



In Loving Memory

Sister M. Mercita Reinbold

Sister M. Mercita Reinbold, SSND, 100, died January 22, 2019, at Notre Dame Health Care, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minnesota. The twelfth of fifteen children, Sister Mercita was born on July 1, 1918, to German-Russian immigrant parents on the family farm near Hosmer, South Dakota. She was given the name Martha at her baptism two weeks later at Holy Trinity Church in Hosmer. At the age of six, she started school in a one-room country school. She traced her interest in art to her years in this school: “My interest in art began in grade school where we were allowed to dabble in art during free time, where we studied art pictures each month, and used art books in each grade – all in our little country school.”

Birth
July 1, 1918

Baptism
July 14, 1918

Profession
July 22, 1939

Death
January 22, 2019

Burial
Our Lady of Good Counsel
Cemetery

Martha’s older sister Barbara was a School Sister of Notre Dame, Sister M. Rita. She was 18 years older than Martha, so the two never really knew each other. Sister Mercita wrote, “In the winter of 1933, when I was fourteen, Sister Rita came home to see our father, who was seriously sick. Though I admired her and her long habit, this counteracted the scrapbook I had made of beautiful long bridal gowns and veils.” Later that year, however, her parents took Martha to see Sister Rita for assistance in deciding her vocation and, that fall, she became a freshman aspirant at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato, Minnesota. In 1936, as a senior, Martha was admitted into the candidature and completed high school as a candidate.

As a second-year candidate, Martha taught grades two and three at Bellechester, Minnesota. On July 21, 1938, she was received into the novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Mercita. She professed first vows one year later on July 22, 1939.

Sister Mercita taught at every grade level from primary through high school in three states. Her Minnesota experience included St. Agnes and St. Andrew, St. Paul; St. Leo in St. Leo; St. Michael in St. Michael; St. Mary, Shakopee; John Ireland, St. Peter; Good Counsel Academy (where she taught calligraphy); St. Michael, Morgan; St. Anthony, Lismore; St. Martin, Rogers; SS. Peter & Paul, Blue Earth; Epiphany, Coon Rapids; Providence, South St. Paul; St. Francis Xavier, Sartell, and St. Isidore, Litomysl. She also taught at St. Mary in New England, North Dakota, and St. Joseph in Grenville, South Dakota. She earned a B.A. in education and art from St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa. She enjoyed teaching art and reflects, “In St. Peter with my third and fourth graders and help of their parents, we created marionettes and dramatized the biblical stories of our religion classes. The fifth and sixth graders at Lismore designed symbols of their patron saints using cut up linoleum pieces. We were then asked to make a large (15”x30”) mosaic for the senior homeroom. The success of this project prompted us to make a mosaic for our own classroom. The two mosaics are now displayed in the entrance of the church since the school no longer exists. At Coon Rapids the pastor asked me to make a mosaic for Epiphany Church. I designed an eight-foot irregular star as the background for the Blessed Mother offering the Christ Child to the world.”

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

continued

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In the 1980s, Sister Mercita transitioned into pastoral and volunteer ministry, serving at SS. Peter & Paul and St. Joseph the Worker, Mankato, and in the Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minnesota. She continued doing various forms of art for her own enjoyment as well as for others.

Her focus changed from calligraphy and mosaics after she went to an art exhibit in St. Peter in 1990. "When I saw a display of an art form that I had never seen before, I felt I was in heaven. How could I ever do something like that?" A few months later, she read in the community newspaper that a class in rosemaling would be taught in St. Peter. "I believe I was the first one to sign up. It was a prayer fulfilled." She was a very willing pupil and continued taking classes for four years. She became an apprentice and received ninety hours of private instruction. Rosemaling is a Scandinavian art form and translates from Norwegian as "rose painting." Scrolls and flowers of various designs are basic, created with repetitive strokes and a variety of brushes. She also became intrigued with painting nisses (Scandinavian elves). According to an article in a Hill Volunteer newsletter, "Nisses do superhuman work for those who give them food every night. But if folks forget, the nisses do mischief, like hiding their boots." Sister Mercita often created a story for each nisse that she painted. She displayed and sold her work at the annual Craft Fair and at other craft venues, as well as at her studio in Good Counsel's Isidore Hall.

Sister Mercita moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel in 1999 and, in addition to her painting, tutored in the Learning Center. She suffered a stroke in 2007, but was determined to regain her former strength and capabilities, which she did to a good extent. She noted that, after the stroke, she could not work as quickly as before, but she did not plan to stop. An article about her in the Mankato Magazine concluded with her quotation, "We need beautiful things." She was grateful for the support and love of her SSND community, stating, "The community gave me the opportunity to develop my gifts and has nourished me."

Attaining the century mark last July, Sister Mercita would have celebrated her 80th Jubilee as a School Sister of Notre Dame this summer. She concluded her autobiography written when she was 96, "I'm still painting with the aid of our Creator God, and Our Lady of Mercy."

The funeral liturgy, with Father Joseph Fogal as presider, was held January 29, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel. A prayer service of remembrance preceded the funeral. She is survived by nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and SSND associates. She was preceded in death by her parents Adam and Kunegunda, known as Cora, (Kraft) Reinbold; her sisters Catherine Geffree, Philopena Weisbeck, Sister Rita Reinbold, SSND, Anna Kunstmann, Helen Fuhrman and Magdalene Fox; and her brothers James, Anthony, Raymond, Eugene, Bernard, Pius, Leo and Benedict.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND

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