

**Sr. Bernadette Kline**  
1925 – 2018



On October 16, 1957 Sister Bernadette Kline, SDS and Sister Michaela Feder, SDS boarded the ship “Africa” at Venice, Italy. On October 30, 1957 they arrived at Dar-es Salaam in Tanzania having traveled 5,700 miles. They traveled down the Adriatic Sea, across the Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal, down the thousand mile Red Sea, through the Gulf of Eden, into the Indian Ocean. During their time on ship, Father Octavian Juppe, OSB, who had already spent twenty years in Tanzania, gave the Sisters Swahili lessons for an hour each day. (*From the Chronicles for Lupaso, Tanzania, East Africa*) Thus began Sister Bernadette's life as a Missionary! Over the next years and into the present, many

Sisters and Lay Salvatorians from the USA would serve in Tanzania.

Bernadette was born on April 16, 1925 in Stephenson, Upper Michigan. She first met the Sisters of the Divine Savior in 1939 when they came to teach religion in the summer months at her parish. The seed of her vocation was planted by Sister Fortunate Sporlein, SDS who invited her to become a Sister. In 1941 she entered the Salvatorians. Sister Bernadette spent eleven of her early years as a Salvatorian teaching in our rural schools. In 1956, Sister Mary Ruth Dittman and Sister Bernadette were missioned to open St. Joseph School in Huntsville, Alabama. The school became known for being integrated from its start.

For ten years from 1957-1967 Sister Bernadette devoted her life and teaching to the Missions. Within these years she spent one year in Nazareth ministering at an orphanage for Arab girls; two years at the International High School in Rome; one year at the Seaford Training College in England where she trained in Domestic Sciences for her mission work; another year in England teaching elementary school; four years teaching in Tanzania. Sister Bernadette wrote many letters to her family and the Sisters back in the states. These letters give us an insight into what life was like in the early days of her time in Lupaso. There are many stories of Sister Bernadette exploring her surroundings and trips into the “bush” to visit some of the homes of her students. She indicates there was much to learn about African culture and customs.



Sr. Bernadette (seated: in the middle)

After her return from missionary work, Sister Bernadette taught high school students at Newman High School, Wausau; Divine Savior High School in Milwaukee and Pius X High School in Milwaukee. She loved teaching History, World Cultures and Current Events. Her years of experience in the missions surely enhanced her teaching.

In 1980, Bernadette moved into a new phase of her life. After receiving her Masters Degree in Theology with an emphasis in Pastoral Ministry she began her years of Pastoral Ministry at St. Robert's in Merrill, WI; St. Anne's in Lansing, IL; Holy Family in Rockford and St. Michael's in Dotyville. She prepared many adults to receive the Sacraments and become members of the Catholic Church. She wrote that teaching Scripture was a very rich experience for her as she could share her firsthand experience of the Holy Land.

In 2002, Sister Bernadette began yet another phase of her ministry. For eight years she held Scripture Study sessions at Mother of Good Counsel Parish. Her knowledge of the Holy Land greatly enriched these sessions. She was also invited to give Mission Appeal talks for funds for our missions. In her autobiography she writes of visiting over 50 parishes in various states to speak of her mission experience. Always a missionary at heart, she loved to share her stories with others.



Sr. Bernadette with Sr. Rita Ruff in Tanzania celebrating their Golden Anniversary of Salvatorian presence.

In 2007, Tanzania celebrated their Golden Anniversary of Salvatorian presence. Sister Bernadette Kline and Sister Rita Ruff were able to travel to Tanzania and join in with this beautiful celebration. Lay Salvatorian, Sue Haertel, who has taught English to our Sisters in Tanzania over the past years has commented that the African people remember Sister Bernadette and often ask about her. One family named their daughter Bernadette after Sister Bernadette.

Sister Bernadette lived her life totally, actively and always enthusiastically involved in her ministry. She had a high level of energy and was always interested in everything about the Congregation. May she now enjoy her eternal reward.



Sr. Bernadette (left) with Sr. Margaret Hansknecht in Masasi, Tanzania

