

# Sister Therese Van Thull, OP



Born to Earthly Life on April 3, 1926

First Profession on August 15, 1951

Entered Eternal Life on November 11, 2022

**T**HERESE VAN THULL was born on April 3, 1926 in Kimberly, Wisconsin to Anton and Marie Van Thull. As the child of Dutch immigrants, she learned a strong work ethic early at their family-owned business. At age six, she was assigned to fill donuts in the Van Thull Dutchmade Bakery in Kimberly, a job in which she took great pride. She loved working in the bakery, often sharing many happy memories of frying, filling and glazing donuts, frosting cakes, rolling out pie dough and making the thousands of

loaves of bread that her family sold each year. Therese was often in charge at the bakery during her teenage years, hiring bakers and keeping things running smoothly, all while going to high school and achieving good grades.

After graduation, Therese decided to become a teacher on the recommendation of S. Regina Williams, who would become a mentor and close friend. She lived with some Racine Dominicans during this time and became close with many of the Sisters. She felt the call to religious life and became a Racine Dominican Sister, making her First Profession on August 15, 1951 and Final Vows on August 15, 1957. She was given the name Sister Marie Antone of the Compassion of Mary.

She received a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Dominican College in Racine in 1955, and a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Dayton in Ohio in 1969. She was a teacher and principal for more than 50 years, starting with schools throughout Wisconsin and Michigan, including St. Patrick and St. Rose in Racine and St. Clement in Michigan. It was during her years in Michigan that she took on the role of principal. During that time she said, "We strive to educate students in an atmosphere of peace, joy and love, working to help them build a sure foundation so they may grow as responsible and creative Catholics."

Returning to Wisconsin, she said she "felt drawn to Milwaukee and to being a more active participant in working for justice in the African-American community." She began teaching in Milwaukee, at Holy Angels, St. Leo, Messmer High School, and the Urban Day School. With the support and assistance of the Racine Dominican Community, she established the Mary Bethune Reading Academy, with a mission to help women in poverty further their education, teach reading skills and prepare them to take their GEDs. She knew that advancing their education would mean higher paying jobs and a path out of poverty.

She also tutored at Westside Academy in Milwaukee for many years before returning to Siena and teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to members of the Racine Community. S. Therese believed strongly in education, and spent her life working to open opportunities for education to those in the margins.

S. Therese loved to garden and spent many hours around the Siena campus planting and tending to her flowers and plants. She also read daily about current events to stay informed about justice issues in Racine and beyond. She would often write thoughtful letters to the editor for the local paper, or articles for her fellow Sisters and Associates on issues of justice, helping them stay informed and asking questions to get people thinking. Her heart for justice was evident in all that she did.

As her friend S. Regina said, "S. Therese is fully present in the 'now' and driven by justice to help people." We thank God for her powerful witness to the Dominican Mission of committed to truth – compelled to justice. she gave to us all.

