



# *Sisters of St. Casimir*

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[www.sistersofstcasimir.org](http://www.sistersofstcasimir.org)



## **Sister M. Lawrence Puishys, SSC**

March 26, 1931 — October 7, 2024

Sister M. Lawrence was born on March 26, 1931 in Worcester, known as the heart of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Her parents, Peter and Anna (Ackalitis) Puishys, named her Anne. Sister M. Lawrence was the middle of seven children having three brothers and three sisters: Joseph, Dorothy, Helen (Sister June, SSC), June, Robert, and William.

She attended St. Casimir School, staffed by the Sisters of St. Casimir in Worcester for the elementary/junior high grades, followed by Classical High, where she graduated in June 1949. She wanted to become a Sister as far back as she could remember having been inspired by one of her teachers, a Sister of St. Casimir. She had so much compassion and love and always wanted to share it with others. She chose to attend a public high school instead of a Catholic one because she did not want her parents to think that the Sisters in the high school were pressuring her to become a Sister. She wanted it to be her own choice, which it was.

On June 15, 1950, a year after she graduated from high school, she entered the Sisters of St. Casimir in Chicago. Her studies continued after her profession in 1953. She received her Bachelor's degree in education and social studies from Marywood College in Scranton, PA, in 1960 and her Master's in education from Loyola University in Chicago, IL, in 1968. In 1977, she participated in a continuing education program in ministry to the aging and became a certified nursing home administrator.

Sister M. Lawrence made her reception as a novice on August 15, 1951, first vows on August 15, 1953, and final vows on August 15, 1958. She had the joy of celebrating her silver jubilee in 1978, golden jubilee in 2008, and diamond (60 years) in 2018.

Sister M. Lawrence began her ministry in education in 1953, shortly after she made her first vows, having been assigned to teach 2nd grade at St. George's School in Chicago. Her ministry went beyond the classroom to include school and health care administration, health care patient advocacy, and ministry of prayer and presence.

In addition to teaching 2nd graders at St. George School, she went on to teach grades 3 through 7:

- 7th grade at St. Clement School in Florida
- 7th and 8th grade at St. Casimir School in Chicago Heights, IL
- 7th grade at St. Joseph School in Chicago
- 8th grade at Providence of God School in Chicago

From 1970 until 1977, she was the principal of Immaculate Conception School in Chicago and from 1977 until 1983, she was the Superior at the Motherhouse in Chicago.

After a year of study and living at Immaculate Mary Center for Rehab and Healthcare in Philadelphia, Sister M. Lawrence began a new ministry at St. Joseph Home for the Aged in Holland, PA, as administrator of the Home and Superior of the local community. She served there until November 1999. The newsletter from the Home contained a warm farewell: "Through the many efforts of Sister Lawrence and her co-workers, a family unity among Sisters, residents, employees, and friends was created. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Sister Lawrence's administration was how she warmed our hearts with kindness and love and brightened our day with friendship and laughter, especially how she always made the residents laugh with her many toys. This always brought a great balance to St. Joseph's."

In 2000 Sister M. Lawrence returned to the Motherhouse in Chicago to live and minister at Holy Cross Hospital as a patient visitor, where she was much loved.

Wherever Sister M. Lawrence ministered she brought:

- Her life of prayer
- Her contemplative view of life
- Her warm smile and delightful laugh
- Her thoughtful notes – including one she wrote to her sister Helen (Sr. June) on the day she entered the community
- Her genuine interest in people, especially those who were hurting – so often, when she was administrator of St. Joseph Home for the Aged, she would sit by a patient's bedside, especially when the patient was near death
- Her engaging jokes
- Her long-memorized poems, including "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer and "Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue" by Mary Dixon Thayer, which she loved to recite

#### *LOVELY LADY DRESSED IN BLUE*

*Lovely Lady dressed in blue —  
Teach me how to pray!  
God was just your little boy,  
Tell me what to say!*

*Did you lift Him up, sometimes,  
Gently on your knee?  
Did you sing to Him the way  
Mother does to me?*

*Did you hold His hand at night?  
Did you ever try  
Telling stories of the world?  
O! And did He cry?*

*Do you really think He cares  
If I tell Him things —  
Little things that happen? And  
Do the Angels' wings*

