

Celebrating the Life of Sr. Christine Marie, FMI

October 8, 1934 – February 13, 2009

Welcome/Eulogy shared by Sr. Leanne Jablonski, FMI

Funeral Eucharist, February 21, 2009

Queen of Apostles Chapel, Mount St. John – Dayton, Ohio

We gather today filled with many feelings ranging from sadness to joy as we recover from the shock of unexpected death and celebrate the life of our beloved sister, friend, teacher, aunt, co-worker, and companion in life's journey. On behalf of the Dayton Marianist Sisters, a special thank you to all of you who have gathered with us – brothers and lay members of our Marianist Family, members of Christine's family, and of the extended family and community she knew in her friends, co-workers, teachers, students and fellow residents.

Christine was born in Maple Heights, a Cleveland suburb on October 8, 1934 as Rita Louise Hucik to Johanna Panek and Joseph Hucik. She lived there until completing a bachelor's degree in music at Ohio State in 1956. She also received an MA in Sacred Doctrine from St. Mary's in San Antonio in 1969.

We are very grateful for Christine's family that has gathered with us. The health and age of Christine's siblings (John, Ann, Dorothy and sister-in-law Marjorie) prevented them from traveling to be with us. We welcome family members of her brother John:

Her nephew Dave and wife Debi Hucik and daughter Diane Locktish

and, children of Christine's sister Ann

Her niece Mary and Tim Carney

Niece Ann and Tony Hallissy and grand-niece Sarah

Nephew Bob Tupta

Grandniece Christa Billerman

We are very grateful for the care given to Christine by her community of dear friends, especially Bros. Charlie Gausling and Ed Zamierowski, and we also welcome many members of Ed's family who became part of Christine's own. We also welcome her friend since Ohio State college roommate days - Elva and husband Bob Mateus.

We particularly welcome the residents of Huffman Place and Twin Towers Place where she lived in recent years, and those of the Ascension parish and school community where Christine spent her last decade in ministry and many others of you who have known her through her recent work as artist and client with We Care Arts where she produced the image used on the prayer card, and members of the New Horizons Jazz Band, who will play a piece at our luncheon later.

A woman of many names – Sr. Christine, Aunt Rita, Chris, Christina, Chrissy, each of us experienced different facets of this sensitive and marvelously creative woman who loved God and nature and a good laugh, and talked so readily and easily to so many different people.

She professed first vows as a Marianist Sister in San Antonio in 1962 and took the name Christine, which she retained – loving the feast day celebration of Corpus Christi and living out the image of the Body of Christ, in how she loved and the sufferings she bore. I recall her 25th jubilee – a beautiful floral wreath on her head – walking as the Bride of Christ, confident in the promise she chose as her theme song – *You will show me the Path of Life and lead me to joy forever.*

Christine taught – especially art and music - for over 26 years, initially at St. James in San Antonio, Texas, and in Dayton at Alter High School. In the 1990s, she served in band music in all the Catholic grade schools as well as at Chaminade-Julienne in the Dayton region and retired from Ascension in 2006 after a decade as an art teacher. In sharing memories, our sisters described her ability to bring out the best music and song out of them, and also her ability to make people do what they would never do. This included events from the early days of formation music practices at Our Lady of the Pillar Convent, to cajoling Eileen to dust off her piano books to accompany Christine on the clarinet for a more recent Province assembly.

The ability of the U.S. Province of Marianist Sisters to sing today is largely attributed to Christine's transformation of a group of women with ordinary voices into a heavenly choir. In going through Christine's music collection for this celebration – what a marvelous array we discovered -- from Ritter's *For the beauty of the Earth* to the solemn *American Adagios* she often used as Holy Week prayer selections, and I saw at least three versions of Ravel's Bolero – dancing feet were a joy to her in her younger years – including square dancing -- and I must admit, I always admired the great looking legs she had even into her senior years..

Christine was also in pastoral roles at the Christian Brothers College in Memphis, Marianist Apostolic Center in Glencoe, and Guardian Angels Parish in Cincinnati for nine years. Her pastoral work extended to countless more – from summers in the Edgemont community garden, programs for inner city youth to others less known. Our community enjoyed her joining with us every Tuesday for Eucharist and supper and our holiday celebrations. On the last drive we shared from Huffman place to Sawmill, I was amazed as Christine told me about her work with the Brown Street Gang in the Oregon district in the sixties. Her understanding of and advocacy for them, and how they stood up for her when she was in a pickle struck me. This was an example of the 'hidden work' of justice she did that we didn't always realize or see. Her own journey nurtured an empathy and compassion for others, though she struggled sometimes to convey it. She made herself available to the people that she was given – and loved the humor in the ordinary – Forrest Gump was in the VCR on the day she died.

A woman of many talents, Christine did much creative spiritual writing that was born of her own journey to healing. We all looked forward to her annual Christmas letter – highlighting

the people and events of her life, and always filled with great humor at the challenges of life. She was a persistent woman – knew what she wanted and needed...and strove to ensure it happened. She also never stopped learning. She knew her God intimately – had a great comfortability in prayer and humor. In more recent years, her suffering was increasing – losing some hearing, eyesight, which limited her abilities to do the music and art she love. She needed more assistance in recent years, and always expressed gratitude and appreciation for the help given. In doing so, she gave a part of herself to us in a wonderful way. Life was not easy for Christine, and it was not always easy for us to know how best to respond to her needs.

The selections at today's Eucharistic celebration are the songs and readings that Christine chose. She didn't leave instructions on her prayer card – so we chose one of her *We Care Arts* pieces....with the quote that exemplifies her deep faith, honesty with God and humor – Behind each suffering is a blessing (*pause*) – FIND IT !

When a person passes on to eternal life and joins the communion of saints – their gifts, hopes, aspirations, become ever more alive in us – as we carry them on in their memory, as their legacy, and trust in the freedom they now know. Christine – we are imagining you singing and playing your clarinet with us -- and laughing more than crying now – fully free of your ailments and sufferings – resting in God's loving arms, in the pose in which you peacefully died. We sense you and God together as one Body extending your arms to us this day, and inviting us to trust that we here gathered are one with the Body of Christ in heaven. We hear you inviting us to celebrate that love, to take some time to laugh and cry – to be fully human - as we gather as the Body of Christ on earth today.

Ok Christine – I hear you ... enough of my words for now – let's get on with the music and rest of the Eucharistic celebration.