



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2017

Sister Catherine LaVerne Kaemmerer, SSND
Teacher, Artist

Chatawa, MS – Sister Catherine LaVerne Kaemmerer, 91, died Feb. 22, 2017, She was born on January 16, 1926, in Pine Lawn, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. She was the fifth of nine children born to Catharine (Springmeyer) and Matthew Kaemmerer.

LaVerne thrived as the center of this loving Catholic, family and of the nearby grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Memories of picnics, swimming, dancing and caring for the younger children, being rescued from near-drowning by her father who then taught her to swim.

Walking to school with her brothers and sisters, Laverne attended St. Paul Elementary School taught by the Sisters of Loretta. She was attracted to the religious life of these sisters. When she graduated from eighth grade she asked permission to go for further education in their aspiranture. Her parents advised her to wait until she completed high school. This she did.

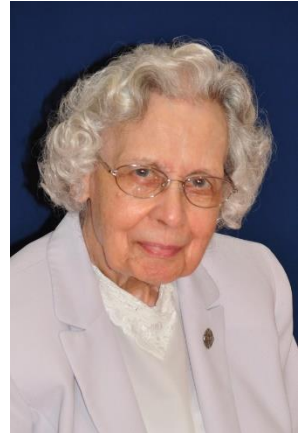
Laverne enrolled in St. Alphonsus (Rock) High School in St. Louis. Her teachers now were the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Mr. Kaemmerer drove LaVerne and her older sister to school in the morning. Each evening they returned home by streetcar and bus. LaVerne recalled the high school years, “This time was enjoyable. I made friends, I dated, went to parties and to summer musicals, but I did not think this life was for me. Still I did not think very much about becoming a religious sister until my senior year.”

An extracurricular activity that developed her appreciation of beauty in nature and in the visual arts was a class in art offered after school. She attended the class several times a week at the convent. Here she discovered another beauty. LaVerne observed, “I noticed the lovely spirit that dominated the lives of the Sisters. This is what influenced my desire to become a School Sister of Notre Dame.”

As she graduated from high school, LaVerne told her parents that she still had the desire to become a religious. Again her mother asked her to delay---just one year. During the year LaVerne was employed in office work, but she gained most from her careful mother as she, with her sisters, learned housekeeping and cooking skills

August, 1945 arrived. Finally Laverne was able to follow her dream. She became a candidate of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at Sancta Maria in Ripa. LaVerne remembered, “Study, leisure, prayer and chores were parts of the daily order as I learned more about God in my life.” As a second year candidate, LaVerne was sent to teach second grade in Alton, Illinois. A year in the novitiate followed as she received the habit and the name, Mary Ernan. At the end of this year, Sister Mary Ernan pronounced her vows as an SSND.

Mary Ernan told us, “My teaching took me to many different places and into varied community circumstances -- large and small. I preferred the communities of four or five sisters.” During these years, Sister taught children in the primary grades with some experience in kindergarten. She always loved little children and preferred teaching those in first grade. Sister LaVerne recalled, “I will always cherish the memories of my teaching years



trying to bring into the lives of students Jesus and Mary and making the children more conscious of their Baptismal heritage and its meaning.”

Sister began her teaching ministry in Effingham, IL and continued this ministry in Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, and Arkansas for 46 years. Of these geographical locations she told, “I became familiar with people of different cultures to which I tried to adapt.” As she was transferred to one new mission, she returned to her baptismal name, LaVerne.

A few years past retirement age, she chose to continue her ministry with little children but with a lighter schedule. LaVerne became a teacher aide in Arizona and then in Pine Bluff, Arkansas as a religion teacher and aide. This was her last mission assignment---one much appreciated by the children and the adults with whom she had contact.

In September 2007, the SSND retirement community in Chatawa, Mississippi became her home. LaVerne found, “Living here has given me many opportunities for continuing to learn, to teach, and to be of service. I accept gratefully the loving service of my Sisters and our nursing staff.” LaVerne loved the community, she was determined in her effort to be at prayer and at all community exercises---and to be of service. Her persistence in the latter endured even to the days preceding her death.

Sister LaVerne died peacefully early Wednesday morning, February 22, 2017. She was preceded in death by her parents and six of her siblings. She is survived by two sisters, Anna Marie Meyer of Redondo Beach, California and Bernadette Hoffman of Florissant, Missouri. Memorial contributions may be made to the School Sisters of Notre Dame Retirement Fund, c/o Resource Development, PO Box 227275, Dallas, TX 75222-7275 or online at www.ssndcentralpacific.org/Partner/Donation.

#