

Death Notice

SISTER MARIA DE LURDES

ND 7054



Lurdes da Ross STEFANELLO

Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, RS, Brazil

Date and place of birth:	June 17, 1949	Frederico Westphalen, RS
Date and place of profession:	February 10, 1971	Passo Fundo, RS
Date and place of death:	May 9, 2026	Passo Fundo, RS
Date and place of burial:	May 9, 2026	Santa Cruz Cemetery, Passo Fundo, RS

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” (Cf. Jer 32:40)

Sister Maria de Lurdes Stefanello was a woman who touched countless lives with her joyful, generous, and welcoming presence. She was born into a large family, the fifth of fifteen children of Erico Stefanello and Henriqueta da Ross Stefanello. Her parents, deeply rooted in Christian faith, raised their children in the practice of their faith, participation in the sacraments of Christian initiation, and daily family recitation of the Rosary.

One of the most significant moments of her childhood was her First Communion, which she described as an experience of extraordinary beauty. From a young age, she nurtured a deep desire to become a sister, dedicating her life to helping others encounter Jesus. When she expressed her desire to embrace religious life, she received the full support and encouragement of her parents.

On February 9, 1969, she entered the Novitiate in Passo Fundo and made her Promise of Fidelity on February 10, 1971, in the same city. With her restless, cheerful, and lively spirit, Sister Maria de Lurdes was affectionately nicknamed ‘*Cigana*’ — a Portuguese term evoking a free-spirited and vibrant personality — a nickname she cherished dearly.

From the very beginning of her religious life, Sister Maria de Lurdes devoted herself to the apostolate of education. Beginning in 1987, she served for twenty-six years as principal in various schools of the Notre Dame Network. She carried out her mission with zeal, competence, and deep commitment. She loved what she did and conveyed that love in every gesture, every lesson, and every encounter. Her presence made every environment lighter and more welcoming, for she carried within her the joy of living and the serenity of one who had found profound meaning in the vocation she had embraced.

Sister Maria de Lurdes was known for her dynamic spirit, her courage in facing challenges, her ease of communication, and her broad vision of the mission. In her later years, she dedicated herself wholeheartedly to pastoral ministry, coordinating catechetical programs, forming catechists, and promoting religious vocations. She deeply loved religious life and bore witness each day to the beauty of self-giving and service. Always available, she spared no effort to help, welcome, and serve. Nothing was too much when it came to the good of others. She faced every challenge with hope, simplicity, and a genuine smile.

Whether in school leadership or in community life, Sister Maria de Lurdes knew how to set aside her own ideas and even her authority when doing so fostered fraternal harmony and unity, always seeking paths that would allow everyone to walk forward together. Sister Maria de Lurdes has returned to the Father’s House, yet her witness of dedication, faith, joy, and love for others remains with us.