

Sister M. Roserita Kimmel, OP
Born to earthly life: January 15, 1933
Religious profession: August 15, 1951
Entered eternal life: January 26, 2018

*I am certain that nothing
will be able to separate us
from the love of God
that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*

Romans, 8, 39

Mary Jane Therese Kimmel was born in Detroit, Michigan, on January 15, 1933, the only child of Rose Marie Feldpaush and Dorsey Kimmel. She was baptized at Saint John Berchmans Parish.



First Communion

When she was six years old, her father died unexpectedly, only forty years old, hemorrhaging from the black lung disease he had contracted as a teenager while working in Pennsylvania coal mines. Mary Jane and her mother were devastated. “We loved him dearly. He was a wonderful dad,” she recalled fondly.

Mrs. Kimmel sold their small cottage to pay overdue bills, and moved with little Mary Jane to New Baltimore, Michigan. Life was hard, exacerbated by the Great Depression and its aftermath. They lived behind the store in which Mrs. Kimmel sold dry goods. With her mother having to work full-time, Mary Jane learned early to shoulder responsibility. With the outbreak of World War II, they moved back to Detroit, where Mrs. Kimmel served as a practical nurse at Saint Mary’s Hospital. Mary Jane enrolled in the fifth grade at Assumption Grotto School, where she was taught by the Racine Dominicans.



Baby Mary Jane





Mary Jane as an Aspirant, 1946



Postulant, 1948

Mary Jane dreamed early on of becoming a sister and caring for orphans. The second part of her dream was never realized, but she would lead a rich and fulfilled life as a Racine Dominican.

She became an aspirant in September of 1946, and entered the postulate on August 30, 1948. Her mother soon moved to Racine as well (not telling her daughter in advance!), taking a position at Saint Anne's Home on the motherhouse campus. The following year, on August 16, Mary Jane received the Dominican habit and the name Sister M. Roserita of the Crown of Thorns.

During the second year of her novitiate she did her practice teaching at Sacred Heart School in Racine under the guidance of Sister Mary Elizabeth (later Evelyn) Lins. Teaching assignments followed at Saint John's in South Milwaukee, with sixty-three third graders (1951 to 1952); Saint Rose in Racine (1952 to 1953); Saint Mary's in Mineral Point (1953 to 1955); Holy Name in Kimberly (1955 to 1956); and Saint Edward's in Racine (1956 to 1958). During the

summer of 1957 she prepared for and celebrated her final profession at the motherhouse. In the fall of 1958 she began a year at Detroit's Assumption Grotto, followed by a year at Saint Clement's in Center Line. Five years (1960 to 1965) at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Santa Fe, New Mexico came next, with the completion of her undergraduate degree in education at Dominican College in the summer of 1964. From 1965 until 1968 she served at Saint John's in South Milwaukee.

In 1968 she was appointed to Saint Peter's in East Troy, Wisconsin as teacher and principal. Not wishing to be the only sister at that mission, she called Sister Rita M. Martin, the community's president, and



South Milwaukee, 1951

asked whether someone might come to live with her and teach fourth grade. Sister Marguerite McGee soon joined her; Roserita was relieved and grateful to have a teacher, a sister to live with, and an experienced mentor for her new administrative role.

The two worked well together, and in 1969 were joined by Sister Cathy Grimm as primary teacher. They departmentalized the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and issued report cards with lists of skills expected at each grade level rather than A-to-F grades. The creative threesome implemented other new ideas, including lively children's liturgies, processions, and other sacred moments. After the Second Vatican Council, they had the children proclaiming the Scriptures and otherwise actively involved in liturgical celebrations.



1966

Meanwhile, Roserita was spending most summers studying at Loras College in Dubuque, and in 1973 was awarded her baccalaureate degree in elementary school administration.



Waukesha, 1990

By that time Racine Dominicans were discerning and choosing their own ministries and local communities. In 1978 Roserita began a ten-year tenure at Saint



Jubilee 2001

Mary's in Belgium, Wisconsin, followed by three years at Saint Mary's in Waukesha and then a sabbatical in 1991–1992. Very brief stints at Saint Alphonsus in New Munster, Wisconsin and at Saint Sylvester's in South Milwaukee followed.

In February 1994 Roserita accepted an invitation to assume the position of director of housekeeping at Siena Center, a ministry she filled for the next two and a half years. She next ministered to the elderly for three years before returning to teaching in the Milwaukee Public School System for three years. From 2002 to 2004 she taught at Nativity of the Lord School in Cudahy, and then volunteered in various capacities around Milwaukee until late 2013, when she moved to Siena Center.

During these same years her long-time friend and companion Marguerite



Jubilee 2011



Cleaning a freezer at Siena Center

Her funeral was celebrated at Siena Center on January 31, followed by interment at Holy Cross Cemetery in Caledonia.

As teacher and principal for over forty-five years, Roserita was loved and respected by students and parents alike. Jay, one former student who ended up in the principal's office on a regular basis for "assistance," called Sister Roserita his guardian angel. "She guided me, sheltered me from harm, and had more confidence in me than I had in myself. She helped me accomplish more than I could have imagined." Jay had written to Sister Roserita in 2004, sharing his appreciation "for the lessons you helped me learn at a young age." He described "the greatest gift you gave me doesn't have anything to do with math, science, music; it has to do with spirit, a basic spirit of goodness. Your spirit of goodness has become a part of me... Just as my physical traits have been passed on to my children, so has that spirit of goodness... Thank you for this most wonderful gift."

Jay's memories reflected those of many of her students. People with whom she taught also appreciated her caring and support, as well as her great competence as an educator. In 1993, Dr. I. T. Johnson, who had chaired the Archdiocesan Evaluation Team sent to Saint Mary's School in Belgium, Wisconsin, ten years earlier when Sister Roserita was principal and teacher there, said the experience "was an eye-opener for me professionally. Saint Mary's was the best school I had ever seen!" Describing the school's strengths under Sister Roserita's leadership, Dr. Johnson concluded, "I have served on four other elementary school evaluation teams; in none of those experiences did I encounter a more competent principal."

Sister Roserita will long be remembered by her Racine Dominican Sisters, friends, former students and colleagues for her kindness, humor, and ever-present sense of gratitude.

suffered a series of heart attacks, with hospitalizations and eventual residence at Lakeshore Manor in Racine — a constant heartache for Roserita. Marguerite died on February 17, 2010.

Roserita herself moved to Lakeshore Manor in early 2018, and died there peacefully at about 8:45 the evening of January 26. She had just celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday on January 15. She had at the time four living classmates — Sisters Jeanne Burg, Therese Van Thull, Margaret Hild, and Mary Vaculik. In addition to her Racine Dominican family, Roserita was further survived by a few cousins.



A good moment with Marguerite