in their hearts for Sister Marcia (Burque)...who genuinely endeared herself to us all.” A 1979 *Morgan Messenger* article provided Sister Marcia’s educational philosophy, “I really like children. I want to encourage them and highlight their good points. Success breeds success, you know.” Dale Klooster, a parent of a Mankato piano student, is quoted in a 2006 Development Newsletter, “Sweet is the only word I think of when Sister Marcia comes to mind. She never gets upset. . . . It is a great environment for Anna.” Roxy Leiferman, another parent, is quoted, “You know it was a good day if Sister Marcia gets up and starts dancing during the lesson.”

Sister Marcia wrote in her 2010 autobiography, “Throughout my life I have had many ‘loves’ – Jesus, my God, my family, the many people I worked with and served, my SSND community, music, teaching and the joys of nature.” She continued, “I continuously thank God for the multi-colored ways in which God has blessed my life. The bright colors of joy, the purples and blacks of pain and sorrow. Yet the Divine Weaver uses each color to produce a unique and beautiful pattern that has been mine and is ME.”

A small ceramic deer graced Sister Marcia’s prayer space; a drawing of this deer is on her funeral liturgy program. This deer is symbolic of Sister Marcia’s seventy-nine years of longing for God. A 2012 Diamond Jubilarian, may she now be celebrating the presence of God in eternal music and song.