

SISTER GERALDINE CLIFFORD

June 3, 1931 – August 29, 2023

Esther Clifford was born June 3, 1931, to Robert Clifford and Geraldine (Swallow) Clifford in Manderson, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation. She was baptized June 9, 1931, and confirmed May 4, 1944, at Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

Esther entered the Sisters of St. Francis from Pine Ridge, South Dakota, in September 1950. She made temporary vows on August 15, 1953, and final vows on August 15, 1956, at Marycrest in Denver, Colorado. At this time, she received her religious name of Sr. Geraldine Clifford.

From 1957-1962, Sr. Geraldine taught aspirants to religious life in Alliance, Nebraska. In 1962, Sister Geraldine moved back to the Pine Ridge Reservation where she taught for several years. These were enjoyable years for Sr. Geraldine! She also taught for several months at Marycrest in Denver, Colorado, but then returned to Alliance, Nebraska, and resumed as teacher and director of the aspirants. She continued her education with summer sessions at St. Thomas College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas.

From 1970-1971, Sr. Geraldine Clifford lived in Redwood City, California, and was novice director for the three United States provinces (Holy Name Province, Sacred Heart Province, St. Francis Province). In 1972-1975, she lived in St. Louis, Missouri, as novitiate director at the Institute of Religious Formation at the St. Louis University. In 1973-1974, she taught classes and directed 30-day Ignatian retreats in Manresa, Spain, for the Institute of Religious Formation. Sr. Geraldine was also a student at Fordham University, New York City, New York in the 1980s.

From 1975-1981, Sr. Geraldine Clifford was provincial minister. She lived at Marycrest Convent and then Queen of Peace Convent in Denver, Colorado.

In 1985, she moved to the Pine Ridge Reservation in Manderson, South Dakota, where she built St. Francis Home to care for abused and neglected Lakota children. She was the director for this home from 1985-2018. During this time, she taught psychology for ten years at Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, South Dakota. She also traveled throughout the Pine Ridge Reservation teaching at nine college centers. These were wonderful years for her. While Sister Geraldine lived at Manderson, South Dakota, she often visited the sisters at Marian Residence in Alliance, Nebraska, and gave spiritual direction for those who desired it. From 1996-2000, she was pastoral minister for St. Agnes Parish in Manderson, South Dakota.

In 2018, Sister Geraldine retired and moved to Marian Residence in Alliance, Nebraska, until it closed in May 2022. Sister Geraldine moved to Highland Park Care Center in Alliance, Nebraska, where she continued her prayer ministry.

On August 11, 2022, Sister Geraldine Clifford was diagnosed with breast cancer. Relatives, sisters, associates, and parishioners visited her over the year she lived thereafter. Sisters Joan Linenbrink and Jane Schneider were with her throughout her final days. After a courageous battle with the disease, Sister Geraldine Clifford died on August 29, 2023, at Highland Park Care Center in Alliance, Nebraska.

Many sisters, associates, and relatives traveled from afar to attend her memorial services that were held at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Alliance, Nebraska. On September 5, 2023, Father Matt Koperski led the rosary and afterwards there were many shared stories and memories of Sister Geraldine. On September 6, 2023, Father Matt Koperski presided, along with concelebrants Father Gerald Harr and Father Steve Deaver, over her Mass of Celebration. Sr. Geraldine Clifford was buried at Calvary Cemetery in Alliance, Nebraska.

Written by Sr. Jane Schneider