

Mercy Sister Karen Berl, 52, following long illness

Sister Karen Berl, a Sister of Mercy and the pastoral assistant at St. John the Evangelist Parish, Spencerport, died Sunday, June 18, in the infirmary at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, Blossom Road, Rochester, after a long battle with cancer. She was 52.



Sister Berl had been the pastoral assistant at St. John's since 1979. Prior to entering parish ministry, she taught for 22 years — nine years in elementary schools and 13 years in high schools in the Rochester diocese. Sister Berl's home parish was St. Margaret Mary's, Rochester. She lived in the sisters of St. Cecilia's convent, Rochester.

Her years in elementary education were spent at St. Cecilia's, Rochester (1957-58); Holy Cross, Rochester (1958-61); St. Charles Borromeo, Rochester (1961-64);

and St. Rita's, West Webster (1964-66).

At the high school level she taught math at Notre Dame, Elmira (1966-76); Cardinal Mooney, Rochester (1976-77); and Our Lady of Mercy, Rochester (1977-79).

Sister Berl entered the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester on Sept. 8, 1954; was received into the Mercy novitiate on June 19, 1955; professed her first vows on Aug. 16, 1957; and professed her perpetual vows on Aug. 16, 1960.

She graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School in 1954 and in 1959 received an associate's degree from Catherine McAuley Junior College (now defunct). She received a bachelor of science degree in math from Marywood College, Scranton, Pa., in 1967, and a master of arts in math from Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J., in 1971.

Sister Kay Schwenzer who taught with Sister Berl at Notre Dame, Elmira, recalled that Sister Berl's favorite quote from Scripture was Isaiah 49: 15-16: "I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name."

"It was the whole idea of being lovingly held by God," Sister said. "She had a real trust and confidence in the Lord.

"Everyone I've spoken to has mentioned her smile — the radiance of it," Sister Schwenzer continued. "I felt there was a real blossoming in Karen when she went to St. John's — her personal giftedness really blossomed in pastoral work. Not that she didn't show love in education — she was very present to her students and took time with them, but in pastoral work her gifts really blossomed.

"Visitation was a big part of her ministry at St. John's — there was a real constancy in her visiting of the sick, especially of the terminally ill. Everyone felt she was their special friend," Sister Schwenzer said.

Schwenzer said.

Her niece, Karen Van Coske, recalled that Sister Berl "was always there for me when the chips were down. She'd say, 'God hasn't left you — God's carrying you now.' That was special to her — those lines from 'Footprints.' She was our only aunt — so we were very close — she was so special ..."

Sister Berl is survived by her mother, Helen Berl; sister and brother-in-law, Lohre and Robert Van Coske; nieces Karen and Lynda Van Coske; her aunt, Agnes Lotzar; and several cousins.

Calling hours took place Monday through Wednesday, June 19-21, with a prayer service Tuesday evening in the motherhouse chapel. The funeral liturgy was celebrated at 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 21, in the motherhouse chapel. Burial was scheduled to take place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery Thursday, June 22.

'New Creation'

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room a suitable setting for such education," he wrote.

When sex education is presented in a group setting, he added, his congregation is concerned that "proper safeguards need to be employed, especially a clear presentation of the moral and spiritual values."

Those who are entrusted by parents to teach sex education have "an obligation to promote a climate of virtue and reverence for the subject at hand," he said.

But he repudiated the idea that his congregation should be engaged in directly monitoring local programs, saying that church law and good pastoral practice make that the responsibility of the local bishop.

"Because the environment in which education is carried out is so specific and local, whether the subject be human sexuality or some other sphere of religious education, responsibility for determining proper teaching aids and texts is within the competence of the diocesan bishop," he said.

"It is not possible," he added, "to foresee all specific circumstances at a national or universal level to allay the anxieties or concerns of parents in a particular situation.... This congregation, therefore,

deems it best to deal with parental and other concerns for the 'New Creation' series, or indeed for any texts, through the spiritual shepherd of the diocese, its bishop."

The *New Creation* series, with different texts adapted to different grade levels, was begun in 1984 and quickly gained wide usage in U.S. dioceses. The first-published texts in the series bore the *imprimatur* of Archbishop James C. Byrne, Archbishop Kucera's predecessor in Dubuque.

Catholics United for the Faith, a lay organization concerned about orthodoxy in Catholic teaching, was one of the leaders in early campaigns against the series.

Complaints against the series and a letter-writing campaign to bishops and Vatican officials were given added impetus in 1986 when Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, criticized the series in a letter to a Milwaukee woman who had written to him complaining about it.

In his letter to bishops, Archbishop Kucera said the 1987 revisions were made in consultation with the Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center in Braintree, Mass.

He said the 1987 revision "is currently the only version sold" by the publishing company.

Clarence Amann, 62, introduced black literature at St. John Fisher

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Tuesday, June 13, at Blessed Sacrament Church for Clarence A. Amann, associate professor of English at St. John Fisher College. The Mass was said by Mr. Amann's brother, Father William Amann, pastor of Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin.

Mr. Amann died Saturday, June 10, at Rochester General Hospital of a rare form of meningitis. He was 62.

