



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

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FACEBOOK: FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OLDENBURG



April 23, 2019

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

S. RUTH ANN WIRTZ, OSF

In the final hours of Easter Sunday, April 21, while the faithful celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus, our beloved S. Ruth Ann Wirtz was called to share in His new life in all its fullness. What a joyful passage she must have experienced as she made her way to the light and glory of heaven! We can only imagine the delightful reunion that must have been hers as she embraced once again her beloved family and Sister-companions in eternal peace!

Dolores Wirtz was born on October 8, 1923 in Princeton, Indiana, the fifth of six children to Otila Schafer Wirtz and Edward Wirtz. Her elementary school years were spent at St. Joseph School in Princeton, where Dolores was taught by Oldenburg Franciscans. Her father owned a restaurant in Princeton and provided well for his family. Dolores grew up in a happy home and maintained a life-long closeness to her family.

After spending her high school years at Immaculate Conception Academy in Oldenburg, Dolores decided to follow her oldest sister, Velada (our Sister Mary Denis) and enter the convent of the Sisters of St. Francis. At investiture, she became Sister Ruth Ann, and she made her first profession of vows in 1949. Professionally, she received a bachelor degree in music education from Marian College (now, Marian University) in 1956 and a master of music degree from Butler University in 1960.

From the outset, S. Ruth Ann was “taken” with music education. Her friends and companions universally noted, “Music was her life!” In her early years of teaching, she worked at several Ohio and Indiana schools, bringing piano instruction to elementary-aged students. In 1952, she began a seven-year stay at Little Flower School in Indianapolis, where she taught piano, directed the school band, and served as organist. An opening in the music department at Marian College necessitated her assignment there; this was to be the beginning of a noteworthy career spanning 52 additional years of music ministry.

S. Ruth Ann’s joy in teaching music was a gift she offered to every student. Besides her college teaching, she instructed neighborhood children in piano and endeared herself to families who witnessed the progress their young children made under her care. In the music department, serving as Associate Professor of Music, she was a structured, disciplined teacher whose primary concern was that students understood the material. A prime area of her instruction was music theory, which could prove difficult for even the most devoted music student. S. Ruth Ann was intent that students truly learn the material, and was attentive to that goal for each individual. “She was kind, but strict,” remembered S. Norma Rocklage, former Dean at Marian College. “It was her desire to see that every student would improve.”

Marian music graduate S. Marjorie Jeanne Niemer noted, “S. Ruth Ann was one of our best musicians. She was very thorough, very patient.” With this character advantage, she was able to teach both beginners and advanced music students.

Together with her close friend, S. Vivian Rose Morshauer, head of the music department, S. Ruth Ann instructed Marian’s Drum and Bugle Corps, accompanying them to festivals throughout the country. Her support for this musical enterprise was tireless and enthusiastic. S. Ruth Ann served as organist at Marian College, as well, providing music for liturgical services. Her excellent skills brought beauty to each prayer experience. In addition, S. Ruth Ann was known for having “perfect pitch”. “I remember the joy of sitting in front of her on many Sundays and holidays,” commented S. Olga Wittekind, former Professor of Psychology. “Her voice was like an angel—crystal clear and beautiful tones!”

While S. Ruth Ann was thoroughly musical, her interests in life went beyond music and extended to everything around her. At Marian, she went to all the football games and took an active interest in all student activities. Her loyalty to Marian was total; she believed in the mission of the school and never grew tired of being there. This same loyalty extended to her friends and Sister-companions. She did not hesitate to speak up in defense of others, and she had the ability to step back and allow others to “be” while supporting their decisions.

S. Ruth Ann’s love for dogs was a special quality she shared with her companions at Marian. She would willingly walk the Community dog around campus, enabling the animal to get its needed exercise. Close friend S. Joel Franks was known to provide transportation back to the Convent after such an outing. She also enjoyed the beautiful array of flowers which S. Janice Scheidler nurtured in the yard of their Convent home.

At her retirement in 2011, S. Ruth Ann was given a standing ovation by the Marian University Community. Then, quietly, she returned to the Motherhouse, where she became involved in both the vocal and chime choirs. Her final years were spent in St. Clare Hall, where she had the daily companionship of S. Susanna Helmes.

Perhaps the biggest impact which S. Ruth Ann has made has been in the unassuming nature of her character. Jim Lerner, former student and music department head at Marian University, noted, “She was one of my favorite teachers—and she was a very special friend. I felt that S. Ruth Ann was overshadowed by others . . . but that never seemed to bother her. She was a very strong person and very secure in who she was.” Her entire career can be described as a work for others. Always professional, but always gentle in her approach, she was able to let go of herself and share what she had without controlling. She had a gift for recognizing and acknowledging the good she saw in others.

We extend our deepest sympathy to S. Ruth Ann’s family, especially her brother Ed, her Sisters and Associates in Community, and her friends and former students who were influenced by her musical gifts. May she, now living in the joy of the Resurrection, be our heavenly companion in serving and praising God!

In joyful memory,

S. Delouise Menges, OSF
For the General Council

SISTER RUTH ANN (Dolores) WIRTZ, OSF

Birth: October 8, 1923

Entrance into Religious Life: August 15, 1941

Entrance into Eternal Life: April 21, 2019

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. RUTH ANN SERVED:

1944-1945	St. Clements	St. Bernard, OH
1945-1946	St. Catherine	Cincinnati, OH
1946-1949	Our Lady of Lourdes	Indianapolis, IN
1949-1950	St. Andrew	Richmond, IN
1950-1952	ICA (OA)	Oldenburg, IN
1952-1959	Little Flower	Indianapolis, IN
1959-1961	Holy Trinity	Indianapolis, IN
1959-2011	Marian (College) University	Indianapolis, IN
2011-2019	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

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