

Sister Rosalia Costello, CSA

Sister Rosalia (Christine) Costello, CSA, 81, passed away Tuesday, July 29, 2008, at Nazareth Center, where she resided.



Born in New Almelo, Kansas, on July 28, 1927, Christine was the seventh of eight children born to Albert and Rose (Schnabl) Costello. The five Costello girls and their three brothers grew up in a rural area of Kansas, spending week days in town during their elementary school years and weekends on the family farm. Christine was impressed with the solid life of the sisters whom she observed teaching. When she was a junior in high school, a Sister's question about when she was to enter the convent caused her to begin thinking seriously about religious life. The thought stayed with her for the two years she worked in Denver after high school. She decided to give religious life "a try" and entered the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes in 1947. She professed her first vows as Sister Rosalia in 1949.

Sister Rosalia earned a diploma from St. Agnes School of Nursing in 1952 and a B.S.N.E. from Marian College in 1956. Throughout her professional life, she continued her education, earning a number of certificates and continuing education units in various specific areas, including intensive and coronary care, pastoral care, hospice, and ethical moral decisions.

From 1952 through 1980 Sister Rosalia served at different times at St. Agnes Hospital in Fond du Lac and St. Anthony Hospital in Hays, KS. She began as assistant night supervisor at St. Agnes, became head nurse on the orthopedic unit at St. Anthony and then at St. Agnes, taught nursing in the School of Nursing first in Fond du Lac and then in Hays, and later spent many years at St. Agnes in a number of leadership positions including Associate Director of Nursing and Director of Nursing. When St. Agnes opened a new intensive care unit in 1968, Sister Rosalia was appointed the first supervisor. Her final year, 1979-80, in an institutional hospital setting was at St. Anthony where she served in pastoral care, patient instruction and alcohol rehab.

Recognizing her relational skills, leadership qualities, and gentle manner, congregational leadership asked Sister Rosalia to assume the role of Local Coordinator of the motherhouse community at 475 Gillett Street. After five years there, Sister returned in 1986 to her roots, her beloved Kansas, where she was once again close to family members. There she visited shut-ins and helped to initiate the parish nurse program at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Hays. Limitations of age and health brought Sister Rosalia to retire at Nazareth Court and Center in 2002. Even in these years of increasing illness, her Irish wit brought many a chuckle.

Many younger women and sisters found in Sister Rosalia a mentor as a woman, as a religious, and as a professional nurse. She was a gentle, loving woman and a loyal friend. She loved a good time yet was deeply spiritual, prayerful, and contemplative. She was always aware of others and went out of her way for those in need of compassion. To those who knew her Sister Rosalia stands out as “the real thing”: genuine and never showy.

Sister Rosalia is survived by one brother, Anthony Costello and his wife Rose of Rockford, IL; sisters-in-law Betty Costello and Julaine Costello; and brother-in-law Duane Sutfin; many nieces and nephews; other relatives, friends, and the members of the Congregation of Saint Agnes with whom she lived and ministered.

Preceding Sister in death are her parents, Albert and Rose; two brothers, Urban and Joseph; and four sisters: Carmel Reilly, Marcella Costello, Eloise Cerney, and Lillian Sutfin.

Visitation: Visitation will be held on Friday, August 1, 9:00 a.m.–1:45 p.m. at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street where a prayer service will be held at 11:00 a.m.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Friday, August 1, at 2:00 p.m. in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street. Burial will follow in St. Joseph Springs Cemetery, Fond du Lac. Fr. Edward Sippel will preside.

Memorials may be directed to the Sisters of St. Agnes Development Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the Nazareth Center nurses and staff and to the staff and volunteers from Hospice Hope for their care for Sister Rosalia.