

Sister Mary Harper, C.PP.S.

Born: July 26, 1938

Professed: August 10, 1959

Entered into Life: February 4, 2025

Verse on her memorial card:

"This is what God asks of you, only this: To act justly, to love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8



February 7, 2025

Dear Sisters, Relatives, and Friends,

Shortly after 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, God called our Sister Mary Harper to her eternal home. As she made this final journey she was surrounded by members of her family, community, and care team.

Mary Harper was born in St. Louis, Missouri on July 26, 1938, the oldest of two children of Ora and Helen (Berns) Harper. She was baptized at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish and attended elementary school there. During her high school years at St. Elizabeth Academy, she met our Precious Blood Sisters.

Mary was received into our novitiate on July 25, 1957, and professed first vows on August 10, 1959. She received the name Sister Robert Ann which she continued to use until recent years. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at Fontbonne College. She completed additional coursework in administration at Webster and Maryville Colleges in St. Louis, at the University of Dayton in Dayton, OH, and at St. Thomas College in St. Paul, MN.

Sister Mary was a dedicated, super-organized, and much-loved teacher and principal. She taught at Most Sacred Heart in Florissant. She was both a teacher and a principal at St. Stephen Protomartyr in St. Louis and at Assumption in O'Fallon. She served as principal at St. Paul in Fenton, St. George and St. Monica in St. Louis, and at St. Sabina in Florissant.

After retiring from education, Sister Mary continued to share her talents in varied ways. She served as a driver and as local coordinator for the retirement community at our motherhouse. She ministered as manager of the St. Elizabeth Adult Day Care Center in Maplewood and as the coordinator of the Sisters of Mercy retirement home. She reached out to the poor and needy at Saints Joachim and Ann Care Service.

Sr. Mary continued to appreciate those whom she served, evidenced by her saving letters they wrote to her. These letters from former students, teachers, pastors, and others affirm the excellence, respect, and loving care with which she ministered.

- A former student wrote: “There is little I remember about elementary school, but I do remember third grade. You taught me so much. I only have one wish: that I can impact someone’s life the way you impacted all your students’ lives.”
- A former teacher wrote: “I could not have had a better principal. Sr. Robert Ann was able to create a positive atmosphere, one where the faculty felt free to be themselves and challenged to teach to the best of their ability.”
- A former pastor wrote: “I always found her ready to listen to people. Pastors will be contacted by parents who feel that a principal is unfair or unapproachable. When she was principal, I rarely had to deal with parents in this way.”
- An adult day care client wrote: “The Center is not the same without you. Mom enjoys herself, but since you’ve been gone, she doesn’t come home with that same spark and enthusiasm.”

Sr. Mary poured love into each of her ministries, and her love for family was also strong and sure. When her mother needed care, Sr. Mary was there. A treasured photo of her brother’s family was often proudly shared, even after aphasia robbed her of the ability to speak their names. Though recently her words were few, she communicated volumes through her smile (sometimes mischievous). The words that seemed to come most easily were, “Thank you,” and “I love you.”

Sister Mary was preceded in death by her parents and by her brother, Robert. She is survived by her sister-in-law, Donna; her nephews, Robert and Tim (Gina) Harper; and by her nieces, Melissa (Bill) Murphy and Christa (Brent) Batliner and their families. Please hold them and all who will miss her earthly presence in prayer.

We will welcome Sister Mary’s body to St. Joseph’s Chapel at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 11, 2025. The Sharing of Memories will begin at 10:30 a.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. Her burial will be in our convent cemetery.

In September 2021, Sister Mary wrote a reflection on what our CPPS community might look like in five years. She penned a beautiful description of “faith-filled women” and said, “In five years, I wonder if I will be in their group here on this earth or with those in the Kingdom. I HOPE to be in the Kingdom of Heaven – ready to welcome them when their time comes.” Her hope has been fulfilled, and we await her ready welcome.

Sincerely,

Sr. Janice Bader

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