



Eulogy of Sister Rita Mary Zander, BVM (Magdalene)

Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 9, 2018

Rita Mary was born on March 12, 1924, the eldest child of Edward and Magdalene Gostomski Zander of Chicago. A sister Esther and a brother Edward, who died in 2004, completed the family. Rita attended St. Viator ES run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. She graduated from The Immaculata and found a job for the summer in the office at Rock Wool Products.

Rita entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1943, and received the name Magdalene upon her reception on March 19, 1944. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1946, and lived 74 years as a BVM.

Rita taught in the elementary grades for 35 years. She was missioned at St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines, Iowa; St. Philip, Most Holy Redeemer, St. Paul, and St. Brigid, all in San Francisco, Calif.; St. Leo in San Jose, Calif.; St. Ann in Butte, Mont.; St. Anthony in Missoula, Mont.; St. Theresa in Palm Springs, Calif.; and St. Viator in Las Vegas, Nev. Rita also taught ninth grade math and served as treasurer at Central High School and worked at the fine arts and learning center at South Central Junior High, both in Butte, Mont. Her favorite missions were those in Butte, Palms Springs, and Las Vegas.

Rita was a good teacher with high expectations for her students. She excelled in teaching in math and art. Mathematics came alive in her classroom through games and guest speakers who demonstrated how concepts applied to everyday life, such as purchasing a car and buying insurance. As an art teacher, she believed that students should create their own pictures instead of simply coloring within the lines. She gave workshops on teaching art and helped teachers decorate their classrooms in different and creative ways.

Rita retired to Wright Hall in 1992 where she served as sacristan and arranged flowers for the chapel. She enjoyed doing crafts with her dear friend Sister Ann Patrice Durr. Their creations were not the normal type found at craft fairs; they were quickly sold to sisters at Wright Hall as Christmas gifts for their families. After Ann Patrice and Rita moved to Mount Carmel in 2006 and 2007, respectively, they continued to make and sell their unique crafts, generously donating the money to sisters for use in their ministries. Rita also joined Cut-Ups, making favors for the birthday meals and table decorations for the benefactor meals.

Rita was a quiet, private person who remained faithful to daily prayers, including the rosary. She was pleasant and kindhearted. Every time she received a box of candy, she gave it to the BVM Life Facilitators to share with the other sisters at Mount Carmel. Whenever she visited the beauty shop, she insisted on tipping her beautician. Rita had a keen sense of humor and enjoyed a good laugh. Several sisters admired her interesting footwear, which included a pair of black and white saddle shoes and a pair of red shoes.

Rita delighted in eating out and having a good time. Unfortunately, participating in table conversations became very difficult as her hearing worsened over the years. She deeply loved her family, especially her sister Esther. They enjoyed visiting each other and traveling together as long as they were able. In recent years, they communicated regularly by phone.

The readings chosen by Rita for her celebration of risen life reflect her deep faith in God. “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17). She truly “Trusted in the Lord with all [her] heart” (Proverbs 3:5) and sought faithfully to follow the will of God. “This indeed is the will of my Father, that those who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life” (John 6:40).

Two days ago, as Rita quickly and quietly left this world, her greatest hope was realized—eternal life with her loving God. Let us rejoice for Rita, who now knows a joy beyond all understanding.