



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO Box 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036
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S. RACHEL WEST

November 19, 2023

Dear Sisters and Associates, Co-Workers, Family, and Friends,

Shortly after midnight, well before many of us had read this Sunday's Gospel, its words came true for our Sister Rachel West: "You yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night."

"I was a depression baby, born in Waukesha, Wisconsin," Rachel tells us in her autobiography. While still a baby, Rachel and her family moved to Amo, Indiana when her dad inherited the family farm. Though a bit unusual at the time, both her parents, Homer and Julia Asselin West, had gone to college; consequently, Rachel and her three older brothers all loved to read. As children, family evenings found them reading books, magazines, or newspapers—or playing with a world globe, map puzzles, or board games. During World War II Rachel's dad, commissioned an officer in the Army Air Corps, was stationed for three years in San Antonio, Texas, and the family moved there to be with him. Returning afterwards to Indiana for high school, Rachel fell in love with basketball, movie stars, and blues music.

Though Rachel had planned to return to San Antonio for college, the Korean War led her father to say that no daughter of his was going to be that far away from home in an army town during wartime. "So I enrolled," she wrote, "somewhat against my liking, at Marian College. I had never been around Sisters, and I was not as totally brought up in 'Catholic ways,' as were my classmates." Rachel, however, did become a member of the last female graduating class at Marian. To Monsignor Doyle she attributes her belief that social justice is a religious commitment. It was also at Marian that Rachel and the Sisters of St. Francis were introduced. She regarded two of her mentors, Sisters Mary Carol Schroeder and LaVerne Frietsch, as "two of the finest teachers I ever had." With their encouragement, Rachel entered the novitiate after graduation. There she became known as Sister Audrey. ("I asked for the name 'Audry' for the actress Audrey Hepburn," she wrote, "but Mother Cephas had other ideas about the spelling.")

Rachel's varied career in education included teaching elementary grades, high school history, French and English, and college history. She earned graduate degrees from Indiana University. Rachel's highly acclaimed doctoral dissertation was published as a book, *The Department of State on the Eve of the First World War*.

From 1970 to 1983, Rachel carried on her long career at Marian College, teaching American history and political science. Having become more and more interested in justice and peace issues, she left the college scene to pursue justice ministry on a full-time basis. She first spent a year in D.C. as an intern with Network and then joined the staff of Groundwork, an intercommunity justice and peace center based in Detroit. It was said of her, "If there is a bill, an issue or a vote that deals with such Gospel-related concerns as homelessness, poverty, abortion, pollution, or nuclear arms, Rachel will be on top of it."

Intending to return to college teaching in 1989, Rachel was called instead to care for her older brother who was ill with cancer. Following this family caregiving and some sabbatical time for herself, Rachel was appointed the first director of the Community's Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, a position she held from 1992 to 2000.

Rachel spent the next year as a student at Pendle Hill, living and praying with Quakers. "This was an unforgettable time," she noted; "in the words of Quakers, 'it spoke to my condition.'"

In 2002, Rachel returned to Marian College, this time as archivist. I'm told that there she took a room full of stuffed boxes of Marian notes and turned all that into Marian's archives. Thinking retirement would follow those eight years,

Rachel was asked next to oversee the Congregation's archives at Oldenburg. Rachel recalled, "I loved teaching and the time I was engaged with Justice and Peace issues. However, my work with archives was a favorite time. This work brings together my love for history. Archives are vital to an institution, preserving records, remembering and being thankful for how we arrived where we are now."

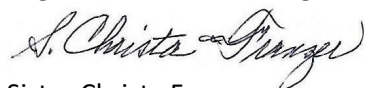
Rachel will be remembered as a gifted teacher and a passionate advocate for justice. She has also earned a reputation as a college basketball fan, a lover of music and of the outdoors, and a skilled cook. Her own culinary favorites included popcorn for breakfast and, later in the day, liver and onions at the MCL Cafeteria.

We offer our sympathy to Rachel's brother Douglas, as well as to her sister-in-law, nieces, and nephews; to her classmates, friends, Community members, and former students. We offer our gratitude to our nursing and pastoral care staff in St. Clare Hall.

Rachel concluded her autobiography, writing: "As for my life as a whole, a 19th century Quaker woman wrote, 'Live up to the light thou hast.' I hope I have done this and, with God's help keep growing into the Light." Rachel has been quoted by another writer, saying: "I have been greatly gifted by God, and want my life to be a prolonged Thanksgiving!"

As we celebrate this upcoming holiday, then, confident that Rachel has "grown into the Light," we prolong our giving thanks for her life!

In gratitude for Rachel's gifts shared,



Sister Christa Franzer

For the General Council

SISTER RACHEL (formerly S. Audrey) WEST

Birth: January 13, 1933

Entered Religious Life: September 8, 1954

Entered Eternal Life: November 19, 2023

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. RACHEL SERVED:

1954-1955	Imm. Con. Academy, Oldenburg IN	1981-1983	Formation Community
1956-1958	St. Mary Academy, Indianapolis IN	1983-1984	Network, Washington DC
1958-1959	Holy Trinity, Indianapolis IN	1984-1989	Groundwork, Detroit MI
1959-1960	Our Lady of Angels, St. Bernard OH	1989-1991	Family Ministry
1960-1961	St. Mark, Indianapolis IN	1991-1992	Sabbatical
1961-1963	St. Anthony, Streator IL	1992-2000	Director JPIC, Indianapolis IN
1963-1967	Rex Mundi High School, Evansville IN	2000-2001	Sabbatical
1967-1969	Student, IU, Bloomington IN	2001-2010	Marian (College) University, Indianapolis IN
1969-1981	Marian (College) University, Indianapolis IN	2010-2023	Motherhouse, Oldenburg IN

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister's online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister's memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org