

Sister Marie Catherine Olinger, OP



Born to Earthly Life on December 7, 1930

First Profession on August 15, 1955

Entered Eternal Life on January 31, 2021

MARIE CATHERINE Olinger (Dominic Marie) was born December 7, 1930 to Leon J. and Katherine Olinger in Strawberry Point, Iowa. She had a brother and a sister, and after her mother died when she was nine, her father remarried and Elizabeth became her stepmother. They were members of St. Mary's Parish in Strawberry Point.

She attended Iowa State Teacher's College where she studied biology and chemistry and graduated in 1952. It was in her senior year that Sister Marie Catherine felt called to religious life. At the campus Newman Center, she met a Dominican priest who introduced her to the Dominican value of truth, to which Marie Catherine was drawn. He talked to her about the Racine Dominicans, a community living the value of truth, and Marie Catherine wrote to the Sisters of her interest. She received a warm and welcoming response, which she said felt like "the grace of God."

After joining the Racine Dominican Community, Sister Marie Catherine spent many years in service to others in teaching, prayer group organization and training, as well as young adult ministry. She began teaching in 1952 at St. Catherine High School in Racine. She also served at Dominican College in Racine and Bethune Reading Academy in Milwaukee as well as in Detroit, Michigan.

When Sister Marie Catherine finished her teaching ministry in schools, she found a new calling to continue educating Catholics of all ages. She became involved at the Charismatic Renewal Center in Albuquerque, NM. The Center, through the teaching and mentoring of Sister Marie Catherine, helped form leadership for over 60 prayer groups in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. She said, "It was a great blessing to see so many people grow in faith and come to a deeper relationship with God. It brought such renewal to their and to my life." Those years of ministry gave Sister Marie Catherine some of her fondest and most cherished memories.

Sister Marie Catherine also ministered among young adults while in New Mexico, helping them to grow their faith and prayer lives. Her contemplative, compassionate and prayerful presence helped them find and feed their own souls.

She returned to Racine in 2012, and having lived for so many years in the southwest, her return to Racine's cold winters was a drastic change. It was a rare moment to see her without her signature scarf – lightweight in the summer months and wool in the winter months.

We remember Sister Marie Catherine's deep prayer life and spirituality, her grateful and tender heart, and her warm and welcoming smile. As a true teacher, her words and actions were a lesson in living the Dominican values of prayer, study, service and community.

