

**SCHULTE, Sister M. Leontius.** September 4, 1901–March 20, 2000.

COLLEGE OF SAINT TERESA (BA 1923), UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN (MA 1931, PhD 1935).

Sister Mary Leontius Schulte was born Catherine Mary Schulte in Cleveland, Wisconsin, the youngest of seven surviving children of Mary (Wagner) (1862–1933) and Joseph Schulte (1860–1940), both natives of Wisconsin whose parents were born in Germany. Her parents had some grade school education and were married in 1885. Schulte remarked in a conversation with one of the authors in 1983 that her parents were farmers, that her father was good-natured and faithful, and that she owed everything to them. Her older siblings were Ella (or Eleanor) (1886–1985), Lucy (1888–1990), Peter (1890–1976), Margaret (1892–1983), Josephine (1895–1982), and Theodore (1897–1987).

Catherine Schulte attended primary school in Cleveland, Wisconsin, and graduated from high school in Manitowoc in 1919. That fall she entered the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, with the intention of studying home economics. However, she became interested in mathematics and received her bachelor's degree, with a major in chemistry and minors in mathematics, French, and English, in 1923.

After her graduation Schulte taught mathematics at high schools in Minnesota; she was at Holy Trinity High School in Rollingstone 1923–24, Saint John High School in Rochester 1924–26, and Saint John High School in Caledonia 1927–28. She entered the Sisters of Saint Frances in Rochester on January 19, 1926 and made her profession of vows in 1927.

Sister Mary Leontius Schulte began her graduate work at the University of Michigan in the summer session of 1928 and became an instructor at the College of Saint Teresa that fall. [Sister M. Thomas à Kempis Kloyda](#), her slightly older colleague at the college, had a similar educational and professional history. She, too, had been an undergraduate at the College of Saint Teresa; she did graduate work at Michigan and then joined the faculty at the college in 1926. Both would earn their doctorates at Michigan and spend the major part of their careers at the College of Saint Teresa.

Sister M. Leontius took graduate courses in mathematics and physics during the four summers of 1928–31 and received her master's degree in September 1931. She continued teaching except for the two academic years 1932–34, when she was in residence full time at the University of Michigan to finish the course work for her PhD. During these two years she lived at Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor. Her dissertation in the history of mathematics, like that of Sister M. Thomas à Kempis, was directed by Louis C. Karpinski. She was enrolled during the summer of 1934, when the dissertation was accepted, and the degree was conferred in March 1935.

Sister M. Leontius was instructor and associate professor at the College of Saint Teresa until 1948 when she was promoted to full professor. She retired as professor emeritus in 1975. During her years on the faculty she was particularly involved with issues concerning mathematics education and gave several talks to the elementary and junior high school sections of NCTM. She was a participant at NSF institutes and conferences at Ball State Teachers College 1959, Montclair State College 1961, Oklahoma State University 1961, Washington State University 1962, and Teachers

College, Columbia, 1969. In the summer of 1966 she attended a Cuisenaire workshop in Denver.

Sister Leontius did a television series of nineteen telecasts, *Parents Ask About Arithmetic*, that were shown on KROC in Rochester in 1961–62, and fifteen kinescope recordings, *Teaching Mathematics K–6*, on KTCA in St. Paul the next year. For the latter she prepared a Teachers Manual K–6, 1963. In the 1980s materials from the programs were in the archives at the college. She credited Sister Thomas à Kempis with the pioneering idea of presenting mathematics on television.

Among the mathematics and educational organizations in which Sister Leontius participated were NCTM; the Minnesota Council of Teachers of Mathematics, where she served as a district board member 1970–75; South Eastern Minnesota Teachers of Mathematics; MAA, where she was on the executive committee of the Minnesota Section 1953–54 and 1955–56 and was chairman of the section 1954–55; and the Minnesota Education Association.

In college Sister Leontius liked athletics and played hockey, tennis, and basketball. As a faculty member she was involved with the mathematics club and was a sponsor of the Legion of Mary, which ministered to the sick; she served as a pastoral minister and visited shut-ins. In the 1983 conversation she remarked that listening to music was one of her pleasures.

Sister Leontius received an alumnae citation from the College of Saint Teresa in 1973. She remained there for several years after her retirement and did volunteer work in the college offices. The College of Saint Teresa closed in 1987, and the campus was purchased by a non-profit charitable foundation. Sister Leontius then lived at the Motherhouse, Assisi Heights, Rochester, Minnesota. She died in 2000 at age ninety-eight in Rochester and was buried in Calvary Cemetery in Rochester.

**Organizational affiliations:** MAA, NCTM, Sigma Xi.

**Dissertation:**

**1934** Additions in arithmetic, 1483–1700, to the sources of Cajori's "History of Mathematical Notations" and Tropicke's "Geschichte der Elementar-Mathematik." PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, directed by Louis Charles Karpinski. Printed by Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, MI. PhD granted 1935. Reviews: *Isis Critical Bibliography* 24:27 (G. Sarton); *JFM* 61.0005.03 (H. Grunsky).

**Publication:**

**1940** Extra-curricular mathematical activities in secondary schools. *Math. Teacher* 33:32–34. Review: *The School Review* 49 #360.

**Presentations not listed above:**

[Leontius, Sister M.] Parents ask about arithmetic. Presented to the NCTM, Madison, WI, 15 Aug 1962.

A new look at old topics. Presented to the NCTM, Minneapolis, 20 Aug 1964.

Operation star: students develop new mathematical systems. Presented to the NCTM, Cedar Rapids, IA, 22 Aug 1968.

Early experiences in logic. Presented to the NCTM, Duluth, MN, 27 Aug 1971.

**Reference to:** OutEdAm 1975.

"Schulte, Sister Leontius." (Obituary) *Winona Post*, 26 Mar 2000.

**Other sources:** Owens questionnaire 1940; Smithsonian questionnaire 1983; Religious Women in Mathematics survey 1983; conversation with author and Uta C. Merzbach, June 24, 1983, Winona, MN; University of Michigan Alumni Records Office; University of

Michigan Graduate School; communication with Sisters of Saint Francis, Rochester, MN;  
US Census 1900, 1910, 1920 WI; SSDI.

Last modified: August 5, 2009.