



Remembering

Rita Angerman, CSJ

May 22, 1930 - November 20, 2018

I was born in Centinela Hospital in Inglewood on May 22, 1930. I think I arrived a couple weeks earlier than expected, and my parents had not chosen a name for me. My grandmother looked at the calendar and noticed that it was the feast of St. Rita and said, "Why don't you name her Rita?" So all my life my birthday and feast day were the same day (except for the years when my name was Sister Gabriel Marie). My brother Gordon was two when I was born, and my sister Mary came along--I'm sure she was a surprise--almost 13 years after me.

My father, Harold Joseph Angerman, had moved to California from Sioux City, Iowa, when he was five. My mother, Esther Bird, moved here with her family from Ft. Wayne, Indiana, when she was about 16. Mom and Dad met at a party at the home of friends who lived next door to Mom's family. They were

married at St. Patrick's Church, L.A. I was baptized at Holy Cross, made my First Communion at St. Patrick's, (where I started school and first met the Sisters of St. Joseph) and was confirmed at St. Columbkille's. I was a South Central L.A. girl all the way.

Because I was born during the depression, our parents struggled to feed and clothe us during their early married life. Also, Gordon contracted polio when he was two and was in and out of the hospital for treatment for several years; but things eventually got better, and with the aid of a scholarship I was able to attend St. Mary's Academy in high school. We were an ordinary Catholic family, active in our parish, which was then St. Malachy's.

Sometime during high school God broke into my life and attracted me into a relationship and to religious life. I entered on September 15, 1947, receiving

the habit on March 20, 1948 (a delay caused by the installation of Cardinal MacIntyre as archbishop). My novitiate was uneventful, but soon afterwards God broke into my life in a different way. I was diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to our hospital in Tucson for a year of bed rest followed by surgery. Then, after three years of teaching 3rd grade at St. Cyril's (not very successfully, I might add), the TB returned: more bed rest and further surgery, and a new complication in the form of accidental damage to my vocal cords which left me with not much voice and led the community to send me to library school.

After that my life settled down, and I spent the next 24 years as librarian at Bishop Conaty, Carondelet High School, and St. Mary's Academy. The next big move came when I began parish work with adults, first at St. Paschal Baylon in Thousand Oaks, then at St. Robert Bellarmine in Burbank. I came alive in ministry when I began being "out with the folks" in the parish, and I discovered that I had a gift for teaching adults. I loved working with adults in Christian Initiation and teaching Bible Study. The phrase "not separating ourselves from the dear neighbor" became important to me. Another joy in my life has been my involvement in the associate program since its beginning in 1980.

During a sabbatical in 1991 I began exploring watercolor painting, and art has been a part of my life since then. I also love poetry (especially Mary Oliver), and am grateful to Sister Laurentia for introducing me to it.

And travel, especially on Amtrak. I'm not sure when my love affair with the train began, but I think

I inherited the "travel gene" from my mother, who was always planning her next adventure. I'm grateful to my father for introducing me to classical music.

Such a rich life, with so many memories and good friends. I give thanks for my life every day, for my love of beauty, for my recovery from TB which allowed me to minister for many years, and for the presence of my Beloved who is always with me on my journey.

As we bid adieu to our dear Sister Rita, let us ponder the words of one of her favorite poets, Jessica Powers:

Ponder the following excerpt from the poem "The Homecoming" while imagining Rita arriving at her heavenly home:

"By naught foretold could she have guessed such welcome home:

The robe, the ring, music and endless banqueting, these people hers; this place of rest known, as of long remembering herself a child of God and pressed with warm endearments to God's breast."

So Rita, as says the poet,

YOU ARE AT HOME

WHERE ALL THIS GLORY LIES.

AMEN.

~ Written by Sister Rita Angerman, CSJ and Sister Annette Debs, CSJ

Make
your home
in me
as I make mine
in You.

~ John 15

