



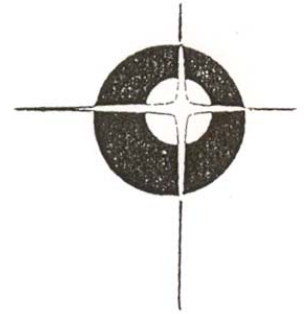
**“The Lord is my light and my salvation.”
--Psalm 27:1**

SISTER MARY DAMIAN EWALD, SSND

December 13, 1915

July 22, 1945

June 13, 2009



About 11:30 p.m., on Saturday, June 13, our beloved Sister Mary Damian Ewald, 93, died peacefully at Good Counsel Provincial House, Mankato, Minnesota. Her condition had gradually declined over the past weeks. In the hours before she died, she seemed particularly serene as the Hour Prayer* was sung to her.

The funeral Mass for Sister Mary Damian, with Father Ted Hottinger, SJ, as presider, will be on June 17 at 10:30 a.m., followed by cremation, with burial at a later date. The vigil service is at 7:00 p.m. on June 16. Loving sympathy to her SSND sister, Sister M. Noel Ewald, her sister-in-law Rose Ann Ewald, nieces and nephews and their families, as well as her former students and colleagues, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, August and Helen (Krapp) Ewald, brothers Wilton, Victor, George, Marcus and Augustine, and sisters Sister M. Cosmas, CSJ (Bernadine), Pauline Morgan, Sister M. Cecile, OSF (Esther), and Eleanor Coffey.

Loretta Mary Ann Ewald, the ninth of eleven children, was born December 13, 1915, in Adams, Minnesota, and baptized about a month later in the parish church, Sacred Heart. She described her family life in these words, “My parents were hard-working and home-loving. Mother was the heart of the home and the teacher. She was overseer of the homework, especially the catechism, prayers and practices. I remember especially that she was a woman of faith and frequently used the sacramentals, especially holy water.”

At the age of seven, Loretta started first grade at Sacred Heart School, conducted by the Rochester Franciscans. She received her first Holy Communion on April 26, 1926, and was confirmed a year later. In her autobiography, she recalled three happy events from her years in grade school: the entrance of her oldest sister, Bernadine, into the Sisters of St. Joseph of Wichita, Kansas; the birth of her youngest sister, Dolores (Sister M. Noel) on Christmas Eve, 1924; and the reception of her sister Esther into the Rochester Franciscans.

Her mother was reluctant to have Loretta attend a public school, but since that was the only opportunity she had for a high school education, Loretta completed four years at Adams Consolidated School, graduating in 1935. Following graduation, she attended Winona Business College. She wrote, “Becoming a secretary was far from my first choice, but the Depression years forced me to get a respectable job as soon as possible.” She held several business positions, the last one at Jostens in Owatonna, where she earned a weekly check of \$15.00. The thought of religious life was often with her, as she had frequent visits with her sisters, as well as former teachers. However she commented, “None of them ever did any verbal ‘advertising.’”

She described her SSND vocation in this way, “Why I came to Notre Dame is, to me, a question without an answer.” She had intended to make a Ladies Retreat at Good Counsel, but a rain storm washed out the tracks, and she was unable to get to Good Counsel. A non-Catholic roommate encouraged her to visit Good Counsel, and she did

this in late October, 1942. She had never been to the Hill, and had never seen a School Sister of Notre Dame before that time. She wrote that after she told the portress, Sister Brunonia, that she was interested in religious life, "Sister Alberta and Mother Annunciata appeared out of nowhere." She met a candidate also, and was invited to come back at Christmas time when all the candidates would be back on the Hill. Sister Edith Hodapp accompanied her to the train depot after the October visit, and said, "You will make a good Sister." Father Henry Speck, her pastor at St. Hyacinth in Owatonna, also highly recommended SSND's as "the real teachers." He had been their pupil at St. Casimir in Winona.

Her third visit to Good Counsel was her entrance day, February 1, 1943. Because of her business college education and her work experience, she was guided into preparation for business education. She received the name Sister Mary Damian at her reception in July, 1944. Following profession in 1945, she taught middle grades for five years at St. Stanislaus, Winona.

Her ministry as a high school business and English teacher began in 1950 at St. Peter in New Haven, Iowa. Until 1989, she continued in this ministry at many SSND high schools, including St. Mary, New Haven; Assumption, Cresco; and Don Bosco, Gilbertville, all in Iowa; St. Mary, New England, ND (twice); and St. Peter, Hokah; St. Michael, St. Michael; and St. Agnes, St. Paul, MN. At Gilbertville, she was one of the SSND's who concluded 97 years of SSND presence there in 1989. She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Creighton, the BA in English and the MA in Education.

From 1989-1994, Sister Mary Damian used her business skills in a different manner, serving as secretary to Sister Lalande on the provincial council. Failing eyesight led to a partial retirement in 1994. She then worked part time in the finance office, assisting Sister Mary Roman with various tasks. In her retirement years, she was an active participant in Scripture study and discussion groups, and was very interested in Province events.

In 1990, she and Sister Mary Matthew Michel participated in the Rome Renewal program, along with several other NAMA sisters. Typical of her organizational skills, she put together a large photo book that contains detailed information about each photo or postcard, and concludes with a delightful narrative of her time in Rome, Germany and Austria.

Another annotated book shows the importance of faith, family and friends to Sister Mary Damian. It contains various prayers and blessings, newspaper obituaries of family members, cards and letters from family members, friends and former students, along with many photos of family and community members and colleagues.

May Sister Mary Damian, for whom God was her light and salvation for 93 years, now be enjoying the eternal light promised in the Hour Prayer.

*When the shades of death are falling,
O, Dear Mother, hear us calling.
Be our refuge, be our guide,
Lead us to the eternal light.

Sister Mary Kay Ash