

Spring 2005



Sr. Magdalene Bergmann

Who was Sr. Magdalene Bergmann? What enabled her to persevere in dedication to our Lord as a Franciscan? What motivated her to serve the elderly and hungry? Why was she able to continue her life of prayer and ministry despite limited eyesight, failing strength and painful debilitating arthritis? Could she have been a saint in our midst? In considering these questions, one must look for the clues to the answers within the intricate tapestry of a life which spanned almost a century: 94 years.

She was born Regina Ann Bergmann on May 30, 1910, in the city of Stockton, Kansas. She was the first of seven children. Her parents Ferdinand Fred Bergmann and Josephine (Grimm) Bergmann took her to St. Aloysius Parish in Osborne, Kansas for Baptism. This initial call to follow Christ flowered and blossomed in young Regina until a retreat in Salina awakened her to a new call. Her favorite verse from Isaiah was, "I have called you by name, you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1) She interpreted this to mean that God was calling her to enter into a deeper commitment, religious life. In her journey and search for the right community, her desire to answer God's call was challenged by her disability (macular degeneration), a disability shared by her brother Fritz, who eventually entered the Holy Cross Fathers. Sr. Magdalene's journey led her to a poor newly emigrated Austrian community residing in St. Francis Convent in Conception, MO. Immediately she knew that this was the place of her vocational call, her new home. There, though the community was indeed poor materially and small in numbers, Sr. Magdalene sensed that she would be able to contribute and support her fellow sisters in their shared ministries.

Sr. Magdalene had no difficulty in shouldering responsibility and performing whatever duties were assigned to her. After she professed vows in 1934, she was sent to Brunswick, Missouri as a housekeeper. The following year she was sent to the newly established Motherhouse in Chillicothe, where she served as a cook, portress and teacher's aide at St. Joseph Academy. From 1937 until 1957, she served as procurator and librarian. Perhaps this is where she first learned to be meticulous in her record-keeping and gained her great love for memorabilia and the preservation of memories in scrapbooks, whether in written text, newspaper clippings, or photos.





In 1957, a major change occurred in Sr. Magdalene's life, a change which she always remembered as a major turning point. She and one or two others were sent ahead of the rest of the sisters to prepare the building which would become both the new Provincial House and a nursing home for elderly women. Undaunted by the thought of transforming a former cancer sanitarium - a vacant five story building with numerous outbuildings and spacious land - into a new convent for her community and its third floor into a nursing home, she placed her trust in God and ventured forth. To her surprise, an able staff had maintained the building and grounds well, so that her task of reorganization was less imposing than it might otherwise have been. Yet there was much to do and to decide, much to rearrange and purchase. What should be done with the dairy cattle and the chickens? Which employees should be retained and who hired to assist with the nursing home? Soon it was necessary to have an official signature of the Administrator of the nursing home, so Sr. Magdalene seized the moment and signed. Thus Sr. Magdalene served in this capacity from 1957 until 1993. During this span, in her capacity as Nursing Home Administrator, she served as a volunteer: from 1969-1979 as Secretary/Treasurer of District II of the

Missouri Nursing Home Association, from 1973-1976 as Secretary of the Missouri Nursing Home Association, and from 1975-77 as a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.

In 1976, Andrew County Ministries took on the ministry of a Food Pantry which would be administered through St. Rose Catholic Church. Sr. Magdalene was asked to be the director since the food pantry was housed within LaVerna Heights. With great dedication and dogged determination she performed this service up until the time of her death, a total of 29 years! Although she gave herself wholeheartedly to each ministry, this perhaps was the one which most pulled on her heartstrings and gave her the deepest sense of fulfillment. It certainly was the one which she just could not relinquish until the day God called her to a new ministry of suffering.



Sr. Magdalene had a deep love for her family. She was proud of their accomplishments and loved to be with them. They, in turn, were devoted to her. Sr. Magdalene also cherished her friends and companions in ministry, especially the many people who volunteered in the LaVerna Guild or donated goods or service to the food pantry. One of the last tasks she attempted was to write some thank yous to donors, and although she wanted to complete them on her own, she had to ask for help.

