



SISTER SHARON ROSE ESHLEMAN, OLVM, was born in Adrian, Minnesota, on May 9, 1936. She was the sixth of nine children born to Lester and Genevieve Fix Eshleman. She was named Sharon Kay, but was baptized Sharon Catherine at Saint Adrian Catholic Church on September 1, 1940. She passed away on February 27, 2021, at the Visiting Nursing Hospice house in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Her four sisters, Valrahe Eshleman, Bonnette Eshleman, Lorraine Henderson and Ardis Beaver, and two brothers, Duane and LeLand Eshleman, precede her in death. Two brothers, Ardin of Buckley, Illinois, and Dallas of Waterford, Wisconsin, survive Sister along with her nieces and nephews.

Sr. Sharon Rose's missionary life began as a "planted seed" by her parish priest when she was 20 years old. She asked to have this story shared in her memorial letter. Here is her story in her own words:

"It has been a delight through the years to celebrate how God got my attention as to this call in life — of which I was totally unaware. In 1954, I graduated from Piper City (Illinois) High School. I did not want to go to college and had no plans. In a short time, I applied for a job at General Electric Company as an office worker in the Engineering Department, about 50 miles from home. After about four years, I became restless and wondered, 'Is this all there is?'"

"I went home one weekend and Father Kerrigan saw me at Saint Peter's Church and asked me if I had ever considered being a Catholic Sister. I must have said a resounding NO, because there was no further conversation. In time, I became curious about the life of a Sister, so my mother and I visited a couple of motherhouses in Illinois to find out what the life of a Sister was like. When we got home, Mother must have shared with Father about the visits. The next time I was home for a weekend, the priest shared with me that he knew of the visits. He shared with me, 'I think it would be very helpful to make a trip to Huntington, Indiana, to visit the Victory Noll Missionary Sisters.' My younger sister, Ardis, came with me to visit the Sisters. After that, I knew that God was calling me. This has tickled me for years. God approached me through the priest and I said NO. Later God spoke gently, 'Come to Victory Noll.' I have smiled, laughed, prayed and accepted how God got my attention for this CALL and the blessings I had never imagined."

Sister Sharon Rose entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on September 5, 1959, and made first vows on August 5, 1962. She left Victory Noll and spent her first year in Clifton Forge, Virginia, where she was part of the religious education program. She went on to serve other parishes and diocesan offices in the area of religious education in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Utah. She served the community in various areas as well, from general staff and activities director for our older Sisters, to becoming the Leadership Team Secretary and later, the librarian. She really was not prepared for any of these roles, yet she

found a way to do the ministry, even learning the computer while serving as the Leadership Team's secretary and the Dewey Decimal System when she became the librarian. Sister Sharon Rose had a Master's degree in Religious Education from the University of Saint Thomas in Houston Texas, and a Master's in Counseling from New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She used her degree in counseling in the pastoral ministry of hospital and home visiting and later as a hospice volunteer in the area of grief and bereavement. It was an area that she would continue to focus on for the rest of her life.

During all her life as a Victory Noll Sister, no matter where she went, the Sisters with whom she lived, and prayed, were a source of enrichment, support and strength, even during times of struggle or celebration. Those with whom she ministered both challenged and stimulated her to remain faithful to God's continued calling.

Sister Sharon Rose said about her missionary life, "Life for me has been a journey filled with many surprises. I have done things, gone places and been with people I never dreamed of meeting. When there are quiet moments for reflection and prayer, I am often filled with awe and gratitude because of the abundant evidence of God's living and guiding presence in my life."

One of the things that many will remember about Sister Sharon Rose was her love for, and protection of, the monarch butterfly. She studied and learned how to midwife the next generation. She offered workshops for people to learn how to be monarch midwives and many fondly remember taking the class with Sister Sharon Rose. She also asked that Victory Noll plant butterfly-friendly flowers. Anyone who tried to remove a milkweed plant would earn a rebuke from Sister Sharon Rose. In an email found in her room, she had written. "A friend got me started with a few milkweed plants and I never dreamed how this adventure with nature would develop into a wonderful butterfly experience for many children, parents, grandparents. It has enabled people to have a close-up experience of the wonder of creation and the gifts to be celebrated."

The rules during the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to change our usual rituals of a vigil and a Eucharistic liturgy. In this different atmosphere, we brought Sister Sharon Rose's earthly remains to Our Lady of Victory Chapel on March 4, 2021, to the same chapel where she had professed her first vows and started her journey as a Victory Noll Sister. Her family, her friends and the Victory Noll Sisters who live beyond Victory Noll were able to join the service through a livestream. We did not send her out to do ministry. We sent her home to God, where she will be welcomed for her faithful service, her love, and listening presences.

As I sat with Sister Sharon Rose just hours before her death, this quote from Lao Tzu, seemed to speak to me of this moment in her life: "What the caterpillar calls the end, the rest of the world calls a butterfly." What I saw as the end, Sister Sharon Rose now sees as eternal life.

With Gratitude and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sr. Ginger Downey O.L.V.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Ginger Downey, OLVM