



In Loving Memory

Sister Rita (Marie Jerome) Reisch

Sister Rita Reisch, 95, passed away the early evening of September 16, 2022, at Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri. Sisters were praying with her.

On April 29, 1927, the oldest of four children was born to Marie (Schmitt) and Jerome Reisch in St. Louis, Missouri.

She was baptized on May 1, 1927, at St. Anthony Church in St. Louis, and named Rita Marie. A younger brother, Thomas, died shortly after birth. Rita grew up with her sister, Patricia, and her brother, Jerome, who would eventually be ordained as a priest for the St. Louis Archdiocese.

Rita attended kindergarten at St. Cecilia's School in St. Louis. The family moved to Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, St. Louis, and she received her elementary education at the parish school under the guidance of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). She enrolled at Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, and was taught by the SSND. During her high school years, the desire to become a religious deepened within her but she did not share this desire until her senior year. Her parents were supportive but felt that she should work for a year. She was employed at the American Auto Insurance Company in St. Louis, doing secretarial work. Her father was a lawyer for another insurance company in the same building, so they often went to Mass together at the Old Cathedral, formally known as the Basilica of St. Louis.

Rita felt called to be a missionary and wrote to many different missionary orders. However, none of their information attracted her. One day, a friend told her she'd heard that the SSND were going to Japan in the near future. This was the sign Rita needed to confirm her decision.

Rita entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, on August 28, 1946, at the same time that her brother left for the seminary. During her second year of candidature, she was sent to teach third and fourth graders at Sacred Heart, DuQuoin, Illinois. She was received into the novitiate on August 2, 1948, and given the name Marie Jerome in honor of her father and brother. She professed first vows on August 3, 1949, and final vows on August 3, 1955. She later returned to her baptismal name.

She earned a bachelor's degree in history from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1959. She earned a master's degree in education from St. Louis University, St. Louis, in 1967.

Following profession, Sister Rita spent 43 years as an elementary educator; 41 of those years in Missouri. She taught at Holy Cross, Cuba; St. Joseph, Manchester; St. Peter, Jefferson City; St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Louis; Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Louis; St. Andrew, St. Louis. She was also the principal during her years at St. Aloysius Gonzaga. She taught for two years at Sacred Heart,

continued

Birth
April 29, 1927

Baptism
May 1, 1927

Profession
August 3, 1949

Death
September 16, 2022

Burial
Sancta Maria in Ripa
Cemetery

*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

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Fort Madison, Iowa.

In 1989, Sister Rita became the assistant local leader at the St. Louis motherhouse; three years later, she was appointed one of the two local leaders at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis. Following a sabbatical, she moved to live with several other SSND in Smithton, Illinois. She performed volunteer ministry at St. Peter Cathedral Grade School and St. Elizabeth Hospital in Belleville, Illinois.

She was one of the first six SSND to retire at Meredith Memorial Home in Belleville in 1997. She continued volunteering at St. Peter Cathedral Grade School, Belleville. In 2003, she responded to the invitation to live with other SSND in Sun City, Arizona. During her 13 years in Arizona, she was a volunteer in pastoral ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Sun City, Arizona. She visited the elderly and conducted communion and prayer services in retirement and private homes. Returning to St. Louis, she continued to perform volunteer service at Theresa Center, Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis.

In November 2019, she was missioned to Veronica House, The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri. As her health failed, SSND began praying with her.

A prayer service was held at The Sarah Community on September 20, 2022. The reading of her biography, sharing of memories and Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning at Theresa Center, Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, with Rev. John Eaton, OFM, as presider. SSND, associate and friends attended the funeral services. Family members were unable to attend. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery, St. Louis.

Sister Rita is survived by her sister, Patricia Harte of Rohnet, California, and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Marie (Schmitt) and Jerome Reisch; and her brothers, Thomas and Rev. Jerome Reisch.

Short in stature, Sister Rita was tall in the virtues of patience, kindness and graciousness. She was a delightful community member, a prayerful woman and an excellent teacher. She deeply loved her family. Her eyes shone with a twinkle as she greeted others. She was a fun-loving person, sensitive to the needs of the elderly and loyal to her friends. May she now rejoice with her family members who preceded her in death as she is welcomed by her God into her new and eternal life!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND



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