

109 Year-Old Nun Dies in Wisconsin

by Susan Brinkmann, OCDS
Staff Writer

(April 7, 2008) After serving the Lord as a religious sister for 90 years, 109 year-old Sister Claude Feldner of the Congregation of St. Agnes is home at last. She died peacefully on April 2 in a nursing home in Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin.

“It is a loss and a blessing — to have shared in the life of Sister Claude for these many, many years,” said Sister Joann Sams, general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes, to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. “Her fidelity for over 90 years stands as a witness for all of us. . . . I ask for her grace and blessing as she is now home with God.”

Those who knew her say that throughout her lifetime, Sister Claude always saw herself as God’s servant and considered life a journey with God.

“We come from God and we go to God,” she once wrote. “What lies between those two poles is what we call the journey of life.”

Sister Claude began her journey of life on September 11, 1898. Born in St. Cloud, Wisconsin, she was only 13 years old when she took her first vows. The daughter of a shoemaker, she had a great talent for music which led to a bachelor’s degree in music with a major in violin from Fort Hays State Teachers College in Kansas in 1922, and a master in music education from De Paul University in Chicago in 1938. From 1917 on, Sister Claude taught primarily music and gave private music lessons to pupils in Kansas, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

As an educator and a mentor, Sister Claude was known for her infinite patience and for drawing the best out of the students she taught and the women she mentored.

In 1974, at the tender age of 76, she began a new ministry of service to the elderly in the Fond du Lac area, taking Communion to shut-ins and volunteering at the Senior Center. She officially retired in 1982, and kept true to her belief that “retirement is a time to be as active as possible, to live life to its fullest, to maintain varied interests and leave the rest to God.”

While continuing to play the organ for Masses and religious services, she kept abreast of current issues, especially those affecting the poor, and was not shy about writing letters to the editor on behalf of those who were unable to speak for themselves.

In 1998, she relocated to St. Francis Home in Fond du Lac, a retirement home which she referred to as her "vestibule to heaven."

“They didn’t think I would live this long,” Sister told the *Fond du Lac Reporter* when celebrating her 108th birthday last year. “I was threatened with tuberculosis as a young woman and was sent to Kansas to heal. At that time, they thought a dryer climate would help a person. It must have worked because here I am at 108 years old ready to enjoy a party.”

Her companions say she was still playing piano in the evenings until just days before her death.

“We have to use our lives to do good,” she once told reporters. “How your life goes depends on what you do with your time.”

Sister Claude ended more than a century of life the same way she started it - as a servant of God.

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