

Sister Cecelia Schlaefer, CSA

Sister Cecelia Schlaefer, CSA, formerly Sister Paul, died peacefully August 17, 2021, at St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Cecelia was born March 11, 1922, in Campbellsport, Wisconsin, the fourth of eight children of Dr. Mathias Schlaefer and Marie Berg Schlaefer. Dr. Mathias was an optometrist, musician, and choir and band director and Marie was a teacher. It was evident from an early age that Cecelia was gifted with innate musical talent nurtured by her family's love of music. After graduating from St. Mary's Springs Academy in 1940, Cecelia entered St. Agnes Convent. She made her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes as Sister Paul on August 15, 1943, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



Sister Cecelia earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1953. She graduated in 1963 with a Masters in Musicology from Catholic University, Washington, DC, and in 1976 completed her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Catholic University. She especially treasured the opportunity to play violin with the Catholic University Symphony during her years of doctoral study. Sister Cecelia taught music in elementary and high schools in Kansas, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Wisconsin from 1943 – 1970. In the summer of 1970, she traveled to Nicaragua and taught music in the grade schools of Waspam and Puerto Cabezas. Gifted with the ability to play all orchestral and band instruments, she gave private and group instrumental lessons and prepared children's, high school and college groups to perform in choruses, bands and symphony orchestras. She also served as organist and choir director for the parishes connected with these schools.

In 1974, Sister Cecelia was named Chair of the Music Department of Marian College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, a position she held until 1986. Among her many accomplishments, she is credited with the development of Marian's Music Education Major and Minor. She taught academic courses, gave private lessons, and organized a symphonic orchestra, a wind ensemble, and a triple string trio, all of which

performed often during the academic year. She was active in the local community, playing cornet with the Fond du Lac Community Band for twelve years. Also a gifted violinist, pianist, and organist, she was often called upon to be a faculty performer and guest conductor. She founded or had leadership roles in several professional organizations serving musicians in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana.

Upon completion of her tenure at Marian College, the warmth of the Arizona sun led Sister Cecelia to the Southwest. There, grounded in her love of people, music, and teaching, she ministered as a liturgist, organist, and adult formation catechist from 1987 to 2017 assisting for a time in several Arizona parishes including: St. James Parish, Glendale; St. Andrew Parish, Sierra Vista; Holy Cross Parish, Mesa; and All Saints Parish, Mesa. She volunteered countless hours entertaining in several retirement homes and care centers bringing joy and laughter with her exuberant, commanding presence and wide range of musical ability. During her visits to Wisconsin, she would provide entertainment, conduct choirs, and substitute as the organist for the residents of Nazareth Court and Center and St. Francis Home.

Sister Cecelia returned to Fond du Lac in May of 2017 to join the community of sisters at Nazareth Court and Center. In July of 2021, she transferred to St. Francis Home where she received care until the time of her death.

Sister Cecelia was preceded in death by her parents Mathias and Marie Berg Schlaefer; her brothers, Aloysius (infant), Bishop Salvador (Albert) Schlaefer, OFM Cap, Father Austin (Francis) Schlaefer, OFM Cap, and Dr. Anthony (Marjorie) Schlaefer; her brother-in-law William Dreyer; her sisters Mary Schlaefer and Therese Weber.

She is survived by her sister Rose Dreyer, her brother-in-law, Dr. Robert Weber, her devoted nieces and nephews, and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed and ministered.

Cremation has taken place. Visitation will be held at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. and from 12:00 -1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 31, 2021.

A prayer service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on August 31, 2021, in the Nazareth Center Chapel. Please check in for the Visitation and Prayer Service at the 375 Gillett Street entrance only.

The Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Cecelia will be held on August 31, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. in St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin with Father Kenneth Smits, Capuchin, presiding. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Memorials may be directed to the CSA Mission Advancement Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the nurses and staff of Nazareth Court and Center, St. Francis Home, and Hospice Hope for their care of Sister Cecelia during her final years.

Zacherl Funeral Home is serving the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes.