



Sisters of St. Casimir

2601 WEST MARQUETTE ROAD • CHICAGO, IL 60629-1817

(773) 776-1324 • www.sistersofstcasimir.org

SISTER NILDA VARANAUSKAS, SSC
(also known as Sister Juana Nilda Varanauskas
and formerly Sister M. Carmen)
October 24, 1939 – May 30, 2021

Juana Nilda Varanauskas, the only child of Casimiro Varanauskas and Emilia Jokubkaite, was born in Capital Federal, Argentina, on October 24, 1939. Both of her parents were born in Lithuania and had immigrated to Argentina. Nilda's family was part of Our Lady of Vilna Parish, a Lithuanian community in Avellaneda, where she became acquainted with the Sisters of St. Casimir of Chicago, who staffed the parish school. As she came to know the Sisters, she was drawn to their way of life. Her parents found it difficult to allow her to enter the Community because they knew she would have to leave her home in Argentina and go to Chicago, where she would remain for at least three years for her religious formation before they would ever see her again.



Nilda arrived in the United States on February 1, 1958, and was received as a candidate on February 11, 1958. At the time, she knew both Spanish and Lithuanian, but not English. That presented a challenge as she joined several other young women who entered the community, some of whom only knew English. She struggled searching for just the right word or the right gesture to communicate what she wanted to say, but her happy, spirited disposition endeared her to all, and she was able to continue adapting and growing in the ways of community life. On August 15, 1958, Nilda began her novitiate, receiving the name Sister Carmen, and on August 15, 1960, she made her first vows. After Vatican II, when the Sisters were allowed to return to their baptismal names, she changed her name to Sister Nilda.

Soon after her profession, Sister Nilda returned to Argentina to teach at Our Lady of Vilna School, becoming its principal in 1967. She remained at Our Lady of Vilna school for thirty-seven years. She was well-prepared for her ministry, having received master's degrees in Education for Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, a licentiate in Psychology, and special certificates in catechetics. She served as a very successful educator, bringing new ideas and programs to the school. Under her leadership as principal, the school became known as one of the best schools in the diocese. The children were well prepared for future studies and were given a strong foundation in their faith. Graduates of the school credited their success in future studies to the education they received at Our Lady of Vilna School. Many of the graduates have gone on to become teachers, doctors, government officials, and other professions.

In the community, Sister Nilda served in local leadership at the convent in Avellaneda and as regional superior for the Argentine region from 1988-1997. Her great gift was one of hospitality to all who came. She willingly prepared meals, welcomed guests, and was available for those in need. Often, she and the other Sisters assisted Sister Joyce Dopkin, whose ministry was at the "villa" bringing clothes and other supplies, joining in worship services and celebrations. Sister Nilda was a great collaborator with the Lithuanian community in Madre de Misericordia Parish; they were grateful for her presence and support of their activities and gatherings. Whenever there was an opportunity for the Sisters to come to the United States, Sister Nilda was always eager and ready to come.

In the last years of her life, Sister Nilda had health issues that limited her ability to do all that she ordinarily did. She was lovingly attended to by the Sisters who lived with her, Sister Asuncion and Sister Joyce Dopkin, who had lived with Sister Nilda throughout their time in Avellaneda. God called Sister Nilda to her eternal home on May 30, 2021, after a prolonged and difficult time of suffering marked by the world-wide pandemic. She was buried in the family plot on June 1, 2021, as immediate burials are the custom in Argentina.

After Sister Nilda's death, many people who knew her wrote notes of gratitude on Facebook, such as this one: "I will love Sister Nilda forever. She was my principal during my school days, and she was an inspiration to me. Her way of speaking with soft, gentle words touched me deeply."

On March 25, 1979, Sister Nilda wrote a beautiful note to the Sisters:

"I thank you for the great privilege that I had in sharing life in Christ with all of you. Please remember me in your prayers. The love of God is always with us."

Dear Sister Nilda, may you rest in peace! Que descanse en paz!



Sister Nilda is survived by cousins in Argentina and by the Sisters of St. Casimir.

Her father, Casimiro Varanauskas, and mother, Emilia Jokubkaite, preceded her in death.

Living member of Sister Nilda's Profession Class of August 15, 1960:

Sister Joyce Ann Dopkin

Deceased Member of Sister Nilda's Profession Class of August 15, 1960:

Sister Rose Marie Tomasiewicz

A Memorial Mass for Sister Nilda will take place in Lemont on July 10 and in Argentina at a later date. Please keep Sister Nilda and all our Sisters in Argentina in prayer during this time.

