



## SISTER MARY RACHEL PEGNETTER

Sister Mary Rachel, (Mary Margaret Pegnetter) slipped into eternity on the Vigil of the Solemnity of St. Joseph in the sacred quiet of the 9:00 evening hour. Sister Mary Alexander Klawinski was praying with her. She died as she lived quietly and humbly welcoming the will of God.

Sister Mary Rachel was born in New Kensington, Pennsylvania and raised by her loving step-parents Dan and June Pegnetter in a close-knit blended family of 6 girls and two boys. After her elementary education she attended Upper St. Clair High School in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

She entered the novitiate of the Felician Sisters in 1970, professed her first vows in 1973 and made her final profession in 1981. Her 40 years of religious life were given to the healthcare ministry in the diocese of Pittsburgh where she served in the Felician Sisters infirmary as a nursing assistant. From years 1974-1976, Sister ministered at McGuire Memorial in child-care.

Everyone's vocation story is unique but everyone does not have an unusual story like Sister Mary Rachel. Once she recounted that she received the seed of her vocation in the eighth grade when she and her brother attended a conference given by Evangelist, Billy Graham. Participants were encouraged to give a "pledge" of their lives to God, and then they received a copy of the "Good News for Modern Man". She carried that seed in her heart when she and members of her family joined a Christian group for outreach ministry to the poor in Lexington, Kentucky. During this summer ministry she and her family shared Scripture, cleaned houses, and conducted puppet shows to teach the Life of Christ to the children.

Later as a member of St. Louise de Marillac Parish, Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania, Sister Mary Rachel attended CCD classes. Already yearning to serve God, she responded to a bulletin announcement of a Vocation Day at the Felician Sisters Convent, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania. In the company of Sister Mary Leona Bzura and Sister Mary Ernestine Trybus, she traveled to Coraopolis. In that visit, Sister Mary Rachel planted the seed of her vocation and pursued her life as a Felician Sister. Other Sisters who deeply influenced her life were those with whom she attended a prayer group in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania. They were Sister Mary Fidelia Chmiel, Sister Mary Angela Maciag and Sister Mary Francine Horos of whom she said sang like an angel.

If Sisters influenced the life of Sister Mary Rachel, it is also true that she influenced them. Her short life was a full life marked by Franciscan simplicity and childlikeness.

All of her convent life she placed the needs of others before her own. From her first profession in 1973, until cancer directed all her energy to the ministry of prayer and suffering, Sister Mary Rachel served the elderly and infirm Sisters with a dedication and compassion second only to a canonized saint.

Her person was a vessel of holiness made visible. Even in her last days of suffering, when the hospice nurse engaged Sister Mary Rachel in water color painting therapy, the art work reflected the light within her. The last segment of a time-line that she illustrated titled, "From

Now to the Future" revealed again the transparency of her beautiful soul. She simply wrote, "I see myself at peace and ready to pass from this life into eternal glory. I thank God for the gift of life and all who are a part of it". Those who knew her will not forget her legacy of compassion, simplicity and acceptance of God's will in her life.

May she rest in peace.