



## **Sister Mary de Lourdes Zdrojewski**

of the Infant Jesus  
(Bernadette Catherine Zdrojewski)  
June 8, 1916 - January 5, 2008

Holy Family Province  
United States of America

“O sweet Infant Jesus, although I see you so small and in so lowly a state, yet I acknowledge you with all my soul before heaven and earth and the whole world, to be my God, the true God. I recognize you to be my king, the king of love, whose great love calls to me to give you my heart.” (Prayer of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd)

Such were the words of Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd that echoed in the soul of Sister Mary de Lourdes, who was called to celebrate the Epiphany in heaven, giving full homage to the Infant King who had captured her heart.

Born in Brooklyn, New York to Frances and Wenceslaus Zdrojewski, on June 8, 1916, Bernadette was an awaited gift who would join the family of three girls and two boys. Upon the death of her aunt, her parents volunteered to assume the care of the children and the family became larger with one additional girl and four boys, making this family of eleven children one of the larger ones in Brooklyn.

Bernadette was baptized on July 2, 1916, in the Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa. She received Confirmation and made her first communion at the same parish where she also attended grade school. Raised in a family which was devoted to the faith, the children all grew strong in their faith and learned early to care, love and respect others. Following her older sister Salomea, who became Sr. Amabalis, Bernadette chose to become an aspirant of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth on February 11, 1931, and thus left home at an early age confident that she too was being called by God to live the life of a religious. On June 16, 1935, she sought entrance and was accepted as a postulant of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. This was followed by her admittance into the novitiate on August 7, 1936, in Philadelphia when she was given the name Sister Mary de Lourdes in honor of her very clear devotion to Mary's apparition at Lourdes and her very favorite saint and namesake, Saint Bernadette.

Sister pronounced her first vows on August 17, 1938, and made her perpetual commitment on August 16, 1944. Sister's devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation was unmistakable. The Holy Family was really the center of her life and she celebrated all the Mary and Joseph feasts as well as a deep devotion to Jesus, who was her beloved. Every morning of her convent life she offered this prayer that she requested prayed at her funeral Mass.

To thee dear Lord. I offer up the little things of life. The daily cares, the vexing tasks encountered in the strife. For me, they mean perfection, which thine eyes alone may see And hidden life means union 'tween my heavenly spouse and me.

May I thus toil on unnoticed 'till the Bridegroom cometh near Till I wake to heaven's splendor and the words of welcome hear. Come my spouse, my loved one, enter into happiness Eternal joy shall be thy portion, naught but bliss thy soul possess.

While still a novice, Sister de Lourdes, was already recognized for her quick wit and her ability to find laughter in the ordinary foibles of daily life in addition to her great energy and deep prayerfulness. She was a woman who was small of stature but with a great deal of energy, talent and creativity. She was someone who could use the odds and ends which possibly would be discarded to make something quite beautiful and useful to be given as a gift to someone with whom she worked or taught. Thoughtful of others, she would also use her talent at crafts as an opportunity to share with our infirmed sisters every Saturday morning, the progress she was making on her current projects. This gave them something else to talk about and often sparked interest. Her crewel, needle work and embroidery were beautiful and brought joy and admiration to the recipients. Who of us will forget the many different ways she used these talents to also fool people especially at Halloween. Remember her Charlie Chaplin or the Bag Lady?

Above all these personal qualities, Sister de Lourdes was an excellent, dedicated teacher. For her, helping others to succeed was of paramount importance especially for the countless number of children whose lives were made better because of her patience and understanding heart. Sister began her teaching mission in 1938 at St. John Cantius School in Bridesburg, her first assignment of ten years, and then on to parishes in New York at St. Andrew and St. Joseph. Sister's skill in teaching and reaching children with difficulties in reading became a special focus of her life. Throughout the Philadelphia parishes of St. Adalbert, Queen of Peace, St. Katherine of Siena, and Sacred Heart of Mary in Baltimore, her skills in remedial reading were well used. She became our community Supervisor of schools offering assistance to many anew teacher. At Holy Family University she taught future teachers, and directed the Reading Clinic. No assignment was ever too difficult for Sister who found her ministry, life giving. When talk of retirement at ninety years of age began to surface, she was one to say. "Why should I stop? I love what I'm doing and it brings life to me and besides Father Kennedy says he wants me." She was a source of joy, to faculty and children in classrooms that she visited at recess. Always ready with a joke or two, she was an inspiration to others who witnessed her high level of encouragement and compassion. She continued to serve the needs of special education children on the intermediate level for the past fourteen years.

In November 2007, Sister began to experience once again some health problems. Followed by a heart attack and stroke from which she never recovered, Sister Mary deLourdes, above all a woman in love with the ministry of teaching, went peacefully to God on the 1st Saturday of January, the feast of St. John Neumann, the founder of the Philadelphia Archdiocesan School System.

The Divine Infant, to whom she had special devotion, came to earth small by choice and design and not by necessity. God chose to accomplish great things in human littleness. And so it was with Sister Mary de Lourdes, small in stature yet chosen by God to reflect His special care for His children and people on earth. We thank you Sister de Lourdes for the life and example of loving which you have offered us and are especially grateful for the countless prayers you said in our behalf. May you now enjoy the presence of your Beloved Jesus to whom you offered all.

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