

Sister Therese (M. Duane) Hoffmann, OP
Born to earthly life: July 6, 1925
Religious profession: September 14, 1950
Entered eternal life: November 12, 2014

*This is what God requires of you: only to do justice,
to love goodness, to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6, 8



Golden Jubilee, 2003

Therese Marguerite Hoffmann was born to Margaret Hansen and Albert J. Hoffmann on July 6, 1925, in Detroit, Michigan and baptized at Nativity of Our Lord Parish.

She had six brothers and two sisters, and was the youngest of the girls. Playing many types of games was a big part of her childhood. They even all played solitaire together! She also liked to go to movies; she and her siblings went to the cinema — for ten cents — on Sundays after devotions at church, and during the week as well at a time when the cinema gave away dishes. Therese eventually acquired an entire set that she would later use when she and Sister Joannette Nitz shared an apartment in Detroit!



First Communion Day, with her Mom and Dad



Therese with her brothers Phil and Bruno, about 1928

After graduating from Nativity High School, Therese held a number of jobs. Influenced to a large extent by the kindness of one of her elementary school teachers, Sister Geraldine Martin, she entered the Racine Dominican community as a postulant on September 14, 1950. She was twenty-five. Her parents were happy with her choice. On August 17, 1951 she received the Dominican habit and the name Sister M. Duane of Divine Providence. She pronounced her first vows on August 15, 1953.



High school graduation

That September she began her life of ministry at Assumption Grotto in her home town, Detroit, as a primary teacher. Three years later she was missioned far from home at Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Santa Fe,



Playing the clown with Della Capella, 1979

baptismal name, Therese, and exchanged the habit for lay clothes.

A few years after Racine Dominicans were given the option of choosing their own ministries, in 1975, Therese became activity director at Detroit's



At Cadillac Nursing Home

New Mexico. Her five-year stint there brought her back to Racine each summer for a few more courses on her way to the baccalaureate degree in education which she was awarded in 1962.

The summer of 1959, however, was spent preparing for her final vows, which she professed on August 15.



1961

In 1961 she was assigned to Saint Mary's in Tomah, Wisconsin. Then, just after having received her degree in education, she was sent to Evansville, Indiana, to serve as receptionist at Regina Pacis Home for long-term health care. But the following year she was back in the classroom, this time at Saint Andrew's in Knowles, Wisconsin, where she stayed for three years.

In 1967 Sister Duane was once more in her home town, teaching at Assumption Grotto. There she would be for eight years. It was during her second year there that she returned to using her

Cadillac Nursing Home — discovering each resident’s likes and dislikes; conducting prayer services and world affairs discussions; organizing games, crafts, sing-alongs, and dancing; and serving as ward clerk. She was always drawn to the weak, the outcast, the lonely senior citizen, Sister Sharon Simon would remark at her funeral. Hers was an unpretentious, non-violent preaching. “Don’t blame God,” she would say; “we must do the work.” A

“Some people call me the bum,” Therese wrote in 1980. “I am. In my free time, I’m a clown. A clown is a ‘vulnerable lover’ — risking self without knowing whether there will be acceptance or rejection. A clown wears makeup which reminds us of death (white) and new life (colored greasepaint). ... Why do people call me the bum? Because I’m on the move: clowning, working,

sharing, helping, enjoying, learning, and most of all trying to spread the Good News to all whose lives I touch.” In her spare time she was becoming more and more involved in social justice ministries, mostly behind the scenes. She served as telephone coordinator for Common Cause; worked for Bread for the World; helped with mailings and attended all the events of the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights; supported the Farm Worker Movement of César Chavez.



S. Joannette Nitz and Therese at a demonstration in 1998

She was big on recycling — known to go through trash and taking out empty

toilet paper rolls, scraps of paper, the little label on tea bags, and even gum wrappers! She did indeed save everything!

After celebrating her sixty-eighth birthday (1993), Therese brought her many skills and her love for seniors to volunteering at Saint Patrick’s Senior Center in Detroit.

She was eighty-one when she moved to Siena Center. There she continued her work with seniors, volunteering now as a visitor in the Senior Companion Program.

In January of 2013, as her health failed and she herself needed more assistance, Therese became a resident at Lakeshore Manor in Racine. She participated in every activity there because she knew what it had meant to have someone show up for activities she had planned during her own ministry in nursing homes. She liked bowling, singing, dancing (especially the polka), and playing any type of game. She was always extremely grateful for the care she received and greeted visitors with a big smile, asking, “Is it nice today?” She was great at responding loudly during Mass or prayer services



60th Jubilee, 2013

Sisters Josephine Romero, Stephanie Seversin, Rosaire Lucassen, Christine Blommel, Rosalie Lauer, Ruth Schaaf, Bernadine Schellinger, Mary Vosters, Marian Diedrick; Therese Hoffmann, Marya Klapkowski

or saying the rosary. She also liked to read any type of little prayer book. She always had her Office book with her and was very faithful about praying that. Shortly before her death, her classmates Bee Schellinger and Rosalie Lauer visited her one evening and figured out that Therese wanted to pray the Office because she had not been able to do so earlier.

