

SISTER M. LAURELLE BERKES

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Born: March 18, 1915  
Parents: Anthony and Mary Jungels Berkes  
Postulancy: September 8, 1931  
Novitiate: August 12, 1932  
First Profession: August 12, 1934  
Final Profession: August 12, 1937  
Died: Monday, March 8, 1993 at 4:07 p.m.  
at St. Joseph Medical Center, Joliet, IL



Ministry:

1934-35 St. Clement, Chicago, IL, Grade 5  
1935-37 St. Francis Preparatory, Joliet, IL, Student, Organist  
1937-38 St. Bernard, Joliet, IL, Grades 3, 4  
1938-44 Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, OH, Grades 5,6, Organist, Music  
1944-51 Sacred Heart, Hubbard Woods, IL, Grade 7, Organist, Private Music  
Church Music, School Music  
1951-52 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Music Grades 1-12  
1952-53 Holy Family, Cleveland, OH, Private Music, Organist, School Music  
1953-55 St. Pascal, Chicago, IL, School Music, Organist  
1955-59 St. Francis de Sales, Chicago, IL, School Music, Organist  
1959-63 College of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, Music Department  
1963-68 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, High School Music  
1968-78 St. Francis Academy, Joliet, IL, Music  
1978-80 St. John, Joliet, IL, Music  
1980-93 St. Paul, Joliet, IL, Private Music Lessons  
St. Ann, Channahon, IL, Choir Director

Wake: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Thursday, March 11, 1993  
2-7p.m. with prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Thursday, March 11, 7p.m.

Burial: Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, IL, Friday, March 12, 1993  
from Our Lady of Angels at 9:30 a.m.

Survived by: Sister, Mrs. Vera (Ray) Gehl of Phoenix, AZ  
and brother, Bob Berkes of St. Charles, IL,  
sister-in-law, Marney (Don) Berkes,  
nieces, nephews and cousins

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

Sister Laurelle Berkes was born to Anthony Berkes and Mary Jungels Berkes on March 18, 1915 and given the name of Antonia Marie (and called Antoinette) when, on April 28 of that same year, she was baptized at St. Mary's Church in Maple Park (later known as Annunciation in Aurora). Antoinette's closeness to the Joliet Franciscan Sisters at Annunciation School and at St. Francis Preparatory were gratefully recalled for Mother Thomasine in June of 1934: "I am grateful to the Community for what it has done in my behalf. I thank you all and the Sisters who have in any way cooperated in bringing me where I am, in giving me all that I have."

Having completed her formation program in the Postulancy and the Novitiate, Sister Laurelle pronounced her first vows on August 12, 1934, and began her long career of music, using her talents to bring much joy to those around her, continuing in that ministry until the end of her life. One of her last public events in music was singing for the RCIA Celebration at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet on Sunday, February 21, 1993.

Her music career and her vocation as a woman religious were intertwined throughout her life. In 1934, Sister Laurelle wrote of her dreams for the future: "Education and singing were a beautiful dream to me from almost babyhood. No wonder then, that I should thank you a thousand times for the vast field opened to me. I don't know what you will make of me, a singer and a singing and music teacher, or a leader of other children. I have told our Lord over and over again that He knows what is best, where I will honor Him most." The gift of her vocation and being a Joliet Franciscan brought great joy to Sister Laurelle throughout her religious life. Often she would speak of her gratitude for the life choices she had made. As early as 1932, she wrote: "I feel certain that God will let me realize more and more what a great favor he has really bestowed on me. I really love it here." Before a recent surgery, Sister Laurelle took time to put in writing the music selections for her funeral, including, from the heart of a true musician, 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring'. She also wrote: "These weeks have been such a rare blessing. I am optimistic, determined and at peace. Pray for me that my courage lasts--that I may accept God's will." Her faithfulness to family, to friends, to her professional associates and to her Franciscan Sisters was evidenced in so many ways. She loved them all and responded to their love with an open and generous heart. Having known the encouragement of Sisters in her own youth, she continued to encourage women to pursue a Gospel Call as a Joliet Franciscan.

Death came quickly on March 8, 1993. When visiting her cousin, Phyllis, Sister Laurelle suffered a heart attack, was rushed immediately to St. Joseph Medical Center, and breathed her last, only minutes after her arrival at the emergency room. Surrounding her, with the medical staff, were Sister Mary Jean Morris, Sister Maurice White, Sister Dorothy Clare Zuleski, her cousin Phyllis, and Father Jim Dougherty, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish.

Sister Laurelle, we thank you for your faithfulness and for your gift of music. May your joy of serving God continue as you join your voice with the heavenly choir in praising God. May the memory of your life continue to give us the courage to follow our heart's desire to serve God. May you be with Jesus, the joy of your desiring, forever. Amen. Alleluia.

