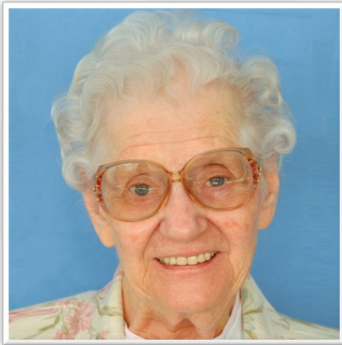


Sister Laurentilla Back, SSND - 70 Year Jubilee!



...without the prayers of supportive people throughout the world, ...and without the arms of God personally upholding and supporting me during those very busy and very dark days, I should not have been able to be and do for those I met.

After Vatican II, many Sisters reclaimed their birth names. Not Sister Laurentilla Back, though. Originally Helen, she knew students would call her "Sister Hell-and-Back," for one thing. For another, her brother Larry had been moved by her choice of Laurentilla.

She needn't have worried too much about the teasing from her students. A Facebook post from one of the schools in which she had taught included replies from several former students proclaiming Sister Laurentilla to have been one of their favorite teachers.

Now in her 70th jubilee year, Sister Laurentilla shares some thoughts about her life with the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

"God has blessed me with God's generous call and my family's encouragement. I am grateful for my SSND gift and support. I was especially happy with my personal ministries in various places, challenges, and assignments. Now I serve with prayer and assistance as requested or needed."

Sister Laurentilla's most memorable ministry took place in New York, following the destruction of the towers on September 11, 2001. She said she was *privileged* to be able to offer comfort as a member of the Red Cross' Spiritual Care Air Incident Response team (known as SAIR). Her thoughts about that time are excerpted here and [available online](#).

"How many times I have reviewed those few short days I was able to be physically present in that sacred place. My time there was a sacred time...reminiscent of those holy places trod by ancient prophets, priests and rulers; sanctified by martyrs and Jesus Himself," she said. "The reverence and respect exhibited by the firefighters, police officers, construction workers and others as they stepped aside for grieving families is a picture I carry with me. The anguish, tears and motivation that kept these workers responding beyond normal human endurance is indescribable."

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Sister Laurentilla Back, SSND - Cont'd

"I know that without the prayers of supportive people throughout the world, without the prayers of supportive team members who worked in close proximity, and without the arms of God personally upholding and supporting me during those very busy and very dark days, I should not have been able to be and do for those I met," she continued.

"I praise our Father/Mother Creator God, who brought some semblance of order out of chaos, light out of darkness, and new life out of death (again). I thank our Redemptive God, who accepted the lives of those who died for others, and I celebrate the Spirit God who continues to enable and encourage each community of persons who strives to rebuild a non-violent world of freedom and peace."

Sister Laurentilla entered the Juniorate when she graduated from 8th grade. When she entered the candidature, she was excited and anxious. "I entered on Monday and went to Cumberland, Maryland on Friday to begin teaching third grade. I was 17 years old. My great aunt, Bernadette Schmitt, was an SSND and she sponsored me."

The prayers and support of her Sisters form the heart of her gratitude as an SSND. In her 9/11 reflection, Sister Laurentilla shared that her first stop on the way to New York was the Motherhouse of her Baltimore SSND Province. There she asked the elder Sisters for their prayers.

"I knew I would need all the spiritual support I could rally," she recalled. "I was unable to fathom the enormity of the disaster and certainly unable to comprehend the courage and dedication of those who lived, worked and moved in and out of the hallowed spaces. I was blessed with Sisters."