



**“O God, You are my God, for you I long.”**

**- Psalm 62:2**

**SISTER MARY ALOYSIUS WIESER, SSND**

February 23, 1921

July 22, 1944

October 21, 2010



Our beloved Sister Mary Aloysius Wieser, 89, died peacefully at 3:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 21, 2010. She had been in failing health for the past few years, and just recently had shown a marked decline.

The funeral Mass for Sister Mary Aloysius, with Father Andrew Olsem as presider, will be on Tuesday, October 26, at 10:30 a.m., in Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in our cemetery. The vigil service will be at 7:00 p.m. on October 25. Loving sympathy to her sisters, Sister M. Julianna Wieser and Dorothy Klug, and her brother, Bernard and his wife, Trudy, her nieces and nephews and their families, her former students and colleagues, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Aloysius (known as Louis) and Julia (Feldmeier) Wieser.

Sister Mary Aloysius, the second of four children, was born on February 23, 1921, near Hokah, Minnesota. At her baptism at St. Peter Church four days later, she was given the name Celestine Marie. Her family lived on a farm, purchased shortly after her parents' marriage. Her father had to give up his trained profession as a miller because "his health rebelled at the flour dust" and began farming "in a quiet valley entitled 'Butterfield,' cradled between the beautiful hills, so native of the Mississippi River Valley." When Celestine was born, her older sister, Barbara (our Sister Juliana), then about 20 months old, called her "Dolly."

About three weeks later, Celestine developed a serious illness, and there was fear that she would not live. She did recover, and later wrote, "Mother claims this return to health was Mary's answer to their prayers. In all their troubles, they invoked Mary, whose shrine was the place of honor in their home. From this time on, I was frail and sickly, and unfortunately the cause of many anxieties till I was about eight years old."

Celestine and Barbara were the only ones in their section to attend St. Peter Catholic School in Hokah, so they stayed with their grandparents and went to school with their uncle (their mother's youngest brother) until Celestine was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Then until their brother was old enough to drive the horse, the family rode into school with high school students who boarded at their farm. Her paternal grandmother, an invalid as a result of a failed operation, also lived with the family from the time that Celestine was seven.

Rochester Franciscans taught at St. Peter School for most of the years that Celestine attended school. Her 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, Sister Severine, left a lasting impression on her, especially because of her knowledge and love of the saints. When Sister Severine had to leave St. Peter's because of serious illness, the class was heartbroken. During the summer of 1931 as Celestine was about to enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the news spread that the Franciscans would not return, and the Notre Dame Sisters would be coming. Sister Mary Aloysius wrote about this, "To most of the children of Hokah, 'Notre Dame Sister' was a familiar term. Most of our parents had attended the Convent School of the Notre Dame Sisters until the sisters were unfortunately forced to leave Hokah. Their departure was mourned by the entire community."

Celestine appreciated her next three years in grade school, during which she received her Solemn Holy Communion and the sacrament of Confirmation. She continued at St. Peter's for high school, a "spontaneous gift of my parents," who did not have the opportunity for a high school education. When Celestine was a sophomore, Barbara entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame. From that time on, Celestine tried to avoid any

thought of becoming a sister, and applied to enter the nursing school in LaCrosse when she graduated from high school in 1938. However, as she wrote, "...seeing how much I could help my parents, I felt that helping them was now my duty." She cancelled her application and spent the next three years helping her parents, and taking part in parish and 4-H activities. She was especially interested in home beautification and caring for flowers and trees. In 1940, Sister Chrysostoma Wurst, the superior at Hokah, asked Celestine if she would be willing to teach 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades for the teacher, who was very ill. Sister Mary Aloysius recalled, "Very skeptically, but enthusiastically, I accepted. This incident seems to have been the instrument sent directly by God to collect all my distorted ambitions since my sophomore year." She found herself drawn to SSND life, and on August 28, 1941, she entered the Candidature in Mankato. Barbara, by this time, Sister M. Juliana, was there to welcome her. She felt blessed by her time in the candidature, a year at St. Matthew's, St. Paul, and her novitiate year.

Following profession in 1944, she was missioned to St. Mary's, Worthington, at that time a year-round catechetical center. From 1946-49, she taught middle grades at St. Andrew in St. Paul, and then moved to another catechetical center, St. Leo, Pipestone, for one year. She spent the 1950-51 year as a fulltime student at Viterbo, LaCrosse, earning an English degree. From that time until 1969, she taught home economics and other subjects at various province high schools: Mankato Loyola and Good Counsel Academy; and Emmons Central, Strasburg and St. Mary's, New England, ND. During this time she attained a master's degree in Home Economics Education (1955, St. Louis U). She also taught college summer school classes for many years. Active in the National Catholic Council of Home Economics for several years, she was elected a regional chairperson of the NCCHE in 1966.

In 1969, she began her focus on dietetics and nutrition, taking prerequisite classes at Stout State University before beginning a dietetics internship at the University of Iowa Hospitals in Iowa City. At the time, she was one of the 13 accepted from 300 applications. She became a registered dietician in 1971 and earned her MS in Nutrition from Iowa University in 1972. Beginning in 1971, she served as dietician and food service manager at the Good Counsel Provincial House, a position she held until 1996. As dietician, she could be a consultant for those in food service and could design diets for anyone with special food needs. Along with her service at Good Counsel, she became a faculty member of the Mankato Area Vocational-Technical School from 1971-1991. She coordinated the Dietary Manager Program at the school, and helped develop the course of studies for the Dietary Manager Program for the State of Minnesota.

She joined with Sister Juliana in 1996 for a year of parish ministry work at Holy Childhood in St. Paul, and in 1997 "retired" to Good Counsel. For the next eight years, her area of ministry was the health care sewing room. At Good Counsel, she also had time to focus on one of her most treasured activities—rosary-making, something she had done for many years. An article in the SSND Development Newsletter quotes her commenting about one in particular: "I was asked to make a rosary for a couple's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I used beads that were golden in color and brass wire to string them together." She used both seeds and manufactured beads to create hundreds of rosaries. Her first rosary was the one that she wore with her habit beginning in 1943.

Her family also was very important to her. She and her sister received letters weekly from her sister and brother and sister-in-law. Periodic home visits were a highlight, as were visits from family to Mankato.

In her later years in Health Care, daily Mass and the rosary were very important to her, and she participated as fully as she could. Her longing for God, nurtured throughout her entire life, found its fulfillment in her death – she no longer needs to long for her God.