



Sister Roserita Kimmel, OP

Born to earthly life: January 15, 1933
Religious profession: August 15, 1951
Entered eternal life: January 26, 2018

MARY JANE THERESE KIMMEL was born in Detroit, Michigan, on January 15, 1933, the only child of Rose Marie (Feldpaush) and Dorsey Kimmel. When she was six years old, her father died unexpectedly, hemorrhaging from the black lung disease he had contracted as a teenager while working in Pennsylvania coal mines. He was only 40 years old. Mary Jane and her mother were devastated. “We loved him dearly. He was a wonderful dad,” she recalled fondly.

Mary Jane dreamed of becoming a sister and caring for orphans. The second part of her dream was never realized, but as Sister Roserita she led a rich and fulfilled life. An elementary school teacher and principal in Wisconsin, New Mexico and Michigan for over 45 years, she was loved and respected by students of all ages, as well as their parents.

Jay, one former student who ended up in her principal’s office on a regular basis for “assistance,” rather than praise, calls S. Roserita his guardian angel. “She guided me, sheltered me from harm, and had more confidence in me than I had in myself,” he shared at S. Roserita’s Remembering Service. “She helped me accomplish more than I could have imagined.”

Jay had written to S. 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 reflect those of many of her students. People with whom S. Roserita 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 St. Mary School, Belgium, WI, 10 years earlier when S. Roserita was principal and teacher there, said the experience “was an eye-opener for me professionally. St. Mary’s was the best school I had ever seen!” Describing the school’s strengths under S. 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.”

Even into her final years, S. Roserita enjoyed sharing stories from her days as a teacher and principal. They gave her great joy, and she missed them. For over 30 years, she lived – and for many of those years worked – with her mentor and dear friend, S. Marguerite McGee. She aided and supported S. Roserita in implementing innovative and creative educational systems. “We were like Sister sisters,” S. Roserita noted. “She was *always* there to support me through all the creative ideas I had, the difficult times I went through, the relatives we cared for.” And when S. Marguerite developed serious health problems, “It was now my time to support her,” S. Roserita said. She did so lovingly for nearly 20 years until S. Marguerite’s death in 2010.

S. 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. She welcomed her death, and though she will be missed, those whose lives she touched are deeply grateful for her “spirit of goodness” they carry in their hearts.