

**Sister Rita Keeven C.PP.S.**

**(Sr. Laurentiana)**

**Born: July 27, 1925**

**Professed: August 10, 1945**

**Entered into Life: July 26, 2011**

Verse on her memorial card: ***“The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack.”*** Psalm 23:1



July 26, 2011,

It was during Sister Rita’s favorite prayer time of the day, 5:00 A.M. that she experienced the merciful love of Christ and was taken into His loving arms. Sister Rita had a great devotion to Jesus, Divine Mercy, and prayed many times: “Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

Sister Rita (Laurentiana) Keeven was the second oldest of nine children born July 27, 1925, to Agnes (Gruenloh) and Herman Keeven in Florissant, Missouri. She is preceded in death by her parents and two of her sisters: Sister Esther Keeven, CPPS, and Clara Blattner. She is survived by her sisters Bertha, Irene, Rose and Frances and her brothers William and Ronald. Sister Rita will be missed by many nieces, nephews, cousins, especially Sister Helen Keeven, CPPS, and other relatives, friends and colleagues both in Missouri and in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

In 1942, Sister Rita entered the community and made her religious profession in 1945. During her religious life she served in Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico. In the St. Louis Archdiocese, Sr. Rita served as an elementary teacher at Ascension School in Chesterfield; St. Agatha School in St. Louis; Our Lady of Fatima and Sacred Heart Schools in Florissant. Other schools in Missouri include: St. Joseph, Rhineland; Sacred Heart, Columbia; St. Brendan, Mexico.

Sister Rita earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from St. Louis University and then a doctorate in education in 1970. Sister Rita became a remedial reading specialist and worked in programs at Long Public School, St. Louis; Orchard Farm Public School in St. Charles; Holy Family School in St. Louis; and at the Remedial Reading Clinic in Webster Groves, Missouri. “If there’s a way of helping any student, a visitor to the clinic feels that Sister Rita will find it. She’s that kind of person ... Sister Rita shows genuine concern for children with learning problems and she has—and will—discover why Johnny can’t read.” (O’Fallon in Focus, 1971)

One of Sister Rita’s favorite scripture passages was the call of God to Abraham asking him to let go of everything and follow God to a new land and embark on a new journey. She answered that call throughout her life of ministry and her spiritual journey. As a pastoral minister at Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Las Cruces, she was one of the first women working in the RCIA program for new Catholics, involved with teaching adults on how to

share the faith with others. In her words, “To me this is a very challenging time in the history of the church, a time when the Lord is really working among the people and challenging them and they are responding: ‘God is saying something in our lives...’ ”

Moving into the ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe Prayer Center in Las Cruces where she spent 25 years guiding adults in their faith development, Sister Rita lived the question “What is the Lord asking of us at this time?” She lived by the courage of her conviction that the center was God’s work and God would sustain this dream of supporting, challenging, affirming people in their faith journey. Her training in spiritual direction and psychology certainly aided her work with the people who came to the Prayer Center.

James Wheeler, S.J., wrote about Sister Rita in 1995: “The Prayer Center also serves, in a beautiful way, people who are among the poor of the city in giving each one of them a sense of dignity and a place they can call their own.” One of the participants shared: “Coming to the Prayer Center has been a spiritual awakening for me. Before I came I didn’t know how to listen to the Holy Spirit and now it’s a daily experience for me.”

These last two years Sister Rita has lived in Villa Theresa Haven and ministered to others by her prayer and presence. She continually witnessed to her complete faith in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. We ask Sister Rita, who stands with the Shepherd, to be with us as we pray: “The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I lack.” Ps. 23

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Fran".

Sister Fran Raia, CPPS