

March 17, 2003

“I will walk with the Lord in the land of the living.”  
(Responsorial Psalm - Sunday, Week 2 of Lent)

Dear Sisters,

During the past four months, Sister Rita often verbalized her great desire to be with her Lord. Last evening, accompanied by the prayer of her MSC sisters, this deepest desire of her heart became a reality.



Sister Rita Mae Ehrmann  
Born: August 27, 1928 in Jersey City, NJ  
Professed: August 19, 1948  
Died: March 16, 2003 in Reading, PA

Sister Rita entered our congregation shortly after finishing her secondary education. She had not known any of our sisters personally, but was drawn to our congregation because of her devotion to the Sacred Heart and later received the name Sister Cordia.

Throughout her life, Sister Rita combined exceptional talent with great simplicity. We knew her as scientist, mathematician, outstanding teacher, poet, artist, generous and adventurous missionary, wise and prudent Provincial councilor, concerned and loving superior. Sister Rita was above all a deeply spiritual and prayerful person.

Following her first profession, Sister Rita was sent to the University of Dayton. Having completed her studies, Sister began her teaching ministry with the aspirants and novices. All of us who were privileged to be her students remember her as an outstanding educator.

Despite serious health problems and frequent migraine headaches, Sister was assigned to graduate studies at St. Louis, Missouri where she received her Ph.D in Mathematics. Upon completion of her degree, Sister Rita began the next phase of life: that of a professor at Villanova University. Sister was known to be a special friend to those students who needed extra help. She was acknowledged by her peers as an excellent professor and became a valued member of the math department at the university.

During the course of her Villanova years, Sister Rita was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and was invited to teach at the University of Botswana in Africa. She accepted with great enthusiasm. For two years, Sister lived independently in a small house and joined the many day laborers that walked Botswana's dusty roads to work each day. While in Botswana, she took up the art of photography and wrote a collection of poems to accompany each picture. Our sisters in Namibia recently reported hearing these poems being read on their national radio. These poems and pictures were published in her book, *African Footprints*.

In 1990, Sister Rita retired from teaching and shortly thereafter took up the challenge of serving as coordinator to over 60 sisters in our Health Care Unit. During these years, she also served as a Provincial Councilor.

In 1998, Sister Rita's love for the congregation prompted her to respond to a request from the German Province to assist the sisters in their study of English. Rita was in Germany during the centennial year and labored with love over many needed translations.

Within months of her return from Germany, Sister began to experience the effects of a blood disorder that proved to be irreversible. For the past year she had known that death would come sooner rather than later and she embraced this reality with a determination to live her last months in a spirit of prayerful readiness. Sister Rita was best able to do this through her painting.

On November 20, Sister Rita suffered a brain aneurysm. Surgery followed and, although successful, Sister's blood condition prevented her from achieving full recovery. Since her return to our Health Care Center, Sister Rita struggled to know how God wanted her to live each day and what His immediate plan for her might be. Only ten days ago she was assigned to Hospice Care. During her last days, Sister was unconscious. As unassumingly as she lived, Sister Rita made her final passage to God; together with her Bridegroom, she entered into the mystery of the eternal transfiguration.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for Sister Rita on Wednesday, March 19, 2003 at 11:00 a.m. She will then be laid to rest in our convent cemetery.

United in Jesus' love,

*Sister Marie Clark, U.S.C.*