

Sisters of St. Francis

o f M a r y I m m a c u l a t e

Sister Barbarine Houdek (Sister Mary Leonard) died in the hospital on October 10, 2023, just a little over of month before her 98th birthday. She was helped to eat a good meal, smiling and happy, then put her hand out to signal she was finished, laid her head back on the pillow and died within minutes. The joy and peace she showed in life remained her gift at the end.

Helen Barbarine was born on Thanksgiving Day in Calmar, Iowa on November 26, 1925, to Elizabeth (Pletka) and Leonard Houdek. She grew up with her brother, Bernard, who preceded her in death. When she was young the family moved to Chicago where she attended St. Cyril and Methodius Grade School. Her high school years were spent at St. Francis Academy. She graduated from the College of St. Francis in Joliet and went on to earn her MA in Theatre Arts from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois.

Barbarine taught primary grades for thirty years in various parishes in Illinois and Ohio until she had the chance to follow her lifetime dream to be involved in theatre. In 1975 she began her Master in Theatre Arts and was able to join several theatre groups.

She began the next chapter of her career in California, teaching high school English, Religion, Drama, Speech and Media Arts at various schools and then settling at St. Francis High School, a Catholic boys school in La Canada. The last 26 years Barbarine was the beloved librarian at St. Francis. She was famous for her "Tuck in that chair and while you're at it tuck in that shirt." She loved all things theatre and sports. She also hosted the robotic team in her library with such enthusiasm that one year the "boys" named their robot after her, "Sista." Barbarine shared with an interviewer once that

Alleluia!



Sister Barbarine Houdek, OSF

she had "always had a yearning to be in theatre but put it behind me for years when I became a religious." But she was a part of any plays she could be in the schools where she ministered. After Vatican II there was the opportunity to study, and from then on she was actor, director, assistant director, stage manager and theatre goer. She loved it all. To the end Sister Barbarine shared her positive outlook and love for music, theatre, reading, for sports, especially her Cubs, with those she met.

Barbarine wrote on the occasion of a Jubilee: "The love and acceptance I received from the sisters and others made me what I am today. Francis and Clare were introduced to me by the sisters. What I witnessed then has not changed: sisterhood, love, friendship, acceptance and praying together. I daily thank the Lord for His loving care and for my Franciscan Sisters."

And now her Franciscan sisters, friends and family thank our gracious God for the life and gift of Sister Barbarine Houdek. The stage has changed but Barbarine remains in our hearts and in the presence of the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia Letter written by Sr. Peggy Quinn

(OVER)

Sister Barbarine Houdek, OSF

November 26, 1925—October 10, 2023

<i>Born:</i>	November 26, 1925
<i>Parents:</i>	Leonard A. Houdek and Elizabeth Pletka
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 8, 1941
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1942
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1944
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 12, 1947
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	October 10, 2023

Ministry History

1944-1948	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Francis Xavier, Chicago, Illinois
1948-1952	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Procop, Cleveland, Ohio
1952-1958	Teacher: Grades 1 and 4, St. John the Baptist, Joliet, Illinois
1958-1959	Teacher: St. Joseph, Manhattan, Illinois
1959-1964	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Pascal, Chicago
1964-1967	Teacher: Grade 1, Mansfield, Ohio
1967-1973	Teacher: Grades 4 and 6, St. Michael, Worthington, Ohio
1973-1975	Teacher: Grade 7, St. Raymond, Joliet
1975-1978	Student: Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois
1978-1981	Teacher: Religion and Drama, Riverside, California
1981-1982	Instructor, Part-time: University of California, Riverside
1982	Teacher: St. John, Joliet
1982-1983	Teacher: St. Monica, Santa Monica, California
1984-1986	Teacher: Our Lady of Corvallis High School, Studio City, California
1986-1988	Teacher: Alverno High School, Sierra Madre, California
1988-1989	Teacher: Salesian High School, Los Angeles, California
1989-1992	Teacher: St. Francis High School, La Canada, Flintridge, California
1992-2016	Librarian: St. Francis High School, La Canada, Flintridge, California
2016-2019	Volunteer: Joliet Catholic Academy, Joliet
2019-2023	Ministry of Prayer and Presence: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet

<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 341, Grave 3, Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, Leonard A. Houdek and Elizabeth Pletka and her brother Bernard Houdek
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her niece Gail Marciniak, grand-niece Stephanie Marciniak, nephew Allan Houdek, many friends and colleagues

Rest in Peace, Sister Barbarine!