

Sisters of St. Francis

of Mary Immaculate

Rita Ann Schmitz was a Columbus native through and through. She was born at Main and 22nd Street and was always proud of her education at Saint John the Evangelist Elementary School and Saint Joseph Academy. (Hers is an educational heritage shared by only one other Sister in our Congregation, Sister Martha Eckstein, who went to those two schools many years after Rita and both were aware of that connection.) Rita kept up with both grade school and high school classmates attending gatherings and exchanging letters and phone calls often.

Her association with the Joliet Franciscans came when she was a youngster, and her mother, Sarah "Sadie" Scullen Schmitz, mentored Louise Gillivan. Louise (later our Sister Mercia), having lost her parents, was responsible for caring for her younger siblings, particularly her brother Jimmy. Louise Gillivan sought out Rita's mother for advice because the Schmitz boys were Jimmy's age. It was through Mercia's choice to join our Congregation at almost 30, that Rita got to know our Sisters.

Rita was independent, fun-loving, and hospitable all of her life. When we had the opportunity to choose professions beyond teaching, she chose to be a social worker for the Franklin County Social Service Agency for sixteen years. Her duties included making home visits on behalf of her clients, and on days when she was "on the road," she made Saint Mary Convent on South Third Street her home base. There she visited with the Sisters at what was in many ways our Columbus center house. Rita and Pauline Devine were often the ones who gathered the Columbus Sisters together, starting a long tradition of monthly get-togethers on Friday nights. Rita was a card player, cook, and loyal friend to many.

Alleluia!



Sister Rita Schmitz, OSF

One of her fondest memories was that at her mother's funeral, which was at old Holy Cross Church known for its pre-Vatican liturgy, one of our Sisters took the lead in singing the only music at the Mass, a communion hymn, and others joined in. It was the type of initiative that Rita appreciated and that added the spirit of resurrection to the Mass that day.

In later years, the Schmitz home on Main Street, where her grandparents lived on one side of the double and Rita's parents on the other, was renovated as part of the Olde Town East Restoration. The owner was happy to have Rita take a tour and recall the early days of the old home. Then, when it came time to cut the ribbon on the series of townhouses restored there, Rita was asked to be a Grand Marshall for the parade to the site and to have the honor of cutting the ribbon.

When Sister Simone Campbell arrived in Columbus on a national tour to draw attention to federal budget cuts which hurt the needy, an effort called the "Nuns on the Bus," Rita was the first one of us to arrive at the First Unitarian Universalist Church to meet the bus and talk to Simone!

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Rita's prayerful spirit was shown in her devotion to the Mass and by the several times that she made a retreat at the Trappist Monastery at Gethsemane, Kentucky. She had a regular pattern of traveling there and a real appreciation for the works of Thomas Merton. There was something contemplative about Rita's spirituality, and even fifty years after her class graduated from Saint Joseph's Academy, she could remember the retreat given to their class by a Dominican priest named Father Louis Ryan, OP.

Rita's nieces and nephews were very attentive, and after she moved to an independent living apartment at Our Lady of Angels, they would make regular visits to see her, usually joining her for the Saturday evening Mass and enjoying a meal in her apartment.

Rita was torn even in her last days between her tiredness and her desire to be part of the fun. A few days before her death, she said to one of our Sisters at Saint Patrick's Residence, "Be sure to call me for the Bingo game." Rita, you were always ready for any new venture. We send you to God with gratitude for all that you are to us, a joyful presence of God's love.

Alleluia Letter written by Sr. Margaret Hoffman

Sister Rita Schmitz, OSF

June 15, 1926—April 20, 2024

<i>Born:</i>	June 15, 1926
<i>Parents:</i>	Arthur L. Schmitz and Sarah Scullen
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 12, 1944
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1945
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1947
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 12, 1950
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	April 20, 2024

Ministry History

1947-1952	Teacher: Grade 2, St. Pascal, Chicago, Illinois
1952-1953	Teacher: Grade 2, St. Joseph, Elgin, Illinois and St. Boniface, Chicago, Illinois
1953-1955	Teacher: Grades 3 and 4, Corpus Christi, Columbus, Ohio
1955-1960	Teacher: Grades 5, 6 and 7, St. Raymond Cathedral, Joliet, Illinois
1960-1961	Teacher: Grades 7 and 8, Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, Ohio
1961-1963	Teacher, Superior and Principal: Grade 8, Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby
1963-1968	Teacher, Superior and Principal: Grade 8, St. Bernard, Joliet, Illinois
1969-1970	Social Service Worker: St. Mary, Columbus, Ohio
1970-1973	Religion and Education Coordinator: Franklin County Home for Children, Columbus, Ohio
1973-1985	Social Service Worker: Franklin County Welfare Office, Columbus, Ohio
1986-1991	Care of the Elderly: Residences, Columbus, Ohio
1991-1993	Care of the Elderly: Residence, Westerville, Ohio
1993-1994	Resident Assistant: Residence, Columbus, Ohio
1994-1996	Activity Assistant: Heritage Day Health Center, Westerville, Ohio
1996-2003	Volunteer: Residence, Columbus, Ohio
2003-2014	Community Service: Little Brook Place, Columbus, Ohio
2014-2023	Ministry of Presence: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, Illinois
2023-2024	Ministry of Presence and Prayer: Ascension Villa Franciscan Place, Joliet, Illinois

<i>Interment:</i>	St. Joseph Cemetery, Lockbourne, Ohio
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, Arthur L. Schmitz and Sarah Scullen, her brothers, Arthur William, Ralph John, Raymond Albert, Charles James
<i>Survived by:</i>	Many nieces, nephews and friends

Rest in Peace, Sister Rita!