

## Mary Rose's Eulogy

Count yourself fortunate if you met Mary Rose. She not only shook your hand, but she would take both your hands in hers, look at you with delight, a touch of humor and a genuine interest that said...I have been waiting to meet you all my life. You felt special. Even in a casual encounter with her you came away feeling good about yourself and about life.

What was it about her that drew others into her space of warmth and inclusion? Keep in mind that she was the fourth child in a family of seventeen children. Well I wish I had been a fly on the wall observing the miracle of her large family growing up on a farm in the heart of Ireland, learning the importance of watching out for each other, helping each other and praying the Rosary together every day as a family. Such a foundation nurtured Mary Rose's deep faith in God and gave us the privilege of knowing her. A former student, Tad, in Uganda commented: "I will forever remember SMR as loving, kind and sincere. Her general belief that everyone is good and means well will forever be with me."

One very appealing feature of her personality was her clarity, her transparency. You never had to second guess the meaning behind her communication... even in her final days. For several months, MR had not spoken much. But about a week before she died a new nurse came to assist her. MR said to her..."who are you and what are you going to do for me?" To the point!

Mary Rose loved teaching. She wrote. "My ministry has always been that of teaching at one level or another. Her wise mother recognized her gift – When Mary Rose was about 10 her mother asked her to prepare her younger brother for First Holy Communion. "

Her skill in teaching First Graders and understanding their world is legendary. The Belgian priest who founded our Congregation was a born educator. Among his writings are a set of maxims for Teachers. They never lose their relevance because they highlight the teacher's relationship with the students. Mary Rose embodied those maxims well. She came to us with special gifts that were fully aligned with the maxims. I'll read one of them: "Once a teacher is known to the students as being a person who loves them and wishes for nothing more than their happiness in everything, then the teacher has gained the chief thing in education, possessing the key to their hearts."

One Sister who taught with her in Socorro, New Mexico summed it up well: At the end of the first day of school, every First Grader left her class full of excitement, carrying a book. Of course this bright decision was not just to benefit the children – it was her wise way to involve the parents in the joy of reading to their children and eventually listening to them read. When children "graduated" from her class, they not only knew how to read – they understood what they were reading! Later in her retirement years she taught reading to adults at House of Hope in San Pedro and local schools in the South Bay.

Mary Rose's career was not always with 1<sup>st</sup> graders! After 30 years of teaching in CA and New M, Mary Rose responded to a deep desire she had of going to our Missions in Africa. She went to Uganda, and was missioned to a Teacher Training College. Now her gift as a

teacher was bearing new fruit preparing others to teach. Later when the Training College became a seminary, MR taught was assigned to teach in the Elementary School in Kabale Diocese. Many times she told us heartwarming stories of the children. She loved them and marveled at their love for learning to the point of wanting to stay in class and give up recess!

There is much more to tell about Mary Rose's ministry and personal qualities, but I want to zero in on the story of how Mary Rose became a Daughter of Mary and Joseph. She told story numerous times. It is a great example of the importance of being awake to the mystery of God's call and the ways in which the call unfolds within a whole series of what looks like chance connections, but are rooted in deep faith and prayer.

Being one of the older girls in a large family, Mary Rose was skilled in caring for her very young brothers and sisters. Her skill was well known in the extended family, and it was no surprise that she was asked at age 15, in 1946 to help her Aunt Lizzie with newborn twin girls. The twins, Mary and Anne, were special in that their birth was celebrated as a direct answer to prayer. Aunt Lizzie had had a few miscarriages and she and her husband begged God to send them a child. They prayed the Rosary Novena – no ordinary rosary. It involved praying the Rosary in petition for 27 days and in thanksgiving for 27 days.

Mary Rose arrived at Aunt Lizzie's home during the 27 days of thanksgiving. Every day Aunt Lizzie and she walked to church, pushing two prams. The story of the twin's arrival in answer to prayer really impressed Mary Rose. She decided to pray the same Novena asking God to help her in her desire to be a nun.

In the meantime, there's a Sister Mary Kevin, DMJ, in Castlecort, 30 miles away from Mary Rose's home who had been sent to Ireland in 1946 (same year as MR's stay with A. Lizzie) with another Sister, Mary Francis from St. Paul's in Westwood to open a house of formation for new members to staff the schools in CA! Leaving CA and the children and parents they loved was more than difficult. But Kevin and Francis had great faith in Blessed Mother and they entrusted the entire venture into Her care. Everyone they met they asked them to pray for vocations to Bl. Mother. Around this time of Mary Rose's sojourn with Aunt Lizzie and the twins, 2 Irish priests from Los Angeles were home on holiday and visited Castlecort. They brought along their 2 nieces for the ride. Sister Mary Kevin quickly saw these girls as possible aspirants but they just as quickly informed her they were not interested! Nevertheless, Kevin encouraged them to pray to Bl. Mother and maybe they knew some girls who might be interested? Now one of the girls was a friend of Aunt Lizzie and she had seen Mary Rose going to church with her aunt every day. She gave Mary Rose's name to Sr. Mary Kevin, mainly to shift the focus off herself!

On the last day of Mary Rose's Novena, she received a letter from Sister Mary Kevin inviting her to visit Castlecort. The letter caused a flurry of excitement. Mary Rose's parents were very happy about it and the Parish priest – the only one with a car - drove Mary Rose and her parents to Castlecort for the interview. The rest is history.

Mary Rose gave herself wholeheartedly, passionately to the work of the DMJ here in CA, New Mexico and Uganda. She loved every ministry she was involved in. This meant of course

that leaving one location for another ministry assignment didn't come easy for her. She wrote the following about the one that brought her time in Africa to an end.

"I was heartbroken and angry. I cried my heart out." Right away she turned to God: "knew (underlined) He was there with me and understood my anger. Then a verse from Jeremiah popped into my head, 'I know the plans I have in mind for you, plans of peace, not disaster, a future of hope'. Once those words sank in I went to sleep". I think it's Antoine Peguy who said that sleep is a sign that we trust God.

Several years later she moved from Marian Residence to Nazareth House. A group of us accompanied her and when it finally dawned on Mary Rose that she was staying at Nazareth she suffered real anguish. After a while in Chapel she talked it out with God and eventually said "Let it be done". She grew to love Nazareth and cherished Mary Enda's daily visits, twice a day for 6 years.

In closing, let us hear what Mary Rose has to say to us:

"In conclusion, I have to admit that I do realize that our God is never far from any one of us – all we have to do is TRUST the plans He has for each of us and try to be really OPEN."

As we bid farewell to Mary Rose, let us keep in mind her special belief that all people are good and mean well. May we carry that belief and her spirit in our hearts always. Mary Rose, remember us all from your place in Heaven.