



Sharing of Memories of Bernadette Marie Schvach, BVM (David Ann)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Nov. 17. 2022

Sister Rose Mary Meyer, BVM

Such a wondrous woman!!! I knew Bernadette as a caring, creative, compassionate woman. She created *huge* banners for Catholic Schools week. She created cakes that not only were delicious but also were artistic. I still remember an igloo cake she gave to the parish school for a cake walk fundraiser. When I asked her how she ever made the cake to look exactly like an igloo, she said it was easy. She just looked at a picture in a magazine and created the igloo cake.

Bernadette was a very affirming, caring, and creative teacher. My office windows looked out on the parking lot also used as a playground. I saw her enjoyment being with her young students. She taught them non-violence by the tone of her voice, her caring interactions, and her obvious concern for each young student.

One year when peace poles were quite popular, she made sure that every classroom had a peace pole. She was also determined to have a huge peace pole near the entrance to the parish church at St. Odilo.

Bernadete was a blessing in many people's lives. I am so grateful that our lives intersected. I still think of her often, including her last year's Christmas message in which she spoke of time to create her beautiful, inspiring greeting cards during COVID as well as before that. Thank you for being such an inspiration in my life.

Patricia Biagi

Sister Bernie was a true saint here on Earth. I am a member of St. Odilo parish. I've known Sister Johanna [Trisoliere] and Sister Bernie for years, since I was very young. Sister Bernie had a very special bond and connection with my parents. When I lost both of my parents within a few short months of each other, it was Sister Bernie who gave me strength to keep moving forward.

There were so many wonderful visits to Iowa to see her. I was a somewhat young, single girl who would rather spend a weekend in Dubuque, Iowa, with a couple nuns, my mother and her best friend than going anywhere else. We had a blast. We had so many fun adventures on our visits. There are so many stories I could tell, but will tell one.

Every time we came to Dubuque, we would always end up at Vinny Vanucchi's for lunch. One time it was during the election season. Bernie Sanders was running for president of the United States. There were signs all over Dubuque "Bernie for President." Sister Bernie and I tried to figure out how we could steal a sign so she could put it in her room. I said, to her, "Sister Bernie, you're too good to be president; you're going to be a saint." That was the Sister Bernie I knew. She was like family, and she will be dearly missed. The memories are in my heart. Rest in peace, Sister Bernie. Please give my parents a hug for me.

Sister Kathyn Lawlor, BVM

Bernadette and I entered Mount Carmel on the same day. On the first day of our postulancy, we were told to line up in pairs according to our heights. Sister Leo Hogan, who was our postulant mistress, gave us our community numbers. Bernadette and George Ann Lange, being the shortest were the leaders of our set. They were leaders of

the line. We always considered them from that day on as our leaders. Bernadette was indeed a leader. We were one of the first sets to celebrate our 25th jubilee at a Senate meeting at Mundelein College in Chicago. They thought of many creative things for us to do and, whatever they told us, we did. I want to thank Bernadette now for being such a caring and creative leader for the set that is nearly 75 years old.

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

Bernie and I were colleagues teaching at Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago. I was a first-grade teacher; she was a third-grade teacher. Honestly, she was quite a mentor for me. I was newly out. She was good about taking me under her wing and helping me. We had fifty in the first-grade classroom, and she had fifty in the third-grade classroom. There were three rooms of each grade. It was quite a large school. Bernie had the ability to make some difficult situations lighthearted. She found a way to ease the tension to make it easier to deal with. When there was a child who needed to go to the principal's office, she never sent the child alone. She accompanied the little one to the office, stood there during the conversation, and then Bernadette would take the boy or girl back to the classroom. It was over and done; no more comments about it. It was a fresh start.

Bernadette was part of the Cut Ups, a group of sisters that worked with Julie Wessels in Activities. Their projects covered a variety of events which included making the table favor for the birthday meal. We celebrated birthdays every month at the noon meal. I can honestly say that for all the years she has been here, there was never a repeat of any table favor they made. She had the ability to engage others in the fun of the project. Normally, she would have the task of doing the intricate work.

