Sister Mary Therese Golden, OP
(1926 – 2014)

Sister Mary Therese Golden was born on November 28, 1926, in Chicago, to Eugene and Frances (Madigan) Golden; she was the fourth of seven children. They were members of Our Lady of Good Counsel and the children attended the parish school. Mary Therese then attended Loretto Englewood Academy, staffed by the Ladies of Loretto. “I thoroughly enjoyed my high school days…but I always found my way back to the Adrians at Good Counsel,” Sister Therese noted in her autobiography.

After graduating from high school she entered the Congregation on January 20, 1945, at the age of nineteen. In her autobiography, Therese shared some thoughts and feelings about her decision to enter. “I believe I had always wanted to enter the convent. For as far back as I can recall I loved children. I was the neighborhood babysitter and I loved the nuns and the joy they seemed to radiate. Religious life appeared so well ordered and happy. I liked that…but could I dare to think I could be part of that?”

At reception, she received the name Sister Frances Eugene and on August 13, 1946, she made first profession. For the next ten years, Sister Therese was assigned to teach in several parish grade schools: Sacred Heart in Pensacola, Florida, for four years; St. Jude in Detroit for two years; St. Mary in Adrian, Michigan, for two years; St. Laurence in Chicago for one year.

From 1956 to 1962, Sister Therese was assigned to St. John in Ypsilanti, Michigan, as principal of both the grade school and high school. During the wake service Sister Marcine Klemm described how Therese arranged to move the high school, that for two years had been located in the basement of the grade school building, to the new high school building a mile and a half away:

A huge semi-truck appeared in the grade/parish parking lot. Sister Therese made the announcement that, class-by-class, students were to put their books in their book bags and bring them to the truck. Then they were to take their desk to the truck and get in line with their class...two-by-two...[and] walk the mile and a half to the school. There, each student picked up a desk and carried it into the new high school building and put it in the designated classroom: freshman, sophomore and junior. The students took their book bags from the truck and went to their designated classroom and classes continued without a hitch. In my book it was a remarkable feat!!!

When Sister Therese finished her term at St. John, she taught at Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, Illinois; the Colegio in Nassau, the Bahamas; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Wickliffe, Ohio; and Aquinas High School in Southgate, Michigan. By this time she was recognized by her peers and the Congregation as an excellent teacher, principal and administrator.

But Sister Therese also had been dealing unsuccessfully with an addiction that had plagued her for many years. In a reflection from a retreat in 1982, she wrote:
I was getting sicker and in my sick mind God was quickly changing from Compassionate Lover to Someone to fear. I wanted to live, because I was afraid to die...and I wanted to die because I was so fearful of living. By the time I got to recovery my fears were buried deep inside me. Anger took over because somehow anger meant strength and fear meant weakness. AA has helped alleviate some of those fears...some of the anger is still there covering other defects, hurt, pain, insecurities, etc. So I know that I still have a long way to go.

After spending time in treatment, Sister Therese was invited to participate in the Congregation’s newly formed Health Panel. She wrote, “Sister Noreen McKeough, knowing my deep interest and involvement with Alcoholics Anonymous, asked me if I would ever consider working in this new apostolate full-time.”

After formal education in the field of alcoholism and addiction, Sister Therese began conducting workshops for women religious on the topic of addiction. She was in touch with Superiors of other Congregations who were concerned about some of their women. Austin Ripley, the founder of Guest House, called her about the possibility of a Pilgrim House for women religious in Lake Orion, Michigan.

For the next twenty-three years, Sister Therese worked in the Alcoholism Centers within the Lutheran Health Care System as counselor; program manager and corporate representative; and coordinator of addiction services to religious communities. Eventually, she became program director at Guest House.

After retiring in 1997, Sister Therese continued to minister as a consultant in chemical dependency for another ten years. In one issue of the Guest House newsletter, she wrote, “It has been my privilege to witness a miracle – the literally hundreds of Sisters who have learned to deal with their addiction, and returned to their communities as functioning, effective members.” Sister Therese received the Sister Ignatia Gavin Award from the National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and Related Drug Problems for her years of service and leadership.

In 2004, Sister Mary Therese Golden returned to Adrian and lived in the Dominican Life Center/Maria until she died on November 20, 2014.

During the wake/remembrance service Sister Maria Goretti Browne, Vicaress of Holy Rosary Chapter, thanked Sister Mary Therese “for not letting your demon control you, but for using that very demon to help hundreds of women religious...live productive lives within their own Congregations.”

Addressing the Golden family, Sister Maria Goretti said:

*These last years must have been painful for you and also for this woman, who did so much for so many, and now had a hard time taking care of herself personally...who could no longer hear clearly and easily. What a cross for her, for all of you! And you were faithful. You visited, called, sent cards. You blessed her in every way you were able. Now it is her turn to bless you. And so, Mary Therese, your work is not over. May you have eternal peace – but – may we feel your presence with us for years to come.*
Sister Rose Celeste O’Connell said that when she first started her chemical dependency ministry, Sister Therese wrote and called her often to see how she was doing. She always had an encouraging word, a book and articles for her to read. “Therese always gave me support, love and compassionate care, for which I am truly grateful,” Sister Rose Celeste said.

Sister Therese’s nephew, Bob Golden, expressed his gratitude for her loving support and care of the family. “She was the perfect blend of idealist and realist.” He also shared an account of how his Aunt Therese used her influence to help his son get a second review that got him admitted to the high school of his choice.

In her homily Sister Nancy Murray spoke about Sister Therese, her speech teacher and Sodality Moderator at Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, Illinois. To her, Sister Therese was both a pioneer and a treasure.

She was the first woman religious to work at Lutheran General in their chemical dependency treatment program. [Her] guarded quality, which at one time...kept her secret, now turned around to help others, to protect, walk with, and encourage the healing that would restore self-esteem and dignity. She remained faithful to the principles of AA, knowing “one day at a time” was all she had; it’s all we have. I believe like St. Paul she is saying, “This then is what I pray, May He give you the power, through the Spirit, for your hidden self to grow strong.”

Fr. Jim Hug, SJ, offered the following prayer during the funeral liturgy:

_Our Loving God,
We offer these prayers for and with our sister, Therese,
In our desire to teach and care for our hurting world and all its children,
help us to be like Therese,
Gentle and caring
Courageous in admitting our needs and welcoming help
Challenging and generous in our care for the neediest,
Trusting always in the readiness of your forgiveness and the fullness of your Life and Love._

_We make our prayer in the name of Jesus,
Through the intercession of our sister Therese,
And in the gentle care of your healing and transforming Spirit
where we live now and forever. Amen._