

Sister Mary Benedicta Viebeck, S.S.N.D.

A memorial service was held for Sister Mary Benedicta Viebeck, S.S.N.D., on March 1 at the Villa Assumpta chapel in Baltimore.

Sister Benedicta died Feb. 28; she was 94.

As the second-oldest of eight children in Bavaria, Sister Benedicta took needlepoint lessons from the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and then enrolled in their school in eighth grade. She walked an hour to school, and on cold, snowy nights she stayed with the sisters.

In 1926 she was admitted to the order's teacher training programs. She was teaching in 1936 when Hitler's regime began to close the state-sponsored schools where she taught. The superior general came from Munich to assess the situation and see what could be done for the sisters. She told Benedicta that the American provincials were asking for sisters, and if her mother approved, Benedicta could be sent to the United States. Sister Benedicta believed her mother realized what was happening to Germany, and told her to go. She professed her vows in 1938 and left immediately for America.

Sister Benedicta taught in New Jersey and New York. In 1962, she came to the Institute of Notre Dame (IND) in Baltimore and taught history, German and government until 1967, when she moved to Rome to serve as administrator at the Generalate, where her command of English and German served her well.

She returned to IND, teaching from 1970 to 1972, and then moved to Notre Dame Preparatory School, Towson, where she taught until 1975, when she was elected to serve on the provincial council for Baltimore.

She returned to IND in 1979 and retired from teaching in 1981, when she began another career as a translator.

She also helped to advance medical understanding of aging by participating in the

Nun Study, a study on aging and Alzheimer's funded by the National Institutes of Health that followed members of her congregation who are between 75 and 106. In a final act of generosity, she donated her body to the study.