



Sister Bernadette Gardiner, OSF *Professed 1947*

"True education enables us to love life and opens us to the fullness of life."
Pope Francis



Sister Bernadette Gardiner generously shared her love of life and learning with countless others. Born Elizabeth Ruth Gardiner in Jackson, Minnesota, to Walter Gardiner and May Ellen Kane, she and her sister, Mary, had "a good upbringing" in Iowa—the birthplace of both her parents. Elizabeth graduated from Estherville High School in Iowa and was a member of Visitation Parish in Pendleton, Oregon, when she entered the congregation in 1945 at the age of 19. Upon taking vows, she took the name Sister Bernadette de Lourdes. Devoted to education, she earned a BS in Education from Marylhurst College and a MA in Theology from Gonzaga University.

Sister Bernadette's gifts were plentiful. Using her education, wisdom, experience, and deep spirituality, Sister Bernadette blessed the lives of countless students through her years of teaching elementary school and serving as a house mother. However, she found her passion in teaching CCD, which she did for close to 40 years—20 years in eastern Oregon, five years in the Portland area, and 15 years in Relito, California. Sister Jude Connelly said of her friend, "She was known for her faith formation ministry. She drove thousands of miles on the roads of eastern Oregon following in the footsteps of Sisters Mary Presentina and Mary Maurina"—a ministry that was documented in the book, *And Away We Go*. Sister Bernadette wrote about her ministry for her 50th jubilee celebration, noting, "As I was going from parish to parish, I learned how important it was to have learned to drive not only to arrive at a destination, but to fill my soul with God's beauty. I loved to come to the crest of a hill and see the natural beauty that lay before me. In some way this became a metaphor for my life. There would always be some unexpected joy around the corner." Sister Bernadette loved the West Coast, especially California, and would sometimes refer to herself as a California girl.

With her warm smile, openness, and deep interest in others, Sister Bernadette was incredibly welcoming and kind. Many would remember her as quiet, thoughtful, helpful, and a good communicator/listener. She was very appreciative of her community of sisters and once wrote, "I recall all the gifted, supportive women that have accompanied me on different parts of my journey. Each sister shared gifts that would both enhance my ministry and nourish my soul."

She also cherished her family and noted that, "All major community events were supported by my family. Even my relatives from Iowa showed up, as I had an uncle who worked for the railroad and would get passes." In later years her nieces and nephews continued to visit and several attended her jubilee celebration.

Her close friend of over 60 years, Sister Emma Holdener, remembers Bernadette as "a woman with many talents. She could fix almost anything including her car; she just had a knack for things like that." When asked about the type of woman she was, Sister Emma described her as simply "a precious woman—quiet and always her dear self." Sister Jude agrees, "She lived a life of Franciscan simplicity. She enjoyed giving little gifts to others and the smallest celebrations." In her free time, Sister Bernadette enjoyed sewing, embroidery, gardening, studying about birds, and driving...while she could. All who have had the joy of knowing Sister Bernadette Gardiner continue to carry her memory in their hearts and the gift of her example in their lives.

Services will be held at Assisi House on Wednesday, November 15. The viewing will be held at 9:30 A.M. Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 11 A.M., with internment of ashes in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.

