



## Sister Oda Marie DeGroot, OP

Born to earthly life: October 27, 1916  
Religious profession: August 4, 1940  
Entered eternal life: May 24, 2017

*"It's a beautiful life! There's no better life."*

*– Sister Oda Marie's reflection on being a Racine Dominican*

**L**AMBERTHA MARY ELIZABETH (SISTER ODA MARIE) was born on October 27, 1916, the third of Henry and Wilhelmina DeGroot's four children. The Dutch-born immigrants settled on a farm near Northland, MI, to raise their family. Lambertha's birth was difficult, and the attending midwife, unable to deliver the child, sent for the doctor. "I was a big baby, and Mom was glad we both made it through the delivery," S. Oda Marie said.

Lambertha learned at a young age to work hard and appreciate life, lessons that sustained her joyfully for 100 years. She spoke fondly of being raised on the farm with her siblings and helping with chores. Her aunt, S. Lambert, and her sister, S. Alma, became Racine Dominican Sisters. Seeing their happiness, Lambertha joined the community at age 21, receiving the name Sister Oda Marie a year later. She brought skills such as cooking, sewing and embroidery that she learned at home. She completed food service seminars and tailoring classes to broaden the depth of her skills. For nearly 40 years, she ministered in food service at the motherhouse and in various missions throughout Wisconsin and Illinois. "S. Oda Marie loved to cook and share with others the fruits of that gift," S. Maryann McMahon noted. She sewed clothes for needy children from donated fabric and was well known for her beautifully embroidered pillowcases and Red Riding Hood dolls. Celebrating her 75<sup>th</sup> jubilee in 2015, S. Oda Marie reflected, "I have found joy in my ministry and cherished all the places where I was sent to serve."

In 1979, S. Oda Marie began a ministry especially dear to her at the Salvatorian Mission Warehouse in New Holstein, WI. For the next 24 years she volunteered there, recruiting other sisters to help during summers. "We were exhausted after the first day," laughed S. Rose Marie Anthony, recounting the strenuous work of packing boxes. She recalled how strong S. Oda Marie was and how she loved both the people with whom she served and the work of repackaging sample medications and vitamins to send to foreign missions throughout the world. Repackaging allowed the center to send more needed items to sites with significantly less bulk and waste.

"Oda Marie was kindness personified," S. Juliana Dischler said. "Wherever she was, she made things lighter and brighter." Other sisters and family members shared numerous stories of her kind, cheerful and fun-loving nature. She was a consummate "people person" who lifted spirits by her very nature. S. Oda Marie stated her philosophy clearly: "There's not time to be grouchy and being grouchy doesn't get you anywhere!"

She loved to travel, and among other adventures, she visited her ancestral homeland of Holland twice. She delighted in meeting relatives there and was committed to keeping the family connections alive. That endearing smile and enthusiastic embrace for which she so was known warmed hearts and bruised a few hands on at least two continents.

Her love of life and people was S. Oda Marie's hallmark. She appreciated having fun and brought that sense of fun to others naturally. But 100 years is a long time to maintain one's energy. When S. Susan Klein visited her at Lakeshore recently, S. Oda Marie admitted, "You have to make your own fun in life. But you know, I'm getting tired of making my own fun!" She now enjoys a well-earned rest ... but is probably already instigating fun for family members, classmates and friends who welcomed her Home.