

Sister Evelyn (M. Claretta) Antoine, OP
Born to earthly life: February 27, 1930
Religious profession: August 15, 1951
Entered eternal life: June 23, 2016

*All the Lord requires
is that you do justice, love goodness,
and walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6,8



40th Jubilee, 2011

Evelyn Margaret Antoine was born February 27, 1930, on a farm in Belgium, Wisconsin, and baptized at Saint Mary's Parish in nearby Lake Church. With four brothers and one sister, she was the last and youngest of the six children of Clara Bittner and Edward Antoine. After her father's death when Evelyn was only six, his widow, a woman of deep faith and prayer, helped the family work together to make a living and care for each other.

Evelyn liked her Racine Dominican teachers at Saint Mary's so much that already in first and second grade she wanted to be one of them. She did wait until after high school, however, before entering the community as a postulant on September 4, 1948. On August 6 of the following year she received the Dominican habit and the name Sister M. Claretta of the Virgin Mary. She pronounced her first vows on August 15, 1951, and her final vows on August 15, 1957.



About 1947



1960

Young Sister Claretta was thoroughly conscientious about every smallest religious rule and custom — even to holding her hands under her scapular whenever possible while teaching! Over the next years, she would teach in various grades and, at Tomah, serve also as principal. Her first assignment after profession was to Saint Mary's in Kenosha. Three years later she moved to Holy Angels in Milwaukee for four years. Assignments followed at Saint Bernard's in Madison (1958 to 1959) and then at Nativity Elementary School in Detroit (1959 to 1962); Saint Clement's in Center Line, Michigan (1962 to 1964); Saint Joseph's in Racine (1964 to 1965); Assumption Grotto in Detroit (1965 to 1968); and Saint Mary's in Tomah, Wisconsin (1968 to 1971).



About 1966

In the meantime, except for the year of her final profession, she spent her summers studying at Dominican College, graduating in 1960 with a major in education. Over succeeding summers she earned her master's degree in history at the University of Detroit, finishing in 1967.

It was early in her time in Tomah that the Racine Dominicans decided in their special Chapter of Renewal (1968) that anyone who wished could resume her baptismal name and exchange the habit for lay clothing. Sister Claretta did both. Gifted with sewing skills, she set to work on her own new wardrobe and suggested that others not so gifted enroll in a sewing class at the local vocational school.



Silver Jubilee, 1978



In the classroom

Beginning in 1970, each sister was free to discern and choose her own ministry and local community. The following year, Evelyn moved to Saint Mary's in Kenosha, where she taught for five years. A year at Detroit's Assumption Grotto followed, and then two at Saint Mary's in Janesville.

As the Church began increasingly to involve the laity in its ministries, Evelyn took a new path and became a pastoral assistant at Our Lady Queen of the Universe

Parish in Woodruff, Wisconsin, for the next four years. From 1983 until 1990 she filled the same role at Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral in Green Bay.

Besides her various ministries, Evelyn liked to travel. As a child, she had been fascinated by China, and in 1989 she realized her dream of visiting that country. She also traveled to Rome and Israel, as well as to many of the western United States, where she would connect with scattered members of her family.



Hospital ministry, 2011



Golden Jubilee, 2001

When she came to visit at the old family farm, she always wanted to play sheephead, the long-time family card game. And she would make her own special potato salad.

For fun, she liked to listen to music, tat, embroider pillow cases, and cook and bake. Whenever she moved from place to place, she brought more pots, pans,

and baking dishes than personal items! And she generously shared her homemade treats with sisters and with people she visited.

She had a sense of humor all her own, and reacted to funny situations with a “full-body chuckle,” her shoulders shaking. At the time of her fiftieth jubilee, as she looked back on her years as a Racine Dominican, she said that she had no regrets. She had made a difference in the lives of many people.

As she lived into her eighties and her health deteriorated, her energies diminished — but never her spirit. Near the end of June, 2016, she was experiencing severe difficulty breathing, and entered All Saints Hospital for treatment. On the morning of June 22, she was placed into Hospice care. She died peacefully the evening of the next day. Sisters Margaret Hild, Joyce Ballweg, Pat McCormick, and Carol Runde were with her. Her nephew David and niece Karen had been with her for about four hours through the afternoon and early evening.

Evelyn’s funeral liturgy was celebrated at Siena Center on June 29. According to her wishes, her body was later cremated and her ashes interred in the community plot in Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.