

Sister Lawrence Bergs, SDS

January 31, 1919 + July 21, 2011

Sister Lawrence (birth name: Ludmilla) Bergs was born on January 31, 1919 in Edgar, Wisconsin, and Diocese of La Crosse. She was one of 10 children born to Anton and Catherine (Schueller) Bergs. One of her siblings, Sister Kathleen, was also a Salvatorian Sister.

The family lived and worked a farm in Edgar, WI and also had a poultry hatchery. An early family interaction with the Sisters of the Divine Savior was that every year Mr. Bergs took 100 baby chicks to Sister Augustine Karrer at St. Mary's Hospital in Wausau. The younger children sometimes went along for the ride but also because Sister Florentine Dengler always had cookies for the Bergs children.



Sister Lawrence attended Holy Family School in Edgar, Wisconsin and was taught by the Felician Sisters. They encouraged her to join their congregation, but her response was “No! My heart is with the Salvatorians.” She entered the congregation on September 4, 1936 in Milwaukee, WI and on August 12, 1937 entered the novitiate receiving the name Lawrence. She made her first vows on August 13, 1938 and final vows on August 13, 1944 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Sister Lawrence graduated from Divine Savior Convent High School. In 1963 she graduated with a BS in Education from Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She also held a State Certificate to teach Mentally Challenged Children. She did further study at various colleges and universities. For 43 years she taught and at times also held the position of principal, in schools in Wisconsin, Maryland and South Dakota.

After completing her teaching career in 1984, Sister Lawrence ventured into a whole new area of ministry in Phoenix, Arizona. She was invited by a staff person from the St. Vincent de Paul Society to come and talk about working there. After their conversation, she responded by saying, “I will try”. He had something very specific in mind: “Ministry to the Homeless”. Sister Lawrence came to be considered the founder of this ministry in Phoenix and because of her commitment; this fledgling program grew into a very big project. She helped the homeless with job referrals, entitlement advocacy, and clothing and in other areas wherever there was need. She also started the Employees’ Assistance Program at St. Vincent de Paul. Sizeable donations were given to St. Vincent de Paul because they saw and knew the work Sister Lawrence was doing.

On the occasion of her 60th jubilee, the Executive Director stated: “Your establishment of the Ministry to the Homeless at Ninth Avenue, so long ago, started the Society providing a service which, along with our food operation and the medical/dental clinic, has become a major pillar of our mission. In view of the expanding human need in the valley, it promises to grow still further as we plan to extend its services at all of our dining rooms in the near future. Your “child” you see, has grown to full adulthood and is now making ever widening circles of impact on this community.” Another extension of her involvement with the St. Vincent De Paul Society was serving as the Spiritual Advisor for the Society in her parish, St. Francis Xavier for 8 years. She also wrote notes to Vincentians who had lost their spouses.

After 17 years, Sister Lawrence retired from St. Vincent de Paul Society and then volunteered in various other places, for example, Good Samaritan Hospital where she was a Cuddler for many newborn babies; she also took calls from the poor and delivered clothes, food and household supplies to families.

In November 2001 Sister Lawrence moved to the Salvatorian Sisters Residence in Milwaukee. She still had energy for crocheting, making greeting cards and most of all her commitment to residents at St. Anne’s Home. She was a vigil keeper with the dying and became a companion to Fr. Bob Wicht, SDS’ mother, Isabelle. Besides frequent visits, each week she brought Isabelle to her room at the sisters’ residence for a phone call to Fr. Bob. In her compassion, Sister Lawrence offered many the gift of her presence and made a great difference in their lives.

Due to diminishing health, Sister Lawrence transferred to skilled care at St. Anne’s in January 2007. She accepted this change graciously.

A few weeks prior to her death, Sister Lawrence showed signs of weakness and difficulty expressing herself, but her dear smile and joyous giggle remained. Sisters began prayerful vigil on July 20 and in the early morning of July 21st, Sister Lawrence died peacefully. She was 92 and professed for 72 years. May her joy be full in the presence of God.

She is survived by her Salvatorian sisters and brothers, a sister, Germaine Ritger, two brothers, Sylvester & Lawrence (Gladys) Bergs, many nieces, nephews and grand nieces & nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents Anton & Catherine (Schueller) Bergs and by six brothers and sisters; Alexius (Hazel) Bergs, Dolores (Hubert) Fochs, Herbert (Mary Alice) Bergs, Marie (Sister Kathleen) Bergs, Alois Bergs and Anthony Bergs

Funeral plans are as follows:

Welcome of Body:	1:00 pm with Prayer Service
Visitation:	1:30 pm—2:00 pm
Mass of Christian Burial:	Wednesday, July 27, 2011 2:00 pm at St. Anne’s Salvatorian Campus Chapel, Milwaukee
Burial:	Thursday, July 28 at 9:00 am Holy Cross Cemetery, Milwaukee WI