

SISTER M. BERNICE LANKA O.S.F. 309

Born: April 13, 1897, Chicago, Illinois
Parents: Alexander and Anna (Nouza) Lanka
Postulancy: September 7, 1916
Novitiate: August 12, 1917
First Profession: August 12, 1919
Final Profession: August 12, 1922
Died: Tuesday, January 5, 1993 at 8:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home



Ministry:

1918 - 1919 St. Procopius, Chicago, IL, Grade 5
1919 - 1923 St. Pascal, Chicago, IL, Grades 2, 3 & 4
1923 - 1928 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Grades 6, 7, & 8
1928 - 1931 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Grade 8
1931 - 1939 Corpus Christi, Columbus, OH, Grade 7, Latin, English, Religion, History, Algebra and Geometry
1939 - 1940 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Geometry and History
1940 - 1942 St. Procop, Cleveland, OH, Religion, Latin, History, Algebra and Geometry
1942 - 1943 Guardian Angel Home, Joliet, IL, Prefect High School and Grade 8 Girls, Latin, English, Religion, History
1943 - 1944 Assumption, Chicago, IL, Grades 6, 7 & 8
March, 1944 St. Bernard, Joliet, IL, Grades 5 & 6
1944 - 1950 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Grade 8
1950 - 1952 St. Michael, Worthington, OH, Superior, Grades 7 & 8
1952 - 1953 Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, OH, Superior, Principal Grades 7 & 8
1953 - 1956 Holy Family, Cleveland, OH, Grades 7 & 8
1956 - 1957 Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, OH, Superior, Principal Grades 7 & 8
1957 - 1958 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Grades 7 & 8
1958 - 1961 Corpus Christi, Columbus, OH, Grades 7 & 8
1961 - 1962 Immaculate Conception, Columbus, OH, Grade 8
1962 - 1971 Annunciation, Aurora, IL, Grades 5 & 6
1971 - 1972 Guardian Angel Home, Joliet, IL
1973 - 1975 SS. Peter & Paul, Chicago, IL, Teacher and Sacristan
1975 - 1978 Holy Trinity, Westmont, IL, CCD and GED Teacher
1978 - 1993 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Friday, January 8, 1993 2-7 p.m. Prayer Service 4:30 p.m. Our Lady of Angels, Joliet

Mass of Christian Burial: Friday January 8, 1993 at 7:00 p.m.

Burial: Saturday, January 9, 1993 at Resurrection Cemetery

Survived by her brother Bernard, nieces, nephews and cousins.

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

Sister Bernice was born in Chicago, Illinois to Anna and Alex Lanka, on April 13, 1897, the first of seven children. On April 22, she was baptized at St. Vitus Church and given the name, Helen Marie. After completing her grade school and high school education, Helen Marie Lanka worked for the Sears Roebuck Company in Chicago for three years. Before her entrance into the Congregation in September of 1916, the Rev. Bernard Haman, OSB, a personal friend of her uncle, Rev. Anthony Nouaz, OSB, advised Helen to meet with his aunt, Sister Lioba Kalal, a member of the Joliet Franciscans, so Helen, like Francis in his early days, was influenced by the Benedictines in her desire to serve God. Helen was received into the Novitiate on August 12, 1917, and was given the name of Sister Mary Bernice.

Already during her seventh and eighth grade years, Sister Bernice had dreamed of dedicating herself to God's service as a teacher. One of her great concerns was that she would die before this dream would become a reality. It must have given her special joy to know that she gave over one half a century of dedicated service in the field of education. The influence Sister Bernice had on her pupils is remembered fondly by so many of them. Her students and her supervisors, as well as the Sisters she lived with, use these words and phrases to describe her personality: cheerful, pleasant, ready to lend a helping hand, charitable, humble, upright, thoughtful, compassionate. Besides her regular teaching assignments both in Illinois and Ohio, Sister Bernice spent eight summers working with the girls at Marybrook Academy helping them to improve their reading skills, and giving them that gentle and genuine interest that was so much of her personality. Even in her retirement years, Sister Bernice maintained a special interest in those learning under difficult situations and was a dedicated supporter of the Center for Correctional Concerns in their ministry of education and support for the residents of the Will County Jail.

Sister Bernice treasured the day of her Final Profession as one of the happiest days of her life. It must have been such a joy for her to be able to celebrate seventy-five years of vowed life last June, joined by so many of her family, friends and Sisters.

Sister Bernice came to Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home in 1978, where her gentle ministry of presence and prayer continued to lighten the hearts of those around her. Often Sister Bernice would speak of her readiness to meet her God, and she died as she had lived, quietly going to meet her God at 8:30 on the morning of January 5, surrounded by her Sisters and her Chaplain, as they prayed together. And so as the Church celebrates the Epiphany of God among all people, a manifestation to sages led by a star, Sister Bernice, whose life as an educator has been a shining star in leading so many to God, was led to be with her God forever.

Sister Bernice, we thank you for your gentle presence among us for almost a century. We pray that as you follow the star of your childhood dream to serve God, you may know the presence of the Newborn King and pray to him for us that our lives may also serve as guides for others to find Jesus. May you find joy in being united with your family, your former pupils and all your Franciscan Sisters in heaven. May you, an outstanding educator, shine as a star for all eternity. Amen. Alleluia.

