



# SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036

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FACEBOOK: FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OLDENBURG



October 5, 2019

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

S. RITA VUKOVIC, OSF

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.  
Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord  
will award to me. . ."*

– 2 Timothy 4: 7-8

Just a few hours after our October 4 feast day celebration, our Franciscan “race enthusiast” journeyed toward her own finish line, with victory in sight.

Rita Mae Vukovic was born in Dayton, Ohio, the eighth of thirteen children born to Paul and Catherine Vukovic. Rita recalled her Catholic roots in a family that celebrated its faith as an integral part of life. Praying the rosary after dinner was a family tradition. Friends who came over to play were expected to join in and finish the rosary with the family.

Having met our Franciscan Sisters during her St. Anthony grade school years, and following her own older sister Kate, Rita entered the Oldenburg Community just after high school. While her early teaching ministry took Rita (then S. Anselm) to elementary schools in Indiana and Ohio, she is perhaps best remembered for the nearly fifty years during which she taught high school students at Bishop Flaget in Chillicothe, Ohio and at Scecina, St. Mary Academy, and Cardinal Ritter in Indianapolis.

An article in the Indianapolis Archdiocesan newspaper referred to S. Rita as “the non-nonsense nun.” Discipline and dedication were part of her secret to success as a teacher. The article acknowledged that in other ways Rita appeared to be the gentle follower of St. Francis who lived to serve God and other people. A colleague from Cardinal Ritter noted that “S. Rita taught mainly freshmen. When they came to her class they were generally terrified of her, and remained so for the whole year. By the time they graduated, they all loved her.” This was witnessed by her following of graduates who returned to visit with their former teacher.

S. Rita was known to offer special support to students with family problems and to provide extra tutoring for those struggling with school work. She also made special efforts to secure food or clothing for needy families. She stated her own philosophy: “Helping students build character and become ‘whole’ people is much more important than molding them into English students or book learners. And I’m certainly for the underdog. I look for the student who really needs help, and I do my utmost to help that kid feel important.”

Describing herself as a “nun on the run,” Rita recalled two adventures which made several newspaper headlines. One was the gift from friends at a Cardinal Ritter fundraiser who paid for her to ride four laps around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway with a professional race car driver. “At 175 mph,” she said, “it only takes about two minutes to complete four laps, so my prayer had to be short and to the point!” At the next year’s event Rita “won” a stunt ride in a T-6 Texan Warbird airplane—anything for the good of the school.

Ranking even higher among her life's remembrances are several recognitions Rita received. These include a West Deanery "Called to Excellence" award in 1998, a "Tribute to Teachers" award in 2002, and the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* award, a papal honor that recognizes lay people for their service to the church.

Watching sports, particularly football and basketball, were favorite extracurricular activities. Rita also loved to travel on archdiocesan pilgrimages—within the United States, as well as to Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Ireland. Despite her class competitions in selling World's Finest Chocolate bars, Hershey's almonds were her personal favorite.

We offer our sympathy to Rita's family, especially to her sister Mary and brothers Bob and Tom, as well as to her faithful friend S. Mary Ellen Gillman, her classmates, companions, former students, and friends. We are grateful to all who cared for her in St. Clare Hall.

All of S. Rita's alumni can quote the saying which also hung in a frame on her bedroom wall to this very day: "Good, better, best. Never let it rest until the good is better and the better, best." We know that, throughout her life, Rita experienced the good becoming better; we trust that, as she has entered eternal life, she is aware of having found the best.

In grateful remembrance,



Sister Christa Franzer  
*For the General Council*

#### SISTER RITA VUKOVIC, OSF

Birth: April 6, 1930  
Entrance into Religious Life: September 8, 1948  
Entrance into Eternal Life: October 5, 2019

#### MISSIONS AT WHICH SISTER RITA (formerly S. Anselm) SERVED:

1951-1954	Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis IN
1954-1958	St. Clement, St. Bernard OH
1958-1959	St. Michael, Cincinnati OH
1959-1961	St. Aloysius, Bridgetown OH
1961-1964	St. Michael, Indianapolis IN
1964-1966	Scecina High School, Indianapolis IN
1966-1967	Bishop Flaget High School, Chillicothe OH
1967-1970	St. Mary Academy, Indianapolis IN
1970-2013	Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis IN
2013-2019	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](http://www.Weigelfh.com)*

*Memorial Donations in Sister's memory may be given online at [www.OldenburgFranciscans.org](http://www.OldenburgFranciscans.org)*