Therese died at Lakeshore on November 12, 2014. Although she had recently become weaker, her death was, in some ways, unexpected. But she was known for doing things her way, in her time! Bee and Rosalie were with her in her final moments. She was eighty-nine years old.

Besides her nephew Don and his wife Pat, nine of Therese's ten classmates were present for the Remembering Service held in the Siena Center Chapel on Monday morning, November 17, followed by her funeral liturgy presided over by Father Tom Venne. Her body had been cremated and after a celebratory dinner her cremains were buried in the community plot in Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.

Back in Detroit, Father Norm Thomas presided over a memorial liturgy at Sacred Heart Parish on the evening of December 2.

Sister Therese is survived by the Racine Dominican Sisters and Associates; her sister Marie Kobane; sister-in-law Doris Hoffmann; and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents as well as her brothers Hilary, Bruno, Duane, Leo, Donald, and Philip and her sister Marcella Hoffmann.

Associate Catrina Ganey, who had known Therese in Detroit but was living in New York at the time of the latter's death, sent a personal reflection, "A Colt and the Upper Room":

No one likes to hear sad news. No matter if you are expecting it or not. I knew Sister Therese had been ill for a while, but I had hopes she would fully recover and be her old self again. So it was definitely sad news when I read Pam Hudson's email that Therese had passed away.¹ For a moment, I was in denial, then a wave of sadness came over me and then a wave of comfort. She was not alone. She was in a community of those who have loved and walked with her for years. They were at her side when she passed from their arms into God's arms. That made me smile.

As the hours passed upon learning about Therese's death, I thought about Sister [Joanette] Nitz. For years, I could never separate the two of them when they lived together in Detroit. If you saw one, you saw the other. Hearing about Therese's passing, made me face my own inner grief again over Sister Nitz's death and the reality of how I still miss my friend. How I missed seeing "both" of them together.

Therese was definitely not like Sister Nitz. While Sister Nitz was ready to march headfirst into the bloody fray of



Merry Christmas!

any battle calling out for the wrongs and injustices of the world, Therese's was more of a quiet approach — a behind-the-scenes sort of person if you will. But she was there nevertheless on the battlegrounds. Maybe not as evident or dramatic at first glance; but she was there. So it would stand to reason, I immediately thought about the stories of "the colt" and the "upper room" as I reflected on the life of Therese.

Every Easter season we hear sermons about Jesus riding into Jerusalem with the crowds cheering: "Hosanna!" Prior to his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, he instructs his disciples to go to a village where they will find a colt tied up, one that no one has ridden. They were to untie the colt and bring it to him. Why? Because he needed it. (Luke 19:28–34). I've always found it fascinating in all of my years of sitting in an Easter service; I have never heard a sermon about the person

1. Director of Health Care Services at Siena Center.

who provided the colt? But obviously this person was someone the Lord could trust to pull off a very important task. Someone he could count on. Someone who served quietly, but served nevertheless; that was Therese! During my social/political work in Detroit with Sister Nitz, Therese was there, too. Writing letters, folding and stuffing envelopes, driving people to and from rallies. She “tied up the colt”....and it always was there when we needed it!

It was the same with the man carrying a jar of water who met the disciples prior to the Passover meal. They needed a room to have their meal with the Lord. This man knew where to lead them to the owner of the house. All was prepared. Jesus could count on him. (Luke 22:10)

Two important events. Two important people. They led, in some ways, quiet lives, but their contributions, faithfulness, and service led to a chain of events which ultimately led to the salvation of many throughout the world. I believe Therese’s life had a quiet impact on so many lives. Even though it may not have created much fanfare, her quiet presence still set off a chain of events in service to God.

However, there was one aspect of Therese’s life that did make a strong impact on my life: her card playing! ☺ I remember her trying to teach me how to play gin rummy. Boy! Did she try!! She went over the suits, the game rules, everything — but to no avail. I just couldn’t get it! I just didn’t have the head for it. But Therese was patient and steadfast with her teaching. Unfortunately, it wasn’t until years later, I was able to play the game. I was sorry I never I got to play with her. She would have been impressed. Even though I know she would have beaten me over and over again!

The last time I saw Sister Therese was two years ago. She was still the same in a lot of ways. Kind; thoughtful; a smile on her face and always on her way to a “card game”! ☺ I know she will be missed. I know I will miss her.

A colt, an upper room, and now Sister Therese. God has placed us on this earth to make an impact on each other. Therese has definitely done that for me. May the Lord’s perpetual light shine upon her now — and forever more — as she rests in peace!