Sr. Magdalene was faithful to God and to her community. Physical challenges and pain did not deter her from joining in daily prayer or our times of fellowship together. Perhaps because Sr. Magdalene personally knew the meaning of suffering, it was her custom to unite her daily journey with the last steps of Jesus by praying the Stations of the Cross each day after

Mass. This support of the community by prayer and suffering was an important contribution and blessing for us.

On April 14, 2005, Sr. Magdalene fell in her bedroom. Her fall was the result of a stroke. This bleeding in her brain caused paralysis on her right side. After her initial hospitalization, she was placed in LaVerna Village Nursing Home. She was attended by her sister Margaret, other family members, friends and Sisters until her death at 8:15 P.M. on April 23. Even though she was unable to express herself well, it was evident that she was aware of all that was happening. When she was anointed with the Sacrament of the Sick, she made the Sign of the Cross with her good arm, just as the priest began, ♦In the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit...♦ A new call and journey began, once again animated by the original Baptismal call and once again accepted with faith and trust in God.

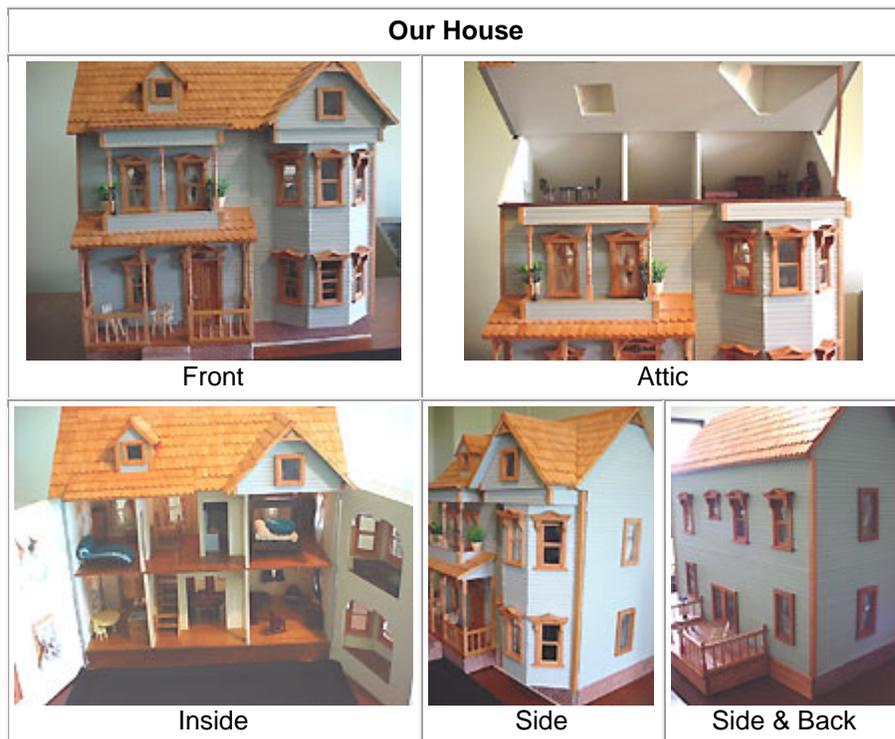


LaVerna Raffles

Quilt Raffle ♦ Queen size, hand-quilted, called ♦Sr. Magdalene♦s Journey♦, this beautiful quilt is made up of rich flower-patterned pieces and is pieced together with an ecru fabric. It was lovingly stitched by members of our LaVerna Guild.

Doll House Raffle ♦ This two-story house which opens from the front, is complete with working windows, a front porch, back deck wood shingle roof, and an interior that is furnished, including lights. The house is 33♦ W X 28 1/2♦ D X 33♦H. (The winner will be responsible for transporting.)

Proceeds from these raffles will benefit the Sisters♦ ministries and retirement fund. The drawing for the quilt and doll house will be held on July 9, 2005, at 2:00p.m. Tickets may be purchased until this time. You need not be present to win. See photos of our two prizes below!



Our Quilt

