



## *Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate*

At midday on Sunday, June 26, 2016, as a morning of summer rain showers gave way to a warm and sunny afternoon, our sister, Bernadette Sifferlin, after many months of declining health, responded fully and forever to the call of Jesus proclaimed in the Gospel that day: "Come, follow me." Peacefully passing from this life to eternal life, she entrusted to those of us whom she left behind an incredible legacy of vision, stewardship and unwavering love.

Viola Sifferlin entered the world of Shelby, Ohio, on May 12, 1925, the eldest of six children born to her loving parents Cornelia Maag and Francis Sifferlin. Viola was a devoted daughter and a caring sister to her five siblings. Intelligent, eager to learn, faith-filled and resilient, Viola's childhood and adolescence were influenced by the Great Depression and a world at war. Notably petite, with a soft-spoken demeanor and a gentle sense of humor, Viola was inspired by the Sisters of St. Francis who were her teachers at Most Pure Heart of Mary School. After her graduation from Shelby High School, she worked at Shelby Salesbook Company, where she was recognized as being "capable, industrious, efficient and conscientious in the performance of duties that required accuracy, speed, initiative and considerable knowledge." Drawn to religious life and to the ministry of teaching, Viola came to the decision that it was time to embark on her Franciscan life journey.

In January of 1948, like many "Shelby girls" who came before and after her, Viola made her life-altering road trip to Joliet, Illinois. Entering as a postulant with the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, she simultaneously began her religious formation and her undergraduate studies at the College of St. Francis. The following August she was received into the Novitiate with her 21 classmates and given the name Sister Mary Bernadette. Two years later, on August 12, 1950, she professed her first vows and realized her dream of becoming a Franciscan sister and a teacher.

Over the course of the next twelve years, Sr. Bernadette took great delight in the children who were her students as well as the Sisters with whom she shared community in Des Plaines, Toledo and Lansing. Over the course of several summers, she pursued a Master's degree in Education at the University of Notre Dame given her anticipated future. However, in 1962, with only two courses remaining to complete her degree, she received an unexpected obedience and a twofold missioning from Mother Borromeo: she was to return to the Motherhouse; she was to assist in the business office and she was to begin *another* Master's degree at Notre Dame, this time in Business Administration. Missing the life, the ministry and the people whom she had come to love and serve, she gradually reinvented herself at the Motherhouse amidst the many changes that were occurring in the world, the church and religious life. With her characteristic

# Alleluia!



## *Sister Bernadette Sifferlin, OSF*

simplicity, honesty and generosity of spirit, she discovered new ways of entering into the mystery of serving others in love (Gal 5).

A protégé of Sister Janet Kahler, Sr. Bernadette was assistant to the General Treasurer of the Congregation for nine years, during which time she helped to manage the patrimony of the Congregation in the years during and following the Second Vatican Council. In 1972, she was elected by the General Chapter to serve a four year term as a member of the Congregation's Governing Board. In 1976, she was appointed by Sr. Ann James Murray to serve as the General Treasurer of the Congregation, a position which she held for the next twenty years until 1996. A lightning bolt of untiring energy, Sr. Bernadette was powered by a combination of unwavering faith in the providence of God and considerable boxes of Fannie Mae chocolate. Financially astute, knowledgeable and wise in her choice of advisors and consultants, she was an innovator and mentor who, like her predecessors, endeavored to secure the Congregation's future by anticipating unmet needs, envisioning alternative strategies and doing her best to live up to the expectations that her very name elicited: BURN-A-DEBT!

Making the most of her senior years in ministry, Sr. Bernadette served as the Secretary and Receptionist for St. Jude Parish in Joliet from 1996 through 2005. Moving to Our Lady of Angels in 2006, Sr. Bernadette began yet another chapter in her life as she enthusiastically committed herself to the ministries of presence and prayer. Awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by the University of St. Francis in 1999, Sr. Bernadette was recognized for the leadership she offered in so many arenas of life. Integrating the dynamics of "sacred spaces" and "market places," she found the points of convergence and helped others to make the connections necessary to make a deal *and* to make a difference. As we celebrate the life of our sister, Bernadette Sifferlin, let us begin by remembering her courage, her creativity, her wisdom and, most of all, her capacity to inspire others to recognize that all is gift and that everyone is responsible for being a steward of the graces that God has bestowed upon us to share for the good of all. Alleluia, Alleluia.

# *Sister Bernadette Sifferlin, OSF*

*May 12, 1925— June 26, 2016*

<i>Born:</i>	May 12, 1925
<i>Parents:</i>	Francis Sifferlin and Cornelia (Maag) Sifferlin
<i>Postulancy:</i>	January 31, 1948
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1948
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1950
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1953
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	June 26, 2016

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## **Ministry History**

1950-1952	Teacher: Grades 3, 4; St. Mary, Des Plaines, Illinois
1952-1959	Teacher: Grade 7; Immaculate Conception, Toledo, Ohio
1959-1962	Teacher: Grade 8; St. Ann, Lansing, Illinois
1962-1968	Assistant to Treasurer General: Motherhouse, Joliet, Illinois
1968-1969	Assistant to Treasurer General, Superior of Motherhouse: Motherhouse, Joliet
1969-1971	Local Coordinator, Assistant Treasurer: Motherhouse, Joliet
1971-1972	Assistant Treasurer: Motherhouse, Joliet
1972-1976	Area Coordinator: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
1976-1996	General Treasurer: Motherhouse, Joliet
1996-1997	Community Service: Motherhouse, Joliet
1997-2005	Receptionist: St. Jude Parish, Joliet
2005-2016	Community Service: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet

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<i>Wake:</i>	Friday, July 1, 2016, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Friday, July 1, 2016, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Friday, July 1, 2016, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Burial:</i>	Saturday, July 2, 2016, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 343, Grave 6, Resurrection Cemetery
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	By her parents, Francis Sifferlin and Cornelia (Maag) Sifferlin, her brother John Sifferlin and sister, Rosemary Bricker
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her brothers, Carl, Ray and Roy Sifferlin

*Rest in Peace, Sister Bernadette!*