

Sister Bonaventure McManus, C.PP.S.

Born: November 26, 1918

Professed: August 10, 1939

Entered into Life: August 9, 2018

Verse on her memorial card:

“The one who abides in me, and in whom I abide, is the one who bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

August 13, 2018

Dear Sisters,

Shortly after 8 p.m. on August 9, 2018, Sister Bonaventure McManus died quietly and peacefully surrounded by Sisters Carol Donohue, Estelle Sullentrup and Viola Marie Spire. Sister Bonaventure completed her earthly sojourn just one day prior to the 80th anniversary of her profession and approximately fifteen weeks before her 100th birthday. She celebrates these milestones in heaven with her family members and our Sisters with whom she now is reunited.

Born in Conception, Missouri, on November 26, 1918, to William and Mary (Corcoran) McManus, Sister Bonaventure was baptized that same day at Conception Abbey and given the name Lorene. The third of six children, she followed in the footsteps of her older sister, Sister Emerita, and came to O’Fallon as an aspirant after eighth grade. She entered the novitiate in July 1937 and professed vows on August 10, 1939.

For the first twenty years of her religious life, Sister Bonaventure served as a cook and homemaker at the Motherhouse in O’Fallon, at the Archbishop’s Residence in St. Louis, at St. Peter’s in Quincy, Illinois, and at Most Sacred Heart in Florissant, Missouri. In 1959, she began teaching; she taught kindergarten and primary grades at St. George, St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen Protomartyr, all in St. Louis. In 1971, during her teaching years, she completed her bachelor’s degree in elementary education at Notre Dame College in St. Louis. Sister Concordia Luecke, a profession classmate, once described her as “the best kindergarten teacher I ever met.”

Always very devoted to her family, Sister Bonaventure cared for her mother for the last 10 years of her mother’s life. At the same time, she served as a pastoral minister and rectory cook at St. Elizabeth Church in Kansas City. When she left the parish, the pastor wrote in the bulletin of this “remarkable woman.” He described Sister Bonaventure’s devotion to her then-blind mother as “dogged and steadfast” and her fidelity to her tasks as “undaunted and inspiring.” He also noted that she was an excellent cook, and he had “about twenty-five excess pounds to prove it.”

After caring for her mother, Sister Bonaventure enjoyed a sabbatical before beginning service with our sisters at St. Agatha Food Pantry. Though diminutive in stature, her persuasive powers certainly were not pint-sized. She counseled clients coming for utility assistance to budget: “What can you do to save for next month? Could you smoke a few less cigarettes?” When there was a project to be completed – a brick path to be repaved or a flower garden to be weeded – with tools



already in hand, she induced both Sisters and clients to help before they even realized to what they were assenting.

Her love and concern for the poor endured. Family members knew that if they gave her a monetary gift, it would be shared with those who were less fortunate. As the Moses for Sister Joyce Schramm, she always wanted to hear of Joyce's work with the poor and the immigrants.

Sister Bonaventure moved back to O'Fallon in 1998 and engaged in many volunteer ministries until she moved to Villa Theresa Haven (now Mount Carmel) in 2014. Among her ministries, she led a centering prayer group, sharing with the participants her love for the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, Basil Pennington and Henri Nouwen.

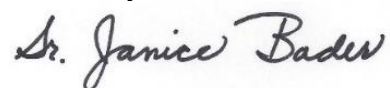
While completing the tasks at hand was important to Sister Bonaventure, maintaining relationships was non-negotiable. While at St. Agatha, visiting and thanking donors and clients was central to her ministry. She maintained close ties with family and friends, particularly with her sister, Helen. Lay friends visited her regularly – one who came on August 9 left just minutes before Sister Bonaventure died.

Sister Bonaventure was preceded in death by her three brothers, Gerald, Lawrence and Vincent, and by her sister and ours, Sister Emerita. She is survived by her sister, Helen Billiard, and by many nieces, nephews and friends. Please hold all of them, and her profession classmate, Sister Mary Brendan, in your prayers.

Generosity and concern for others were hallmarks of Sister Bonaventure's life. That generosity extends even to her death in her choice to donate her body to science. We will gather in Precious Blood Chapel for a Prayer Service of Thanksgiving on August 16, 2018 at 7 p.m. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at a time when her out-of-state relatives can attend, probably late September or early October.

A woman of deep and simple faith shaped by her rural roots and Irish heritage, she rose early every morning to pray. She knew the implication of the scripture verse that she chose for her memorial card: "The one who abides in me, and in whom I abide, is the one who bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Sister Bonaventure surely lived a fruitful life on this earth, abiding in God for nearly 100 years! Now she abides fully in God's presence, and we trust that her prayers will continue to bear fruit in the lives of all whom she loves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Janice Bader". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Sister Janice Bader