

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Ritamary Bulach

BORN: December 1942

ENTERED CONGREGATION: January 1, 1961

DIED: September 8, 2020

For her 50th Jubilee, Sister Ritamary wrote these words: "The aspect of religious life that has been most rewarding is that I like to think that I have been a witness to something other than what we have here on this earth. In this witness, I hope to have encouraged others to sanctify this life for the greater life to come. Also, I like to think that the Lord will one day say to me: I was hungry and you gave me to eat; thirsty, and you gave me to drink."

On December 31, 1942, Ritamary was born Hilda Cornelia Bulach to Elizabeth and Victor Bulach, the second youngest of 11 children. She was born on a farm near Oxford, Ohio. Growing up on the farm, there was plenty of work but also time to play in the creek and the woods, and to fish and swim.

Sister Ritamary started her primary education in public school in the small town of Reily, Ohio. In the third grade she transferred to the Catholic school, Queen of Peace in Millville, where she met the Sisters of the Precious Blood. She returned to public high school and it was during her time in secondary education that she felt a strong attraction to religious life. She wrote, "I had a great thirst for God that nothing less than God could satisfy."

Ritamary decided to inquire about religious life as a Sister of the Precious Blood. She wrote, "I met with Mother Aquinas; we talked about a number of things. I told her that I am interested in food service, not education. She said that we have institutions that would meet my interest." Ritamary also wrote that at the time she entered she had no knowledge of Precious Blood Spirituality, but that she "loved the Eucharist, and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament was very appealing."

From then on, her understanding of Precious Blood Spirituality grew. Some of her favorite lines from Scripture were

Romans, Chapter 8, verses 18 and 22, which says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us," and, "We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now."

Though some of our monastic practices have changed since the time of her entrance, Sister Ritamary claimed that she never lost "the monastic attraction." She had a great respect for the early church Fathers and a devotion to Blessed Charles de Foucauld, whom she considered a more recent Father of the Desert. Like Blessed Charles, Ritamary too found strength in solitude.

At the age of 18, Hilda officially entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood on January 1, 1961. Approximately six months later, on August 14, 1961, Hilda entered the novitiate, when she received the name Sister Ritamary. Two years later, on August 15, 1963, she made her First Profession of Vows.

Her life in ministry did span many years in food service, where she began in Dayton. Ritamary cooked at Lourdes Hall and the Motherhouse in the early to mid-60s. Later she served as a cook and housekeeper at the Maria Stein Retreat House. She returned to what is now the Maria Joseph Center in 1977, working full time in food service there for 32 years.

During her time at the Maria Joseph Center, she completed an associate degree from Sinclair Community College in dietetic technology, becoming a registered dietetic technician. Prior to her attendance at Sinclair, Sister Ritamary attended a four-year summer program at Fontbonne University in St. Louis to obtain a dietary manager's degree. She also attended the Dietary Managers Association's national convention in Cincinnati, at which she completed an approved education program from Purdue University.

At a recognition luncheon for her 30 years of service, Ritamary's supervisor

quipped to the crowd in attendance that "she is truthful and tells me when I am wrong." The crowd in attendance laughed. Her supervisor went on to say that "it was a good trait, because Sister also helps me find the answer or a way to correct the situation." Her supervisor then asked, "Can any boss wish for any better trait in an employee?"

In her more recent years, Ritamary offered hospitality and a life-giving presence to guests at Salem Heights as a receptionist. She visited our Sisters in Emma Hall, and helped with the Salem Heights Chapel wash. But most of all, she enjoyed her time in her various outdoor and garden spaces outside Salem Heights, with great pride, taking pleasure in showing her flowers and vegetables to her family.

Just prior to her fall in mid- to late July, I received Ritamary's Mission Reflection Response for this upcoming calendar year. As Council had been busily writing our Commissioning Cards, finishing last Friday, I sat in my office with Ritamary's reflection. Hers was the first Mission response I received and now it is the last one I write, not so much in the spirit of being commissioned but now asking her to intercede for us.

Sister Ritamary, bless you as you are fully in God now. May you continue to proclaim God's love to us and to all the world. You are living a life which is the most ultimate life of prayer. Work with God to help us find peace and harmony among ourselves. Help us to give of ourselves to one another on this earth. Keep watch, as a steward of our planet, inspiring in us an appreciation and reverence for all creation. But most of all, continue to work with God to feed and nourish the hungry as you now fully participate in the Heavenly Banquet. Ritamary, your suffering, your labor pains are over and the glory of God has been revealed to you! Amen.

— Sister Marla Gipson