

From the Foot of the Cross



The Passionist Nuns of Saint Joseph Monastery in the Diocese of Owensboro KY

Summer 2009

Christ's Yellow "Rose" From Texas

Vestition of Sister Rose Marie of the Merciful Heart of Jesus



Those who log onto our vocation blog www.passionistnuns.org/blog/ already know that **Postulant Shannon Schoppe** from Houston, Texas, a graduate of Texas A & M, received our Passionist habit on Friday, July 26, 2009, becoming **Sr. Rose Marie of the Merciful Heart of Jesus**. This simple, private ceremony prescribed for us by the Church is powerful in symbolism and rich in food for meditation. The black Passionist habit is an external witness to our charism of devotion to the Passion of Jesus. The white veil of a novice signifies that Sr. Rose Marie is responding to her call to be the Bride of Christ. The Vestition ceremony marks her entrance into a two-year novitiate (training period) preparing her to vow herself to Christ on the day of her Passionist profession.

When asked why she chose to ask to be clothed in the Passionist habit, Sr. Rose Marie responded: *"I couldn't be more certain that God has called me to Passionist life, and I look forward to a life of living communion with Jesus, uniting all of my small life to His merciful love poured out in His passion, death and resurrection. This (Passionist Life) is the way He has given me to love Him with all my heart, mind, soul and strength, and this is the way He continues to teach me how to love all for His sake. After searching for this particular way of love to which He has called me with all of my heart, I'd be crazy not to hold tight to what I've found! The*

Passionist habit is the outward sign of this love and the commitment that exists between Christ and myself. It's like 'wearing my heart on my sleeve' so that I and everyone who sees me will always know Who I belong to."

For other young women who might be thinking about Passionist life, Sr. Rose Marie offers this encouragement: *"Have a courageous heart! Be willing to love truly, completely and courageously, and you will be amazed where that desire and willingness to love will take you. The journey is exciting, risky, sometimes dark, sometimes lonely, but ultimately FULL of love that grows deeper and deeper. And for the openness of a heart that will sacrifice and take risks for God, there is always a deeper joy waiting around the corner of every 'impossible' situation. He sometimes does ask us to give more than we think we can, but the things He asks us to lay aside for Him aren't anything compared to the wealth of love and blessing He will shower us with when we say 'yes' to all He asks. Besides, when He asks the 'impossible' of us, He is ultimately offering us the miracle we need to do the impossible. After all, 'nothing will be impossible for God!'" (Luke 1:37)*



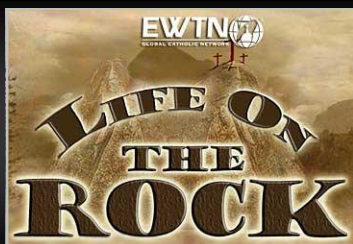
A few days after her V estition...



Sr. Rose Marie's parents **Mark** and **Karen** and three brothers, **Matt, Wesley and Brian**, arrived for a three day visit. During this time we were treated to some entertainment as her Dad accompanied Sister's violin music with his guitar. Sister Rose Marie attributes her devotion to the Merciful Heart of Christ to her Mother. You can view more photos from this wonderful occasion on our website, and also read more about Sister's new religious name.

"The Daughters of the Passion, by their habit, but far more so in heart, mind and actions, are to keep perpetual and loving mourning for our Crucified Lord, and by the continual exercise of every virtue, anoint His sacred wounds."

~ ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS



Be sure to tune in to EWTN's "Life on the Rock" program at 7 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, September 3, 2009,

Monastery visitors



For nearly 30 years, Fr. Thomas McGonigle, O.P., has given courses here at our monastery. This year's theme was "The Divine Good Pleasure in the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross" (our founder). We are always greatly inspired by the teachings of our brother in the Lord who understands our founder with such depth and fervor.



Since his sophomore year at the University of Illinois, Fr. Rob Lampitt has made retreats at our monastery. Now in his 1st year as a priest, and having completed advanced studies in Rome, Father made a retreat before his first assignment in the Peoria IL diocese.



Photo courtesy Larena Lawson

We welcomed newly ordained Dominican priest, Fr. Thomas Petri, OP, for a visit and Holy Mass in June. After accompanying a seminarian friend, it is always a great joy for us to have them offer Holy Mass in our chapel. As a seminarian Father Petri made retreats here in our Guest House.



