



Sister Mary Smith OSF
1936 – 2013

Mary Virginia Smith was born August 27, 1936, in Lourdes, Iowa, the second of eleven children born to Clement and Mabel (Tierney) Smith. She was baptized at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Lourdes, Iowa, on August 30, 1936. Her siblings included brothers Clement, Thomas, Dennis, Paul, Francis, and Patrick and sisters Bernadette, Margaret (Elaine), Mabel (Annie), and Rosemary.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent, Clinton, Iowa on September 8, 1955, and received the name Mary Clement at her reception June 15, 1956. She later resumed her baptismal name. She made her first profession, August 12, 1958, and her final profession on August 12, 1961. Her novitiate classmates were Sisters Marcella Marie Narlock, Ann Marie (Alice) Weber, Christopher (Elizabeth) Skube, Ida Green, Mary Mel McMillan, Virginia Krakow, and Maria (Teresa) Trimble.



She attended Our Lady of Lourdes Grade School and Our Lady of Lourdes High School, Lourdes, Iowa, through tenth grade, graduating from Mount St. Clare Academy, Clinton, Iowa, in 1955. After entering the Sisters of St. Francis, she attended Mount St. Clare College, earning her A.A. in 1958. She received a B. A. in Music Education from the University of Iowa in 1967.



Sister Mary held an Iowa Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate and taught music at the elementary and high school levels. She ministered at Mount St. Clare Academy, Clinton, Iowa, St. Patrick's, Perry, Iowa, and Our Lady of Good

Counsel, Fonda, Iowa.

After earning an M. A. in Religious Studies from Mundelein College, Chicago, Illinois, she continued her education at St. Bonaventure University in New York and in Assisi, Italy. Upon returning to Clinton, she held the position of Formation Director for the congregation from 1976-1981. In 1980, she was elected Vice President of the Sisters of St. Francis, and from 1981-1988 served as President of the congregation. In May, 1987, Sister Mary was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities from St. Ambrose University “for her never-ending search for better ways to serve God, humankind and her religious order.”

Following her terms as President of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Mary undertook further study at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, California. Her ministry then centered in the area of spiritual direction and retreat work at the Franciscan Canticle, Victorville, California; the Franciscan Renewal Center, Portland, Oregon; and the Hearth, Portland, Oregon. She was also a spiritual director and retreat leader at The Canticle in Clinton, Iowa.



In 2008, Sister Mary was re-elected to leadership as a member of the General Council and in 2012 became the Vice President and a member of the General Leadership Team. During all of her years in leadership and spiritual direction, she also served as organist for many of the congregation’s liturgical celebrations. In the final months of her life, Mary continued to model servant leadership through her courageous acceptance of her final illness as she completed her journey to eternal life.

Sister Mary Smith died at The Canticle on Sunday evening, March 10, 2013.

Left to honor her memory are her siblings: Clem (Judy) Smith, Bernie (Bob) Voves, Elaine (Mike) Farrington, Dennis (Marie) Smith, Paul (Nancy) Smith, Francis (Carol) Smith, Annie (Charles) Riley, Rosie (Mike) Zeimetz, and Pat (Barb) Smith; sister-in-law Shirley Smith, many nieces and nephews, and the Sisters of St. Francis with whom she shared life for over 57 years.

She was preceded in death by her parents and by her brother Tom, who died on March 9, 2013. Her aunt, Clinton Franciscan Sister Edward Smith, is among other relatives who welcome her home.

Services include a Wake and Rosary at The Canticle on Thursday from 3-5:00pm,

followed by a Wake Service at Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace Church in Clinton from 6:30-9:00pm with a scripture service and storytelling at 6:30pm.

Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated on Friday, March 15th at 10:00am at the Church followed by a burial service at St. Ireneaus Cemetery in Clinton.