



Wake Stories of Sister Rose André Koehler, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, May 14, 2018

Judith Wright, Niece (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

Aunt Betty, as she was called, was a woman of great power. I was always thrilled to know she was coming to visit, because her sister Roberta, my mom, always quieted in her presence! She was always very crisp & perfect in the habit and in secular clothes. I loved her! I came and visited Mt. Carmel in 2012. We walked along the Mississippi and visited the Field of Dreams. These are the fond memories I have of my sweet auntie! I am grateful for Joanie (Joan Opatts, BVM) and the BVMs for the wonderful care she had for her 74 years! God bless you! Jude.

Sister Mary Angele Lutgen, BVM

Rose hired me to teach at St. Paul the Apostle in Davenport, Iowa, and later I was with her in Montgomery, Ala., and worked in the literacy program. I have a story about my time in Davenport. My classroom, second grade, was directly across from the office right inside of the door to the main entrance.

When we were studying community helpers in social studies, we invited Rose to come and speak to the class and answer questions. The first question the children asked her was "What do you do to help Mrs. O'Donnell?" Mrs. O'Donnell was the secretary who sat directly inside the office and Rose was in the inner office. Of course, Mrs. O'Donnell was the one the children saw everyday as they went in and out of the room. She was also the one who put the Band-Aids on and called the parents when the children were sick.

Rose gave a little instruction about the role of the principal, an almost hidden role in many schools. We were very pleased to have Rose as our principal. I enjoyed my years working with her there and in Montgomery.

Maureen Budinger, Niece

Aunt Betty would visit us often. When she first visited us when I was very young, she would come in the whole habit. She would disappear into the bedroom. When she would come out, there would be a pile of clothing there, but she still looked like she had the habit on, as far as we were concerned. My memories are mostly about her clothes.

My next memory was when I picked her up at the airport for a visit. It was after the sisters were out of the habit. I got there and I couldn't find her. I turned around and here was this lovely lady in a blue suit with styled hair. It was Aunt Betty. It was so unusual, but she looked fantastic. When she reached retirement, she wore very casual clothes and she would come to visit more often because she lived around here.

She didn't have to have a companion with her anymore, but she always had Joanie. They would play Scrabble; my mother was a great Scrabble player. Also Aunt Rosie (Rosellen Koehler, BVM), who was still in Chicago, came. Everything was all very relaxed. Judy mentioned her mother Roberta. When the Koehler women get together, the talking never stops. Whether or not they were playing Scrabble. My memories are of how she became more a part of our family as her clothing changed through the years.

Marianne Johnson, Niece

Rose André was my Aunt Betty and with Aunt Rosie (Rosellen Koehler, BVM), they came to my house all the time. My mom used to give haircuts to all the nuns. Aunt Rosie, Aunt Betty and my mom all played Scrabble. They were each other's best friends. I most remember coming to Mt. Carmel and playing cards and leaving with such a peaceful feeling. She always made me feel good. I bet she did that for everybody else. I will miss her so much.

Roberta Zak, Niece

We were always so grateful to have Betty around us. My fondest memory is also of mom, Betty and Rose playing Scrabble and later years Yahtzee. Whenever Rosie came into town, my mom and her would go shopping, bummed around and had a good old time. I am just grateful that now she is without pain and is up there with my mom and all my aunts and uncles. I think my mom and my aunts are all out bumming around, playing cards and having a good time while the guys are all sitting around and watching baseball. I am so very grateful for Joan; she has been a godsend while Rose was so very sick. We are going to miss them all very much.

Jenny Stork, Teacher, St. Anthony ES, Dubuque, Iowa

I was hired by Sister Rose to teach at St. Anthony's. Many of my colleagues are here with me today. We owe Sister Rose such a debt of gratitude. I'm not sure if Sister Rose knew when she hired us that we all had a great desire to teach in a Catholic school, but I think we also believed that we not only taught the Gospel values but we wanted to live those Gospel values. Many of us have remained very close friends for the past three decades. We've seen each other's great sorrows and great joys, deaths and births. I believe that her leadership, her sense of kindness and fairness, is something we will always carry with us.

Mary Kluesner, Teacher, St. Anthony ES, Dubuque, Iowa

I was with Sister Rose during her whole time at St. Anthony's. I first met her when my son Mark was only four weeks old. I knew I didn't want to miss meeting this new principal we were going to have, so I went back to school. She was so welcoming and even gave Mark a gift.

I want to thank Sister Rose for what a good job she did in hiring. I wasn't hired by Sister Rose; I was hired by Sister Jean Emile Cofone, another really good BVM. Sister Rose was able to mesh the group that was there. We had a really big school and to hire new people and to continue to have that comradery was really important. That's what carried us through and helped us to enjoy all the years we were with her.

