

Sister Mary Neff, CSA

Sister Mary Neff, CSA, baptized Matilda Cecilia Neff, and formerly known as Sister Mary Donald, died peacefully on April 9, 2018, at St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Matilda Neff was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on November 13, 1927, to William Neff and Anna Zauner Neff. Her family included one boy and seven girls. Matilda attended Altoona Catholic High School for two years. She entered St. Agnes Convent, Fond du Lac, and graduated from St. Agnes High School in 1944. She made profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15, 1947, as Sister Mary Donald.

Sister Mary received a BA in Art/Art Ed from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and earned an MA in Art from Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana. She did post-graduate studies in counseling at Fort Hays State College, Hays, Kansas, and received a certificate in pastoral counseling from Cardinal Meyer Institute, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She continued to enhance her professional credentials through a variety of courses in art and counseling over the years.

Sister was a first-grade teacher in Wisconsin and Minnesota for 16 years; while on the faculty at St. Florian School, Milwaukee, she was an illustrator for children's educational materials for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. She taught art at Marian High School, Hays, Kansas, and at St. Francis Seminary, Victoria, Kansas, for eight years. During the 60s and 70s, Sister Mary ministered within CSA, assuming various roles in the formation of young women preparing for religious life.

A Marian College faculty member for 23 years, Sister Mary was Assistant Professor of Art and Director of the Art Department. She played an active part in college and community organizations. She contributed her gifts in numerous ways: judging art exhibits; leading art workshops; designing logos, signage, publications and cards for individuals and events; promoting Marian's Heritage Festival of the Arts from its beginning. She was awarded the James R. Underkofler Excellence in Teaching Award in 1992, was awarded Professor Emerita by the Marian College Board of Trustees in 1995 and was among the recipients of the first annual Windy Award in 2001. After retiring from Marian College, Sister Mary gave private lessons in drawing, painting and calligraphy at her Mariart Studio.

Sister Mary was preceded in death by her parents William Neff and Anna Neff; her brother William Neff; her sisters Cleopha Neff, Madeline Neff, Walburga O'Neill, Gertrude Neff, Alma Duman and Mary Pressler. She is survived by her nieces, nephews, and the Sisters of St. Agnes with whom she lived, prayed and ministered.

There is no visitation. Burial took place on April 12, 2018, at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery. A Prayer Service will be held on April 19, 2018, at 11:00 a.m. in Nazareth Center Chapel, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

A Memorial Mass will be held on April 19, 2018, at 2:15 p.m. in St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Father Ken Smits, Capuchin, will be the presider.

Memorials can be directed to the Sisters of St. Agnes Development 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 the staff of Hospice Hope, for their care of Sister Mary Neff in the last years of her life. Zacherl Funeral Home is serving the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Agnes.

