

Sister Renee Brinker, C.PP.S.

Born: October 11, 1931

Professed: August 10, 1952

Entered into Life: April 6, 2023

Verse on her memorial card:

“Everyone is precious, as precious as the blood of Christ.” ~ Mother Theresa Weber



April 11, 2023

Dear Sisters,

At approximately 8 p.m. on Holy Thursday, April 6, 2023, Jesus invited our Sister Renée Brinker to take her seat at the heavenly celebration of the Passover meal. She went peacefully home to God as Sister Mary Harper prayed quietly by her side. It is easy to imagine that she, who was both a choir member and choir director on at least two continents, is now singing Alleluias with the heavenly choirs.

Bonnie Brinker was born in Owensville, Missouri, on October 11, 1931, the first of seven children of Raymond and Jeannetta (Myers) Brinker. After graduating from St. Elizabeth Academy, Bonnie entered our community's novitiate on July 25, 1950. She professed first vows on August 10, 1952, receiving the name Sister Mary Renée.

Sister Renée completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at St. Louis University and a Master of Arts degree at the University of Missouri, both in history. A life-long student of history, she wrote copiously of her experiences in other countries, painting vivid pictures of the physical and political climates as well as of the local cultures, including sights, sounds, smells, and tastes (with garlic always receiving a failing grade).

As a teacher and principal, Sister Renée was both creative and exacting, demanding the best of students and teachers. She shared her love of learning in North and South America, Europe, and Asia. In Missouri she taught at Sacred Heart, Columbia; St. Henry, Charleston; Our Lady of Fatima, Florissant; St. George and St. John in St. Louis. In Illinois, she taught at St. Peter's, Quincy.

In 1966, Sister Renée joined our mission in Finland, and except for intermittent returns to the U.S. and time spent in China and in Peru, she remained in Helsinki

until 2019 when she returned to O'Fallon. In Helsinki, she served both as a teacher of history and as principal of The English School. She also served at the British Council Library, and taught at Helsinki Business College, at the Swedish speaking Workers' College, at Helsingin Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu, and at Kalliolan Kansalaisopisto Adult Education Center. In 1996, she taught English at Shanghai University and in 1999 she spent time teaching English to our novices in Peru.

Among Sister Renée's treasured keepsakes are letters from former pupils with whom she maintained faithful contact. A Finnish student remembered playing the role of "a peasant during the French Revolution, a worker during the Industrial Revolution, and a noble in czarist Russia." A student from China wrote, "She is friendly and easy to get close to. . . she is respected and beloved." And a student from the U.S. addressed her as "the most wonderful teacher, friend, and guide a person could ask for."

Sister Renée was preceded in death by her parents and by her brothers-in-law, Edward Heumann and Laurence Hitz. She is survived by her sisters, Billie Heumann, Charlene Hitz, Ardith (Roger) Larson, Linda (Thomas) Donze; by her brothers Raymond (Shirley) and Edward (Judy) Brinker; and by nieces and nephews of several generations. Please keep them and all who will miss her in prayer.

We will welcome Sister Renée's body to St. Joseph's Chapel at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 15, 2023. We will gather for Sharing of Memories at 2 p.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 2:30 p.m. Her burial will be in our convent cemetery.

For her memorial card, Sister Renée chose words attributed to Mother Theresa Weber, "Every person is precious, as precious as the Blood of Christ." We give thanks that Sister Renée taught so many students how precious they are, and we pray that she now knows without a shadow of a doubt how precious she is in the eyes of God.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Janice Bader