

Sister Mary Venard LeBeau, C.P.P.S.

Born: February 22, 1923

Professed: August 10, 1944

Entered into Life: March 10, 2025

Verse on her memorial card:

"The gift you have received, give as gift."

Matthew 10:8 (NAB)



March 17, 2025

Dear Sisters, Relatives, and Friends,

At approximately 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 10, 2025, our Sister Mary Vénard LeBeau slipped quietly from this life into her heavenly home while Sister Marlene Huck prayed quietly at her bedside.

Georgine Alde LeBeau was born on February 22, 1923, in Zurich, Kansas, the second of eight children of Arthur and Anna (Thyfault) LeBeau. Growing up in a French-speaking home, she was fond of saying that she changed her clothes and her language when she returned from school each day.

In 1939, when Georgine was a student at St. Elizabeth Academy, Mother Wilhelmine visited and told of the mission recently established in Finland. Georgine immediately decided that this was her calling. In her autobiography, she wrote, "My religious vocation to the Precious Blood Community is so closely linked to my vocation to Finland that they became one."

Georgine was received into our novitiate on July 25, 1942, and professed first vows on August 10, 1944. She received the name Sister Mary Vénard, a recognition of her French heritage. She earned a bachelor's degree in French at St. Louis University and a master's degree in education at Helsinki University.

Sr. Mary Vénard taught for five years at St. George School in St. Louis, a seeming eternity to her, before her yearning for Finland was fulfilled. On June 22, 1949 (a day she celebrated annually) Mother Borgia missioned her to Finland. On August 25, 1949, at the tender age of twenty-six, she left for Finland. She only returned to the U.S. for good on February 20, 2023, two days before her 100th birthday.

During her years in Finland, Sister Mary Vénard taught preschool and elementary grades at The English Schools in Helsinki and Tampere. She also served as the principal in Helsinki. For two brief interludes, she returned to the States for additional

studies at St. Louis University, and she taught at St. Stephen Protomartyr and St. John the Baptist in St. Louis.

After forty plus years, Sr. Mary Vénard retired from teaching in Finland. To escape the potential fanfare of a 70th birthday celebration, she accepted an invitation from Kersti Nigesen, Director of Vanalinna Hariduskolleegium in Tallin, Estonia. This marked the beginning of more than twenty years of service in Estonia where she documented and demonstrated her methods for total immersion teaching of the English language at the school in Tallin and at Katolu Kool in Tartu.

Only recently freed from Soviet control, Estonia was struggling spiritually and financially. Sr. Mary Vénard brought her faith and her intrepid ability to ask for money. Through friends worldwide, she received funds for the schools in Tallin and Tartu, and for organizations caring for the handicapped, the blind, the sick and the elderly. She said, "I beg for help. Be careful; my hand is always open." Her begging continued when she returned to Finland in 2015 and began ministering to African refugees.

Small of stature but mighty in deeds, Sister Mary Vénard was recognized for her dedication by the Rotary Club of Denver, the Ebenezer Foundation of Finland, the President of Estonia with the Pro Terra Mariana Medal of Honor, and Pope Benedict XVI with the Pont. Maximus Award, the Church's highest lay honor.

Sister Mary Vénard was preceded in death by her parents and by her sisters, Ella Marie, Victoria (Joe) Bordes, and Elaine (Joe) Otzenberger; and by her brothers, Ambrose (Lily), and Lionel (Lucette); and by her sister-in-law, Judy. She is survived by her brother, Paul, and her sister, Diane.

We will welcome Sister Mary Vénard's body to St. Joseph's Chapel at 9:00 a.m. on April 4, 2025. The Sharing of Memories will begin at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. Her burial will be in our convent cemetery.

Her legacy of 102 years cannot be adequately recounted here, but we are confident that her spirit lives on in the thousands of children and adults whose gifts she nurtured. We also trust that she will continue to beg on their behalf from her heavenly home. May she now enjoy eternal rest from her tireless labor.

Sincerely,



Sr. Janice Bader