



**“The Lord is my shepherd,
there is nothing I shall want.” – Psalm 23:1**



SISTER M. SHARON KEEFE, SSND

February 14, 1923

July 22, 1943

June 22, 2010

Early in the morning of June 22, 2010, our beloved Sister M. Sharon Keefe, 87, died, following years of patient suffering from Parkinson’s disease and other ailments. As she entered the Hospice program earlier in the month, she commented, “That means I’m going to die. God is in the driver’s seat and I am the passenger.”

The funeral Mass for Sister M. Sharon, with Father Andrew Olsem as presider, will be on Friday, June 25, 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 June 24. Loving sympathy to her sisters Mary (Ray) Kelly and Theresa (Don) Kubicek, her brothers Frank and John (Mary), 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, Frank and Ruby (McCabe) Keefe, and her sisters Jean and Joan Keefe.

The oldest in her family, Sister Sharon (Florence Keefe) was born in 1923 on a stormy Valentine’s Day in Mercy Hospital, Davenport, Iowa. She wrote about her baptism at Holy Family Church, “I would have been named Mary, but at the insistence of my aunt Florence, I received the name Florence Mary.”

When Florence was about a year old, the family moved to Mankato, where her father worked for the Northwestern Railroad as a lineman and electrician. They lived in a rooming house on Rock Street, operated by a Mrs. Janda. (Later, when Florence was a Postulant under the direction of Sister M. Alberta Janda, she learned that Mrs. Janda was Sister Alberta’s mother.) Some time later, the family moved to North Mankato.

Before Florence started school at Holy Rosary, she was apprehensive about going to school. She wrote, “Soon, however, the time arrived for me to go to school. I came to school for the first day and did not entertain any expectations of returning again. I thought it would just be for one day.” She continued, “I was always a very reticent child at school, but I was just the opposite at home.” She wrote about another episode in her childhood, one that may have been a foreshadowing of her vocation. “When my cousin Beatrice was taking care of us children, my desire one evening was to be dressed up as a Notre Dame Sister. ... My disappointment was great when she cut a paper wimple similar to that worn by the order of Sisters whom she knew.”

School Sisters of Notre Dame were important in Florence’s vocational choice. She credits one of her teachers, Sister Jane Francis Pott, for helping with school work, especially arithmetic. Her eighth grade teacher, Sister Bernardia Gores asked Florence if she wanted to be a School Sister of Notre Dame. She responded that she was very much undecided and said she just didn’t know.

Following the completion of eighth grade in 1936, Florence attended Good Counsel Academy. She apparently had been thinking about becoming an SSND, because she wrote in her autobiography, “After the high school retreat in my senior year, Sister Benigna offered me an opportunity to see Mother Superior regarding my vocation. I

was very much excited and not a little afraid. My fears were soon over when I talked with Mother M. Andrina. She accepted me, and told me to pray fervently to Our Lady of Good Counsel for guidance.”

On August 27, 1940, Florence entered the Candidature. She commented, “I will always remember my Candidature days as a very joyful time in my life, because of the beautiful community spirit and the feeling that I was doing what God wanted me to do.” She was received as a novice on July 21, 1942, and given the name Sister M. Sharon. Profession followed on July 22, 1943.

Sister Sharon’s first teaching assignment was middle grades at St. Joseph, Red Wing, followed by intermediate grades at Sacred Heart in St. Paul. She began a series of primary grade teaching positions at St. Michael, St. Michael; Sacred Heart, Heron Lake; SS. Peter & Paul, Loretto; St. Leo, St. Leo (where she stayed 13 years); SS. Cyril & Methodius, Minneapolis; SS. Peter & Paul, Springbrook, IA; and Immaculate Conception-St. Joseph, Raymond, IA. During these years, she earned her B.A. from St. Teresa’s College, Winona, and an M.S. Ed from Mankato State University.

In 1971, she became a nurse’s aide at Good Counsel Healthcare, and subsequently studied at Mankato Vo-Tech College to become an LPN, completing the course in 1973. She continued her service at Good Counsel until 1979. For the next few years she worked parttime in St. Cloud as a tutor both in Holy Spirit and St. Mary’s Cathedral Schools. She spent a year as a tutor at Corpus Christi in St. Paul, and two years as a teacher and parish visitor at St. Mary in Caledonia.

In 1985, she began a 10-year period of service as a tutor and teacher’s aide at SS. Peter & Paul in Mankato. In a 1990 newspaper article about how the school has changed over the years, she is pictured as the only SSND serving in SS. Peter & Paul Grade School. While at SS. Peter & Paul, she also volunteered at the Summit Center in Mankato. Sister Sharon’s spelling prowess also received recognition during Mankato’s adult spelling bees, called “S-P-E-L-L-D-O-W-N for Literacy.” She and Sister Jeanne Wingenter participated in 1993 on the SSND team called the “Hilltoppers,” and they teamed together in 1994 as the “May-Bees.” In the newspaper publicity, Sister Sharon is shown spelling a word at the 1993 Spelldown, and the same photo was used in 1994 to promote the event.

During her ministry years, she was privileged to participate in two pilgrimages – the SSND Jubilee trip to Rome and Germany in 1986, and a 1988 pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine in Mexico. She counted both as treasured experiences.

In her retirement days at Good Counsel, she stayed as active as her Parkinson’s disease allowed. Her bright smile is evident on several photos taken at this time. She participated in Notre Dame Hall activities, community prayer and meetings, and her sharings often quickly got to the heart of the matter. She had a deep devotion to Mary, Our Blessed Mother, and her contemplative nature is evidenced in her choice of Scripture, the account of Mary and Martha -- “Mary has chosen the better part.” Family was important to her, and she looked forward to visits with family members. She enjoyed working puzzles, playing the card game “Golf,” and was a big fan of the TV program “Animal Planet.”

May Sister Sharon, now freed of her infirmity on earth, be celebrating celestially with Jesus, her Friend and Shepherd.

Sister Mary Kay Ash