She didn't always agree with some of the shenanigans we tried to pull. I remember the time she came down the hallway and noticed a rubber chicken hanging on my bulletin board outside my room. She wasn't too pleased. However, anytime there was a change in what was happening, she wasn't always ready to accept that change unless we went to her. I remember going to her and telling her this could

work if we had some plans in mind. She was always ready to listen and always very supportive. I really appreciated those times.

Even after she left and she and Sister Joan went South, I'd call up Sister Joan when they would be home and several of us would meet. We would have such a good time visiting. She was very proud of the beautiful facility you have here as she showed us around. She always asked, "How are the teachers at St. Anthony's? Where are they? What are they doing? How are their kids?" She was so excited to keep that communication open and always so interested in everybody.

Even after many of us left St. Anthony's and went to other teaching jobs, we always look back and say, "There was something special at St. Anthony's." It was due in part to the comradery that she built and that she allowed us to be professionals. That's really important – to do what we love doing, to be passionate about our teaching. She fostered that in all of us. Thank you, Sister Rose.

Sister Catherine Jean Hayen, BVM

I first met Rose the summer of 1965. Later she was my principal for eight years at St. Paul the Apostle in Davenport and eight years at St. Anthony's here in Dubuque. We have been friends for over 50 years. I know Rose as a BVM of faith. Faithful to her God, friends, teachers, students. She dedicated herself to the needs of people in Montgomery, Ala., as her last active ministry. Rose died as she lived – so faithful to our loving God, accepting the challenges that life brings. Rose, I miss you, but rejoice. You are in the arms of our loving God.

Mai, Friend

I met Sister Rose some 20 years ago in Montgomery, Ala. She taught me English. I came from Mali, Africa, and couldn't speak English when I met Sister Rose and Sister Joan. Sister Rose taught me English. After six months, I was speaking English. Ever since then, Sisters Rose and Joan have been my friends. We had such wonderful times and sad times. When I was in Montgomery, it was a really bad time. Sister Rose and Sister Joan would put their money together to buy me shoes when I didn't have shoes. I remember one time I was left in an apartment, Sister Rose and Sister Joan came and gave me pillows and blankets because I didn't have any.

I am here today because of these two ladies. Sister Rose and Sister Joan are my guardian angels. I thank God for the two of them. Sister Rose had such a big heart. When I joined the army and was in Afghanistan, every week they would send me letters and cards to let me know they were praying for me. That kept me going the whole year in Afghanistan and everywhere I went. Korea the same thing. I just can't thank God enough for bringing Sister Joan and Sister Rose into my life.

Father Gene Kutch, Former Pastor, St. Anthony, Dubuque, Iowa

I was transferred to St. Anthony's in July of 1987. Sister Rose was one of the great blessings I inherited. You never know what you're going to run into when you are transferred, many of you can relate, I'm sure. At that time, St. Anthony's was the largest Catholic school in Dubuque. It was regarded among the best, greatly due to Sister Rose's leadership. The faculty were very devoted to her. As mentioned earlier, many of them were hired by her. One thing that really stand out is that the faculty of those years was very involved in the parish. Sometimes we get into situations where it's all about the school and the parish really doesn't benefit from the commitment and dedication of the teachers. St. Anthony's has a great reputation and much of that in the 1980s was due to Sister Rose's leadership and the relationships she had with the faculty members and parents.

Margo, Friend

I met Sister Rose and Sister Joan when I was a worker in the cafeteria at St. Anthony's. We had a social life together with my mom Virginia. We would have what we called our shop-'til-you-drop days. We would all get out of the car at Walmart, get our carts and have a time limit. We'd meet at the door at a certain time. We took turns picking which restaurant we would eat at. Over the years, my husband Ron and I had backyard picnics and we would invite the sisters that taught at St. Anthony's. We would bring out the set of croquet and Rose was there to win; there was no doubt in that. In the years of her retirement and when she moved to Marian Hall, some of her favorite things were home baked goodies. I tried to fill that slot. When I would approach her with a homemade rhubarb or pumpkin pie, she would smile from ear to ear. Our group of four is now down to two. Joan and I will be there together. I miss Rose so much already.

Sister Diane Forester, BVM

Rose had saved a short reading to use potentially as part of her services. I will read this to you from her notes. It's a poetic reading from Macrina Wiederkehr. The book title is not given, just the author's name.

Jesus, you move through each season with your magic wand.
One by one, you have taken my leaves from me.
I am the story of your emptiness and you have told me well.
The part of me that feels stripped cries out to you,
"How can I give shade with so much gone.
Again, I feel your magic wand.
You speak to me of an inner shade whose name is peace,
the gift that comes from letting go.
Your story continues to be told in me.
Your story continues to unfold in me.
And suddenly, when I look again, I realize what you have taken from me
had only made me free to see I am your story of glory.