

In Memory of Virginia Thoennes, SLW  
January 12, 1930 – December 8, 2019

Virginia was born in Chicago, Illinois, the oldest of six children. Lorraine, her sister, was second oldest. Her mom and dad adopted a baby boy who they named Richard. When Virginia was 11 years old her father, Theodore Schmidt, died. Three years later her mom remarried Dr. Lawrence Thoennes. After a short time in their marriage her stepfather adopted the three children. Virginia's mom and dad then had two girls Martha and Mary and took in a foster child name Chuck, who became a permanent part of the family and took the Thoennes name when he was an adult.

Virginia entered the Community of the Sisters of Christian Charity in 1947 and professed her final vows nine years later. She began to teach in 1950 at the junior high level. Virginia loved math and science. Those were the days when the Sisters taught all year and went to school during the summer to finish their studies for their Bachelor or Master's Degree.

She loved teaching and taught mostly at the junior high level in Riverdale IL, New Orleans LA, St Louis MO, Chicago IL, LeMars IA, New Ulm MN and Chicago IL. In New Ulm, Minnesota. She consolidated five small parish schools into one school system known as Central Catholic. She was the administrator of this consolidation for five years.

She became Principal of St Gregory High School in 1976 and finished her studies for a Master in Education Administration during that year.

*"I love using God's language, the Living Word, wherever possible!"  
"Whether I was working with the teachers or with the children, I wanted to make it a friendly, warm, loving and safe place."*

*"No matter where I was, it was the academic, social and spiritual growth of the children that gave me most satisfaction as an educator."*

Virginia was a member of the Leadership Team of the Sisters of the Living Word from 1982-1988. Soon after she became Pastoral Associate for Corpus Christi Parish, Carol Stream IL and then at St. Raymond of Penafort Parish in Mt Prospect IL. She was the Coordinator of Human Concerns at St. Edna parish, Arlington Heights IL.

Virginia retired from full-time ministry in 2000 after having a major heart attack. During the next twelve years she helped establish a prison ministry at St Edna parish, was librarian at the Living Word Center, established a scripture group with her prison ministry, was a member of the Northwest Cook County Chapter of Church Woman United, a co-director of the SLW Associates in the Chicagoland area, was active in RCIA at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Schaumburg, was on the Mardi Gras Committee, the Planning Committee, the Governance Task Force, the Communication Task Force, Constitution Task Force, was a social concerns advocate, worked with the Network for Prisoners and Family Ministries and Interfaith Affordable Housing.

*"I am very lucky to have lived the life I had."*