Sister Rita Marie *of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

~ Clare Rita Boteler ~
1931-2009

“Happy are they who die in the Lord! Yes, they shall find rest from their labors, for their good works accompany them.” - Revelation 14:13

Happy too is the monastery that has a “Sister Fix-It!” Sr. Rita Marie of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was just such a one, and always with a smile. When she was called home to God, she had a whole life of good works accompanying her. We pray that she finds rest from her many labors in the service of God, community and the Church for 59 years as a Passionist Nun. We don’t want her to “rest” too much, however, for we have already entrusted the repair of our roof and the completion of the Carmel Home chapel to her intercession!

“Serving” was truly her gift. From plumbing jobs to fine needlework, from retrieving a lost Passion Sign ring from a sink pipe to designing and making liturgical vestments and altar linens, from fixing a window to excelling in the culinary arts, Sr. Rita Marie’s

practical skills, nimble fingers and artistic creativity blessed us and many others in countless ways.

Born to **Silverius Aloysius Boteler** and **Virgie Mae Winkler Boteler** on October 15, 1931 in Knottsville, KY, **Clare Rita** was the 6th of 10 children. Her older sister, **Sr. Rose Mary (Rose Ellen)** who died in 2004, was also a member of our community.

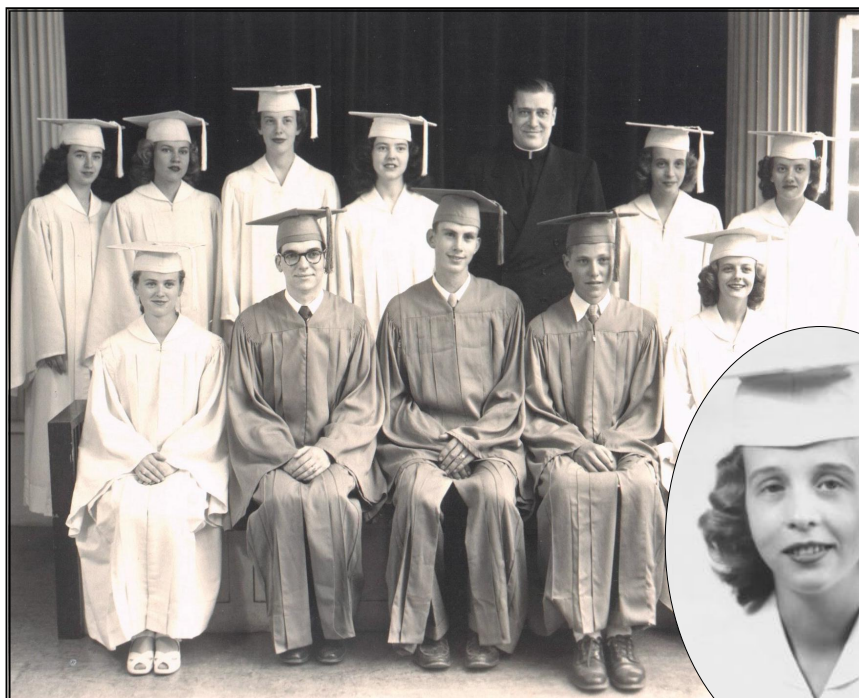
Sister’s early life centered around her family, parish and school. She mentioned several times how indebted she was to her father for all she learned about mechanics, as she watched and helped him in his workshop in the garage. Sr. Rita Marie also recounted how at an early age she had learned sewing and cooking from her mother. The Singer sewing machine her father donated to our monastery is still in fine condition and often used by our Nuns. Cooking skills learned from her mother were a much-needed asset to our community during the years Sister served as monastery and retreatants’ cook. Even in her later years, she specialized in baking whole wheat loaves and pumpkin bread.

As a teenager, Sr. Rita Marie made her own garment patterns. This too was a useful skill in later years when she was assigned to make and fit Passionist habits for Nuns of every size and shape! During recreation or otherwise, her nimble fingers were often seen crocheting lovely baby blankets of variegated colors.

Sr. Rita Marie’s sewing arts also enabled her to design and make vestments, altar cloths, stoles and albs for priests and parishes all over the diocese. Perhaps these contacts with our diocesan priests sparked the great devotion she had in praying for priests. Each year before the solemnity of Corpus Christi, Sister was assigned to prepare tiny slips of paper on which she typed about six names of priests working in our diocese. These were rolled up and placed in a special container, ready for each Nun to draw the names of the priests for whom she would pray specifically throughout the



Fr. Whelan, Pastor, Sr. Rita Marie’s parents (to the left of Fr. Whelan) pictured with many family members. They are sitting on the front steps of the entrance to the original monastery on Benita Ave.



Sr. Rita Marie's high school graduation class pictured with the pastor of St. William's Parish, Fr. Robert Whelan. Sr. Rita Marie is standing at the left of Fr. Whelan. Father knew the importance of fostering priestly and religious vocations and always tried to encourage the students to remain open to these vocations.

coming year. We still continue this Corpus Christi custom each year.

