

Sister Audrey Williamsen, OP



Born to Earthly Life on June 20, 1926

First Profession on August 5, 1947

Entered Eternal Life on January 12, 2022

AUDREY MARY WILLIAMSEN was born in Little Chute, Wisconsin on June 20, 1926, the second of three children of George and Mary Williamsen. Audrey described her family life as a church-centered home. She was taught by the Racine Dominicans from second through twelfth grade and found their life and work to be inspiring. Audrey joined the Racine Dominicans and professed vows in 1947.

S. Audrey loved learning and books, and that passion was reflected in both her education and ministry. She received a B.S in Education from St. Norbert (DePere, WI), a B.A. in Library Science from the College of St. Catherine (St. Paul, MN) and a M.S. in Library Science from Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, MI). Audrey spent the first 22 years of her religious life as a teacher in schools in Wisconsin and Michigan, including St. Edward in Racine, Ss. Peter and Paul in Green Bay and Holy Cross in Kaukauna.

S. Audrey's love of reading and desire to share that love with others would shape her next, beloved ministry – as a librarian. She went back to school and obtained both a bachelor's and master's degree in library science.

She began her work as the librarian at Dominican College, at St. Clement in Centerline, Michigan, Siena Center in Racine and St. Catharine College in Kentucky.

Her work as a librarian was fulfilling, and she brought passion and hard work to the role. At Dominican College, she set up a course of study that led to a Librarian Certificate for elementary school librarians. As Director of the Library at St. Catharine College, she reclassified all their printed and non-printed materials to the Library of Congress system, not as easy task according to S. Audrey. She was also instrumental in helping students at St. Catharine's have access to more than a million books thanks to computers that linked their library with dozens more across the state in the mid-1990's, as this new technology was being created.

After becoming the Head Librarian at Siena in Racine, S. Audrey doubled the library's holdings and established a department to handle AV equipment and production. She was an avid reader; always reading snippets of books as she put them away. If she liked a book, she'd check it out and she did that frequently. She regularly added new books, in a variety of subjects, including many justice issues, to help our Community stay current. For all who used the library, she was always very patient, understanding and would readily extend the return date for a book.

Along with her work in the Siena Library, she served many roles on Campus. S. Audrey assisted the treasurer, maintained health records, helped local groups to request the use of space at Siena, and even operated the switchboard. She was happy to help wherever she could. And you would always find her with a book in her hand or offering a recommendation for a good read. A Sister once said that S. Audrey was "the Guardian of Our Words," which was a most fitting description.

Audrey was a woman of strong faith, deep commitment and very faithful to prayer. We are grateful for her faithful witness as a Dominican, as a guardian of our words and for the countless ways she enriched the lives of so many by opening new worlds through books.

