



SISTER M. IRENE FEDERSPIEL, SSND

Sister M. Irene Federspiel, 87, died December 16, 2011, in Notre Dame Health Care Center, Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. In her SSND ministry, Sister Irene served first as a home service sister and as a primary grade teacher. In 1986 she started a third ministry as founder and chief crafter of Ceramic Haven on Good Counsel Hill.

Sister Irene, the oldest of five children, was born December 8, 1924, on the family farm near Gilbertville, Iowa. She was baptized Eileen Mary Magdalene a few days later at Immaculate Conception Church, Gilbertville. In 1930, Eileen started school at Immaculate Conception, Gilbertville, where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. She stayed home to work for two years after eighth grade graduation, and then came to the aspiranture at Good Counsel Academy for one year. She entered the candidature in 1942, was received in 1944, and professed first vows in 1945.

Following first profession, Sister Irene gave service to her community at Sacred Heart, St. Paul; St. Mary, Shakopee; Good Counsel; Holy Rosary, North Mankato; St. Mary, Madelia; St. Mary, New Trier; St. Donatus, Iowa; St. Matthias, Wanda; SS. Peter & Paul, Loretto; St. Paul, Comfrey; and St. Francis, Buffalo. As a home service sister, she had five recipes published in the 1947 *Notre Dame Centenary Cookbook*: Freola, Sausage Bean Casserole, Cheese Dumplings in Tomato Sauce, Baked Devil's Float, and Frosting for Cake – Wartime.

Due to the SSND teacher shortage, Sister Irene was asked in 1959 to complete her high school work and earn a college degree, while at the same time teaching primary grades. Her graduation from Mount Mary College in 1973 marked the achievement of this goal. In her ministry as educator, she taught at St. Stanislaus, Winona; St. Theresa Catechetical, Mapleton; St. Mark, Shakopee; St. Albert, Albertville; St. John, Searles; St. Michael, Morgan; St. Adalbert, Silver Lake; Immaculate Conception-St. Joseph, Raymond, Iowa; St. Peter, Hokah; and All Saints, Madison Lake. As a teacher, she was recognized for her creativity, her interest and concern for children with special learning needs and for her ability to handle double grades. In some of her later assignments, she also spent time with the elderly of the parish, visiting them and taking Holy Communion to them. She struggled with health issues, however, and needed to give up teaching in 1985.

While recuperating from an earlier illness, she became interested in ceramics, and in 1985, began her ceramics ministry in earnest. She named her ministry “Ceramic Haven”. She taught both sisters and lay people, and many several sisters worked part time in Ceramic Haven. In addition to hand painting ceramic items of all types, Sister Irene and her helpers began restoring and repainting statues for parishes. Ceramic Haven became a popular destination for tour groups and regular customers. Nativity scenes, Santas of all shapes and designs, and wildlife pieces were among the most popular items.

Sister Irene had a strong devotion to the rosary, and prayed it often during the day, especially when her time in Ceramic Haven became more limited. As she looked back on her life, she commented, “I’ve had lots of transfers, but now I have time to prepare for the surest and biggest of all transfers where we will never be separated from loved ones.”

She is survived by her sisters Bernice Babinat, Jo-Ann Wierck and Jeanette (Roger) Klinoff, and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents Louis and Magdalen (Funfsinn) Federspiel, and her brother Loren.