

**SISTER M. REYNITA FLYNN**

**June 28, 1912 - April 4, 2010**



*"It's the time one spends with the rose that makes the rose so beautiful."*

*- The Little Prince*

Rose, Aunt Rose, Sister Reynita, in Spanish, and in living, Little Queen.

Queenly she surely was in her erect walk, her mannerisms, her bearing and the way she related to others.

As the sign in her bedroom announced, Rose came from PROSPECT, one of the many hills in Johnstown, settled by the Flynns, Dowdells, and other Irish-American families; many gave vocations to the Sisters of Charity. Daughter of Francis Flynn and Elizabeth Dowdell Flynn, Rose had five siblings: Donald, Nicholas, Robert, Catherine and Vera, all of whom preceded her in death.

Rose was baptized on July 21, 1912 in the parish church, Our Lady of Mercy. She attended the parish school, staffed by the Sisters of Charity. After completing secondary school at Johnstown High School, Rose entered the Sisters of Charity. In his letter of recommendation to the community, Father Richard Mullane wrote in part,

*"Gentle in her ways, charming in character - good and pious. You will find her I am sure a real candidate for the religious life."*

On September 8, 1930, Rose entered the Sisters of Charity at Seton Hill. After her postulancy, she received the religious habit and was given the name, Sister M. Reynita, which she was quick to tell you, meant in Spanish, *Little Queen*.

A new group of postulants entered on February 2, 1931, and Sister Reynita soon discovered that she and one of the postulants, Mary McChesney - Sister M. Callista - had been born on the same date, June 28, 1912. Thus began a life-long friendship between two dedicated and fun-loving sisters.

While still a very young sister, Reynita began her ministry as a primary teacher in schools of the Greensburg, Pittsburgh and Altoona- Johnstown Dioceses, at the same time attending classes on Saturdays and in summer school in pursuit of the Bachelor of Education Degree, which she received from Duquesne University in 1944.

I first became acquainted with Sister Reynita when we were both assigned to Cathedral School, Greensburg in 1962. Sister Reynita was a first grade teacher. She was a very effective and charming teacher: her pupils were well disciplined. I recall one day when, after one of Sister Reynita's pupils had brought the daily attendance report to the office, the secretary remarked to me,

*"If children don't learn to be polite in Sister Reynita's class, they will never learn."*

I recall another incident when we were living at the Cathedral Convent. Another sister asked me if she could move to the empty bedroom in the back hall. When I replied that there was no empty room along that hall, she insisted there was. So we walked back, and Sister led me to Reynita's room, neat, inviting, no extras except the bottle of holy water on the stand. Needless to say, the sister remained in her own room.

From 1973 to 1978, both Sister Reynita and Sister Callista were assigned to the catechetical ministry at Holy Trinity Parish, Huntingdon, PA. One can only imagine life with these two friends, dedicated, joyful, playful, serious religious women evangelizing the children of that parish and town.

After many years of teaching, Sister Reynita experienced a new call. Her brother Bob needed care. She received permission from the superiors to give her time to Bob, caring for him until his death. While living with Bob at the Valley Pike Manor, Sister Reynita was elected to represent the floor residents, attending Tenant Council meetings, fostering a family spirit among residents and orienting newcomers to the programs and services at the Manor.

After Bob's death, Sister Reynita spent several more years teaching, before moving to Sacred Heart Convent in East Liberty, where I again had the privilege of living with her. Usually, after assisting at two Masses in the church, and a second cup of coffee, Sister Reynita would do her Rosary walk. She walked back and forth on that long third floor hall, rosary in hand, praying all fifteen decades every morning.

On Tuesday mornings, I would often drop her off in Wilkinsburg where her sister Kitty lived with her daughter Mary Ellen who was usually at work all day, leaving Kitty alone. Reynita would stay with Kitty several days each week, spending the days watching Kitty's large collection of videos. Later, Kitty came to Caritas Christi, where Rose spent most of her time sitting with Kitty, leaving her only for meals and community exercises, again watching videos.

Rose's greatest pleasure came from being with family. She could name every person in all those pictures in her room, loving all, especially Vera. Even in pain and illness, Rose would smile with those bright, twinkling eyes. She smiled at, and sometimes joked with, the nurses, the workers in the dining room, the maintenance men, and the ladies who came to clean her room.

She was proud to be a Flynn from Prospect, a Sister of Charity, finding her strength in God. An undated entry in her journal reads,

*"Speaking of my health, dear Jesus, I have terrible pain from the time I get up in the morning, until I go to bed at night. I try not to complain. I try to suffer in silence. I know my suffering is nothing compared to your suffering for me. I offer my pain."*

The final, undated entry, after aspirations to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, reads,

*"Dear Guardian Angel, watch over me and protect me from all sin and danger and from sudden and unprovided death. Eternal rest give to all those who die tonight."*

Father Rathgeb anointed Reynita Saturday evening, Holy Saturday. On Easter Sunday, at dawn, Jesus, as He had appeared to and called Mary Magdalen on the first Easter, called Reynita. That awful pain is gone. She is with God.

Good-bye, Rose, Reynita, our Little Queen. Join all the Flynns and Dowdells, the Sisters of Charity and all those you knew and loved who have preceded you; enjoy Jesus and His Mother, Mary Our Queen.

*Sister Francis de Sales Joyce  
April 7, 2010*