



Name: Sister Bernadone Fagan
Date of Birth: May 5, 1927
Place of Birth: Manistique, MI
Parents: Patrick Roderick and Olive Phoebe (Arnold) Fagan
Religious Profession: August 15, 1946
Date of Death: October 27, 2020
Age: 93
Years Professed: 74

Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Eileen Margaret May Fagan was born in Manistique, Michigan on May 5, 1927 to Patrick Roderick and Olive Phoebe (Arnold) Fagan. She was baptized at St. Francis De Sales Church on May 15, 1927. Eileen, Maggie as she was called by her father and close friends, was the 12th child in the Fagan family. She had eight brothers and three sisters.

Eileen attended St. Francis De Sales School, which was staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Eileen really did not like going to school from September to June, however, she enjoyed helping the Sisters clean the school in August to get ready for another year. Each year in grade school, when the Mother Superior made her annual visitation, she would ask, "How many of you girls want to be Sisters when you grow up?" Eileen never raised her hand.

As a high school student, Eileen would often visit Sister Conrad and Sister Mary Teresa. She got to know them and admired them for giving their life to God. The idea of becoming a Sister struck her one Saturday in March 1943. She teasingly asked her mother what she would say, if she told her that she wanted to go to the Convent. Her Mother quickly and calmly replied, "Nothing, but you would never go." Being of a challenging nature, the question in my head was, "Why not?" A little later, Eileen continued the conversation with her Mother. Her Mother knew that she was fun loving and the life of the party. Eileen loved going to dances and being with her friends. She thought that Eileen was going to the Convent because of the admiration she had for the Sisters. Eileen eventually received the blessing of her Mother and Dad to go to the Convent.

On July 12, 1943 Eileen wrote the following letter:

Dear Mother Perpetua,

I am sure the Lord has chosen me for the Religious Life and I would like to enter as soon as possible. I am now sixteen and in my Junior year of High School. I have wanted to enter the Convent since the seventh grade, but circumstances never permitted it. Mother and Dad are not able to pay everything, but a friend of ours said that you would allow girls to enter and the parents could help out when they could. I would appreciate it very much, if we could do this. If this is possible, please send me the application blanks. When would be the best time to come and what should I bring?

God bless you,

Eileen Fagan

Her Pastor wrote the following letter of recommendation:

Eileen Fagan, a young lady of sterling qualities and good moral behavior, is hereby recommended to your Community. She was confirmed by Bishop Magner on the 27th of September 1940.

Sincerely,

Bernard J. Schevers, OP

Eileen was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent on December 6, 1943 along with Ilene Hambeau (Sister Eileen) and Rosemary Jenks (Sister Nathanael). They arrived on time for lunch and the usual Monday laundry duties. On Reception Day, June 13, 1944 Eileen received the name Sister Bernadone.

Sister Bernadone completed her high school at Holy Family Academy and received her diploma in 1945. She continued her education at Holy Family College where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree on July 28, 1960 with a major in Mathematics and a Minor in Chemistry. Sister Bernadone also received a Master of Science Degree, August 18, 1972, from Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska in Science Education.

Before Sister Bernadone was received into the Novitiate, she was asked how she would like to serve in the apostolate. Sister Bernadone said that she wanted to be a cook. Mother Perpetua told her that she belonged in the classroom. At the time, Sister Bernadone thought she was wrong about that, since she hated school and really enjoyed cooking. The first day she was in the classroom she knew that was where God wanted her to serve Him and His Church. Sister Bernadone taught elementary grades for thirteen years. She taught in high school for fifty-three years and served as Principal for six years, along with her teaching responsibilities. Sister Bernadone loved teaching, especially students who were a challenge and those who found school to be a challenge. Sister Bernadone believed that those were the students that needed her. The others could learn and get along without her.

She impacted the lives of many students who kept in touch with her.

- One student wrote that Sister Bernadone had faith in her ability and became her mentor, helping her to fulfill her potential.
- A man wrote that Sister Bernadone taught him how to get organized for success. "Even though she could be my Grandma, she still gets excited about teaching kids. She is smart, encouraging, has a positive attitude and has instilled in me to 'never stop learning.' I will miss her and appreciate all she has done for me at Roncalli."
- Another student, having great difficulty with math reflected in a note to Sister Bernadone: "One of the most valuable lessons I have learned from all of this, is how to direct my frustrations. I've discovered that instead of getting mad at you or me, who don't deserve all that negative energy, I direct my anger at the source of the problem, the problem in front of me. I feel it actually helps me focus and want to figure it out so I can stop being angry."
- A student wrote, I just want to thank you, Sister! In all honesty, I don't think I would have made it without your help. I actually had a lot of fun, too. We had some great philosophical conversations and a few good laughs, too.
- An adult student who graduated from Rosecrans High School wrote: "I can't tell you how many times I have thought of you during my own college years and while raising my children. Recently

I coordinated a class on mental health first aid training. The course greatly emphasized how important it is to establish relationships with children, especially ages 12-18. They asked us to name one person who was influential and who you could go to if you really needed something and of course I said YOU! I just wanted to wink and thank you for being that person for me, for your patience and time.”

- A student who graduated from Guernsey Catholic High School said that Sister Bernadone got her through her Senior year. She would not have graduated without her.
- A former student Sister Bernadone had at Catholic Memorial High School in Waukesha wrote a letter to Sister telling her of significant life altering events that happened in his life. In conclusion he wrote, “Many thanks for all you did so many years ago at CMH, and for all the prayers that I’m sure you said for me and my classmates. Obviously, I came to need them some years later and equally obvious, someone was listening!”

Besides teaching, Sister Bernadone loved to sew, cook, do crafts and cut hair! Sister Bernadone made hats and mittens for the poor and crocheted beautiful items for babies. There were always many requests for Sister Bernadone to make scrubbies!

In her Jubilee reflection, Sister Bernadone wrote, “God has continued to direct, challenge and support me through my Religious Community, my family, my students past and present, the priests, parents, teachers where I served. I am deeply grateful for their example, encouragement and friendship. The years have been interesting, some were difficult. Because of special people like my parents, brothers, sisters and their families, close Community Members and friends who led the way and walked with me, I am here today! It has been a wonderful life and I would gladly do it again.” God is never outdone in generosity!

Thank you, Sister Bernadone for sharing your life with us as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. You are now enjoying the hundredfold that God promised to those who leave all and follow Him.

Eternal life grant to Sister Bernadone, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her.
May she rest in peace.
AMEN!