



“Let my soul glory in the Lord.”

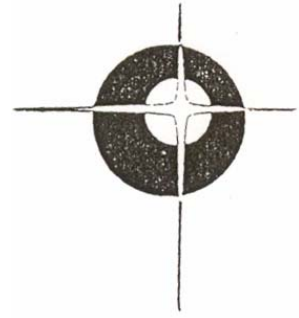
--Psalm 34:3

SISTER Mary (Margaret Ann) Boylan, SSND

May 11, 1922

July 22, 1944

February 29, 2008



Our beloved Sister Mary Boylan, 85, died peacefully at Good Counsel Convent, Mankato, Minnesota, Friday, February 29, 2008, at 3:25 p.m. Several sisters were present with her when she was called home to God, the God she loved and served so generously over her life of 85 years.

The funeral Mass for Sister Mary, with Father Ted Hottinger, SJ as celebrant, will be on March 4, with community vespers the evening before. Burial will follow in our cemetery. Loving sympathy to her brother John and his wife Betty, to her niece and nephews, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, as well as her former colleagues, students and parishioners. She was preceded in death by her parents James and Josephine (Ferris) Boylan, and a nephew. Throughout her life, her brother and his family had been extremely important to her.

Mary, the second child in the family, was born May 11, 1922, in Mankato, Minnesota, and baptized in SS. Peter & Paul Church. Three of her grandparents were Irish immigrants, possibly the reason Mary was known for her love of Irish music. Her mother grew up on a farm near Iona in southwestern Minnesota; her father was from rural Blue Earth. Mary wrote, “When they somehow providentially met (my Dad being a salesman for International Harvester) and married, they settled on a farm near Amboy.”

The family moved closer to Mankato so that the children could attend SS. Peter & Paul School. She received her first Holy Communion in 1931 and was confirmed two years later by Bishop Francis Kelly. “At that time, I was in Sister M. Frances Hoffarth’s fifth grade. She had introduced me to St. Therese, the Little Flower, and so I chose her for my Confirmation patron.” Mary loved school, so when she missed her entire 7th grade year because of a serious leg infection, it was really a hardship for her.

In 1937, Mary’s freshman year, Loyola High School was opened to girls. She and her classmate, Dorothy Olinger, were in the first class of girls that attended Loyola for four years. Mary realized that the influence of her SSND teachers at Loyola played a part in her vocation, as it was during high school that she felt called to religious life. Dorothy entered SSND right after high school, but Mary’s parents wanted her to go to college first. She enrolled at St. Catherine’s College, attended for one semester, and then received her parents’ permission to enter SSND. She joined the Candidature on January 2nd, 1942. Her parents were immediately proud of her, and Sister Beth Haltiner recalls Mary’s father asking anyone on the Hill, “Do you know my Mary?”, assuming that there was no need to mention her last name.

Mary was received as a Novice on July 21, 1943 and given the name Sister Margaret Ann. Following profession in 1944, she taught at St. Andrew, St. Paul; Wabasha; and St. Francis, St. Paul. She received her BA from St. Catherine’s in 1948 and then taught mainly English, history and religion at Good Counsel Academy (1948-57) and St. Agnes (1957-59). She earned a Master’s in English from Creighton in 1952.

In 1959, a major change occurred in Sister Mary’s ministry – one that eventually affected many other sisters. During that summer, she and Sister Olivia (Cortona) Aydt were sent to Catholic University in Washington, DC to take what was then called a CCD Leadership Training Course. This course consisted of both elementary and secondary religion methods

and a moral theology class. Upon completion of this course, the sisters received certificates that qualified them to instruct lay catechists. Sister Mary wrote of the next steps, "At the urgent request of Father Harry Majerus, CCD Director for the Diocese of New Ulm and pastor at Franklin, Mother M. Bernardia allowed Sister Olivia and me to begin a diocesan ministry of instructing lay catechists in many rural parishes with headquarters at Franklin. Mother Bernardia in her far-sightedness allowed us to do this," because she understood the great needs of the American rural areas. The services of the sisters were donated that first year because the diocese did not have the funds to support a CCD center.

Sister Mary continued her narrative, "This work involved changes in SSND lifestyle: driving a car (hence a 'driving veil' instead of our heavy wide veil which obstructed vision), teaching and traveling at night, teaching men as well as women, living in a small apartment above the diocesan center, often staying in private homes as we worked in widely scattered rural areas away from a convent. We conducted week-long teacher training and adult education courses, set up 'schools' of religion, conducted demonstration classes, visited the classes during the school year, and held teachers' meetings. This proved to be a pioneer type of work..." The sisters also started discussion clubs and organized people willing to assist catechists. A highlight of her time in the New Ulm Diocese was the Inter-American Catechetical Congress in Dallas, Texas, in 1961 with Sister Olivia and Father Majerus. They held a workshop on rural catechetics, sponsored a booth on the "New Ulm Plan" and one of their catechists gave a demonstration class.

After her years in New Ulm, Sister Mary continued in religious education in Bloomington, Winona, St. Charles and Pipestone, and earned a master's degree in religious studies from St. Mary's University in Winona. In the Winona Diocese, she and Sister Joellen Welder did work very similar to her New Ulm ministry, focusing in a special way on adult education. In 1977, she moved to Holy Spirit in St. Cloud, and began what she called her "third career," that of pastoral ministry. A blurb in the parish bulletin credited her with bringing a "woman's touch" to parish ministry. She was usually the first contact for a bereaved family, often conducted the vigil service, and stayed in contact with the family. She also established one of the first Divorced and/or Separated Support Groups in the area.

In a 1992 *Memos* (SSND Province Communication) article, she summed up her experiences as a pastoral minister: "The rewards of this work far outweigh the challenges. The support and cooperation of the pastor and parish staff prove to be invaluable. However, it is difficult knowing that for every person you help, many others go unsatisfied. But there is great joy in being able to listen to, to pray with, to comfort, to love and even to cry with those who are hurting. Being present with people at the 'deepest' times of their lives builds long lasting relationships."

Sister Mary moved to St. Joseph Parish in Montevideo in 1992, continuing in pastoral ministry. In 1995 she retired from paid ministry, but stayed in the parish as a volunteer. She and Sister Madge Studer, also retiring from parish ministry at the same time, were honored in a tribute in the parish bulletin: "Rather than retiring fully, these two women choose to continue giving generously to the church...If they were retiring from a large corporation after 51 and 47 years of service, a giant gala retirement party would probably be theirs. Instead, we as a community have a responsibility and privilege to represent all the people they have served over the years at a simple reception after Mass."

Sister Mary moved to the Hill in 1997 to spend her final years. Known for the twinkle in her blue eyes and her wide smile, she endeared herself to both sisters and staff alike. In Sister Beth Haltiner's words, "Mary was one of those rare, precious persons who loved everyone!"

May dear Sister Mary, whose soul truly gloried in the Lord for 64 years of religious life, now glory eternally in God's love!

Sister Mary Kay Ash