

Reflection for Sr. Rosella Uding, CDP

Funeral Liturgy, June 28, 2019

St. Elizabeth Church, Granite City, IL

Sr. Rosella Uding was a woman dedicated to her Provident God, to family, to community and to the people to whom and with whom she ministered. Being the fifth of eleven children, Rosie learned early about responsibilities with her siblings on the Uding family farm. She valued family life very much and made the effort to be present for family weddings, baptisms, funerals, and significant moments of passage for nieces and nephews.

The same was true of community life. Rosie valued prayer, both individual and communal, the Eucharist, sharing at meetings with other community members, and was always willing to pitch in and help wherever she was needed.

It's not coincidental that the readings she chose for her funeral really were exemplified in her life. She tried to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with her God as we heard in the first reading. The second reading from John speaks of being called the children of God. And we all know how she loved children and spent a good part of her life in service to youth.

In fact, she spent most of her professional life in the ministry of education. Some of those years were spent in the classroom in schools both in Missouri and Illinois. In 1977 Rosie and I went away for summer school to Seattle University where we shared a dorm room, enjoyed our program of studies in religious education, and discovered on the weekends the wonderful scenery of the beautiful Northwest. Rosie became a Director of Religious Education for various parishes and lived her dream of enhancing the spiritual lives of youth for over 34 years. The only time when she wasn't working directly with youth was when she readily answered the community's need to help oversee the house of the Congregation's international headquarters in Wakefield, Rhode Island and then to serve as Vocation Director.

Her last place of ministry was at St. Vincent de Paul parish in in Wheeling, West Virginia. There, in 2009, Rosie began as the Director of Religious Education and became very involved in parish life. She said that there she found providence visible in the simple and kind people of Wheeling. Even though her health seemed to fail more since living there, having had pneumonia five times in ten years, she didn't want to leave that ministry. She told friends that she loved the people, the kids, and the place and she wasn't leaving!

As I said previously, she had a great devotion to the Eucharist. It's not surprising then that she would choose the feeding of the five thousand for her funeral gospel reading. It is the same reading we heard this past Sunday. It was the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. In that Sunday's gospel we heard about Jesus blessing the bread and the fish, and the

simple sharing of it creating a crowd into a community. That same spirit of generosity and humility works a similar “Eucharistic” miracle in Wheeling, West Virginia with a woman who shared the struggles, doubts, pains and sorrows of a group of parishioners whom she loved. The simple gifts we take into our bodies at Christ’s table are sustenance for living eucharistically in the world: for practicing the kind of hospitality Jesus practiced when he fed hungry followers and ate with all the wrong people. Our own bodies are meant to nourish other bodies—not to judge them or try to fix them, but to love them, and to see that their flourishing (and our own) depends on how we offer support and compassion.

The Eucharist compels us to become Eucharist for others; to make the limitless, complete love of Christ real for all in our own acts of charity and kindness.

Rosie was a Eucharistic woman. A woman of the resurrection. A woman of providence. Belief in the resurrection means filling life with faith; it means believing in your sister or brother, it means fearlessness towards all.

Being a providence woman, Rosie said, was “trying to live a life of deep faith and trust, of being open to the Providence of God, and sharing that trust and faith with others you meet along life’s journey. I think we can say, without reserve, that providence was made visible in the life of Sister Rosella Uding. May she rest in peace.

Barbara McMullen, CDP