A professor at St. John Fisher since 1963, Mr. Amann is credited with helping to develop and sustain Black literature studies at the college. Father Amann said his brother was always sensitive to those who were in pain or suffered in some way, including the victims of prejudice. He added that his brother "recognized that racial prejudice is something we're all afflicted with, including himself."

Born in Rochester, Mr. Amann received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Fisher in 1959, and a master's degree in English and American literature from the University of Rochester in 1963. He taught for a short time at McQuaid Jesuit High School before he began his teaching career at Fisher.

In addition to Black literature and teach-

ing, Mr. Amann also was devoted to poetry, writing prolifically on a wide range of subjects for publication and for friends. During his life, he published several volumes of poetry. "We used to kid him, 'Hey, are you going to write a poem about this?' whatever experience we had," Father Amann said.

Mr. Amann also wrote numerous articles for magazines and newspaper. His last published work, an article about the novel *Joshua*, appeared in the May 11 issue of the *Catholic Courier*.

Father Amann noted that his brother had been sickly all his life, and had suffered a number of personal problems, but that he faced difficulties with "courage and resiliency. He would not only survive, he would prevail."

In addition to his brother, Mr. Amann is survived by two daughters, Laura Tellier, of Webster, and Clare Marie Amann, of Stony Brook, Long Island; two sons, Paul Amann, of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Christopher Amann, of Rochester; two sisters, Dorothy Jones, of Rochester, and Eileen Fitzpatrick, of Hilton; and one grandson.

Mr. Amann was interred in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Document

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At a news conference following his presentation, he told reporters that the changes worked out with the congregation did not change the substance or thrust of the document.

The changes made more explicit "what I understood to be nuances already there," he said. "But for those to whom the nuances loomed large, the document has been strengthened."

In outlining the rights and responsibilities of theologians, the document says they "must keep in mind the pastoral and missionary effects of their work" and must recognize bishops as the "authoritative teachers in the church" to test and judge the soundness of theological teaching.

Theologians must act "in fidelity to apostolic faith" as they engage in "critical inquiry" and "should use pastoral discretion" in dealing with the media and popular dissemination of their ideas, it says.

The document says that "paramount" among the rights of theologians "is lawful freedom of inquiry and expression of scholarly opinion."

Theologians also have a right to "moral support from the church, though they must also expect and even welcome objective criticism of their work," it says.

The document also defends "the right of theologians to a good reputation and, if needed, the defense of that right by appro-

priate administrative or judicial processes within the church."

It urges bishops and theologians to get to know one another and to collaborate frequently, both informally and in such structured processes as the development of diocesan statements and policies, and the analysis of issues facing the local church.

In its guidelines for doctrinal dialogue in cases in which a theologian is alleged to be teaching something doctrinally or pastorally unsound, among the first things the document calls for are accurate fact finding and clarification of meaning, to determine whether a complaint against a theologian is

fair and accurate.

The guidelines aim at peaceful, mutually agreed-upon resolution of difficulties between a theologian and a bishop, but they also protect the right of the bishop for pastoral reasons to issue public warnings or other statements at any time concerning authoritative church teaching and the relationship of other views to that teaching. "The best response to bad teaching is good teaching," the document says.

During floor discussion before the vote on the document, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago urged its adoption, saying, "It is important for us to promote col-

laboration between ourselves and theologians, whose expertise is so important to us."

He said that "whatever ambiguities" may have existed in earlier drafts "I believe have been resolved."

He called the guidelines for formal doctrinal dialogue an "important instrumentality when difficulties arise." While they were still in draft stages, he said, he made use of them to deal with a couple of situations in Chicago.

"I have found them helpful," he said. "What is there is workable."

China

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to China's jurisdiction places the 38,000 Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong in jeopardy because the Chinese government wants the British government to stop the influx of refugees into the territory and expedite the departure of the ones already there before 1997. The Chinese government will not Vietnamese citizens in Hong Kong has said be recognized as Hong Kong citizens.

"Very few refugees want to stay in Hong Kong because they are afraid of 1997," Father Tsang said. "But, if refugees keep coming to Hong Kong and other

countries don't accept them, it will cause many social problems for Hong Kong. Hong Kong needs cooperation from other countries."

Hong Kong has introduced several measures to curb the number of incoming Vietnamese refugees, including new screening methods to speed identification of "genuine refugees" and "economic migrants" and a policy of keeping "economic migrants" in detention camps for eventual repatriation.

"No matter what policy is adopted, people are still coming into Hong Kong and no country is willing to take them because many of them are unskilled," Father Tsang said. He added that although he disagreed with the detention camps policy, he realized that the Hong Kong government used it as a last resort in a difficult situation.

Hong Kong also is appealing to other countries for help. It has asked Vietnam to strive to improve its economic situation and give its people more freedom so they won't flee the nation. Hong Kong also wants Britain to share some of its burden by accepting more refugees and helping in negotiations with Vietnam, the priest said.

Citing strained resources because of the large numbers of refugees in Hong Kong, the colony's officials also asked for relief at a United Nations conference on Southeast Asian refugees held June 13 in Geneva. Delegates at the conference adopted a plan calling for the screening of refugees, similar to the method used in Hong Kong. It also called for voluntary repatriation of refugees, although the British government strongly favored forced repatriation.