



Sister Winifred Grace Wheeler, S.J., age 75, of Grand Rapids, died Wednesday, March 28, 2018 at Mercy Health-St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids. The daughter of Harry Tabor & Loretta (Miner) Wheeler, she was born on May 15, 1942 in Detroit and entered religious life in the Felician community on June 19, 1960, taking her final vows on August 6, 1968. In July of 1973, she became a vowed member of the newly formed community of the Servants of Jesus. Sr. Winifred, fondly known as Sr. Winnie by all who knew her came from a large family of ten children, all raised in the Detroit area. She remained the loyal and go-to-person in her family throughout

her life. Each family visit, special occasion and celebration was attended with enthusiasm, love and the happiness that Winnie lived in healthy, happy times as well as difficult times. Upon her graduation from Madonna College in Livonia, majoring in education and music, Sr. Winnie entered into a life-long ministry of various educational ministries on many levels. As a teacher, Principal, music director, parish liturgist, bookkeeper or special events coordinator, Sr. Winnie was always untiring in her efforts to spread the good news and joys of the gospel to every person, young and not-so-young whom she met. She served at several parishes in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, including St. James, Assumption, Blessed Sacrament and the Shrine of St. Francis Xavier & Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her ministry also extended to Manistee Catholic Central and St. Joseph Parish in Manistee in the Diocese of Gaylord. Sr. Winnie was graced (also her middle name) by God with many special personal gifts of friendliness, musical talents, prayerfulness, generosity, love of family, friends and her sisters in religious life. No doubt, however, she will be most remembered by countless persons for her encouragement in bringing out their own gifts of teaching, singing, playing, praying and living. Many current guitarists are stringing sounds of music because Sr. Winnie helped place an instrument in their hands. She especially influenced the hundreds of children who quickly became attached to her because of the special gift she had of joining in their own unique innocence and playfulness. The highlight of her life, said Sr. Winnie, was "my opportunity to travel to the Holy Land eighteen times in my lifetime as a student, prayer and music leader and pilgrim. Each time I returned home refreshed and renewed in my faith. I loved to walk along the path that Jesus prayed, lived and died. I also loved to lead others along the same journey and experience of walking through Galilee, Jerusalem and the Holy Cities as we prayed and sang." The Servants of Jesus, Sr. Winnie's Community of Sisters, are especially grateful for the joys as well of her gifts of mind, heart and spirit that she shared so profoundly. Her joyful presence, guitar, music books, playing cards, a bit of chocolate and fun loving conversations were a part of the Sisters' gatherings for the past 45 years. We extend our special thanks to Sr. Winnie's caregivers at the Lacks Center at St. Mary's. She was preceded in death by

her mother, Loretta Wheeler; father, Harry Wheeler; step-mother, Mary Wheeler; and four brothers, William, Paul, Gerard, and Michael. Surviving are two sisters and one brother-in-law, Mary & George McComb, and Harriet Brichta; four brothers and four sisters-in-law, Harry Thomas Wheeler, Rev. Fr. John P. Wheeler, C.S.B., Richard & Patricia Wheeler, Timothy & Faith Wheeler, Susan Wheeler, and Cora Wheeler; many, many nieces and nephews; and her religious community, the Servants of Jesus. Visitation is from 1-7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 3, 2018 at the Shrine of St. Francis Xavier & Our Lady of Guadalupe, 250 Brown Street S.E., Grand Rapids, with the Scriptural Wake and Sharing Service beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 4, 2018 at the Shrine of St. Francis Xavier & Our Lady of Guadalupe with her pastor, the Rev. Father Jose Luis Quintana as celebrant, and her brother, the Rev. Father John P. Wheeler, C.S.B, as con-celebrant. Rite of Committal will take place later at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield. Sr. Winnie will be deeply missed by her family and friends; parishioners and clergy; sisters and ministers in all walks of life. Rest in peace, Sr. Winnie, faithful servant of God! Instead of flowers, Sister Winifred would have appreciated contributions in her memory to the Servants of Jesus, 3142 Weiss - Apt. A, Saginaw, MI 48602. To send a message of sympathy to the family, sign Sister Winifred's online guest book, or to share a favorite memory, visit: [www.MichiganCremation.com](http://www.MichiganCremation.com)