

Sister David Ennis, CSA

Sister David (Norma) Ennis, 83, died on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, in Nazareth Center where she resided.

In Beloit, Wisconsin, the day before Halloween, October 30, 1926, James “Arthur” and Vera Ennis, along with their son Patrick, welcomed a daughter into the world and named her Norma. Her childhood years were spent in Beloit where she attended Brother Dutton School, and first met the Sisters of St. Agnes, her teachers. After her graduation from Brother Dutton in 1941, the Ennis family moved to Detroit. But Norma had been impressed by her teachers and returned to her Wisconsin roots by entering the Congregation in Fond du Lac in 1944. Later her brother Pat’s family would join her, working with the Sisters on the farm east of town.



On August 15, 1947, Norma made her first profession of vows as Sister David, the name she had received as a novice. Assigned as a teacher in the tiny town of Nanty Glo, Pennsylvania, she began what would be more than a half-century as an educator and principal in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois, and New York. Over the years she earned a B.S. in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac; a B.S. in Library Science from St. Catherine’s in St. Paul, Minnesota; and a M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision from Siena Heights in Adrian, Michigan. Sister David successfully taught every grade from three through eight, but said she was “most comfortable” with seventh and eighth graders.

Nearly 25 years of teaching were followed by more than 25 years as principal, the majority of those years in Fond du Lac where she served as principal in all the Catholic elementary schools except St. Louis. In 1991, forty years after her graduation from Brother Dutton, Sister David returned to Beloit as principal of St. Peter’s School. When she needed to lighten her load, she remained in education by serving as librarian at St. John the Baptist School in Jefferson, Wisconsin. Firm and competent as a teacher and efficient as an administrator, she leaves a lasting legacy on many of those students and colleagues who knew her over the last half of the twentieth century. Whatever her accomplishments, Sister David credited the Congregation with her success because of the many opportunities provided for spiritual and intellectual growth.

Although her ministry was education, Sister David was first, last, and always a woman religious. Her loyalty as a member of the Congregation is equaled by the loyal and close friends she has made. For her family to whom she has remained close, she is an inspiration and a mentor to many. Her younger sister, who followed her into religious life though in a different community, found in her a model from whom she learned integrity, honesty, faithfulness, and fairness over the years. Sister David was a woman of principle and integrity. Strong in the face of challenge, she faced her final illnesses in the past five years with courage, determination and dignity—and always with

gratitude for any act of kindness shown her. A woman who often laughed at herself and joked with her friends about wanting to be always in control of herself and of situations, Sister David finally and peacefully gave over that control to the God who called her home last Tuesday.

Sister David is survived by a sister, Sister Mary Ann Ennis, OP, of Jefferson, WI; a sister-in-law, Eva Ennis of Fond du Lac; many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews; and the Sisters of St. Agnes with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.

Preceding her in death are her parents, James "Arthur" and Vera Noonan Ennis; two brothers: James (Jr.) Ennis who died as an infant and James "Pat" Ennis; and one sister: Rosemary Ennis, who also died as an infant.

Visitation: Visitation for Sister David will be held on Friday, January 15, 2010, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac. A prayer service will be held at 11:00 a.m.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on January 15, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac. Father Tom Coyle will preside. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery.

Memorials may be directed to the Sisters of St. Agnes Development Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the nurses and staff of Nazareth Court and Center and of Hospice Hope for their care of Sister David in her retirement years.