

Death Notice

SISTER MARY ST. LEO

ND 4035

Mary Louise DECHANT



Christ the King Province, Chardon, Ohio, USA

Date and Place of Birth:	August 8, 1924	Lorain, Ohio
Date and Place of Profession:	August 16, 1945	Cleveland, Ohio
Date and Place of Death:	April 13, 2020	Health Care Center, Chardon, Ohio
Date and Place of Burial:	April 16, 2020	Resurrection Cemetery, Chardon, Ohio

"Take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home."

Mary Louise grew up on a large farm in Avon, Ohio, the second of eight children born to Leo and Mildred (Westrick) DeChant. Her parents had loving, happy hearts and deep faith; they were always ready to share their resources and their family home with anyone in need. Mary Louise worked on the farm and helped her mother with household tasks and care of her siblings. Perhaps these years of rural upbringing taught her to hold dear her family, the beauty of nature and the pure and simple things in life. Through the friendship and guidance of Sister Mary Anselm Langenderfer, one of her teachers at St. Mary School in Avon, Mary Louise recognized and followed God's call to religious life. She entered the Sisters of Notre Dame on September 8, 1942, and at investment, received the name Sister Mary St. Leo.

The day after her profession in 1945, Sister began, and embraced wholeheartedly, her ministry of education to elementary grade students. She was the consummate educator, serving as classroom teacher, administrator, tutor or office assistant for over fifty years – twenty-two of these at St. Jude School in Elyria, Ohio. Sister Mary St. Leo was a gentle but strong leader, a good listener, dedicated, organized and efficient, with the ability to inspire students and those with whom she worked. Sister earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in education from St. John College in Cleveland, Ohio, and a master's degree in religious education from the Notre Dame Institute in Middleburg, Virginia.

Sister Mary St. Leo's gift for writing and her educational experience led to assignments as author and editor of "Our Sunday Visitor" *Our Living Faith* textbook series and writer for *Christ Our Life* religion textbook series. She was always grateful for the graces and inspirations she received from participating in this writing ministry, and was proud that through it many people would come to know and love God. In later years, Sister told her own life story in a comprehensive and extensive autobiography recounting the places, people and experiences that shaped her life and meant so much.

Because of physical limitations, Sister moved to the provincial center in 2004 and continued to be God's instrument as she shared her love and optimism with her sisters in community. She brought joy to others with the beautiful orchids and plants she tended. Her talent for needlework was evident in exquisitely-crafted items, many of which were prize winners at the Geauga County Fair. These were placed in the SND Gallery or Boutique; some were lovingly presented as gifts to her family members whom she cherished and spoke of frequently. Sister Mary St. Leo was a woman of conviction, wisdom and humor, simple yet deep prayer and a welcoming spirit. In all the events, challenges and sacrifices that were part of her journey, Sister trusted in the faithful presence of God, welcoming it in whatever way it was revealed. A sister-friend wrote, "Sister was a woman of grace who readily showed grace and God's blessing to others. She was always supportive, made our house a home and kept us focused on what was important."

May Sister Mary St. Leo enjoy the fullness of Life and Light in God's loving, abiding presence.