

**SISTER ANNE (Regis Mary) DOWD**  
**January 12, 1918 - May 22, 2005**

My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready.  
I will sing, sing your praise!  
- Psalm 108

Today's morning prayer opened with these words from Psalm 108. How appropriate for this day as we reflect on the life of Sister Anne Dowd, whose entire life seemed to proclaim this readiness!

The remote preparation of this heart for the Lord began in the large family of Andrew C. and Margaret (Shalley) Dowd into which she and her twin sister were born on January 12, 1918. Eighth among 11 children, these baby girls found their places among their siblings: Robert, William, James V., Catherine, Mary, John M., Richard, Joseph, and Rev. Regis P., Missionary Servant of the Most Holy Trinity. Today, only two remain among us, Robert and Sister Margaret Marie.

Sisters Anne and Margaret Marie were born when the country was at war. The United States had been drawn into World War I. Pope Benedict XV was Pope, and Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States. Both of these leaders worked to bring an end to the war and peace to the world. The Armistice would be signed later that year.

On January 27, 1918, the twins were taken to Saint Rosalia Church in the Greenfield section of Pittsburgh and baptized Anna Marie and Rita, an important step in the preparation of their hearts for God.

In the family, Anne learned how to live. She learned to respect others, to do her share, to play and to pray. These qualities she carried throughout her life. In earnest about her obligations, Anne was kind and generous; she could be serious and fun-loving; she loved to play, especially cards. And she played "for blood".

At Saint Mary of the Mount Schools, both elementary and high, the priests and the sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, further nourished Anne's love for God, so that, after graduation in 1936, she was ready to consecrate her life to God as a religious sister.

But while her vocation had been fostered in a school staffed by the IHMs, Anne felt her call to join her cousins, Sister Mary Richard Shalley and Sister Joseph Louise Reilly, as Seton Hill Sisters of Charity.

In his letter recommending Sister Anne to the congregation, the Reverend Thomas Rea, pastor of Saint Mary of the Mount Church, wrote,

*The bearer is Miss Anne Dowd, a member of the parish. She belongs to a very fine Catholic family.... She herself is an excellent young lady being highly thought of in this community. She has been most exact in the observance of her religious duties. She is a graduate of our Parish High School, always standing well up in her class and always being a very satisfactory student.*

*- Thomas O'Regan Rea, Pastor*

Thus, the third significant step in the readiness of this willing heart was her entrance into the postulancy of the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1936. In doing this, Anne brought about the first major separation from her twin, Rita, who did not follow her to Seton Hill until 1945.

On January 1, 1937, Anne Marie was received into the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, given a new name, Sister Regis Mary, and the religious habit of the community with a white cap which she wore for one year. Two years later, on January 1, 1939, Sister Regis Mary made her first profession of vows.

Over the years, through summer school and Saturday classes, Sister Anne pursued her education, her professional preparation, earning a Bachelor of Education degree from Duquesne University in 1954. Subsequently, she participated in various workshops and programs to further enhance her skills for teaching.

With profession came the beginning of her many years as a teacher of young children in first and second grades, preparing hundreds of children for their first reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, leading them to open their hearts to the Lord as her own was being drawn closer and closer to Him.

A dedicated evangelizer, Sister Regis Mary was happiest when telling her pupils about Jesus and his love for each person. A fellow sister/teacher quoted one of her own pupils as lisping, *Thithta Wegis Mawy is the nicest teacher in the thchool.*

This niceness was brought to children North, East, South and West. Sister Regis Mary/Anne was assigned to schools in the Dioceses of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Altoona-Johnstown, and Washington. For several years she participated in the Faculty Exchange Program with the Holy Family Sisters in Louisiana. Much later, at the time of her golden jubilee, Sister Anne reflected that her happiest memories were of teaching the poor black children in Louisiana.

A former student, now a teacher in Virginia, wrote to thank Sister Regis Mary for the influence she had been in his life, preparing him for the sacraments, developing in him a love for God and God's church.

As a mentor in the Cadet Undergraduate Teaching Program, Sister Regis Mary was influential in leading a young woman with whom she was working to recognize her call to religious life. We know this woman as Sister Geraldine Frances Marr.

Throughout the years, in all her endeavors, Sister Anne's heart was being readied. Her active ministry came to an end in 1987 when ill health brought her to Assumption Hall and ultimately to Caritas Christi. The ministry of love continued as caretakers were drawn to her quiet presence - never complaining, accepting everything, all the pain, diminishment, and inconveniences with peaceful resignation.

Her heart was ready on May 22, 2005, Trinity Sunday, when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit came to take Sister Anne home with them. Her response, I am sure:

My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready.  
I will sing, sing your praise!

Sister Anne, as you join in the heavenly chorus, intercede for us that we may respond in like manner.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection  
Sister Francis de Sales Joyce  
May 25, 2005*