

Sister Mary William Posthauer, OP

“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

~Luke 23:43

On the afternoon of June 25, 2016 God called Sister Mary William Posthauer to her eternal home. Sister was 99 years of age and had devoted 81 years to her religious life with the Dominican Sisters of Amityville.

Born to Charles and Elizabeth Posthauer in College Point, Queens on January 24, 1917, Agnes was the second of five daughters. The family lived in St. Fidelis Parish, College Point where Agnes first met the Dominican Sisters of Amityville. She began her high school years in what was then called St. Agnes Academy but in her second year transferred to the newly formed Dominican Sisters Juniorate located in Watermill, NY to complete her studies. Agnes was in the first graduating class and entered the Novitiate in Amityville on February 2, 1935. She received her habit and the name Sister Mary William on August 15th, 1935 and on August 18, 1936 pronounced her vows. Her ministry was education.

She began teaching in the elementary schools of St. Margaret’s parish in Middle Village, Queens and then in Sacred Heart parish in East Glendale, Queens. While teaching in Sacred Heart, Sister began studies for a B.A. degree at St. John’s University with a major concentration in Latin. In 1948 Sister Mary William was transferred to Dominican Commercial High School to teach Spanish and English. Sister then pursued a Master’s degree in Spanish, also at St. John’s University. In addition to her teaching duties at Dominican Commercial and pursuing her Master’s, Sister supervised the production of the yearbook, doing all the photography by herself. Sister also was moderator of the debate club.

In 1966 Sister Mary William was transferred to Molloy College, Rockville Centre, NY and served in both the Education and Foreign Languages Departments. While on the faculty, Sister began her doctoral studies at Teachers College at Columbia University, NY. Her time at Columbia was a particularly enjoyable experience for her. At Columbia she especially enjoyed meeting people from all over the world. Always physically active, Sister walked in the neighborhood around the University and visited many of the Hispanic families who lived in the area. Because of the number of Jewish students and neighbors, Sister also sat shiva with them when a relative died. Additionally, she tutored some of her fellow doctoral students from other countries who were having trouble writing their dissertation in correct English grammar. Sister was definitely a person who loved people of all kinds in all different places.

After receiving her EdD., Sister Mary applied for and won grants for further study at Fairfield University, CT, Temple University, PA and for two years at the Catholic University in Valencia, Spain. There she also became involved with Peace Corps Volunteers who were required to learn Swahili. Sister called her experience of learning Swahili “fun” but believed it unlikely she would become fluent in it. Sister later became Academic Dean at Molloy College which she described



as a wonderful experience because she came to know more about Nursing through its highly acclaimed Department.

From 1982-1988 Sister responded to a need for a Principal at Holy Redeemer parish school which was receiving an influx of Spanish speaking parishioners. While there she served both the children and the adult Spanish speaking parishioners. In 1988 she was asked by the Congregation to come to Amityville as Director of Sisters’ Studies. She moved to Amityville where she used her spare time to become the Religious Education Coordinator at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal parish in Point Lookout, NY. Subsequently, she became the Religious Education Instructor with extra duties at St. Matthew parish in Dix Hills, NY.

When Dominican Village Retirement and Assisted Living Community opened in 1992, Sister Mary William came on as a Volunteer. She taught the residents Spanish and Line Dancing and produced a Newsletter for which she did all the photography. When her sight became impaired, she began special sessions for the residents with low vision and made personal visits to the residents. At the same time she became active in both the Dominican Village Civic Association and that of North Amityville until she could no longer continue because of near blindness and hearing loss. Her interests remained active, however, as she listened to books on tape and, with the help of Sister Nivard Stabile who faithfully read the daily newspaper and religious material to her for many years, Sister Mary kept up with world and local events as long as possible.

Sister Mary William was honored publicly by her Amityville Dominicans in a yearly Gala event, held at the Garden City Hotel, as an extraordinary member of the Congregation and of the larger community who embodied the best of the Dominican tradition. Additionally, she was honored by the Dominican Village Board of Directors as a treasured volunteer and a source of inspiration and encouragement to the residents. Sister Mary William certainly added new life to her many years. A woman of deep spirituality, great intelligence, generous and hospitable, Sister Mary William was an extraordinary person. Sister was always curious and, in the Dominican Tradition, sought Truth in God’s wonderful world of people.

Sister Mary William’s siblings, including Sister Anne Patrice, OP and Sister Mary Mercy, OP, predeceased her but she will be dearly missed by the Amityville Congregation and by her nieces, nephews, her sister Joan, and their extended families.

All services will take place in St. Albert’s Chapel at Queen of the Rosary Motherhouse. The wake will take place on Tuesday, June 28, 2016 beginning with a Prayer Service at 3p.m. and at 7p.m. On June 29, 2016, following a Prayer Service at 10:10a.m., the Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 10:30a.m. Burial in the Sisters’ cemetery will follow immediately after Mass.

