

Sister Bernice Moellering C.PP.S.

(Sr. Cordula)

Born: June 7, 1918

Professed: August 10, 1931

Entered into Life: March 21, 2011

Verse on her memorial card: *“Oh my God, my infinite, eternal, immense, incomprehensible MERCY.”* [St. Vincent Pallotti]



March 23, 2011

Sister Bernice Moellering (Sister Cordula) passed peacefully into new life on March 21, 2011, at 11:55 a.m. Sister Nadine Flott was with her praying the Te Deum: *“...help her to be numbered among the saints in heaven.”*

Sister Bernice was born on June 7, 1918, in Florissant, Missouri, and baptized at Sacred Heart Church on June 9, 1918. Sr. Bernice had five sisters and all of them entered religious life. Sisters Mary Elise and Mary William entered the Franciscan Sisters of Mary (Sisters of St. Mary); Sister Perpetua entered the Pallotine community; and Sisters Angeline and Mary Ann joined Sr. Bernice as Sisters of the Most Precious Blood. The sisters also had three brothers: William, George, and Walter. We imagine a great family reunion in heaven when Sister Bernice joined her parents and siblings.

From Sister Bernice’s memoirs: *“I was born the fifth of nine children in Florissant, Missouri, on a farm. We were poor as many of the families were...at the age of fourteen I entered the aspirancy in O’Fallon. Life now took on an intellectual bent.”*

Sister Bernice received a bachelor’s degree in English/Speech from Quincy College and a master’s degree in English/Speech for secondary education from Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska. Her teaching ministry was launched in 1943 when she taught at elementary schools: St. Agatha School and St. John the Baptist in St. Louis; Sacred Heart, Columbia, Missouri. Secondary schools include: Bishop DuBourg and St. Elizabeth Academy in St. Louis; and St. Joseph in Omaha, Nebraska.

As a participant in the Seminar for Great Teachers in 1969, Sr. Bernice was recognized as an excellent teacher who “keeps...abreast of the latest thinking in her field and yet at the same time retains all (the) basic principles which can never change so that her approach is always so fresh and viable. The students always come back for more...her teaching of English and American Literature will amaze you.”

Teaching at St. Mary’s Junior College for twenty years was a joy for Sister Bernice as she brought her skills and fresh approach to many students. She also taught at St. Charles Community College in O’Fallon for two years. During these college years,

Sr. Bernice published a text and workbook entitled *Joy in Mastering English* which focused on the rules of English composition to make it easier to clarify many writing problems. Her students said she was “tough”, “a rule-quoting hard liner” on English grammar, but Sr. Bernice enjoyed that kind of reputation.

O’Fallon Nuns Teach in Jail. This was the headline in the St. Charles paper during the 1970’s when Sr. Bernice and Sr. Carol Orf taught a five-week literature course at the Institute of Correction in Gumbo, St. Louis County. St. Mary’s Junior College gave credit for all who passed the course. The students discussed novels and films to help them find their true identity, gain new insights, broaden their knowledge and learn vicariously about life situations and problems. Sr. Bernice said: *“Every time I rode past the institution, I felt I had to do something. I feel this will give the men self-confidence. If I get through to just one, it will be worthwhile.”*

Sister Bernice was a good friend of our Sister Vera Meinhardt. Their friendship began in 1966 and deepened through the years until Sister Vera’s death in 2009. Sister Bernice wrote in 1991: *“Sister Vera and I have been friends for twenty-four years. In 1980 it was Vera who found me when I had a stroke. Our friendship has grown over the years and was always centered in Jesus.”* Sr. Vera would call Sr. Bernice “Bunny,” the name given to her by a younger brother. One sister wrote that the name fits her because she was a fair-haired blond (natural) and was alert as bunnies are to sounds, words, movements.

In 1989 Sr. Bernice left formal college teaching and tutored many students privately working to enhance their writing and English skills. Since 1998 Sr. Bernice has resided in the St. Joseph Community at Villa Theresa Haven praying for the needs of the community and the world. *“One good thing came from my stroke: God taught me to contemplate, which I do for a full hour. Lord, increase my faith...I know Jesus and the Cross are with me.”*

The quote on the memorial card that Sr. Bernice chose is from St. Vincent Pallotti: *“Oh my God, my infinite, eternal, immense, incomprehensible MERCY!”* Each of the words describing God’s mercy meant a great deal to Sr. Bernice. She is now experiencing the vision and company of this immense mercy of God. Let us join her in this prayer of wonder, asking her to help us believe and live in the mercy of God.

When Sr. Bernice was teaching in St. Mary’s College she published a book of poetry written by her students. This one entitled, *Tranquility*, was written by Maggie Settles, and describes our wishes for our dear sister:

*“May rainbows color your spirit
And peace fill your soul.
May you rest with the light of a twinkling star.
For surely our love will travel far.
To the new horizon, the one you now touch...”*

Sincerely,



Sr. Fran Raia