

# **Sister Ruth Evelyn Mauch, CSC**

(Sister M. Ruth Elaine)

December 9, 1935–July 18, 2022

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**These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Mary Elizabeth Bednarek, CSC, and read by Sister Mary Tiernan, CSC, at Sister Ruth Evelyn's funeral on July 28, 2022.**

We in the Area of South America are joining with all of you present here celebrating Mass for our dearly loved sister, friend and companion, Ruth Evelyn Mauch.

Recalling also in a special prayer her parents Joseph and Mary Eugenia, her sister Kathy and brother in-law Gus, all of them known and loved by us. Our hearts are united in caring solidarity with you, dear Elaine (Sister Ruth's sister), and other members of Ruth's family.

Preparing this reflection and recalling our cherished experiences with her was a blessing. She was, and continues to be, a vital and important part of who we are as well as so many other Brazilians who loved and admired her vibrant, passionate and dynamic personality.

Sister Maria de Lourdes de Deus Pimentel, CSC, shared that "Ruth was a kind, thoughtful and loving woman who knew how to cultivate people's hearts. Anyone who knew Ruth knew a treasure. Ruth had a strong personality, a friend who didn't let herself be discouraged. She had words of courage, someone who was always there, encouraging and challenging to look to the future, a true leader."

She loved Holy Cross and gave of herself in every circumstance. Prayer and a deep relationship with God sustained her. Sisters Eleanor Snyder and Mary Josephine Delany, CSC, remembered a letter she wrote as coordinator of the Area of South America about the mission needs in Peru. She had been praying during Pentecost and felt moved

by the Spirit to ask for volunteers. Both Mary Jo and Eleanor responded with “yes.” When elected as Area coordinator, she made a “commitment to us as a group and to communal discernment.”

Ruth was an educator and served both at Colégio Santa Maria in São Paulo, Brazil, as well as director of the parish school in Telêmaco Borba, Paraná, Brazil. However, her most powerful impact was with the Base Christian Communities and impoverished workers. Sister Maria Cecilia Nesteriuk, CSC, who lived with her in various missions over 18 years shared that “Ruth embodied in her own person the struggles and needs of the people. She became a naturalized citizen and realized her missionary vocation living as closely as possible the life of the poor.”

In the 1970s, Ruth and Sister Maria Regina (Gomes), CSC, opened a small house for formation in a poor neighborhood. The house had no running water so every morning very early they, with two discerners, went with buckets to a communal fountain. In the rainy season, carrying the buckets on their heads through mud, they lost half but gained in laughter. A few years later, in the same house, Sister Angela Mary (Carey), CSC, remembers having house meetings with Ruth under a banana tree with the help of a *caipirinha* (Brazil’s national drink). Ruth was always ready for any adventure, to help when needed, and involved in the present moment. She was, someone observed, her father’s son, the tomboy of the family.

Ruth arrived in Brazil during the beginning of the military dictatorship, a time of repression and torture. Prisons were overflowing with leaders of the civil society and the Christian communities. Ruth played an important role in strengthening the people through Bible reflections and action. She focused special attention on factory workers in their struggle for unionization. Sister Maria Regina remembers making coffee at 5 a.m. for Ruth to serve to the workers as they arrived in front of the factories. This was a time for sharing their lives, strengthening friendships and hope.

During this period, Ruth also visited the women prisoners. There, she met a woman about to give birth who needed someone to take her child. Ruth encouraged a young woman on her pastoral team to receive the child. Everyone helped with clothes and food and the newborn boy is now in his 20s and grateful for his adopted mother and the sisters.

Ruth, always an educator, gave night classes to workers alongside Sister Maria Regina in a program for alphabetization according to the methods of educator Paulo Freire. Ruth loved LIFE. She was a loving, joyful, energetic person, enjoyed adventures, was fearless in facing injustices, and a true friend. Her strokes provoked her leaving Brazil; that was not just sad but tragic for her.

Her strokes began during her last mission in the north of Minas Gerais, where she continued to touch people's lives. They sent messages speaking of her zeal in helping build communities, her friendship and pastoral witness, visits to the imprisoned and as teacher to seminarians.

On learning of her death, Bishop Angélico Sândalo Bernadino of the Eastern Region of São Paulo sent this message: "It was a joy to serve with her, this missionary disciple of Jesus. I always admired her ardor, joy and self-giving, to the cause of Evangelization, the workers, and the Christian Communities. May the Resurrected Jesus receive her, and she continue to pray for us."

Before closing, we want to extend our heartfelt appreciation for all the sisters and staff of Saint Mary's Convent who cared for Ruth with so much love and attention during these past years. May God bless each one and may the Light of Christ that radiated so brightly in Ruth continue to inspire all of us.

Ruth, Abraços com todo carinho. Te amamos.

Hugs with all our hearts. Your sisters in the Area of South America.