

Sister Carole Gurdak, CSA

Sister Carole Gurdak, CSA, formerly Sister Miriam Joseph, died peacefully September 1, 2025, at St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Carole was born February 3, 1939, in Yonkers, New York, to Joseph and Catherine Farrell Gurdak. She grew up with her younger brother, Joseph, in Yonkers and attended Catholic grade school staffed by the Sisters of Charity. She met the Sisters of St. Agnes while a student at Sacred Heart High School in Yonkers. In 1955, after her junior year at Sacred Heart, Carole entered St. Agnes Convent where she completed her high school education and began the formation process for religious life. She made her first profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes as Sister Miriam Joseph on August 15, 1958, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



Sister Carole earned a BS in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and an MS in Educational Guidance from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Throughout her years as an educator, she enhanced her professional skills with additional credits and certificates in religious education; elementary administration; and instructional leadership, innovation, and individualized learning. Sister Carole began her years as a teacher at St. Patrick School, Fond du Lac (1959), and then taught grades 1–8 in various parish schools in Wisconsin and New York. She was both a teacher and principal at St. Peter Claver School, Sheboygan, Wisconsin (1970–1972) and at St. Mary Grade School, Fond du Lac (1972–1973). From 1973–1979, Sister was principal of the combined Saints Mary and Joseph Catholic School, Fond du Lac.

Sister was appointed Apostolic Councilor for her CSA community (1979–1982), doing personnel work among those sisters who staffed elementary schools outside of Wisconsin. She felt privileged to accompany the sisters and to work with pastors, especially during times of transition due to changes in the availability of sisters to continue ministering in a particular school.

Upon completion of this role, Sister Carole focused her ministry in the South, beginning in Mississippi and Alabama, serving in various parish settings as a teacher, a principal, and as the Curriculum Coordinator for the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama. In 1995, Sister moved to Winter Haven, Florida, working as guidance counselor and assistant principal at St. Joseph School, while sharing responsibilities with her Capuchin brother for the care of their frail elderly parents who had retired to Winter Haven from New York. After the death of her parents in 1998, Sister moved to New York City and taught 5th grade for three years at Our Lady of Sorrows School on the Lower Eastside of the city. Following this teaching assignment, she took classes in grant writing, did substitute teaching and parish ministry until asked to return to Fond du Lac to be part of the team of Local Coordinators caring for the retired sisters at Nazareth Court & Center, a role she held from 2003–2007.

After a year of sabbatical, Sister returned to New York City where she accepted the position as Office Manager for a non-governmental organization at the United Nations. Retiring from this position, she volunteered as a receptionist at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Manhattan.

Sister remained in Manhattan, living with her CSA sisters at The Leo House, until declining health necessitated her move back to Fond du Lac in August 2016. She received care at Nazareth Court & Center and St. Francis Home until the time of her death.

Reflecting upon her life, Sister Carole was deeply grateful for her many and varied opportunities to teach, to heal, and to serve others in need. They in turn enriched her life. She stated, "The challenges were many, but the blessings far greater."

Preceding Sister Carole in death were her parents and her brother, Father Joseph Gurdak, OFM, Cap.

Sister is survived by her cousins, their families, and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.

Cremation has taken place.

Services for Sister Carole will be held on Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

Visitation will be held from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

A Prayer Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. in Nazareth Center Chapel, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial will be offered at 2:00 p.m. at St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, with Father Thomas Zelinski, OFM, Cap., presiding.

Burial of cremains 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 and the Gurdak family are grateful to the nurses and staff of Nazareth Court and Center, St. Francis Home, and Hospice Hope for their devoted care of Sister Carole.

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