



Obituary

Sr M. Rosalia Steinbach O.P.

31.01.1929 –14.04.2024



*"Thus says the Lord:
Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name: you are mine.
You are precious in my eyes and glorious,
and I love you."*

Isaiah 43: 1, 4

Sr Rosalia (Elisabeth "Lisa" Maria) was born at home on 31 January 1929, on a cold winter morning in the beautiful Bavarian town of Aschaffenburg, Germany. Her parents, Heinrich and Katharina (Reisert) Steinbach, joyfully welcomed their third child and their first girl into the world. Besides her two older brothers, Karl and Walter, Sr Rosalia would soon be followed by three sisters and three brothers.

She was baptized at home on 3 February 1929 as was the custom, through Saints Peter and Alexander Parish. In due time she was a schoolgirl, enjoying the new challenge of learning and study that the Primary School in Aschaffenburg offered her. She was a lively child, inquisitive and fun-loving. At the age of nine, she received the Sacrament of Confirmation at her home parish of Saints Peter and Alexander. When she was fourteen, she finished Primary School and went for a year to a trade school in Aschaffenburg, learning home economics.

World War II brought terror and hardship for the Steinbach family. Mr. Steinbach was a volunteer fireman, and was often called away to help put out fires in the city, leaving his family vulnerable. Their home was bombed five times and twice completely destroyed. The mother and children sought refuge in the forest for a time, out of necessity. Sr. Rosalia helped her mother keep the younger children together and safe. Her oldest brother, Karl, only 19 years old when called into military service, was captured in France, and as a prisoner of war, was killed when he stepped on a mine. He was buried in France.

During World War II, Sr Rosalia was a leader in the Catholic Youth movement in Germany. Sieglinde Connolly, a childhood friend, wrote the following at the time of Sr Rosalia's Golden Jubilee, presenting a glimpse of Sr. Rosalia, namely her courage and strength:

"As a teenager in Germany during World War II, Lisa was a member of the Catholic Youth Group. At that time, it was a violation of Nazi martial law to have meetings or to privately

assemble. Ignoring the Nazi laws and threats, Lisa and her Catholic Youth Group regularly held meetings in their homes. In order to avoid discovery by the patrolling Gestapo, members of the Youth Group staggered their entry...one member entering every 5 minutes...into the house where the meeting was to be held. Were these teenager girls and boys taking risks? Dachau, just outside of Munich, was the first concentration camp for political prisoners. There were thousands of priests, religious, and laity in Dachau, many of whom never left."

Inspired to create a better world, Sr. Rosalia responded to a call to the religious life and to dedicate her life to God and to service of God's people. She entered with the Oakford Dominican Sisters in Neustadt am Main in Germany on 1 January 1956 and received the Dominican habit on 8 September 1956. After a year of Novitiate, she professed first vows on 12 September 1957 in Neustadt.

At first, she was assigned to Mersch and Freckenhorst where she kept the house. By the end of the year, she was on her way to America, arriving as she said herself, "as a Christmas present" to the community in Oakland, California, on 24 December 1957. If a Christmas present, she traveled without money and without knowledge of the English language! She contributed her dedication, energy, and her dry sense of humor to the laundry work and to cooking at St. Albert's Priory and House of Studies for five years.

She was then sent to St. Justin's Convent in Santa Clara, where she did the housekeeping and cooking for the large community of Oakford Sisters teaching at the school. She returned to St. Albert's for two years to give an opportunity for Sisters to take sabbatical time before being assigned to the newly opened, *Villa Siena, Home for the Elderly*, in Mountain View, California in 1967. For sixteen years Sr Rosalia cooked for the residents and community of Sisters, serving as the Food Manager and taking classes twice a year for two weeks at a time, to keep up her knowledge and to strengthen her managerial skills.

Sr. Rosalia worked hard and prayed with devotion and dedication. However, no matter how long the days, she never lost her sense of humor. She was known to "measure the postulants for their coffins" soon after they entered. During adoration in the chapel, Sr. Rosalia is known to have moved the shoes of the Sister in front of her, who took them off, never thinking they would be gone when she reached for them after prayers. Sr. Rosalia would come to evening recreation dressed in lay clothes and speaking to the Sisters about her life in the world, having the Sisters in stitches!

Sr. Rosalia was also artistically gifted in singing, embroidery, knitting, crocheting, and creating and selling flower cards. The money earned went to the support of the community and to the work with the elderly. She had great devotion to St. Joseph, and often pleaded with him when there was little money for food in the early days at Villa Siena. In her faith and gratitude, she trusted in the providence of St. Joseph, sharing any extra food with the poor.

In 1983 she was gifted with time for a sabbatical programme, "Focus on Leadership", in Spokane, Washington. She returned to Villa Siena in 1984 and then again went to St. Albert's

to free another Sister for a sabbatical. She returned to Villa Siena from 1985 to 1989, and then was called to our House of Studies in Rome to help with cooking for the sabbatical program.

When she returned to Villa Siena in July 1990, she was asked to work with the Residents in a new capacity, as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). She grew to love this care for the Residents, saying good night to them and kissing each one before they went to bed. She lived at St. Catherine's Convent in Sunnyvale, driving to Villa Siena for her daily afternoon/evening shift. She did this work for fourteen years, and then formally retired at the age of 75.

In 2004 she joined the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe House of Formation in San Leandro. She gardened, baked, cooked, and for a few years, visited the elderly in a Care Center within walking distance, leading a weekly Communion Service for the Catholic Residents there. In 2005 she went to Hawkstone Hall, England, for a four-month spiritual renewal programme. Through all this, she also served 23 years as the US Regional Bursar from 1993 - 2016.

In 2017 she was welcomed at Our Lady of Oakford Regional Centre when the House of Formation became the setting for an intentional community of women. Sr Rosalia enjoyed daily walks, cooking, and baking, and helped at the Regional Centre with hospitality.

In 2019 she was assigned to St. Martin's Residence at Mission San Jose, Fremont, settling in among the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose and the Oakford Sisters. Despite the ravages of arthritis in her hands and fingers, she knitted beautiful shawls, blankets, hats, and gloves for the annual Boutique. In retirement, Sr. Rosalia gave much time to presence with her Beloved in quiet prayer and reading. She walked the Motherhouse campus daily, gathering the newspapers for the various communities, and reveling in nature's seasons and colors in the outdoors.

In January of this year, Sr. Rosalia was in the hospital some days with pneumonia. She spoke of her desire to go home to God. Later in the month we celebrated her 95th birthday.

She then developed a secondary infection which required isolation. During this time, she fell in her room, and broke a bone in her wrist. She remained in bed, and was present to the day-to-day, though there were times when she seemed in another world. Once she was out of isolation, Sisters were allowed to see her, praying and singing with her, and encouraging her.

She seemed to recover a bit, but would ask to be allowed to go Home. She was clear in what she desired and waited upon God. She received her wish on Sunday, 14th April in the afternoon, when she quietly slipped from this world into the next and into the arms of her Beloved God.

Rest in Peace, dear Sr Rosalia.

RIP