By temperament, Sr. Rita Marie preferred to be on the "giving end", and so she readily took on the role of "Martha" in a contemplative community. She was never happier than when she could solve a mechanical problem or pitch in to ease the work of another. She would readily



"The Four Foundation Stones"

L to R: Sr. Margaret Mary, Sr. Rita Marie, Sr. Rose Mary, Sr. Marie Michael. These four Sisters from St. William's Parish in Knottsville, KY were among the first to persevere in those early "pioneer days" after the Owensboro monastery was founded in 1946.

leave aside her own work to come to the aid of a Sister in need. And many needs there were indeed! As "Murphy's Law" seems to plague religious communities, one never knows what will break, not work, or hang up next. Only Our Dear Lord knows how many hidden sacrifices Sr. Rita Marie offered in coming to our aid "just in the nick of time."

Here is one of many examples demonstrating this trait: In our former monastery there was a passageway connecting the main monastery to a newer wing housing the altar bread and printing departments. The windows in the passageway tended to stick because of weather exposure. When told about a window in the passageway that refused to open, smilingly, Sr. Rita Marie might ask: "Really? Did you ask it to open?" Then she would check it as soon as possible. Never suspecting that Sr. Rita Marie could possibly have fixed the window so soon, the first Sister might meet Sr. Rita

Marie shortly afterward and hear her say, "Have you checked the stuck window?" Sure enough, when it was checked, the window would glide smoothly in its tracks. These kinds of "behind the scene" acts of charity can go a long way to lift community spirit.

During the hour of "free time" at midday in our monastic schedule, one might find Sr. Rita Marie hard at work in the basement carpenter shop, fixing or building a piece of furniture. Here "Sister Fix-it" produced many custom-made heavy duty push carts, carriers, book shelves, tables, etc. She even managed to make a large gurney (a wooden stretcher on which to transport a dying Sister to and from chapel). Another specialty was her knack at making heavy cardboard boxes of every size and shape,



Here we have what we believe was Sr. Rita Marie's pattern for her homemade cards which she cut out. Shortly after Sister's funeral we celebrated Mother Catherine Marie's Feast Day. A couple of the Sisters finished off this delicate cut-out and presented it as a gift to her from Sr. Rita Marie and all the Sisters.



Sr. Rita Marie had a life-long, tender devotion to our Blessed Mother. Our Lord gave Sister the gift of entering eternity on a Saturday - the day of the week devoted to Our Lady.

either for shipping or storage. Hand cut with a large knife and sealed with duct tape, these boxes were "made to last forever" as the saying goes.

And finally, we cannot overlook her famous "paper lace" cards cut by an X-Acto knife with time-consuming patience. All designs were made by Sr. Rita Marie using the compass she brought with her to the monastery. These gorgeous handmade cards were for special occasions and treasured by anyone privileged to receive one.

From 1988 until 2006, our community cared continuously 24/7 for our sick and dying foundresses and other Nuns. Sr. Rita Marie excelled in the tender loving care and contagious smile she lavished on the sick when she took her turn at this work of mercy. As time went on, this specialized care of our sick and elderly Nuns, coupled

with the strain of the relocation of our monastery, followed by the 7-year law suit, as well as our own growing in age, pushed the endurance of the community beyond reasonable limits, resulting in many healthy Sisters, developing their own disabilities.

During this time and particularly after the death of her sister, Sr. Rose Mary, Sr. Rita Marie's physical and emotional condition deteriorated rapidly, along with increasing memory loss. After professional consultation, we made the painful decision that we could no longer continue giving day and night care to seriously ill religious in our own monastery, even with the help of paid workers.

In February 2005, Sr. Rita Marie was the first to be moved to a nursing facility where she could receive the care she needed. We pray that as we continue to receive young and healthy members, we will again be able to resume the care of our aging Sisters here at the monastery. For Sr. Rita Marie, however, and two others of our Nuns who moved to nursing homes in November 2005 and April 2006, this was an experience of the last "Stations" along their personal Way of the Cross with Jesus.

We will always be profoundly grateful to the staff at Riverside Manor in Calhoun, KY and at Nazareth Home in Louisville, as well as the Carmelite Sisters and staff at Carmel Home in Owensboro where Sr. Rita Marie spent the last year of her life. Honorable mention goes to **Joann Raymond** who faithfully cared for Sr. Rita Marie's black clothing and shoes during her stay at Nazareth Home.

