

Memento for Sister M. Rose Virginia (Burt), CSC (Maria del Socorro Consuelo Burt)

March 30, 1925 - April 12, 2019

These memories were lovingly prepared by those who knew Sister M. Rose Virginia (Burt), CSC, and shared their reflections. They were written and read by Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, at the funeral on April 16, 2019.

Sister Rose Virginia was born in San Diego, California. She was baptized Maria del Socorro Consuelo, and her parents placed her under the protection of the Blessed Mother. Consuelo's mother Rose Virginia was born in Sonora, Mexico. Her father, Dr. Russell Ross Burt, was a physician from the Midwest, who moved to Mexico where he met and married Rosa Virginia La Salle. Sadly, when Consuelo was young, her mother died from complications after an appendectomy surgery. Dr. Burt remarried, and Consuelo was raised by her stepmother and father. Consuelo had an older brother, Richard, and a younger brother, Russell, better known as Buddy. Buddy went to live with the Pendleton family at the request of Dr. Burt. Mrs. Pendleton was Consuelo's Aunt Catherine, sister to her mother.

Consuelo entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross after working for a year as a bank clerk and inspector for the United States Department of the Navy. Holy Cross was a natural choice. As Sister wrote in 1988, "I was raised in a Mexican culture with many detours and bumps along the way and educated by the Holy Cross Sisters at Saint Agnes School in the lively area of Los Angeles." Consuelo was given her own mother's name at the reception of the habit. She had had a nickname of Posie, which the family always called her, although she really didn't like it. No one remembers just where the childhood name came from, but it stuck! Sister Rose Virginia always preferred to be called Rose.

Sister Rose Virginia's lifelong concern for the poor and those in need had its origins in her father's example of giving medical care to the many who came to his neighborhood clinic. When people came for care, each shared their life's story with Dr. Burt. They often left with food or other items, such as clothing and bedding, that their family needed. Sister Rose desired to serve overseas as a missionary, but her life took a different direction. She became a nurse and served in several medical centers sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. A shift in Sister Rose's ministry took place in 1971. She explained

that “because of my personal need to grow further as an individual and to own my Hispanic heritage, I asked to work with Hispanics and the poor. Consequently, I found my way to McAllen, Texas, where I began in a migrant clinic and labor camp, and then entered the pastoral care ministry at the request of the local bishop.”

During the years of Sister Rose Virginia’s ministry in the Rio Grande Valley, she felt called to volunteer for the opening of a new ministry in Chimbote, Peru. In November 1982, Sister Rose and Sister Patricia Dieringer, CSC, arrived in Chimbote and were welcomed by Richard Renshaw and Thomas Shea, Holy Cross priests. A few months later, Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, joined them.

After hearing about Sister Rose Virginia’s death, Father Renshaw remembered her by writing, “She was a dear person, a true disciple of Jesus and an inspiration for her kindness.”

Father Shea wrote of his admiration for Sister Rose as well. When a trip was planned for 10 parishioners to travel from Chimbote, a desert seaport, to Puno, a city high in the Andes Mountains, for the ordination of Diego Irrarasavel to the priesthood, everyone knew the trip would be challenging. Father Shea wrote, “The group traveled by bus and we thought that Sister Rose would have the most difficulties with the long trip and the altitude because of her age but she was the best of us all. It was a great trip!”

This should be no surprise, since, at 56 years old, Sister Rose assessed her own ministry qualifications by writing, “I would have to climb a mountain at my own pace — but I would get to the top. The poor have taught me to share Christ and know him in a new and freeing way.... I know I have quite a few miles left in me.”

Father Shea further wrote, “Sister Rose and the sisters collaborated in the parish with Richard Renshaw and me; we had great social and ministry-related meetings weekly. Thank you, Rose Virginia for your ministry and life with us in Chimbote, Peru.”

Sister Rose continued in ministry wherever she was. She moved to Saint Catherine by the Sea, Ventura, California, in 1997. While there, she nursed members of her community and enjoyed time for arts and crafts. After retiring to Saint Mary’s in 2004, she was actively involved in the stamp ministry, including inviting other sisters at the motherhouse to join her in that ministry.

To the end, Sister Rose Virginia maintained a deep love and concern for the poor. Her prayer was a support to the poor, as well as for her family, friends, and those she had worked with. She had a deep love and devotion for her family members. Anyone who came to her room was immediately impressed with the large display of family photographs on her wall.

May Sister Rose Virginia now enjoy fully the presence of the Lord with those who have gone before her. May she rest in peace.