



60th Jubilee, 2001

Sister Clara Dischler, OP
Born to earthly life: February 20, 1922
Religious profession: August 4, 1941
Entered eternal life: February 24, 2013

*The whole created world
 is waiting in eager expectation
 for the children of God to be revealed.*

Romans 8:19

Martha Bridget Dischler, daughter of Joseph and Mary Laubmeier Dischler, first saw the light of day on February 20, 1922, in rural Plain, Wisconsin.

Even as a child, little Martha enjoyed exploring every aspect of nature and all its creatures around her family's farm. And even as a child, as she attended the parish school at Saint Luke's, she



Baby Martha



Martha as an aspirant, with her Mother



Eighth-grade graduation

knew she wanted to be a sister like her Racine Dominican teachers. So no one was surprised when, after graduating from eighth grade, she went to Racine to become an aspirant. That was August 25, 1936. She completed her secondary education at Saint Catherine's high school, moving on to the postulate in early 1939. The following August 4, she received the Dominican habit and the religious name Sister M. Clara of Divine Providence. She professed her first vows on August 4, 1941.



Martha as a postulant, 1939



**Martha as a bride
on her reception day**

She had begun her teaching ministry at nearby Holy Name School during her second novitiate year, and after profession was sent to Saint John's in South Milwaukee, where she taught for five years. She next spent three years at Assumption Grotto in Detroit, and then a year at Saint Mary's in Tomah.

She served as principal at Saint Francis in Ottawa, Illinois for the 1950–1951 term, and then was assigned to Saint John's in Little Chute for four years. Meanwhile, during the summers, she studied at the College of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul, earning her bachelor's degree in 1955.

That fall she found herself teaching in Hubbardston, Michigan, where she stayed for six years, surely enjoying a rural setting once more. But then, in 1961, it was back to the city, this time to Saint Clement's in Center Line, Michigan. She was back in Little Chute the following term, and this time would stay for five years.

She must have been delighted when her July 16 assignment slip of 1967 sent her to the University of South Dakota in Vermillion for a year of full-time study in history and natural science. After that year she would continue her studies in the summers, completing her master's degree in 1968.

Her next teaching assignments were in Center Line (1968–1975) and her home parish in Plain (1975–1981).

In 1981 Clara accepted an invitation to minister in Alaska, joined the next year by Sister Agnes Ballweg. For the next ten years, Clara would serve as principal of Holy Name School in Ketchikan and as superintendent of schools for the Juneau Diocese, with Agnes on her teaching staff. Sister



Sister Clara with her parents, about 1945



About 1950

Rita Vander Velden joined them for just one term, 1984–1985, as school secretary. “I loved my time in Ketchikan,” said Clara, “especially working with the children. They were so easy. Each one of them had so much good inside. Sometimes you had to look a little harder to find it, but it was always there.” Agnes commented that Clara “found the sunsets breathtaking, as well as the icebergs, the bears, and the eagles. She took great joy in walking around the lake and naming every plant, bird, insect and tree along the way. Each week I got a science lesson on our walks.”



1990

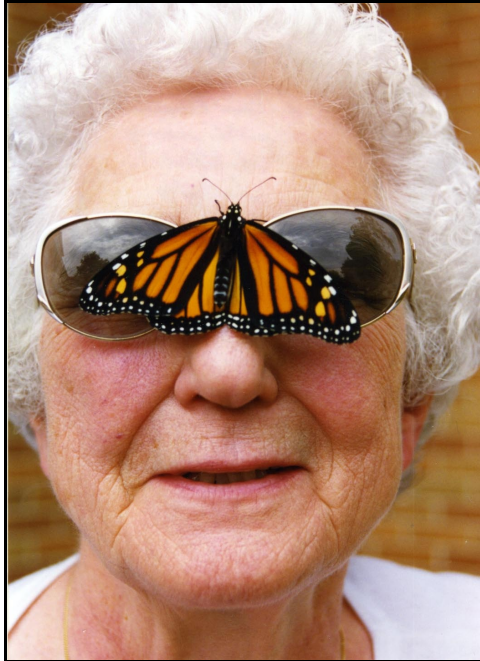


Clara and Agnes in Alaska, with S. Nadine Grogan (L)

