

Sister Odilia Berna, O.S.F.

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Born: December 23, 1907
Parents: Victor and Magdalen (Tisch) Berna
Entered from: St. Mary, Woodstock, IL, Route 2
Postulancy: September 8, 1923
Novitiate: August 12, 1924
Profession: August 12, 1926
Died: Thursday, January 6, 2000 at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home,
Joliet, IL at 5:25 p.m.

Ministry:

1925 - 1928 St. Boniface, Chicago, IL, Grade 2, Grade 3
1928 - 1943 Sacred Heart, Hubbard Woods, IL, Grades 1, 2
1943 - 1949 Guardian Angel Home, Joliet, IL, Prefect
1949 - 1954 St. Michael, Sigel, IL, Grades 5, 6
1954 - 1955 St. Boniface, Chicago, IL, Grades 6, 7
1955 - 1956 Sacred Heart (Englewood), Chicago, IL, Grade 7
1956 - 1957 Immaculate Conception, Toledo, OH, Grade 6
1957 - 1958 Marybrook Academy, Maumee, OH, Reading, English, Religion
1958 - 1959 St. Mary, Plainfield, IL, Grades 5, 6
1959 - 1960 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Grade 7
1960 - 1962 St. Francis de Sales, Toledo, OH, Grade 7
1962 - 1965 St. Michael, Worthington, OH, Grade 7
1965 - 1966 St. Joseph, Manhattan, IL, Grades 5-6
1966 - 1967 St. Francis de Sales, Chicago, IL, Grade 5
1967 - 1972 SS Cyril & Methodius, Chicago, IL, Grades 5, 6
1972 - 1973 Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Food Service
1973 - 1978 Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL,
Receptionist, Gift Shop
1978 - 1984 Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Gift Shop
1984 - Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Tuesday,
January 11, 2000 from 2-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Tuesday,
January 11, 2000 at 7:00 p.m.

Burial: Wednesday, January 12, 2000 leaving Our Lady of Angels at
9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, IL
Section 8, Lot 336, Grave 9

Survived by: her sister, Sister Roseanne Berna, O.S.F. of Joliet, IL, Anna DeWitz
of Elgin, IL, Rose Feldt and Mary Johnson of Woodstock, IL and many
nieces and nephews

*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

Sister Odilia Berna was born in Hampshire, Illinois on December 23, 1907 to Victor and Magdalene Tisch Berna, and was baptized Frances at St. Charles Church. There were 15 children in the family: Joseph, Victor, Lena, Matthew, Marie, Henry, Aloysius, Frances, Josephine, Anna, Frank, Margaret, Rose, Mary and Tillie. Two of the children died in infancy. Their mother died shortly after the youngest was born. Their father worked to care for the children. Frances never forgot the love her mother had shown to all of her children. In 1984, she wrote, "Her caring love, continuous work of feeding, clothing, washing, her patience, her prayers said with us each evening, were factors which influenced my life."

When Frances was almost 16 years old, she came to Joliet, together with her sister Josephine. They were received as postulants with the Joliet Franciscan Sisters on September 8, 1923. On August 12, 1924, Frances was received into the novitiate and was given the new name of Sister Mary Odilia. Her sister Josephine received the name, Sister Mary Roseanne.

Following First Profession of vows on August 12, 1926, Sister Odilia began teaching in the primary grades at St. Boniface School in Chicago and two years later went to Sacred Heart, Hubbard Woods, Illinois where she stayed for 12 years before she was asked to go to Guardian Angel Home in Joliet to be prefect of boys. She also taught at various other schools in Illinois and Ohio.

In 1972 Sister Odilia came to Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home where she worked in food service, at the reception desk, in the gift shop, and as a seamstress. Even after she retired in 1985 she continued to help in many ways, especially in sewing and sorting and in wrapping packages as she assisted Sister Lillian Ujka in her duties for over 12 years. When she was asked to contribute to research, conducted by the Diocese of Springfield, about semi-retired sisters, she wrote, "I realize that old age is a natural phase of human life and that in spite of my limited activities, by my prayers and my suffering, I am engaged in an authentic ministry. Coming in contact with people each day has made this period of my life one of self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction. We need each other so much and every little service is so greatly appreciated. Most of all, I am grateful for the many spiritual activities which are available to us daily."

As Sister Odilia advanced into her 90's, she was no longer able to keep up the activities in service of others, but she continued to keep all in her prayer. She was gracious and grateful to all who provided services for her. She suffered patiently through her cancer and recently through hip surgery. As her health failed, Sister Roseanne, together with many of the other Sisters kept watch and prayed at her bedside. During the early evening of January 6, 2000, Sister Odilia peacefully gave herself back to God.

Sister Odilia, we thank you for your gentle presence among us. May the faithful service you provided to others remind us to be faithful and gentle in our lives. We ask you to pray for us, your family, your Franciscan Sisters and all whose lives were touched by yours, that we may reach out to others in need. May you know God's love and live in God's peace forever. Amen. Alleluia.

