

Sister Mary Celeste Hanigan, OSF 1933-2019

Sister Celeste Hanigan was born October 3, 1933, in Spalding, NE, the fourth of five children of John and Kathleen (Sullivan) Hanigan. She was baptized Dolores Theresa at St. Michael Church in Spalding on October 15, 1933. She had two brothers, Thomas and Dan, and two sisters, LaGene and Claire.

Dolores attended St. Rose of Lima Grade School and Denison Public High School in Denison, IA. After graduating from high school, she attended Mount St. Clare College in Clinton, IA, for two years before entering the Sisters of St. Francis on September 8, 1954.

She received the name Mary Celeste at her reception June 16, 1955. She made her first profession on August 12, 1957, and her final profession on August 12, 1960. Her novitiate classmates were Sisters Jeanine Bradford, Ruth Cox, Teresa Kunkel, and Joan Theiss, and former Sisters Robert Mary (Barbara) Dwyer, Angela Marie (Patricia) Sherman Kuzmak, Charles Mary (Mary Ellen) Chihak Follett, Leo Marie (Sarah) Flanagan, Helen Marie (Marguerite) Delhotal Bloch, and Elaine (Audrey) Callahan.



She earned a B.A. in History from Creighton University, Omaha, NE; an M.A. in Education from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA; and an M.A. in Pastoral Ministry from Seattle University, Seattle, WA.

Sister Celeste taught at St. Boniface, Clinton; St. Patrick's, Perry, IA; St. Mary's, Carrollton, MO; St. Gerald's, Oak Lawn, IL; St. Rose of Lima, Denison, IA; St. Kieran's, Chicago Heights, IL; and was principal at St. Catherine's, Riverside, CA. She was Director of Religious Education in Muscatine, IA; Sts. Peter and Paul, Alta Loma, CA; and Our Lady of Rosary, San Bernardino, CA. She served as Pastoral Associate at Holy Family Parish, Hesperia, CA, and at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, San Diego, CA.

After retiring in 2009, she became the Sisters of St. Francis Associate Partnership Coordinator, serving in this role until 2011. Using various resources, Sister Celeste developed a ten-week course for people searching for ways to become peacemakers. Sister Celeste resided in San Marcos, CA, and continued to share her faith and wisdom with numerous friends and associates until her death on November 30, 2019.

Sister Celeste was independent and carefree. She treasured being part of a small church community and taking part in her book club. She enjoyed playing cards, knitting, sewing, card making, and painting.

She was preceded in death by her parents, and her brother, Thomas.

She is survived by her sisters, LaGene Webb and Claire Brown; her brother, Dan; several nieces and nephews; Sandra McFarlane, who was her good friend and caregiver during her final years of life; and the Sisters of St. Francis, with whom she shared life for 65 years.