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Colleen Jane (Tiernan) Otto



Colleen Otto passed away Friday, December 23rd, 2022, at the age of 70.

A funeral mass will be held at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, January 7th, 2023, at St Mary Catholic Church in Grinnell. Family and friends are invited to join in fellowship after the service for a lunch to be served in the Parish Hall. Memorials in Colleen's name may be directed to St. Mary Catholic Church and mailed in care of the Smith Funeral Home, PO Box 368, Grinnell, IA 50112. Memories and condolences may be shared with her family online at www.smithfh.com.

Colleen was born August 2nd, 1952, the oldest of 14 children

who were raised by dairy farmers Bill and Joanne Tiernan. Colleen graduated in 1970 from Stuart High School in Stuart, Iowa. She attended nursing school in Carroll, Iowa, and later at Marshalltown Community College in Marshalltown, Iowa, where she graduated as an RN. Colleen worked as a nurse for several decades and took pride in caring for her patients and co-workers. Colleen married Bruce Otto in 1973 in Stuart Iowa, where they then moved to Montour, Iowa, and raised four children. Bruce and Colleen moved to Grinnell, Iowa, in 2013 and Colleen retired as a nurse from the Marshalltown hospital a few years later.

Colleen was the second mother to her siblings, always the chief organizer of family events and made sure gatherings occurred multiple times per year. The annual Sisters' Day was always a special gathering for Colleen and her seven sisters. Colleen was the consummate caregiver both professionally as a nurse and personally to her entire family. She was always genuinely concerned with everyone's well-being and was constantly making sure family news was shared among everyone. She was diligent about emailing and calling all family members regarding the happenings and health of her very large and spread-out family. She was available in person so many times over the years to help any family member in need and was happy to provide care for them, including most recently with her mother, Joanne, and her daughter Nicole.

Colleen was a wonderful cook and baker and was happiest trying new recipes as well as taking requests to whip up a new dessert or treat. Wine was her indulgence and she loved to scout for new brands and labels while sticking with her long-time favorites. The family has some baked goods left in the freezer that Colleen made. They will be able to enjoy and to remember her love of feeding those she cared for.

Bruce and Colleen were long time DIYer's and worked on multiple large and small projects at both of their homes in Montour and Grinnell over the past five decades. "There was always work to be done and we were never finished with the house" was a common phrase heard from Colleen. They tackled bathroom remodels, kitchen updates, additions of rooms and space as well as new exterior buildings. Both enjoyed planning and implementing home improvements and were happy to show off their finished work to family and friends that came to visit.

Colleen was a devout Catholic and was active her entire life with the parishes that she belonged to. She helped with adult Faith Formation classes, liturgy planning, as well as volunteering where needed. She was a song leader who had a lovely voice that helped lead her parishioners in singing during weekly masses for decades. Her faith-filled life is a testament to anyone as an example on how live, laugh, pray, and love every day. She would often say "God knew what I needed" as well as "Keep them in your prayers" in response to anyone who was struggling physically or emotionally.

She will be missed by everyone who knew her, and we are ever thankful for the extra years God granted her. She did not squander her opportunity and was able continue living a faith-filled life, enjoyed traveling with her husband and watched her family grow with her many grandchildren. A lesson for all of us to live life fully because: "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

Colleen was preceded in death by her father, Bill Tiernan and her brothers Tom and Peter Tiernan. Colleen is survived by her husband Bruce, her four children Karl and Lisa Marie Otto (Alexandria, VA), Nicole and Fernando Yanez (Fishers, IN), Evan and Michelle Otto (Kellogg, IA) and Emily Otto and Kim Schaeffer (Newburg, IA) as well as her 10 grandchildren, William and wife Lexa, Madeline, Levi, Luke, Avery, Jonathan, Sofia, Emmett, Louise and Nora. She is also survived by her Mother, Joanne Tiernan (Stuart, IA), 11 siblings and their spouses Christopher "Kit" Tiernan (Marshalltown, IA), Ellen and Ken Iwai (Chicago, IL), Eric and Margaret Tiernan (Stuart, IA), Angela Buskohl (Rowley, IA), Shane and Cathy Tiernan (Polk City, IA), Laura and Scott Dankof (Westcliffe, CO), Nancy and Dennis Munro (Wheaton, IL), Martha and Don Scheckel (St. Paul, MN), Rob and Liz Tiernan (Marshalltown, IA), Sara and Sam Reichart (Ankeny, IA) and Rachel and Dave Tegeler (Des Moines, IA); a sister and brother in-law, Pam and Andrew Thompson (Charlottesville, MO); 45 nieces and nephews; and several great nieces and nephews.