



BENEDICTINE SISTERS

SACRED HEART MONASTERY
in CULLMAN, ALABAMA

916 Convent Road NE, Cullman, AL 35055 ~ www.shmon.org ~ (256)734-4622

December 24, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

CULLMAN—Sister Margaret Frederick, O.S.B., a Benedictine Sister of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, AL, died on December 22, 2017, at the age of 82.

Reception of the Body with Vespers of the Dead will be Tuesday, December 26, 2017, at 4:45 PM in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel in Cullman, followed by Visitation. The Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:30 AM on Wednesday, December 27, 2017, with interment to follow in the monastery cemetery.



Born August 4, 1935, in Miami, Florida, to Robert deRolfe and Sarah Wilson Frederick, Sister Margaret enjoyed the closeness of a loving family and an early childhood that she described as “idyllic.” After stints in Florida and Georgia, the family settled in Tuscaloosa where Sister Margaret became acquainted with several Benedictine Sisters who taught in the city. One of the Sisters gave her instruction in the Catholic faith and she, along with her mother and sister, were baptized into the Catholic Church in 1951.

Sister Margaret’s acquaintance with the Benedictines deepened when she transferred to Sacred Heart Academy for her final year of high school. After one year at the University of Florida, she returned to Cullman and entered Sacred Heart Monastery in 1953. The following year she entered the Novitiate, receiving her Religious name of Sister Mary Stephen. In 1955, she made her First Monastic Profession, with her Perpetual Monastic Profession following in 1958. Sister educational preparation for the ministry of teaching included a Bachelor’s degree in Speech and a Master’s in English, both from John Carroll University in Ohio.

The ministry of education was a natural fit for Sister Margaret. Enthusiasm for her subject, creativity in teaching, and genuine care for her students led her to be beloved by those she taught and highly respected by those with whom she worked. Sister Margaret taught at several schools in the Diocese of Birmingham, including nine years at John Carroll Catholic High School in Birmingham. However most of her over 50 years of teaching ministry unfolded in Florida where she taught for over

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thirty years, first at Pensacola Catholic High School and later at New Smyrna Beach High School where she taught Advanced Placement and Honors English. In addition to her teaching load, which included at various times journalism, humanities, and religion, she served in other roles such as newspaper and yearbook faculty moderator and National Honor Society moderator. On several occasions she led groups of students on humanities study tours in Europe.

Sister Margaret's skill and dedication did not go unnoticed. She was honored as Teacher of the Year at New Smyrna Beach High School and as Teacher of Excellence by the American Business Women's Association. A particularly cherished honor was the reception of the Diocesan Medal of Honor for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee which was bestowed on Sister Margaret in 1983.

Within the monastic community, Sister Margaret held the position of Superior on several of her mission appointments. She also served for a time on the Monastic Council. Her Sisters deeply appreciated Sister Margaret's love of beauty, generous spirit, joyous presence, and her legendary storytelling ability in which she could render in unforgettably vivid color what might be an otherwise monochrome tale.

In her lengthy final illness, Sister remained a vibrant and vital presence within the monastic community. She continued to convey joy and to notice and name the beauty around her even in the midst of illness, providing her Sisters and caregivers alike with a daily witness to the goodness of God. A haiku poem Sister Margaret wrote many years ago is testament to her ability to find beauty in suffering: *Grief, I defy you / to rob me of this treasure / my dream-filled pillow.* Testament to her enduring faith are the words she spoke to her hospice nurse on the day she died: "God is wonderful."

Sister Margaret was preceded in death by her parents and by her brother Robert deRolf Frederick, Jr. Survivors include her Benedictine Sisters, her sister Mary Michael Gaynor (John), sister-in-law Nancy Frederick, and eight nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, AL, 916 Convent Rd., Cullman, AL, 35055.

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