

SISTER THEOPHANE SCHWERDT, O.S.F. 726

Born: December 5, 1906
Parents: George H. and Mary (Kortte) Schwerdt
Postulancy: September 5, 1927
Novitiate: August 12, 1928
First Profession: August 12, 1930
Final Profession: August 12, 1933
Died Saturday September 3, 1994 at 11:50 p.m. at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home.



Ministry:

1930 - 1935 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Grades 5, 6, 8
1935 - 1936 St. Boniface, Chicago, IL (to November 16), Grade 8 then to Annunciation, Aurora, IL
1936 - 1949 Annunciation, Aurora, IL, Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, Principal
1949 - 1950 St. Joseph, Freeport, IL (to January) Grades 7, 8, Principal, then to St. Mary, Fairfield, AL
1950 - 1951 St. Mary, Fairfield AL, Grades 4, 5, 6, Young Ladies' Sodality, Choir
1951 - 1957 Annunciation, Aurora, IL Grades 5, 6, 7, 8, Principal, Choir
1957 - 1958 St. Raymond Cathedral, Joliet, IL, Grade 8
1958 - 1964 Ss. Peter and Paul, Leonore, IL, Grades 6, 7, 8, Principal
1964 - 1968 St. Mary, Rock Island, IL, Grades 5, 6
1968 - 1975 St. Mary, Plainfield, IL, Grade 5, 6
1975 - 1977 St. Michael, Brunswick, MI, Part-time teaching
1977 - 1982 St. Michael, Fremont, MI, Part-time teaching
1982 - 1984 St. Mary, Shelby, OH, Retired
1984 - 1987 St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL, Tutor in St. Francis Reading Center
1988 - 1994 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Tuesday September 6, 1994
2-7:00 p.m. with prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL Tuesday September 6, 1994 at 7:00 p.m.

Burial: Wednesday September 7, 1994 leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:30 a.m.
Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, IL, S8-L351-G8

Survived by: her sisters Josephine Hatke, Marie Flood, Emma McDonald, Veronica Osborne, and Christine Foran, her second cousin Sister Marie Therese Kaufman, OSF, cousins and nieces and nephews.

*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

Sister Theophane was born in Sigel, Illinois to George and Mary Kortte Schwerdt on December 5, 1906. Baptized at St. Michael Parish, she was given the name Georgina Theresa. As the fourth of eight daughters, Georgina learned young what it means to live together as sister. Shortly before her 21st birthday, she came to Joliet to be welcomed as a postulant by hundreds of Franciscan Sisters.

At her reception into the Novitiate, Georgina was given the name Sister M. Theophane. Completing her high school education at St. Francis Academy in Joliet, she continued her studies at the College of St. Francis in Joliet and at Loyola University in Chicago where she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree. She also received a Master of Arts Degree in Franciscan Theology from the College of St. Francis in Joliet.

Sister Theophane loved her ministry of Catholic Education and served as teacher or principal in various parishes in Ohio, Illinois, Alabama and Michigan. Twenty of these years were spent at Annunciation Parish in Aurora, Illinois. It was there that she learned Gregorian Chant from the Benedictine Monks and trained the children's choirs. Music was always an important part of her life. Sister Theophane also enjoyed cooking and sewing, as well as crocheting, ceramics, art work, reading, gardening, walking and hiking.

In reflecting on her Golden Jubilee, Sister Theophane wrote: "It is with a feeling of great joy and a profound sense of humility and deep gratitude that I give praise to God for these fifty years of service to His people. I am most grateful to God for all His gifts: the call to religious life, good health, my talents, my family, my friends and acquaintances, my community." In requesting to make final vows, many years before that, she had written: "The most cherished wish of my heart is that of being united irrevocably to my Divine Spouse." At her Golden Jubilee Celebration at St. Michael Parish in Fremont Michigan, she chose to sing as a solo number, "Set Me Like a Seal on Your Heart."

When Sister Theophane returned to Our Lady of Angels, those who passed her place in chapel could hear her singing the hymns and "carrying" the hymn for her section of the chapel. Suffering from cancer, and struggling with legs that didn't always carry her where she wanted to go, Sister Theophane continued her outreach to others through her many letters and faithful correspondence. Just the day before she died she wrote to some friends in Michigan. Saturday morning September 3, 1994 Sister Theophane suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and went into a coma. Sisters kept vigil through the day and shortly before midnight that night, Sister Theophane was welcomed irrevocably into the arms of her loving God.

Sister Theophane, we thank you for your life of dedication to us, your Franciscan Sisters, your family, your pupils, your friends. You have shown us what it means to be Sister. You have led us in singing praises to God. Continue to pray for each of us now as you sing with the heavenly chorus. May God set you forever as a "Seal on His heart...." Amen. Alleluia.

