**Blessed Marianne Cope to be Canonized a Saint**

**Syracuse, N.Y., February 18, 2012** – Today the Vatican has announced Oct. 21, 2012 as the date for the canonization ceremony of Mother Marianne Cope. This ceremony will complete the canonization process and Mother Marianne will be venerated as a saint in the Catholic Church. A special day in the calendar of the church, Jan. 23, is designated as her feast day which is the day of her birth.

Sister Patricia Burkard, general minister of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities said, “Since notification of the Holy Father’s proclamation in December announcing that Blessed Marianne would be canonized a saint, we have been in joyful anticipation of hearing the date. Learning the date for the canonization ceremony completes the cycle of 37 years of efforts to get us to this moment. We now go forward in joyful anticipation with the next steps of planning.”

The process of progressing through the titles of venerable, blessed, and finally saint, took 37 years in the case of Mother Marianne. The Sisters of St. Francis officially petitioned Pope Paul VI to open the cause for her canonization in 1974. The following year, Sister Mary Laurence Hanley was appointed the cause’s full time director. In 1983 Mother Marianne’s cause was officially registered at the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints.
In 2004, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Mother Marianne “venerable” at a special ceremony at the Vatican. A decree was issued affirming her heroic virtues. This was based on fully documented and convincing material presented to the theologians of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and unanimously affirmed by the cardinals, archbishops and bishops of the same Congregation.

In the same year, theologians and the Vatican Medical Board unanimously ruled that a miracle was due to the intercession of Venerable Marianne Cope. Pope John Paul II declared that she was eligible to be called “blessed.” On May 14, 2005 the beatification ceremony of Mother Marianne Cope took place at the Vatican. The story of Kate Mahoney, recipient of the miracle can be found at www.saintmariantecope.org.

Another miracle was needed for Mother Marianne to be declared a saint. The miracle of Sharon Smith moved this process forward. In 2005, Sharon was diagnosed with pancreatitis and the extreme infection was literally destroying her organs. Her inexplicable medical recovery from near death was affirmed by the Vatican Medical Board and the theologians and then by the cardinals and bishop members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in December 2011. That same month, Pope Benedict XVI declared her a saint in the Catholic Church. Sharon Smith’s story can also be found at www.saintmariantecope.org.

Marianne Cope, a sister of St. Francis, entered religious life in 1862 in Syracuse, N.Y. For a period of time she ministered as teacher and principal in several schools in New York State. She was instrumental in the establishment of two of the first hospitals in the central New York area, St. Elizabeth Hospital in Utica (1866) and St. Joseph’s Hospital in Syracuse (1869). These two hospitals were among the first 50 general hospitals in the entire U.S. and continue operating today.

In 1883, Mother Marianne was the only one of 50 religious leaders to respond positively to an emissary from Hawaii with a request for Catholic sisters to provide health care on the Hawaiian Islands, especially to patients with Hansen’s disease (leprosy). For more than 30 years, Mother Marianne ministered to these patients at Kalaupapa, Molokai, Hawaii and promised her sisters that none of them would ever contract the disease. To this day, no sister has. Her compassionate care has earned her the affectionate title of “beloved mother of outcasts.”

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities, who claim Mother Marianne as one of their own, is a congregation of 490 vowed women religious whose Franciscan spirit motivates them to continue God’s work and respond to God’s people wherever there is a need. Together, the sisters serve in three countries and 15 U.S. states/territories.

For more information, a media kit can be found at www.saintmariantecope.org.