I also was Bernadette's council contact person. I was coming back from a trip when I got the call from the doctor who said there was a need to see and talk with me regarding Bernadette. I also drove to Iowa City to be with her after her life-flight there for the surgery she needed. Her ability to take whatever came her way was always done with a certain amount of finesse and the ability to make the best out of a difficult situation. We had a little time in the emergency room to communicate. She had more concern for others than for herself. I have learned many lessons from her. She has been a great gift to me. Thanks, Bernie.

Camella Papin, Friend, Former BVM

I have been a very close friend with Sister Bernadette for many years. We went to graduate school together, lived and taught at St. Odilo's in Berwyn, Ill., and have remained friends during her years here at Mount Carmel.

Bernie was an unsung heroine, a woman who has had a positive impact on so many people through her actions and words. She has dedicated her time, energy, and quiet enthusiasm to helping others. At St. Odilo School she worked hard to get her students to learn, even if they didn't want to themselves. She fostered their creativity and always encouraged them to do their best.

Bernie was very close to her sister Evelyn. One of the hardest things she had to endure was Evelyn's death. She would go to Evelyn's house on Sundays, and they would have dinner together. After Evelyn passed, Bernie continued to go on Sunday to cook and care for her brother-in-law George. Another example of being an unsung heroine.

On a personal level, she has been a wonderful friend who helped me through some hard situations. When I was going through the process of leaving the BVM community, she stuck in there with me while at the same time remaining a loyal and committed BVM.

In January, my 50-year-old nephew died from brain cancer. Bernadette contacted me right away and told me she put Mike's name on the BVM prayer board and was going to have Masses said for him. Once again, showing her love and concern for a friend.

Sister Bernadette Schvach was a special person who loved her God, loved being a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was loyal to her friends and school family and will be missed by many. Be at peace, Bernie. You are forever my friend and forever unsung heroine.

Sister Joanne Lucid, BVM

I was fortunate enough to be the next-door neighbor to Bernie. She was a delightful neighbor to have in Vista. These stories are just my own little version of things. One Saturday, I invited Bernie for a little social and she was delighted. At some point she said, "Josie, why do we always have wine?" I said, "Bernie, what would you like?" She said, "A good, cold beer." I said, "Bernie, the least I can do is take care of that for you." Another week I got a Belgium beer. That delighted her very, very much.

Bernie and I used to receive Communion together. When we were finished giving our thanksgiving, I would typically say, "Bernie, so you want to eat together." She always said yes. In the last two months, I said, "Bernie, why don't you just take it easy. I'll save you a spot at the table." "Oh, I would like that." We ate together frequently.

One of the joys I had, because I am not a cook, I would always share the magazine *Southern Living*. I don't know why I got it. It had recipe after recipe, delightful, beautiful photos. I would look at it and admire it and then give it to Bernie. At the table, Bernie would go on and on in the most beautiful way. In my last conversation with her, I will never forget that it was like she was brought into another world because it was so detailed. She seemed to be so happy explaining how the spices would go together. She put up her arms and said, "How wonderful that would be!" I said, "Bernie, just listening to you is a delight!" I know nothing about all these spices. It was the way she looked – her eyes lighting up and her being so happy. I remember that Teresa Gleeson was at the table with us. Teresa looked at Bernie with such love and support; we all did. Bernie made our luncheons the best.

Nicole, Niece of Sister Johanna Trisoliere, BVM

Sister Bernie became part of our family. She would go on our family outings when we came to visit Sister Johanna. She was a funny one. Her humor was truly contagious as was her smile. One time when we went to the Texas Roadhouse, she made sure to fill up her purse with all the peanuts. We will miss her, and we will definitely stock up on all the peanuts for her!

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I only knew Bernie in the last seven years after I came to work at Mount Carmel. At the time, there was a group of sisters who volunteered to do sewing and mending. It was clear that Bernadette had a great affinity for the old "workhorse" Singer machine. It only did forward and back, nothing fancy, but you could count on it all the time. She would often do the sewing. Because the group got smaller and smaller and because of her ability, she was the go-to girl for (there isn't any other way to say this) but in an institution, the thing that most often gets ruined are hooks on bras. She was the person who unfailingly would take those and put new ones on by hand. It was such a gift to our sisters to not have an article of clothing become unusable just because it got tangled up in the institutional laundry. Bernie, your gift that seemed small was very large. Bless you.

Sister Mary Anne Hoope, BVM, Director, Centre for Spiritual Renewal, Kumasi, Ghana

I had the good fortune to live at St. Odilo with Bernadette during some of my summers in the U.S. One could not meet a more gracious, loving woman than Bernadette. She was an excellent baker and cook and I was blessed to enjoy some of her food. I was touched by her goodness to her family and to the parishioners at St. Odilo.

Just last year she repaired a banner given to my colleague Father Mike many years ago by Sister Teresian Verwiel, BVM. The banner said he was a Missionary of Africa and is much treasured by him. He will take it to London from Ghana with fond memories of her generosity.

Linda McBride

Sister Bernadette, aka Sister David Ann, was not my first-grade teacher but about one-third of my graduation class at Our Lady of Lourdes, Chicago, had her. Donor events were where I would see Sister until she moved to Dubuque. When I was in Dubuque for a visit, I was able to sample her wonderful baking skills. Always enjoyed seeing her picture on Facebook. I will miss seeing her.

Sister Katie Heffernan, BVM

Bernie and I belonged to the same cluster for many years. We were both in Chicago, but we lived far apart. I was always happy when I went over to her convent at St. Odilo. I always told her she was the “hostess with the mostess!” And she was!! What she did that gave me the *most* joy was to have open, full boxes of candy on all the tables—Fannie May, Frango mints, and on and on and on—all delicious chocolates!

We also had news and interesting topics of discussion, but truthfully, I was usually more distracted by those wonderful open, full boxes of delicious chocolates, plentiful boxes of chocolates. Bernie’s personality matched that candy – open, full, and plentiful. She was always so kind, and nice and welcoming! She had a wide variety of interests, and it was nice to share with her.

When I knew I was coming to Mount Carmel, I was happy to know that I would get to spend more time with Bernie—which I did—but it is a *great* loss that it has now ended, for a while, at least. From one of your admirers.

Natasha

Sister Bernadette taught me in fourth grade back in the late 1970. She was one of my favorite teachers at St Odilo. I remember always doing extra credit projects for her and she welcomed the hard work! She was a great teacher (although shorter than most of her students) and had a huge heart.

Sister Patricia Taylor, BVM

Bernie was a very active friend within the community and her personal relationships when it came to being supportive, which could be in words, food treats or any number of ways. She was by nature a caring and sharing person. Her loyalty as a friend was lifelong and I miss her already. Her sharing was not limited by the distances we lived after our novitiate at Mount Carmel where we first met as postulants. Those of us with whom she shared her creative and loving skills on missions have been enriched.

We are happy that she is discovering for herself God’s blessings and abundance in a life that defies human limitation to describe. May she intercede for us a new presence and power to enrich our lives in ways our limited humanness cannot always reveal to us! It is not all earth loss but a new way of perceiving how our shared lives will grow in new ways until we and our God become a fresh reality in that unexplored eternity waiting for us in one grand reunion. Thank you, Bernie.

Sister Rosemary Surby, BVM, Close Friend

I taught with Bernie at St. Odilo School. I had the junior high and she had the third grade. She was a super teacher in every aspect - always prepared and loved her students. Her students loved her; the parents loved her and wanted their children in her classroom every year. She was creative and engaged children in classroom projects. One that was exciting and current, she read the Harry Potter books and had a “Harry Potter Day” complete with cupcakes, capes, and signs.

I really liked Bernie. She was very kind to me. After my mother died, I asked to live with Bernie and Johanna. They were both happy to have me. Bernie was wonderful to live with and she loved to cook. She and I did the grocery shopping, and I enjoyed our outings. She took care of her brother-in-law after her sister died and was so kind to him. She cooked his meals and cleaned his house on Sunday.

We have been friends for about 30 years, and I am missing her very much. I have been blessed to have known her. She is on my mind and in my heart. May she rest in peace.

Sister Johanna Trisoliere, BVM, Close Friend

Bernadette was a wonderful, talented woman. She did beautiful calligraphy. She used to do the certificates for First Communion, Confirmation, and graduation for all the students. She was an excellent teacher and would do beautiful art projects with her students. She had large bulletin boards on which she would hang their artwork. Many times, it was three-dimensional. She was a good listener and a beautiful person who had gifts and talents that she shared marvelously and wonderfully.