



## Sister Evelyn Novinski, OP

Born to earthly life: September 8, 1910  
Religious profession: August 4, 1932  
Entered eternal life: July 28, 2014

**“Being a sister is such a wonderful experience.  
My life has been a happy blessing.”**

*Sister Evelyn on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday*

**I**T WAS THE SUNDAY MORNING BEFORE SHE WAS TO BEGIN FIRST GRADE when little Cecelia Novinski first saw them. She had never seen one before, and she just stared in awe. She stared and stared, and finally someone identified what she was staring at ... a SISTER!

Sisters were new to all six Novinski children, and after the first day of school, Cecelia’s oldest sibling informed the family she wanted to be a sister, to which Cecelia declared, “If she goes, I want to go!”

Anna Cecelia was the sixth of George and Wilhelmina Novinski’s 10 children. She was born on the family sheep farm near Reliance, South Dakota, on September 8, 1910. When she was 18 months old, her family moved from South Dakota to a farm near Fennimore, WI. It was at Fennimore’s St. Mary Parish that she and her siblings were introduced to Racine Dominican Sisters. They impressed the children deeply, as three Novinski girls headed to Racine as soon as they were old enough: Sisters Lambertine, Luciana and Evelyn (Cecelia).

S. Evelyn taught intermediate grades for 46 years in schools around Michigan, Wisconsin and New Mexico. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in education from St. Norbert College in DePere, WI, in 1951 – 22 years after she first began teaching. When her vision began failing, she retired from teaching and moved to Our Lady of the Oaks in Pewaukee, where S. Rosaria taught her to make rosaries. S. Evelyn made more than 11,000 rosaries that she then sent to the missions.

Upon learning her eyesight would continue to decline, she spent two summers in Janesville, attending school for the visually impaired. There she learned to weave baskets, and over the years she created over 980 baskets for use both inside and outside of her community. Having learned to crochet as a child, she also crocheted caps for children, because she was able to feel the work without having to see it.

The grace with which S. Evelyn accepted the loss of her sight epitomized her outlook for nearly 104 years. In recent years, her hearing also failed, leaving her increasingly isolated, yet she never became bitter. “She was so gentle, kind and prayerful,” S. Marian Diedrick, who spent time with S. Evelyn most days, said. “She always greeted me with that welcoming smile... She was a dear friend, mentor and sister.”

Staff members were also recipients of S. Evelyn’s warmth and kindness. Connie Olson, speaking on behalf of all the aides in Supportive Living, noted, “She was like a grandma to each of us. Just knowing her has made us better people.”

Family remained important to S. Evelyn throughout her life. In later years, when she could no longer see her nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews, as soon as they identified themselves, she immediately launched into questions indicating she had kept up on each of their lives and remembered earlier conversations she’d had with them.

The day that little girl in Fennimore was so awestruck by seeing sisters, she would never have guessed she’d dedicate 82 years of her life to being one herself – and what a happy blessing that would be.