

**St. Marianne Cope, O.S.F.
(Germany/USA) 1838-1918**

*Opened two of the first Catholic Hospitals in Central New York:
St. Elizabeth in Utica and St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse.
Answering the request of King Kalakaua of Hawaii, Sister Marianne and
several sisters traveled to Molokai to care for lepers with Fr. Damian.
Operated a school and hospital and
cared for Fr. Damian after he contracted leprosy.¹*



Maria Anna Barbara Koob was born on January 23, 1838, in Heppenheim, Grand Duchy of Hesse [Germany]. Just a year after her birth, Barbara Koob immigrated to the United States of America (USA) at which time the family name was changed to Cope. Her family settled in Utica, New York, where she attended the parish school until 8th grade. When her father became an invalid, Barbara Cope worked in a factory to assist the family financially. She first learned about medical care from the Sisters of St. Francis of Syracuse who came into her home to care for her ailing father.² Her father died in 1862 when she was 24 years old. This along with her siblings' maturity, permitted her to leave the factory to pursue religious life.

Barbara entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Syracuse, New York, taking the name Sister Marianne. The first sisters of St. Francis were all nurses or teachers for the first 50 years or so. Sister Marianne was both. Speaking German, she initially became a teacher and later a principal at a school for immigrant children in New York.

She, then, helped direct the opening of the first two Catholic hospitals in central New York. She arranged for students from the Geneva Medical College in New York to work at the hospital, but also stipulated that patients should be able to refuse treatment by them. It was one of the first times in history that the rights of a patient to refuse treatment were recognized.

By 1883 Sister Marianne Cope became the Superior General of her congregation. She answered the request of Hawaiian King Kalakaua, who had invited more than fifty religious institutes, to care for the victims of leprosy. Sister Marianne and six Franciscan sisters traveled to the Hawaiian Island in 1883, first operating a hospital and school for the leper community on Oahu, and subsequently on Molokai. It was at the hospital on the island of Oahu, where victims of leprosy were sent for triage. The most severe patients were then sent to the island of Molokai.

Sister Marianne Cope also cared for St. Father Damian who ministered among the lepers after he contracted leprosy and died in 1889. Mother Marianne miraculously never suffered from leprosy. She died at age 80 on Molokai on August 9, 1918 and was buried there.

Her remains were returned to the Syracuse, New York, mother house, St. Anthony Convent chapel, 1024 Court Street in Syracuse, New York, in 2005 and then enshrined in the Honolulu cathedral in 2014. Mother Marianne Cope was beatified on May 14, 2005, and canonized on October 21 2012, by Pope Benedict XVI. (Memorial - January 23).³

*"Let us make the very best use of the precious moments
and do all in our power for His dear sake
and for His greater honor and glory."*

Saint Marianne Cope's biography for the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities' Museum:⁴

Marianne Cope was a Professed Member of the Sisters of St. Francis and is Recognized as an Extraordinary Woman of the 1800's and Early 1900's. Her Call to Act as a Servant of God and the Franciscan Spirit she Embraced, provided a Foundation of Values that Gave her the Courage and Compassion to Accept Difficult Challenges with Diplomacy and Grace.

As a leader in her community, Mother Marianne was instrumental in opening two of the first Catholic Hospitals in Central New York: St. Elizabeth in Utica and St. Joseph's hospital in Syracuse. Recognizing the need for basic health care in a city of immigrants, she and a small group of women defied convention by purchasing a saloon in Syracuse, New York and transforming it into a hospital to serve the needs of a diverse community. Here they welcomed everyone and provided the same quality of care regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or economic means. They pioneered rules of patient's rights and cleanliness practices not seen before in the United States. And this was just the beginning. Throughout upstate New York, Mother Marianne and her growing community educated and provided healthcare to children and adults with dignity and compassion for all.

In 1883, Mother Marianne and a group of six other Sisters of St. Francis bravely journeyed across the United States by train and took a ship to the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii) to care for individuals believed to have leprosy (now known as Hansen's disease). They initially served at the Branch hospital at Kaka'ako on the island of Oahu to provide care for those exiled from their families. The king and queen then asked that the sisters open a home to care for the healthy children of patients and Marianne named it the Kapiolani Home in honor of the queen.

Mother Marianne traveled to Maui in 1884 where she was asked to manage Malulani Hospital, the island's first general hospital, as well as St. Anthony School. In 1888, she and the sisters moved to Kalaupapa to care for those with Hansen's disease who had been exiled to the remote peninsula on the island of Molokai. There she cared for Father Damien in his last months and attended temporarily to the boys' home that he had established there until the Sacred Heart Fathers sent a permanent replacement.

Mother Marianne not only provided healthcare to the girls in her care at Bishop Home in Kalaupapa, she offered healing for mind, body and spirit by creating a community that supported individual creativity, dignity and respect. A community of family was established enhanced by gardens, music, art, games and laughter. The grave sites of thousands of people who died from Hansen's disease cover the peninsula on Molokai. It is heartening to know that the sisters provided them with some measure of peace and comfort during their time there.

References:

- 1) "Saint Marianne Cope". CatholicSaints.Info. 21 September 2021. Web. 9 April 2022. <<https://catholicsaints.info/saint-marianne-cope/>>
- 2) Kristin Barrett-Anderson (9 June 2022). Personal Communication. Saint Marianne Cope Shrine and Museum, Syracuse, New York.
- 3) <https://www.simplycatholic.com/st-marianne-cope-a-saint-for-outcasts-and-lepers/> (accessed 16 Oct 2021).
- 4) Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities Museum. Saint Marianne Cope (1938-1918) Biography. Accessed 28 May 2022. <https://www.saintmarianne.org/her-story.html>

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls.* May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka