



About 2005

Sister Mary Hope Bergemann, OP
Born to earthly life: January 29, 1927
Religious profession: August 15, 1949
Entered eternal life: October 31, 2014

“Blessed are you!”

Matthew 5

Louise Bernadine Bergemann, tenth of thirteen children of Frank and Bernadine Gement Bergemann — nine boys and four girls — was born in Racine on August 26, 1924, and baptized at Saint Mary Parish.

Prayer was always a part of the Bergemann family’s life. Her mother and grandmother were charter members of the Dominican Third Order; so morning and evening prayer as a family was the norm. Mary Hope would say she was destined for the Dominican Order from her mother’s womb! And music filled their lives. All of her older siblings took band lessons in school; so they had their own orchestra and enjoyed playing music together. The family and extended family gathered Sunday afternoons for concerts. On Sunday evenings, the family gathered around the piano and sang songs as Mom played the piano. Mrs. Bergemann was a piano teacher, giving lessons to help support the growing family.

Louise and all of her siblings attended Saint Mary’s School, and most of the children also attended Saint Catherine’s High School. After graduation, Louise worked in a factory until Sister Eleanore Edelbeck asked her if she would like to teach for the sisters. Having always wanted to become a teacher, Louise jumped at the chance. She was hired as a lay teacher and went to Saint John’s in Little Chute, Wisconsin, with Sister Madonna Martin as her mentor. It was her first time away from home. She roomed at a parishioner’s house and had her meals with the sisters — though in a separate dining room. She was quick to note that she was allowed to help do the dishes!

Midway through her first semester of teaching, she decided she wanted to be a Racine Dominican. On February 1, 1946, at the age



The Bergemanns about 1945

Lenny, Ray, Wally, Matt, Ferd, Barney, Joe, Mariann
Agnes, S. Mary Hope, Dad, Mom, S. Mary Faith

of twenty-one, she entered the congregation. Family members and friends didn't think she would persevere in the convent and wagered how long she would last. But persevere she did!

Her college courses began with her first days as a postulant. That summer, on August 4, she received the Dominican habit and the name Sister Mary Hope of the Precious Blood. As a senior novice she taught second grade and, later in the year, fourth grade at Saint Joseph School, trekking each school day from the motherhouse to the other side of the Root River .

Meanwhile, her sister Margaret had joined the Congregation of Saint Agnes in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and had been received into the novitiate as Sister Mary Faith. Both sisters made their religious first profession on August 15, 1948 — so were able to celebrate with each other only in spirit.

Later that month Sister Mary Hope made her way to her first mission, Saint Bernard's in Madison, Wisconsin. She would continue to teach in primary grades for all of her educational ministry, often doing church work and teaching CCD (religious education) classes as well. In 1950 she was back in Racine, this time at Holy Name School. But two years later she crossed over to Michigan, to Nativity in Detroit — but for less than a year, being asked in November to finish the term at Saint Benedict the Moor in Milwaukee. (It was said in those days that flexible and adaptable sisters were likely to be transferred often! When Mary Hope would call home to let her parents know her new address her Mom would say, "Can't you behave yourself? You must be doing something wrong or they wouldn't move you so often!")

On August 15, 1954, she celebrated her final profession at the motherhouse and then returned to Saint Benedict's. In fall of 1955 she was sent to Saint Mary's in Janesville, only to be asked once more to move that December to Saint Joseph's in Racine. There she would stay until January of 1960, when she was moved — again at mid-term — to Saint Norberto's in Roxbury. Two years later,



Silver Jubilee, 1973
Sisters Marjorie

in the fall of 1962, she was again in Detroit, this time at Assumption Grotto. Here she would actually get to stay for four years!

Meanwhile, her summers were being spent at Dominican College in Racine, where she completed her baccalaureate degree in education in 1963.

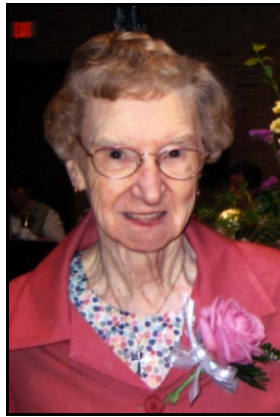
Two single-year appointments followed: 1966–1967 at Saint Mary’s in Tomah and 1967–1968 at Saint Aloysius in Sauk City.

In 1968, Mary Hope began what would be her longest sojourn — at Saint Rita’s in Racine — where she would elect to remain after 1970, when Racine Dominicans were given the option of choosing

their own ministries. It was at Saint Rita’s that she and the Racine Dominicans with her there adopted the Montessori Method for their teaching. In 1979, Mary Hope began studies at Midwest Montessori Institute in Milwaukee. Those studies were interrupted the following year by illness, during which (1980–1981) she recuperated at Siena Center. She was able to return to school in the fall of 1981, and the next summer received her certification and returned to teaching at Saint Rita’s (which the following year became Racine Montessori School). Montessori training, she said, “helped me to be a better teacher and brought out my own creativity.”



1982



40th Jubilee, 1988

From then on, she made many of her own teaching

materials. 1968 to 1983 at Saint Rita’s were what she called “The Camelot Years.”

It was at Saint Rita’s that the convent was struck by lightning, with the fire ball crashing into Mary Hope’s bedroom. This was her first close call with death. Over the next years would come a double aneurysm, lymphoma, three broken hips, a broken arm, an esophageal tear and repair, and then multiple strokes.

In 1983, Mary Hope retired from teaching and moved to Siena Center — but certainly not to inactivity! She was soon a regular and cheerful presence at the Center’s reception desk and switchboard, a ministry she held until 2006.

In her spare time, she could often be found in the art room, using stamps, decorative papers, laces, buttons, and more to create lovely greeting cards. She said of her



In the craft room with Ss. Clementia Waffle, George Ann Heegeman, Theresa Rotarius about 2000

card making, “Because I resonate with Saint Augustine’s calling God ‘Beauty ever ancient, ever new,’ I hope viewers of my cards will perceive a glimmer of God in them. I do not sell the cards, but offer them to those who delight in beauty. If an added button, piece of lace, shimmery glitter, or ribbon makes them smile, I feel my ministry has value.”

In July of 2011, Mary Hope’s declining health dictated a move to Lakeshore Manor, where she was a gentle presence to all who were



Making greeting cards, about 2000

privileged to know her. There she very peacefully about 2:20 on the morning of October 31, 2014. Fellow resident Sister Grace Marie Kraft and two of her caregivers, Joanna and Raylenna, were with her.

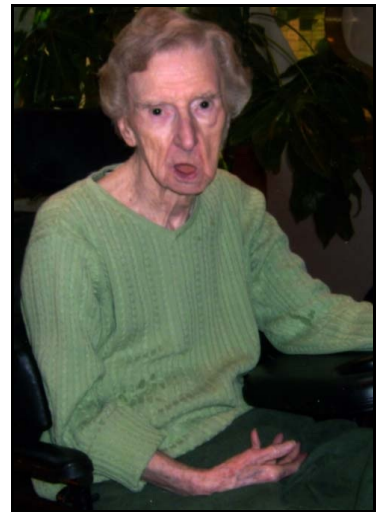
Mary Hope was survived by her sister Aggie and by classmates Sisters Virgine Lawinger, Dolores Chartrand, and Irene McCarthy.

Her dear friend Sister Ruthanne Reed preached the homily for her funeral liturgy, which was presided over by Father Mike Newman on the morning of November 3. That same afternoon, her body was

interred in the community plot in Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.



Golden Jubilee, 1998



June, 2012