Around Christmas 2008, Sr. Rita Marie showed rapid weight loss, and then she almost died during the ice storm of January 09/. Thanks to the alertness and skill of the Carmel Home staff, she came through this crisis, but shortly afterward, her continued loss of appetite began to cause alarm. She was hospitalized for tests and found to have generalized cancer.

When we brought her back to Carmel Home a few days before Palm Sunday, none of us thought she would make



L to R: Sr. Rita Marie, her sisters Agnes Murphy and Sr. Rose Mary, and niece Mary Froehlich circa 1997. While our chapel was under repair, we had to visit in the lower level of the retreat house because our visiting rooms were our temporary chapel.



A few of the stoles Sr. Rita Marie designed and made to perfection!

it to Holy Week. Little did we realize that Sister would live to Holy Saturday. Mother Catherine Marie and our Nuns took turns staying night and day with Sr. Rita Marie. Together with many of Sister's relatives and friends, we were united with Our Lord in His Passion and Death during that holiest week of the Church year, keeping vigil and praying with Sister who was stretched on her own cross with Jesus.

Never did she complain, and except for the last few days, Sr. Rita Marie was able to smile at visitors. She would seem to go into deep recollection whenever we began the prayers. And at times of silence, one could see Sister silently gazing at the Divine Mercy or Immaculate Heart pictures that were near her bed.

Besides her sister, **Agnes Murphy** and husband **Danny**, her niece **Mary Froelich** and husband **Danny**, as well as her niece **Ruth Ann Carrico** who throughout the year checked on Sister before retiring at night, we are particularly indebted to **Paula Bittel**, assistant activities

director, who throughout Sister's year at Carmel Home offered her diversion by means of games and humorous banter. Our thanks also to **Alexandria Johnson**, who prayed by her bed as often as possible when Sister lay dying. Most of all we thank Sr. Francis Teresa and the Carmel Home Sisters in Owensboro for the charism they share with the entire staff. We would like to name all of the Carmel Home staff, but in so doing would surely miss someone. God knows the kindness and care shown by each caregiver, and we ask Him to reward you as only He can. "Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, that you did unto Me," says Our Lord in the Gospel.

With peace and acceptance, Sr. Rita Marie suffered through the Easter Triduum with Our Lord, at every minute seeming ready to breathe her last. Finally, the Divine Bridegroom came for her at about 4:26 p.m. on Holy Saturday. It was already Easter Sunday in many parts of the world. Imagine her joy when she saw the Risen Lord come to take her into His eternal Easter. May she rest in peace and may she pray for all of us still on our pilgrim way!

Sr. Rita Marie on her Gaudeamus Day in 2002, celebrating her 50 years as a professed Passionist Nun. The poster behind Sister reads: "Rescue the Desperate," and it is filled with drawings of calamities she adverted. Many such posters decorated the room that day!



A cleverly-costumed nun appeared as St. Joseph bearing with him many rewards from Heaven for her generous service. All was decorated in gold and pink because everyone knew she loved the color PINK!



Some faithful friends: Paula and Alexandria (inset)



A Loving Remembrance of our Deceased



JOSEPH WILLIAM CASTLEN, JR.

Passionist Oblate

1914-2009

When Joe Castlen joined our Passionist Oblates, he was about 88 years "young". Undaunted by his golden years, Joe participated vigorously in discussions and brought wisdom and gentlemanly humor to the Oblate community. As part of the 2nd group of Oblates, he made his Act of Oblation in 2005, and took the Passionist name: "James of the Divine Savior."

A native of St. Louis, Joe lived most of his 95 years in Owensboro. He and his beloved wife, **Margaret Elizabeth**, raised 8 children, 7 of whom are still living. As Joe's family and achievements are well known in the Owensboro area, we are devoting this article to the way he related to our Passionist spirituality.

When Joe wrote to the superior of our monastery, requesting to be admitted into the Oblate formation program he said: "Among the things that have influenced my desire to become a member and be associated with the Passionist Way of Life are: the life-long impressions left on me from attending Passionist Missions at St. Paul's in Owensboro, after my conversion to Catholicism as a teenager; the "Sign Magazine" read during my younger years. Each issue had at least one story that inspired me to strive to live the Way of the Cross. The book, The Mysticism of the Passion in St. Paul of the Cross, by Martin Bialas, C.P. Since reading that book, my first intention at each Mass is "conforming to God's will." Joe also commented on how his association with other Oblates had "influenced my life more than I can express."

When because of physical decline Joe could no longer attend the monthly Oblate meetings, Peggy Clark assumed the role of our liaison by visiting Joe and spending time sharing the materials from the meeting. Peggy said, "It was so beautiful working with him; he was strong in his beliefs but open to hear how another approached the spiritual life."

