

Sister Madonna Dionis, CSA

Sister Madonna (Anna) Dionis, 90, died on Thursday, March 5, 2009, at St. Francis Home where she resided.

Anna was the fifth of eleven children born to George and Rose (Seidel) Dionis in Altoona, Pennsylvania. In her own words, Anna once wrote: "By the goodness of God, I was born in Altoona, PA early on Holy Saturday morning, March 30, 1918, at the time of the terrible flu epidemic during World War I." From her earliest days, church, prayer and love of God, were central to her family life. She had fondest memories of growing up in her humble home with many joyous activities involving her brothers and sisters. She attended St. Mary's Grade School in Altoona with the Sisters of St. Agnes as her teachers for whom she had great admiration. It was during fourth grade that she decided to become a Sister and upon eighth grade graduation she entered the congregation and in 1937 made her profession of vows, as Sister Madonna, a name which evidenced her life long devotion to the mother of God.



Sister Madonna received a BS in Ed. from Marian College, and an MA in History from Marquette University. Throughout her professional life, she continued her education, earning a number of certificates and continuing education units, which prepared her for ministries beyond the classroom. As Sister Madonna said in her autobiography: "All of my mission assignments provided millions of opportunities for involvement, and in each case, I found it hard to leave my involvements behind." She emulated her fourth grade teacher, Sister Beatrice, and taught in grade schools in Kansas, Wisconsin, Michigan, and New York from 1937 to 1977 and was principal for sixteen of those years. Sister Madonna's gifts and talents were shared with the Sisters of St. Agnes when she served as Apostolic Councilor from 1969 – 1971. As Local Coordinator at Nazareth Heights from 1977 – 1985, Sister Madonna's love and care for the Sisters was very evident. During 1985-1986 she also ministered to the poor at the Service Center in Mobile, AL. Even in semi-retirement at the Boyle Center, S. Madonna continued her service through teaching basic skills at the Fond du Lac County Jail and volunteering at Marian College until her retirement in 1996.

Sister Madonna's love of God flowed out into love of neighbor and love of nature. She was gentle, vibrant, caring, and joyous. She enjoyed people, parties, singing, natural beauty - all as gifts from God. People were drawn to her knowing that she cared deeply about them and their concerns. Her exuberance for life and things of the spirit were contagious. She saw her life as a hymn of praise for God's goodness to her. Those whose lives she touched will continue praising God for her.

Sister Madonna is survived by her brother, Peter (Beverly) Dionis; her sister Louise Dionis; her sister-in-law, Jane Dionis; her niece, Rosemarie (Bill) Long; many other nieces and nephews, the members of the Congregation of Saint Agnes with whom she lived and ministered, other relatives and friends.

Preceding her in death were her parents, two sisters, Martha and Rose, six brothers, George, John, Joseph, Luke, Paul, and Carl.

Visitation: Visitation for Sister Madonna will be held on Sunday, March 8, from 2:00 – 7:00 pm and Mon., March 9, from 8:00 – 9:45 am at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac. A prayer service will be held on Sun., March 8 at 4:00 pm in the chapel at Nazareth Center.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Monday, March 9, at 10:00am in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac. Father Ken Smits, OFM, Cap. will preside. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the nurses and staff of Hospice Hope, and St. Francis Home for their care of Sister Madonna.