

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Mary Rose McCrate

(Sister Mary Blanche)

BORN: October 1935

ENTERED CONGREGATION: January 2, 1953

DIED: August 21, 2017

Today we gather to celebrate a life lived giving joyful praise to God! Sister Mary Rose McCrate, formerly known in religious life as Sister Mary Blanche, was a member of the Sisters of the Precious Blood for 64 years.

Knowing Mary Rose, one could speculate that on October 18, 1935, she announced her arrival in Dayton, Ohio, to her parents James and Martha McCrate with the rich alto harmony she would come to be known for. Mary Rose was their first-born. She would be followed by her only brother, James, and two sisters, Patricia and Kathleen.

Mary Rose grew up on the east side of Dayton, beginning school at Holy Family and later moving to St. Mary's. It was there that Mary Rose came into contact with the Sisters of the Precious Blood, and an earlier dream of being a nun was revived as she was inspired by her seventh grade teacher, Sister Mary Bernard. In eighth grade Sister Hildegard invited a group of girls to the Motherhouse and the rest is history. The following year Mary Rose found herself enrolled at Precious Blood High School. It was a bumpy ride transitioning from high school to the postulancy. The community was making some changes, but Mary Rose hung in there and made her profession of vows in 1955.

Armed with a Bachelor of Science degree in education from the University of Dayton, Mary Rose would spend the next 17 years teaching elementary and intermediate grades in Wapakoneta, Cincinnati and Cloverdale, Ohio, and St. Joseph, Missouri. Mary Rose names Cloverdale, where she had 54 fourth, fifth and sixth graders, as her favorite teaching experience. These responsible farm children allowed a teacher "to put all her energy into teaching since discipline problems were nonexistent." Education would continue to be a thread that ran throughout Mary Rose's life. She would return to the classroom as a tutor for Sylvan Learning Center at Grace A. Greene in the Dayton Public system.

Upon moving to Twin Towers, Mary Rose felt at home volunteering in the GED program, assisting students with reading and math. "My favorite student," she wrote, "was a 70-year-old gentleman who was determined to get his GED after retiring from General Motors."

Mary Rose's interest in music would play out as another thread that ran through her life. The year 1972 found Mary Rose studying at DePaul University, where she earned a Master of Music degree. She put this degree to good use in the classroom. However, attending St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Indiana, to earn certification in church music and liturgy would merge her skills as an educator with her knowledge and love of music. Mary Rose would minister to Catholic and non-Catholic congregations as choir director or coordinator of music and liturgy at various churches in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Her love of music was evident in her participation in various choirs along her journey including the Dayton Philharmonic, which led to New York City concert trips. Mary Rose was delighted and took great pride in the opportunity to sing with the Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall and later at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center.

In retirement Mary Rose was not one to allow grass to grow under her feet. She continued to volunteer with Communion Services at Heartland in Kettering and at Twin Towers Place. It was not uncommon to attend a performance at the Victoria Theatre or the Schuster Center and run into Mary Rose as a volunteer usher. She wrote: "Ushering for the Victoria Theatre Association gives me access to Dayton's rich cultural scene." In addition to the cultural scene, she kept her mind sharp through her participation in UD's Lifelong Learning Institute.

In doing a bit of research about October 18, 1935, I discovered some interesting facts. One fact from the very old art of ancient Chinese astrology stood out. If you were born on that day, in that year, your mythical element is wood.

Mary Rose was passionate about music, theater and wood carving. While Mary Rose would claim, "Woodcarving continues to be a challenging hobby," I would claim that it has been a joy to watch Mary Rose develop her gift as a wood carver. She loved carving, she loved talking about carving and she loved her involvement with the Wood Carvers of Dayton. If you have not seen some of Mary Rose's carving, be sure to check out the pieces on display.

In closing, I would like to share some of Mary Rose's thoughts from her Five Wishes. I believe these thoughts sum up for me the person I have come to know as Sister Mary Rose McCrate.

This is Wish 5: My wish for what I want my loved ones to know.

- I wish to have my congregation, the Sisters of the Precious Blood, my family and friends know that I love them.
- I wish to be forgiven for the times I have hurt my Sisters, my family, my friends and others.
- I wish to have my Sisters, my family, my friends know that I forgive them for when they may have hurt me in my life.
- I wish for my Sisters, my family, my friends to know that I do not fear death itself. I think it is not the end, but a new beginning for me.

Mary Rose loved life! She was not fond of conflict and would rather live in peace! Mary Rose did not hold grudges; she moved on!

Mary Rose had a great sense of humor and hearty laugh!

Mary Rose did not shy away from adventure. If she made up her mind to do something, she did it. Including a trip to Alaska, completed just days before the events that led to her death.

One of the Sisters who visited Mary Rose this past Sunday bid farewell to her with a kiss on the forehead and these words: "Vaya con Dios Blanche!" I am sure she has gone with God and is currently filling the celestial house with music.

— Sister Patty Kremer