

January 2, 2012

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family & Friends,

Sister Rita Snyder died at 4:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 31, 2011. Rita had been declining for some time. However, her death came rather suddenly. For several days she was no longer able to walk and was in a wheelchair. At the end, she was unable to talk and on Saturday evening it became obvious that death was near. Father Fahey was told and came over to anoint Sister in the early evening. A nurse was with Sister Rita when she slipped away and went peacefully home to God.

Sister Rita was born in Chicago, Ill. on June 21, 1922 to John Joseph Snyder and Ida Marie Falkenburg Snyder. One brother, John Snyder and four sisters, Elizabeth McCabe, Jane Juds, Mary Magyer and Helen Petkus precede her in death.

Sister Rita entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 27, 1945 and made her first Profession of Vows on August 5, 1948 at Victory Noll, and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1954 at Redlands, Calif.

Rita served God and God's people in the missions of California, Indiana and Florida. She began her missionary life in Coachella, Calif. where she was engaged in the religious education of many young children from elementary through high school. She taught in four mission centers and on an Indian reservation. Rita also did home visiting and parish census work. From the beginning of her missionary life, she was full of enthusiasm and joy in sharing the Gospel with her students. Her engaging smile and kindness was remembered by all who worked with her and those she taught.

Sister Rita earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Sociology from Loyola University in Los Angeles, Calif. and a Master of Arts in Theology from St. Mary's University in Morago, Calif.

In 1981 Rita moved to El Centro, Calif. to be part of a cluster there. Living with Rita were Sisters Muriel Balch, Alice O'Brien, and Betty Anderson. In this mission Rita worked for Catholic Community Services and took on the responsibility of setting up the accounting department. This department serviced I. N. S. Women's Detention Center, the House of Hope, a shelter for homeless women and their children, and Catholic Community Services Counseling Service. She also was a board member for the Food Co-op and Credit Union. Sister Betty helped establish the House of Hope and was its first Director and Sister Alice established the Credit Union located at Catholic Community Services building. Rita was also the bursar and bookkeeper for our local community in El Centro.

In 1985 Rita returned to Victory Noll and worked as receptionist, buyer, driver, and library assistant.

In 1996 Sister Rita returned to the Imperial Valley, El Centro, where she assisted Sister Maria Luisa Valdez, the assistant Director, at the Imperial Valley Diocesan Office of Evangelization & Catechetical Ministry with the library and video library. Rita also assisted with secretarial work and bookkeeping at the Sister Evelyn Mourey Center, a Victory Noll Center established by Sister Evelyn Mourey, and still operated under the direction of Sister Maria Luisa Valdez to assist the poor and needy.

At the Vigil Service on Monday evening, Sister Rita's family were unable to come, however they sent beautiful flowers and were remembered in our prayers. During the Eulogy, Sister Betty shared about the tremendous responsibility Rita had as accountant/bookkeeper for Catholic Community Services. She set up the account records for the services of the agency.



Betty shared that Rita enjoyed her days off. She liked to sleep later and have a leisurely breakfast. Sister Betty said our little white poodle Shelley knew when it was Rita's day off. Shelley would wait for Rita and follow her in the kitchen where she watched Rita make bacon and scrambled eggs. When Rita was ready to eat so was Shelley, she would sit — up a trick Betty taught her, and Rita always shared a few morsels with Shelley. Sister Betty shared that at the office Rita extended a warm welcoming smile to each client who came in for counseling or other assistance. Her presence would put them at ease. If they had children with them, Rita would open her top desk drawer and bring out candy for the little ones. She had a great love for children.

After the Vigil Service, we went to the dining room for refreshments and continued sharing our memories of Rita. In general it was said that Rita loved life, had a joyful spirit and a contagious smile. Sister Monica Haines shared that Sister Rita's niece, Rita Springer, brought her to Victory Noll in 2005. She helped Rita get settled in her room in St. Joseph's building. She decorated the room with Rita's pictures, etc., hung window curtains and made the room look very inviting. Rita was very pleased. Sister Beaty Haines shared about the time she was driving Rita to her mission group meeting in Chicago. When they were coming into the city Rita said, "That's the house where I grew up," and Beaty asked if it was the house right at the end of the street. Rita said it was and she had never been back. Sister Beaty exited the highway and took Rita to the house she grew up in and they got out and had a good look at the house. Rita even pointed out her bedroom. She was happy to have this opportunity to visit and relive old memories.

Sister Grace Marie Samblanet shared that Rita told her that when she went to the Marymount University operated by the Jesuits, she was the first woman in the Philosophy department to get a degree. Sister Mary Jo Maes shared that she had invited Rita to come back to El Centro for a visit. Sister Rita let Mary Jo know that she was coming. However, Mary Jo had quite a surprise when Rita arrived with all her things. Luckily, Mary Jo lived in a two-bedroom apartment. Rita heard, "come back to El Centro." Rita stayed and lived happily there for several years before returning to Victory Noll to retire.

On Tuesday, January 3, 2012 we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Sister Mary Joan Ginsterblum and Sister Millicent Peaslee placed the Pall over the casket, and Sister Alodia Carney placed the Crucifix. Sister Rita chose two beautiful readings for her Mass. In the Gospel, John 17:24-26, Jesus prays to His Father saying that He wants all those who the Father gave him, to be where He is and to see His glory. Jesus says He has revealed God to us so that God's love for Jesus will live in us, Jesus will live in us.

Father Fahey shared that it is when we bear the cross and our sufferings and unite them to Jesus, that we will be glorified. This was Sister Rita's faith. She offered her sufferings and united them with Jesus. Her suffering brings her now to see and share in the glory of Jesus. As Rita was united with Jesus in a mystical way when He gave Himself to her in the Eucharist, now she is united to Him in glory.

After Mass, we had the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn "Ter Eres La Victoria." These prayers took place in the Gathering Space because of slippery walks and cold weather. After the service, we went to the dining room where a delicious dinner to celebrate Rita's life was shared.

Sister Rita, thank you for your joyful spirit among us. We rejoice that you are now experiencing the eternal joy of being in God's loving embrace.

Sincerely in Christ,



Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary