

Sister LaVerne Wester, C.PP.S.

Born: April 30, 1931

Professed: August 10, 1951

Entered into Life: January 23, 2025

Verse on her memorial card:

**"As the Father has loved me, so I have
loved you. Live on in my love." John 15:9**



January 24, 2025

Dear Sisters, Relatives, and Friends,

A few minutes before 11 a.m. on Thursday, January 23, our Sister LaVerne Wester took her last breath just as the music playing softly in her room increased in volume with the words, "I will lift you up." She was surrounded by her sister, Alvira Wester, Sisters Esther and Ruth, Ann Marie Quan, and Pam Penning.

LaVerne Wester was born in St. Louis, Missouri on April 30, 1931, the third of six children of John and Adele (Heller) Wester. She was baptized at St. George Parish.

LaVerne was taught by our sisters at St. George School and dearly loved Sister Mary Albert Stemmler who taught her from kindergarten until second grade. LaVerne was heartbroken when illness prevented Sister Mary Albert from returning after the Christmas break of her second-grade year. When she later learned that Sister Mary Albert had died, she immediately resolved that she would become a sister to take Sister Mary Albert's place.

LaVerne was received into our novitiate on July 25, 1949, and professed first vows on August 10, 1951. She was given the name Sister John Leonard. She completed a bachelor's degree in history at St. Louis University and a master's degree in education at the University of Dayton.

For thirty-nine years, Sister LaVerne (John Leonard) was a dedicated teacher and principal, bringing out the best in both students and teachers, always observing something positive to affirm in each person. She taught elementary grades at Holy Innocents, Holy Family and St. Stephen in St. Louis and at St. Joseph in Omaha. While at St. Stephen she became a teaching principal. She went on to serve as principal at Sacred Heart in Florissant, the largest Catholic school in the Archdiocese of St. Louis at that time, and then at Assumption in O'Fallon.

Retirement from education marked the beginning of another thirty years of ministry to elders, the sick, and the poor. Sister LaVerne cared for elders at St. Elizabeth Adult Day Care Center and as a driver and local coordinator for the retirement community at our motherhouse. She brought comfort to the sick as a pastoral minister at Mercy Hospital, and she shared the gifts of hospitality and presence with clients at Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Service. A ministry of sending cards to the homebound continued until her final illness.

Sister LaVerne's life was all about relationships – relationships with community, family, friends, students and their parents, faculty, and coworkers. She loved sharing a game of cards or a Cardinal baseball game, and she delighted in lunches with friends. Her handwritten notes or phone calls came for special occasions and for no occasion. The large stack of cards she received this past Christmas serves as testimony to the success she achieved in maintaining those relationships.

Her relationship with family and with her soulmate, Sister Mary Harper, were mainstays for Sister LaVerne. Her nieces and nephews visited often and were by her side the day before she died. Sadly Sister Mary, who was always so faithfully present, was hospitalized at the time of Sister LaVerne's death.

Sister LaVerne was preceded in death by her parents and by her brothers, Leonard, Norbert, Lloyd, and Vernon. She is survived by her sister, Alvira and by nieces and nephews of several generations. Please hold them and all who will miss her earthly presence in prayer, especially her dear friend, Sister Mary.

We will welcome Sister LaVerne's body to St. Joseph's Chapel at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, January 31, 2025. The Sharing of Memories will begin at 10:30 a.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. Her burial will be in our convent cemetery.

For her memorial card Sister LaVerne chose the verse, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love" (Jn. 15:9). Sister LaVerne treasured in her heart this message of Jesus' love, and she chose these words to remind us of Jesus' love and of her love for all of us. Let us live on in that love.

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