Over the years, besides her administrative work, she had taught in the primary grades through high school. “She was a wonderful teacher,” said her classmate and good friend Sister Esther Szambelan, “Many of her students won prizes at state science competitions.” But a few months after Clara and Agnes had returned to Racine from the North, Clara was asked to take charge of Siena Center’s card shop, a post she filled with pleasure for a decade. But by the summer of 2003 her health had declined to the point that she needed nursing care.



Manager of the Siena Center card shop, 2000



In her glory with the butterflies!

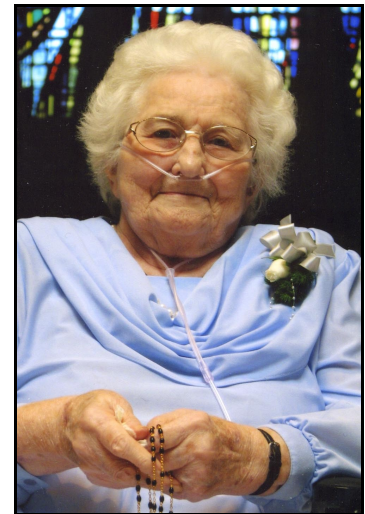
Clara would spend her remaining years — nearly ten — in supportive and later skilled care, with stays at Willow Crest in South Milwaukee, Racine's Lakeshore Manor, Kenosha Care Center, and our own Siena Center. Ever the lover of nature, even when she was confined to a small space, said Sister Rosalie Lauer, nature was "alive in her room, with symbols of the cardinal in her snow globe, the Alaskan Husky she named Alaska, her colorful sweatshirts with birds, flowers, or animals, and for spring, her illuminated bouquet of tulips. Best of all, making her eyes sparkle, were the live plants and flowers which visitors would so lovingly bring, along with greeting cards."

Clara would beam with joy whenever she was able to return to Siena Center for special occasions. And she did that almost to the end.

On February 20, 2013, Clara celebrated her ninety-first birthday, declining in health but not alarmingly so. Less than a week later, however, about ten o'clock the evening of February 24, the call came that she was dying. Sister

Rosalie and the community's director of health care services, Pam Hudson, rushed to Lakeshore Manor; they were still on the road when they received the call that Clara had died, very suddenly and peacefully, surrounded by Lakeshore staff and our own Sister Kateri Byrne, also a resident at Lakeshore. Rosalie and Kateri sat with her body until the funeral home personnel arrived.

Besides her Racine Dominican sisters and associates, Sister Clara was survived by her brother Simon Dischler and his wife Mary Jane, her sisters Margaret Chase and Clara Ruegsegger, and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers Thomas, Charles, and Lucas; and her sisters Bernadine (who had died as an infant), Lucy Gruber, Genevieve Bindl, Agnes Berget, Elizabeth Liegel, and Theresa Brown. One classmate, Sister Esther Szambelan, was still living to celebrate Clara's life.



70th Jubilee, 2011

In her homily that morning, Sister Jean Ferstl reflected on Clara's spirituality. Clara, she said, "is one who was called to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit, along with many others, in renewing the face of the earth. Some time ago when I was visiting with Clara at Lakeshore, she stopped suddenly and pointed to something that she saw outside from her fifth-floor window. What she wanted me to see was a bird perched on the top of the flag pole, about forty feet from where we were sitting. I sat with her in awe of one of God's beautiful creatures, a cardinal. I was amazed that she caught sight of it from that distance. She was so in tune with all of creation around her. Sister Clara would resonate with Saint Paul's words: 'Indeed, creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.'"

Her body was interred that same day in the community plot at Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.