



## Sister Agnes Ballweg, OP

Born to earthly life: June 15, 1925  
Religious profession: August 4, 1944  
Entered eternal life: November 24, 2016

*"We are still very dedicated to helping all people and are able to bring the 'Good News' to them."*

*S. Agnes speaking of the Racine Dominicans*

**I**N HER 72 YEARS AS A RACINE DOMINICAN, Sister Agnes Ballweg witnessed many changes in community life. And through them all, she was a consummate community-builder to the very end. She knew strong communities are built on genuine care and respect for one another – and a tasty batch of cupcakes helps, too! Just three weeks before her death, S. Agnes baked Halloween cupcakes for all the sisters living at Siena. Then she proudly led the parade dressed as Cleopatra, a costume for which she won first place!

Known for her radiant smile and the joy she found in life, S. Agnes had an infectious spirit. At her remembering service, various nieces and nephews, as well as great-nieces and -nephews, spoke warmly of their times with "Sister Aggie." "She was timeless, non-judgmental and fun," great-niece, Lucy Kubly, said. "She was a jokester who could laugh at herself... She meant so much to us."

Agnes Adeline was the sixth of eight children born to Jacob and Magdalena Ballweg on a farm near Roxbury, WI. She attended St. Norbert School, where she liked school and her Racine Dominican teachers. When in fourth grade, she didn't have transportation into the village, so she boarded with several other students at the convent. When she was in sixth grade, her mother died, and Agnes recalled how tenderly her father cared for her and her siblings. After completing eighth grade, she asked to join the Dominicans – a decision her father supported, but wanted her to be certain it was what *she* wanted.

At her reception, Agnes became Sister Magdala, the name she carried until returning to her baptismal name in 1968. For nearly 50 years, she served as teacher and principal in many schools around Wisconsin, a brief time in Michigan, and ten treasured years in Ketchikan, AK. At each mission, she was respected as an excellent teacher, loved by her students.

S. Agnes went to Ketchikan to serve as secretary at Holy Name, the only Catholic school in the Juneau Diocese. But in her second year, the school needed a sixth grade teacher, and at age 57, she accepted the challenge, teaching for the next nine years. She enjoyed everything about her years in Ketchikan – her students, the school community, the sisters with whom she served. She reveled in Alaska's pristine beauty, and the whales which could be seen from her classroom during their yearly migrations. "It's hard to explain," S. Agnes reflected on the beauty of her surroundings. "Sometimes I would get up at night just to look out the window at the ocean. And the sunrises and sunsets were gorgeous."

Even with the physical limitations and intense pain of her last years, S. Agnes continued to live for others. "I recall her most for her smile, her joy in spite of pain and her ability to create a sense of community between diverse personalities with an innate graciousness," S. Maryann McMahon said in welcoming guests to S. Agnes' funeral liturgy. "Her candy and dessert creations were reasons to gather around a table for sharing the stories of daily life. In those simple encounters, relationships deepened and community bonds were forged more deeply."