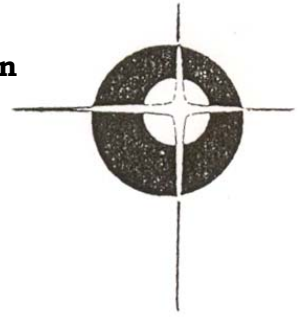




**“I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in
the land of the living.” – Psalm 27:13**



SISTER M. NICOLETTE WELTER, SSND

July 29, 1907

August 10, 1927

January 3, 2010

Our beloved Sister M. Nicolette Welter, 102, died peacefully at 2:10 a.m. on Sunday, January 3, 2010, at Good Counsel Provincial House, Mankato, Minnesota. She had declined during the last days of 2009, and died early in the new year.

The funeral Mass for Sister M. Nicolette, with Father Ted Hottinger, S.J., as presider, will be on Thursday, January 7, 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 January 6. Loving sympathy to her sister-in-law, Pat Welter, her brother-in-law, Robert Yackley, her niece, Sister Mary Jo Welter, other 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, Peter and Josephine (Baltes) Welter, her sisters Rose Degross, Isabel Welter, Sister Mary Ursula (Cecilia), Sister Mary Claverine (Ursula), Sister Mary Stella (Mary), and Erma Yackley, and brothers, Fred, Joseph, Clarence and Lawrence.

On July 29, 1907, the feast of St. Martha, the fifth of eleven Welter children was born in New Market and named Martha Veronica Welter. In various autobiographies, Sister Nicolette wrote extensively about her parents. Her father, Peter, emigrated from Germany when he was 11 and lived in St. Paul for several years. He then moved to New Market, and after a few years married Josephine Baltes, who had been born in New Market. Peter ran the general store, was postmaster and funeral director in New Market. Sister Nicolette's mother was frequently called on for help, especially when someone was near death. Her father often invited sales agents to dinner, and Sister Nicolette wrote, "We children were the richer because of the visitor." The close-knit family enjoyed their time together.

Since there was no parochial school in New Market when Martha was ready for school, she attended public school through 3rd grade. St. Nicholas School opened in 1916, and Martha continued her elementary education there. In an autobiography written as a novice, she described her high school choice in this way: "After I finished the eighth grade in 1921, I desired to become an aspirant at Mankato, but I myself did not have the courage to ask the permission of my parents so Sister Agreda did it in my stead, and they readily gave their consent."* In a later autobiography, she expanded on her vocation, "I joined the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1923 because some of them were my teachers... They were always happy and showed their love for all of us, their students. They spent time in prayer and thanksgiving to God for the many blessings they received. I, therefore, felt drawn to follow them as a School Sister of Notre Dame."

Martha completed two years of high school at Good Counsel Academy and then asked her parents for permission to enter the candidature. They again consented, and she became a candidate on August 28, 1923, the beginning of her junior year in high school. One week later, she was sent to Clarkston, Washington to teach first grade. (She had taken the teachers' state board examinations and received a teaching certificate that summer.) The following summer she received the sacrament of Confirmation with several other candidates, and then moved to St. Andrew's in St. Paul, where she taught second grade. She was received into the novitiate on August 13, 1925, and given the name Sister M. Nicolette in honor of the patron of her home

parish. As a second year novice, she taught third grade at St. Agnes in St. Paul. She professed first vows on August 10, 1927, and then returned to St. Agnes, teaching various grades, until 1945. During that time, she earned her high school diploma in 1928 and a bachelor's degree from Mount Mary College in 1942.

In 1945, Sister Nicolette was appointed principal and upper grade teacher at St. Mary, Shakopee. When Blessed Sacrament School opened in Waterloo, Iowa, in 1951, Sister Nicolette became the first principal and local community leader. She continued in that role at St. Matthew (1957-58) and Holy Childhood (1958-64), both in St. Paul, and at St. Francis Xavier (1964-67) in Sartell. In 1967, she returned to St. Agnes, where she had spent so many of her early teaching years, as principal until 1977. She continued her education at Loras College, Dubuque, and Catholic University, Washington, DC, where she earned a master's degree in education in 1958.

St. Agnes held a special place in her heart, and her students loved and respected her in turn. In 2005, one of her former pupils established the Sister Nicolette Welter Scholarship, which assists deserving students to continue at St. Agnes Grade School. The press release for the scholarship stated, "During her years as principal Sister accepted and forgave the bills of many students who couldn't pay all their tuition... We are asking those who remember her and the excellent education she provided her students to show your appreciation and generosity with a gift to this fund." The article also mentioned that she loved visits from former pupils.

After 53 years of service in Catholic schools, Sister Nicolette asked to move into another ministry in 1977. She spent one year at St. Francis Xavier in Sartell as a parish visitor, and then in 1978 began 16 years of service to the elderly and infirm of St. Joseph Parish in Red Wing. She endeared herself to the people of Red Wing as she visited, prayed and played cards with residents of nursing homes and retirement communities, as well as individuals living in their own homes. She also found time for needlework, and her creations were sold at a boutique in St. Paul to help raise money for the SSND Retirement Fund. In 1993, Sister Nicolette moved to Good Counsel, where she continued her needlework as long as she was able.

In 1986 Dr. David Snowdon launched the "Nun Study," his ground-breaking research project on Alzheimer's disease. Sister Nicolette became an enthusiastic participant in the study. One of Dr. Snowdon's discoveries was that sisters who used complex sentences, termed "high idea density," in their early autobiographies were less likely to develop Alzheimer's. (The sentence quoted earlier in this obituary and marked with an asterisk was cited as an example of high idea density.) Dr. Snowdon had been encouraged to get to know the sisters as persons, not merely research subjects, and he followed that advice. Sister Nicolette was one sister whom he got to know very well, and she was often featured in newspaper and magazine articles and television segments, as well as in his book, *Aging with Grace*. A May 14, 2001, TIME magazine article discussed the topic of sisters donating their brains to the study, and reported the following, "I didn't really know what it was going to be about," says Sister Nicolette, an engaging 93-year old... 'But I thought if science could learn something from this program, then I was glad to be a part of it.'" A copy of Sister Nicolette's early autobiography is part of the "Women & Spirit - Catholic Sisters in America" exhibit that portrays the influence and effect of sisters in the United States.

On July 29, 2007, Sister Nicolette celebrated her 100th birthday and 80th Jubilee, two very distinctive milestones. And now, after 102 years of life and 82 years of SSND service, may she fully enjoy the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!