



## **Eulogy of Sister Rose André Koehler, BVM**

Marian Hall Chapel, May 14, 2018

Elizabeth Ann Koehler entered this world on Oct. 13, 1925, as the daughter of Andrew and Christina Gossman Koehler of Boone, Iowa. Her mother was born in Pennsylvania while her father was born in Germany and immigrated to the United States with his sister at the age of 12. He worked for the railroad, first shoveling coal and later as an engineer. He was a tall, gentle and kind man; and Elizabeth was very close to him. Elizabeth joined siblings Genevieve, Roberta, and Mary and was followed by Firmin Arthur, who died as a young child, and Rose Ellen.

Elizabeth attended Sacred Heart School in Boone, Iowa. As a freshman in high school, she recalls looking over at a group of BVM teachers having fun at a Halloween party and thinking that she would like to be like them. Her mother, upon learning of her intention, expressed her wish that Elizabeth would wait a few years until one of her friends spoke up and said, "Let her enter and get it over with!"

Elizabeth entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1943, and received the name Rose André upon her reception on March 19, 1944. She professed first vows on March 19, 1946, and lived 74 years as a BVM. Her sister Rose Ellen entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1950, and received the name Jean Christine upon her reception. Sister Rosellen died on April 19, 2001, from complications after leg surgery.

Rose André taught in elementary schools for 23 years. She was missioned at Holy Family, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Gertrude, St. Cornelius, and St. Dominic in Chicago; St. Joseph and South Central School in Butte, Mont.; St. Mary in Lincoln, Nebr.; Visitation in Des Moines, Iowa; and Presentation in Stockton, Calif. She was principal at St. John in Butte, Mont., St. Paul in Davenport, Iowa; and St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa, where she served for 12 years. Recalling her years as principal, she commented, "I loved the spirit of these schools, which [is] a testament to capable, responsible teachers."

As a school administrator, Rose André was a dedicated professional committed to the education of people of all ages and economic backgrounds. Fortified with a vision for the school and the ability to make tough decisions, she diligently worked to bring her plan to fruition. She strongly supported ongoing professional development for her teachers, especially in the use of computers, and was instrumental in introducing technology to the classrooms.

In 1992, Rose André moved to Montgomery, Ala., where she tutored in an underprivileged school and taught English as a second language at the City of St. Jude Literacy Center. She credits the black community with teaching her how to express her emotions and show affection for others through hugs. In 2000, the Central Alabama Laubach Literacy Program (CALL) honored her as Volunteer of the Year. The executive director of CALL said, "A tutor since September of 1992, [Sister Rose André] tutored 54 students for a total of 4075 hours, more volunteer hours than any other tutor CALL has ever had. . . ."

[She] has taken special interest in students with challenges that threatened to overwhelm them.” She remained in Montgomery for eleven years until moving to Mt. Carmel in 2003.

Rose André was intelligent and talented in multiple areas. She easily completed crossword puzzles and always won at Scrabble. Being an avid reader certainly was an advantage. She loved to knit, crochet, and sew and even made a jubilee dress for her close friend Joan Opatts. She enjoyed decorating school bulletin boards, a true indication of an elementary teacher! During summer school when not in class, she kept busy cutting hair for not only BVMs, but also other religious sisters and even priests.

She credited, or maybe blamed, her German heritage for the desire to do her best always and her focus on achievement and recognition. Later in life, she learned to say to herself, “Rose, just sit down and enjoy it. There is no need to try to prove myself . . . I do know I am loved.”

Due to various health issues, Rose André endured pain all her life, yet never complained. As a woman of deep prayer, she surely found courage in Isaiah 49: “For the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted. . . I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have engraved you.” Having received comfort, she freely shared her spiritual insights, giving comfort to others. She was a true listener whose sincere interest in people was evident in her sympathetic, understanding and generous heart. She was pleasant, kind, loyal, and deeply grateful to the BVM community.

With gratitude, we honor Rose André for her life of faithful, dedicated service. With joy, we celebrate her entrance into eternal life, freed from pain, reunited with departed family and friends, and resting peacefully in the palm of God’s hand.