



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

"I have seen heaven. I am not afraid. I am ready." These words of Sister Rosemary Winter have been spoken by her many times over the years since her near-death experience in 1991. Early in the morning of July 30, 2015, the Lord came for her a second time and took his beloved to Himself.

Born on February 14, 1940, Rosemary was the anniversary gift to her parents, Albert and Mabel Winter. Her grandmother had predicted Rosemary's birth and had told her mother to name the girl she was going to have "Rose." Rosemary entered the family as the 6th living child. She had four other siblings who would live through childhood after her. This made Rosemary a "middle child" but her brothers and sisters preferred to call her the heart of the family. Many times they told her that she was the glue that held the family together.

Rosemary was a member of Immaculate Conception Parish (Darby) in Toledo, Ohio, and attended the parish grade school. As a child in the fifth grade, she told her mother that she wanted to become a Sister. Her mother took her to the Ursuline Convent to meet some of her teachers, choosing one as her mentor. In 1954 the eighth grade teacher took some of the girls to Joliet, to see the Motherhouse and to spend a couple of days at the Prep. When Rosemary returned home, she informed her mother that she did not want to be an Ursuline. She wanted to be a Joliet Franciscan. Her mother told her that they would have to go to the Ursuline convent and inform the Sisters of her new choice. This event influenced Rosemary's life in such a way that she was never afraid to confront issues that needed to be addressed. People might refer to this as being frank or speaking her mind but Rosemary saw it as letting people know just how she was thinking on events in her life. Once she told her side of the story and heard the other side of the story, the event was over as far as she was concerned.

Rosemary was blessed with a faith in her God so that she trusted that anything she asked God for she would receive. Her prayer was always, "God you know I need this and I know you will get it for me. I am thanking you now for it." And she would receive it.

Rosemary went to the Prep in September, 1954, and after completing her senior year of high school during the summer of 1957, she entered St. Francis Convent on September 8, 1957. On August 13, 1958, she became a novice and was given the name of Sister M. Vita, in memory of one of the Joliet Franciscans who had influenced her life at Darby.

In September, 1961, she began her ministry in the field of education as first grade teacher at St. Clement's, Chicago, Illinois. She was a born teacher. She enjoyed her students and made the classroom such a welcoming place for them that they looked forward to coming to school. She had many stories to tell the other Sisters when she returned home. She loved the children so much and wanted them to succeed.

Alleluia!



Sister Rosemary Winter, OSF

It wasn't long before Sister Rosemary's ministry of education became one of ministry to the poor, the underprivileged. She saw the need for an adequate education if her children were going to be able to escape from the poverty into which they had been born. She spent summers teaching Head Start at Sacred Heart, Englewood, in Chicago and then ministered at St. Mary Parish in Fairfield, Alabama, Hopkins Park, Illinois and Sacred Heart Parish in Joliet. Her ministry might have been listed as education, but it was more. She felt a oneness with each person she met; her ministry became more of a ministry of presence.

She never traveled by bus or train without making a new friend. She enjoyed shopping but instead of going from store to store, she would find a bench to sit on and wait till the others had done their shopping. When her companions would return to the bench to take her home, they would find her talking with someone, listening to their life story and offering advice or the promise of prayers. Some of these people kept in touch with her. During the week before she died, she received flowers from one man whom she had befriended as a young boy of 8 years old when he was traveling to stay with his father during the summer after his parents had separated.

Eventually, Rosemary saw that she would not be able to continue in the teaching field. Her eyesight was failing rapidly. Looking for a new ministry, she participated in a month-long ministry discernment workshop and arrived at the conclusion that her ministry should be one of "Sister Sunshine." She returned to Joliet to minister to her Sisters at Our Lady of Angels. Many Sisters welcomed her visits as life-giving and enjoyed her stories. She always made sure she had a joke to tell everyone, a new one each day. When a Sister expressed a fear of dying, Rosemary would share the story of her own experience of 1991. This brought many of them to the peace they desired and they were ready to make the journey without fear.

Many lives have been touched through Sister Rosemary's simple faith, her love of creation, her singing, her sharing of her gifts, especially the gift of her friendship. Her inability to see was a physical detriment but it never stopped her from enjoying life and seeing the good in others. Her affirmation of others can never be forgotten. We share in her joy now as she "sees" the God who loved her.

Sister Rosemary Winter, OSF

February 14, 1940 — July 30, 2015

<i>Born:</i>	February 14, 1940
<i>Parents:</i>	Albert Winter and Mabel (Roberts) Winter
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 8, 1957
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 13, 1958
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1960
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1965
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	July 30, 2015

Ministry History

1960-1961	Student: College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois
1961-1964	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Clement, Chicago, Illinois
1964-1967	Teacher: Grade 1, SS. Peter and Paul, Chicago
1967-1976	Teacher: Grades 1, 2, 3, St. Mary, Fairfield, Alabama
1976-1977	Principal: St. Mary, Fairfield
1977-1978	Teacher: Grades 1, 2, Sacred Heart, Chicago
1979-1980	Teacher: Grades 1, 2, St. Michael, Fremont, Michigan
1980-1984	Teacher: Kindergarten, Annunciation, Aurora, Illinois
1984	Counselor/Advocate for Battered Women, Guardian Angel Home, Joliet
1985-1987	Teacher: Educare, Joliet
1987-1988	Teacher: Educare and Tutor: Sacred Heart, Joliet
1988-1990	Teacher: Grades 1, 2, St. Thaddeus, Joliet
1990-1991	Teacher: Bobbie Noonan, Joliet
1991-1993	Teacher: Pre-school, St. Mary, Dixon, Illinois
1993-2005	Teacher: Grade 3, St. Joseph's School, Joliet
2005-2006	Sabbatical
2006-2008	Volunteer: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home (OLA), Joliet
2008-2009	OLA Sister Residents Care/Companion, Joliet
2009-2013	OLA Sister Residents Care/Local Chapter Coordinator, Joliet
2013-2015	OLA Sister Residents Care

<i>Wake:</i>	Friday, August 7, 2015, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Friday, August 7, 2015, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Friday, August 7, 2015, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Burial:</i>	Saturday, August 8, 2015, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 360, Grave 11, Resurrection Cemetery
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	By her parents, Albert Winter and Mabel (Roberts) Winter; brothers, Frank, Albert, Richard, Donald, James, Clifford, William, Edward and Michael Winter
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her sisters, Mary Leech and Patricia Arnold; and her brother, Charles Winters

Rest in Peace, Sister Rosemary