

Sister Bernadine Dreiling, CSA

Sister Bernadine (Theresa) Dreiling, 91, died on Saturday, October 24, 2009, in St. Francis Home where she resided.

When Theresa was born on June 25, 1918, she was the fourth youngest of the twelve children in the Peter and Margaret Dreiling family. The six boys and six girls grew up in a Catholic farm family in Victoria, Kansas. There Theresa learned the lessons of faith and hard work that would mark her entire life. Having the Sisters of St. Agnes in grade school as teachers inspired her to enter the convent in Fond du Lac in 1934, at the age of 16. Three years later she made her first profession of vows as Sister Bernadine, CSA.



Sister Bernadine spent more than fifty years as a homemaker in CSA communities in Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, and Kansas. She was an excellent housekeeper, laundress, seamstress and cook (having earned a food service supervisor certificate from Fontbonne College in St. Louis, Missouri). Early hours of the morning while others were still sleeping might find Sister Bernadine laundering the white habits of the hospital sisters so that they could wear them when they went to work. In other places she could be found painting a wall or ceiling in her colorfully splattered cap, shirt, overalls and shoes. Paint brush or pastry brush, drill or needle—she wielded each with ease and skill. Sister Bernadine was never happier than when she made others happy. Nothing was too much; no service too small or too menial. Her boundless energy made comparisons to the energizer bunny inevitable.

In spite of the long hours of hard work, Sister Bernadine knew how to have fun. She enjoyed celebrations with the sisters and with her family. She was a bit of a prankster but could also laugh when the joke was on her. Nevertheless, the heart and soul of her life was prayer. She spent hours in chapel, often in the wee hours of the morning, praying for her numerous relatives, for the sisters, and for the needs entrusted to her by her many friends. A rosary was never far from her hands and prayer came easily to her lips. God was the center of her life and the source of her energy and spirit. She spoke often with Jesus and his mother Mary as personal friends. When physical limitations caused her to come to the retirement facility, Sister Bernadine continued to serve: pushing wheelchairs, helping in the sewing room, and continuing her life of prayer. In her last few weeks, suffering became her prayer. Last Saturday evening she peacefully slipped into eternity to meet the God she had served so well and long.

Sister Bernadine is survived by a sister, Ida Walker of Kansas City, KS; many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews; and the Sisters of St. Agnes with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.

Preceding her in death are her parents, Peter and Margaret VonFeldt Dreiling; six brothers: Bonaventure (Bonny), Alex, Herman, Dominic, Leo, and Walter; four sisters: Beata Kreitler, Adeline Scherr, Regina Hopfinger, and Gertrude McDonald.

Visitation: Visitation for Sister Bernadine will be held on Wednesday, October 28 from 4:00 until 8:00 p.m. at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac. A prayer service will be held at 6:00 p.m.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on October 29, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac. Father Ken Smits, O.F.M. Cap., will preside. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery.

Memorials may be directed to the Sisters of St. Agnes Development Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.