

Sister Rosemary Russell, C.PP.S.

Born: December 9, 1939

Professed: August 10, 1965

Entered into Life: July 31, 2020

Verse on her memorial card:

**“I have not stopped giving thanks to GOD
for you.” Eph. 1:16**



August 3, 2020

Dear Sisters,

Shortly after 7 a.m. on Friday, July 31, 2020, our Sister Rosemary Russell quite unexpectedly left this life and was born into eternal life. When her condition suddenly became critical on Thursday afternoon, her first thoughts were of others. She entrusted Linda Cento, our community nurse, with messages of love for family, friends and community.

Born on December 9, 1939, and baptized on December 16 at St. Edward in St. Louis, Rosemary was the first of eight children of Michael and Mildred (Shaw) Russell. In her autobiography, Rosemary wrote that the family's 3-room flat had "plenty of room for three people, but by the time we moved, my parents had eight children, one dog and a grandmother living in those three rooms." Is it any wonder that she fainted when she learned that her mother was pregnant with twins, siblings' number seven and eight?

Toward the end of Rosemary's junior year at Rosati Kain High School, her father's company moved to New York. Since moving the family to another state seemed impossible, her father sought work in Florissant. Doing so proved to be difficult, so after graduation Rosemary began working at Union Electric to help support the family. In 1962 she began teaching at Our Lady of Fatima in Florissant.

Since 7th grade, Rosemary had thoughts of becoming a sister, planning to join the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught her in grade school. Family needs put her plans on hold but being in touch with our sisters at Fatima re-inflamed her desire. She entered our community as a novice in 1963 and professed first vows on August 10, 1965, receiving the name Sister Maureen Therese.

Sister Rosemary completed a bachelor's degree in Special Education at Fontbonne and earned a master's degree in Elementary Administration at the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Sister Rosemary's first assignment as a professed sister was at St. John the Baptist Elementary School in St. Louis. Just two years later she was asked to serve as principal of the newly formed Compton Heights Catholic School. There she was able to foster a sense of community among the pastors and families of five ethnically and racially diverse parishes, none of whom were enamored with the archdiocese's decision to consolidate their parish schools.

After eight years at Compton Heights, Rosemary taught at St. Sabina for three years. From there she went on to serve as the Administrator of Elementary Education for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, and in 1986 she was elected to our community's General Council. As the contact for our sisters in Bolivia, her heart was deeply attracted to their ministry. After completing her term in leadership, she began cross-cultural and language training, and she served in Bolivia until she was again elected to the Council in 1998. In 2001 she began working with the English Tutoring Project where she ministered until her retirement in 2014.

Rosemary had a heart for justice. In addition to her passion for fair and just treatment of those she served in her full-time ministries, she gave herself in many volunteer capacities. She joined the peaceful protests at the School of the Americas; she was our community's representative to the inter-congregational NGO at the United Nations; she served as a member of our social justice committee and as the chairperson of our Bold Action committee; she visited the detainees at the prison in Troy, MO; she coordinated letter-writing campaigns to senators and representatives. Amazingly, these are but a few of the ways in which she promoted justice.

While the paragraphs above tell us what Rosemary did, these words shared by Sister Loretto Maes capture the essence of how she did it: "A woman of many talents and gifts used so well and competently. She did things so well that one never noticed how well they were done. With her it was normal. Rosemary brought peace and stability, a reassuring calm and a gift of synthesis that moved work and discussions ahead. But she not only brought peace and stability, she gave it to others through her very being. Our lives have been so enriched by her life."

Sister Rosemary was preceded in death by her parents, by her brothers, Michael and James, and by her sister, Joan Chowning. She is survived by her brothers, Thomas and Timothy; by her sisters, Mary Jerilyn (Jeri) VarVera and Margaret Standerfer; and by many nieces, nephews and grand-nieces and nephews. Rosemary was very close to her family; in recent years she met weekly with her sisters for lunch. Her sister, Jeri, said, "I don't know what we will do without her." Let us hold them in prayer, asking God to let them experience Rosemary's continued loving presence.

There will be a wake for Sister Rosemary beginning at 11 a.m. on Saturday, August 8, 2020, at Baue Funeral Home, 311 Wood Street in O'Fallon. Burial will be in our convent

cemetery at 2 p.m. Because of social distancing requirements, we ask that the sisters from O'Fallon visit before 12:30, leaving the later time for family and others coming from St. Louis. A memorial Mass will be celebrated when we are able to gather in our chapel.

Sister Rosemary left two options for the verse for her memorial card, both expressions of gratitude. "I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you" (Eph. 1:16) and "Give thanks to the Lord who is good, whose love is eternal" (Ps 136:1). Perhaps she was unable to choose only one because her love of God and her love of others each ran so very deeply. We give thanks for her life and her love, and we rejoice that she now is experiencing the fullness of God's eternal love.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Janice Bader". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and legible.

Sr. Janice Bader