*Make a noise? And can He hear  
Me if I speak low?  
Does He understand me now?  
Tell me, for you know.*

*Lovely Lady dressed in blue —  
Teach me how to pray!  
God was just your little boy,  
And you know the way.*

- Her pocket always had pictures of pride and joy, which she wanted to share, especially with patients, visitors, and staff at Holy Cross Hospital. She would ask: do you want to see my pride and joy? After a yes response, she dug into her pocket and pulled out pictures of “Pride” furniture polish and “Joy” dishwashing detergent, always bringing smiles to all she shared this with, even when they knew what to expect!
- Her beautifully braided palm crosses, palm doves, and palm roses which she made each year at Easter time and shared with Sisters, family, and friends all eagerly awaiting each year for new ones.
- Her watchful eye that earned her the nickname “hawk-eyes” and enabled her to see what her students were doing, even when she was not looking directly at them.
- Her ability to work jigsaw puzzles systematically, even during her waning weeks with dementia – smaller puzzles with fewer pieces, but she could still do them.
- She could find 4-leaf clovers amidst a field of green and then make and distribute cards that read: “Bless this billfold, Lord, I pray replenish it day by day. May the bills blow in and out blessing people all about. Help me earn and wisely spend. Show me when to buy and lend. Thank you, God, for bills to pay for the things I need each day. When it is empty put in more from Thy vast abundant store.”



Sister M. Lawrence was faithful to her life as a Sister. On her golden jubilee, she wrote: "As far back as I can remember, my only desire was to be a Sister of St. Casimir. I prayed that it would happen. My prayers were answered! Here I am, 50 years as a Sister of St. Casimir. I never regretted my decision. My family supported me and helped me to achieve this goal. On July 22, 1953 my mother wrote, 'Be a good nun – that we may be proud of you always...' I tried to obey her exhortation."

In 2015, Sister M. Lawrence moved to Franciscan Village to independent living and later to assisted living. While living at Franciscan Village, she celebrated her 60th jubilee. She wrote: "As I reflect on my 60 years as a professed Sister of St. Casimir, I am grateful to God for helping me enjoy being a teacher and an administrator, not only in educating children but also in caring for the elderly. One of my special blessings now is living with my sister, Sister June, and our SSCs. I've learned that God's will is what counts, not mine! God knows what is best for me and all of us."

Sister M. Lawrence's most recent move was to skilled care at Mother Theresa Home. While there, she could be seen in her wheelchair moving down the hall, stopping in most rooms, checking to see if the patient was okay, and sometimes even trying to help.

*Lovingly prepared by Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC*

Sister M. Lawrence was preceded in death by her father, Peter Puishys, and her mother, Anna Ackalitis Puishys, as well as her brothers Joseph (Joan), Robert, and William Puishys; her sisters Helen (Sister M. June, SSC), Dorothy (Zera) Giles, and June (Ralph II) Turner; niece Jane Taylor, and nephew Ralph Turner, III.

She is also preceded in death by all members of her profession class:

Sister M. DeChantal Brazus  
 Sister Lorraine Therese Siminas  
 Sister Mary de Sales Sokol  
 Sister M. Agnese Chapp  
 Sister Maria Casimira Vilkevicius

Sister M. Lawrence is survived by sisters-in-law Pauline (R.I.P. Robert), Paula (R.I.P. William), nieces and nephews, June, Joseph Jr, Rachel, Elizabeth, Nancy, Donna, Robert Jr, Ellen, William Jr, Stephen, as well as grandnieces, grandnephews and the Sisters of St. Casimir.

Visitation and Wake Service: Monday, October 28, 2024, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.  
Franciscan Village Chapel  
1270 Village Drive  
Lemont, IL 60439

Mass of Christian Burial: Monday, October 28, 11:30 a.m.  
Franciscan Village Chapel  
The Mass will be live-streamed.  
<https://www.asimplestreaming.com/sister-m-lawrence-puishys-ssc/>

Celebrant: Father Bob Lucas, CM  
Interment: St. Casimir Cemetery  
Funeral Director: Palos-Gaidas Funeral Home



Sister M. Lawrence and Sister June





Srs. Lawrence; Joanela,  
Juline, Aniceta, Christine



August 2024





Sister M. Lawrence with her siblings



2003 Golden Jubilee