



Sister Lois (Mary Mark) Vanderbeke, OP
Born to earthly life: May 7, 1936
Religious profession: August 15, 1958
Entered eternal life: June 4, 2016

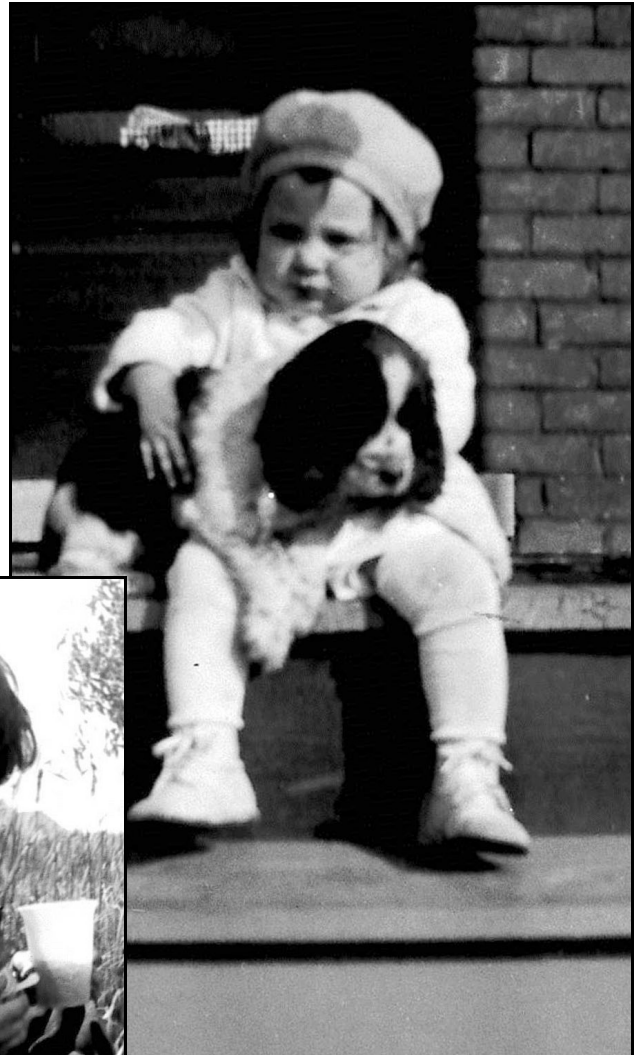
*Those who instruct many in justice
will shine like stars forever.*

Daniel 12, 3

On May 7, 1936, Leontine (Teeny Blomme) and Joseph A. Vanderbeke of Detroit welcomed a daughter, soon baptized Lois Marie at Assumption Grotto Parish.

After her graduation from Nativity High School, she entered the Racine Dominican postulate in the fall of 1954. She was received into the novitiate on August 17, 1956, as Sister Mary Mark of the Poverty of Jesus, and celebrated her first profession on August 15, 1958. (She would resume her baptismal name in 1968.)

As a member of the first class to remain at the motherhouse for a second year of “juniorate” after profession, she spent one of those years teaching at nearby Saint Mary’s School. Before leaving the juniorate at the end of summer in 1960, she received her baccalaureate degree from Dominican College and was assigned to teach at



October 1937



Young Lois



Lois with her family during her home visit as a postulant

Saint Catherine's High School. Associate Joe Grauwels would later recall his time as a freshman in her classroom—"so young and yet such a good teacher!"

The following term she studied full-time at Marquette University, earning a master's degree in mathematics. Then, after one more year at Saint Catherine's, she began a three-year doctoral program in math at the University of Illinois at Urbana, interrupted only during the summer of 1964 as she prepared with her classmates at the motherhouse for her final profession.

Armed with her new doctorate, Sister Mary Mark began teaching at Dominican College in the fall of 1966.

Given the option in 1968, Sister Mary Mark, along with nearly all of the other sisters, resumed her baptismal name, Lois, and exchanged the habit for lay clothing. (She and a few others had been secretly accumulating new wardrobes for some months in expectation of the changes!)

Lois was appointed dean of Dominican College in 1970, and the following year, dean of continuing education and the college's new graduate school. The 1974–1975 term found her at the University of Wisconsin in Madison pursuing post-doctoral courses in finance, after which she returned to Racine to succeed Sister JoEllen Moser as the community's finance director, a role she would ably fill until 1998. Her filing system in that office was unique — piles of papers on every available surface, including most of the floor — but she always knew where to find exactly what she wanted!

When the community decided in 1977 to negotiate with parishes for lay-equivalency salaries, Lois pursued that delicate task with then vice president Sister Jean Verber. And she was at the heart of the development of the "Resource Proposals" which would remodel the congregation's economic structures to better serve its mission and ministries. Her financial management was consistently formed by those ideals.

After her 1998 retirement from her post as finance director, Lois served as chair/coordinator of the sponsorship office (2000–2006) and as mission fund administrator (2001–2008), and was often requested to advise other religious congregations in their financial planning and to lecture at conferences of the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutions (NATRI). She was influential also in the United States bishops' creation of the national Office for Religious Retirement in the early 1980s. And she was active on a number of boards and committees in Racine and beyond with an aim at directing



Lois with her parents



Lois, brother Jerry, and their parents, about 1970

finances toward human needs, rights, and development.

Already during her last years in the finance office, Lois became aware that something was not “right” with her brain. But she found ways to cope and to work with whatever capacity remained to her. While living with Sisters Rosaire Lucassen and Karen Fredrickson on Park Avenue, she would often walk to Lakeshore Manor, and would avail herself of rides to Kenosha Care, to visit with sisters in residence in those facilities. Even her dreams



Classmates, about 2015

Back: Ss. Rose Stietz, Mary Ann Weyker, Lorene Haas, Jean Verber, Yvonne Arnoldi; Front: Carla Mae Streeter, Joyce Quintana, Lois Vanderbeke, Betty Olley

were populated with children in need, and she was once heard crying out, “Karen, they have no one; if we don’t take care of them, we’ll have that on our conscience!”

For a time, Lois was able to continue living on Park Avenue, but spent most of her weekday daytime hours at Siena Center as it became unsafe for her to be alone while Rosaire and Karen were occupied elsewhere. Finally, on February 29, 2016, she moved to Lakeshore Manor.

“For many months,” wrote Rosaire, Lois had “wanted to go home and she was praying that God would get the message. She did not want things to go on the way they were. She knew they were not right for her.” On June 3 she was diagnosed with pneumonia, and sisters began staying with her around the clock. Then, about 9:20 on the morning of June 4, after a night with much difficulty breathing in spite of oxygen and other comfort measures, she surprised everyone by making a quick and very peaceful exit into the arms of God. Rosaire was with her at the time.

Besides Racine Dominican sisters and associates, Lois was survived by her sisters Sharon (John) Paul, Doreen (Roberto) Arevalo, and Margaret (David) LaRose; her sister-in-law Claudia Vanderbeke; and nieces and nephews. Her parents and her brother Gerald had preceded her in death.

Lois’ funeral liturgy was celebrated at Siena Center on the morning of June 10. Her body was interred in the community plot in Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.



The Family



Cousin S. Joann Blomme and Lois, about 2015

