

Sister Mary Francis Burke, OSF
1926 - 2024

Sister Mary Francis Burke, 98, passed away Friday, November 15, 2024, at The Alverno in Clinton. A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 20, at The Canticle, 841 13th Ave N in Clinton, with Rev. Robert McAleer presiding. Visitation will be at The Canticle from 4:00-6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19, with a rosary at 4:00 p.m. and wake service at 6:30 p.m. Burial will be in St. Irenaeus Calvary Cemetery. Pape Funeral Home is assisting.

Elizabeth Ann Burke was born on February 26, 1926, in Charlotte, IA, the fifth of eleven children of Martin and Susan Maudie (McClintock) Burke. She was baptized on February 28, 1926, at Immaculate Conception Church in Petersville, IA. She had seven brothers, William, Donald, George, James, John "Jack," Gerald, and Stephen, and three sisters, Mary Clare, Ruth, and Maudie (Sister Donna).

When Elizabeth Ann was a child, the family moved to Colome, SD, where she attended a rural school near Colome and Colome High School. Her family returned to Iowa in 1942, and she graduated from St. Joseph High School, DeWitt, in 1944.

She taught in a rural Clinton County school for one year prior to entering the congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent, Clinton, on September 8, 1945. She received the name Mary Francis at her reception on June 17, 1946, professed her first vows on August 12, 1948, and her final vows on August 12, 1951. Her novitiate classmates were Sisters Angela Daley and Hilary Mullany.

She received an A.A. degree from Mount St. Clare College, a B.A. in Elementary Education from the College of St. Teresa, Winona, MN, and an M.A. from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA. She held an Iowa Permanent Professional teaching certificate.

Sister Francis began her ministry as a primary teacher in parochial schools in Oak Lawn, Chicago, and Rochelle, IL; Maysville, KY; and Victor and Lidderdale, IA. Sister Francis was among the first group of Clinton Franciscans to serve internationally, helping to establish Mary Star of the Sea School in Freeport, Grand Bahama, in 1960. This school accepted children of all ethnic backgrounds and played a major role in the education of Black children in Freeport. She later served as teacher and/or principal in schools in Clinton, DeWitt, and Perry, IA; Reedley and El Cajon, CA; Chicago Heights, IL; and Maysville, KY.

Sister Francis also ministered in Clinton in the occupational therapy department at The Alverno for three years and as director at Mount St. Clare Convent for six years. Additionally, she served as a Home Health Care Aide in Clinton and DeWitt, and Lake Havasu City, AZ.

Sister Francis retired from active ministry in 2006. While living at The Canticle, she enjoyed playing cards and being outdoors picking apples from the orchard and tending the flower beds to beautify the grounds. In winter months, she spent her time piecing together quilts for anyone who needed them.

In November 2017, Sister Francis moved to The Alverno, where she resided until her death.

Sister Francis is survived by her sister, Sister Donna Burke; her brothers, James (Maurita), and Stephen Burke; numerous nieces and nephews; and the Sisters of St. Francis with whom she shared life for 79 years.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Ruth Burke and Mary Clare (the late Donald) Wendel; brothers, John (the late Mary Ann), William (the late Mattie "Pat"), Donald, George (the late Jean), and Gerald (the late Elvera); sister-in-law Darlene Burke; and several nieces and nephews.