Peggy went on to say that the times they talked about the Will of God, they always began giving thanks for all the ways God had led them. Joe was especially grateful for being led to be Catholic. It changed every choice he made: the college he attended, his career choices, how he and his beloved wife raised their children. In God's gift of "**Mikey**" [a son who suffered from a developmental disability], Joe said he and his family learned how to love deeply and were brought closer together. Joe believed that in heaven their family might find out that Mikey had more influence on people than his [Joe's] teaching or counseling, or the lawyers and judges in their family, because Mikey taught them so much by his loving and accepting ways.

May this good and faithful servant of the Lord, enjoy the eternal fruits of the crosses he bore on earth, and may he pray for all of us!

JOSEPH ROBERT SWANSON

1941-2009

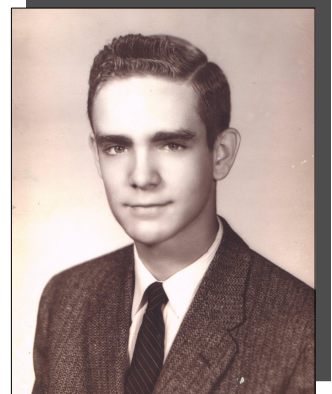
Affiliate, **Christie Swanson**, lost her oldest brother, Joe, on July 9, 2009. Joe died while doing an act of charity. Being retired, he had volunteered to drive a physically challenged woman to and from her place of work. Such generosity was characteristic of his life. While on his way to pick her up after work, Joe was in an auto accident and died.

Here is what Christie has to say about her brother: Joe was the firstborn child of eight in our family. Someone nicknamed him "Butch", but I'm not sure he really liked that nickname or not. He joined the Army after high school graduation, and served in the Honor Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. This gave him the opportunity to participate in ceremonial functions for the U.S. President and other foreign government officials.

Later, as a mechanic, he used to build and race stock cars. After moving to Kentucky, he worked as a mechanic in the city garage and from there he retired. Before his divorce he was married for 40 years and had two children.

"The thing I remember most about him is his generosity," says Christie. He would mow other people's lawns, take neighbors bouquets of flowers from his yard, stop to fix someone's car that had broken down on the road. He opened his home to people when they had nowhere to live, cared for people who were sick, helped others get medical attention, even offering to pay the doctor's bill. He believed this is what God wanted him to do. Joe said he wanted to serve the Henderson, KY community, and believed that he served by every kind act he did. While Joe lived through extremely difficult personal trials, and had his own seemingly insurmountable problems, he never lost the desire or capacity to serve others.

"My brother served God very well here on earth, and I have great hope he will be rewarded with the joy of heaven. St. Therese said she would spend her heaven doing good on earth, and I believe that Joe will want to do the same," says Christie.



From the Foot of the Cross



Passionist Nuns
8564 Crisp Road
Whitesville, Kentucky 42378-9782

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Dear Relatives and Friends in Christ,

Have you prayed for the holiness of priests today? Have you said "Thanks" to priests working in your diocese, or to a religious priest, for their fidelity to their priestly vocation? Pope Benedict XVI has set aside this special year of prayer for priests. We encourage you throughout the year to do something special by way of prayer, Eucharistic adoration, days of fasting, etc., for priests, as well as by encouraging young men to consider the priesthood.

"Without [the ministerial priesthood] there would be neither the Eucharist nor even the mission of the Church herself," says Pope Benedict. Recently we received a wonderful letter from Fr. Thomas Nelson, O. Praem., of the Institute for Religious Life, in which he stated: *"Parish priests are the single most common point of contact for young Catholics who need help in discerning a vocation to the consecrated life."*

Many of our Nuns testify that their vocation was awakened by the encouragement of a priest. So we count on our priests to keep our Passionist vocation in mind when assisting young women in vocational choices.

And for all of our family members and friends throughout the nation and world, we humbly ask your prayers that God will continue to bless our community with new members, and grant them health and perseverance in our life. Thank you.

Thanks too for the countless ways you help us continue our contemplative mission in the Church—by your prayers, donations, personal service, as well as by the many veggies that are shared with us from local gardens. Know that in our deep gratitude we carry you and your needs and intentions in our hearts in the prayers, works and sufferings of our day, as we stand before the Lord on your behalf. God's blessing and peace be upon you, each and all!

Mother Catherine Marie and the Passionist Nuns of Whitesville



Photo courtesy Larena Lawson



Photo courtesy Tami Schneider

Loving congratulations to our new ordinands
Fr. Josh McCarty (top) and Fr. Daniel Dillard

Please remember us in your will and help continue our Contemplative Passionist Mission