



Sister Kay Marie Duncan, OSF Professed 1957

*"If you want to be successful, it's just this simple. Know what you are doing. Love what you are doing.
And believe in what you are doing." Will Rogers*



After a life spent in loving and joyful service, Sister Kay Marie Duncan, OSF, (formerly Sister Ruth Mary), 86, died in Assisi House on Friday, July 7, 2023. Born in Baker, Oregon, Kay Marie was raised by Roscoe and Ruth Duncan on a ranch in the Keating Valley, where she grew up with her sister, Emma Angeline, working with animals and helping her mother with household chores. A member of St. Francis de Sales Parish and a graduate of St. Francis Academy, Kay Marie entered the congregation in 1954 and professed her first vows in 1957. She earned a BS in Education from Marylhurst College and an MA in Private School Administration from the University of San Francisco.

Sister Kay Marie began her ministry in education, teaching in schools in California, Washington, and Oregon. She also gave piano lessons. Sister Kay Marie's first year of teaching was spent in Riverside, California, at St. Thomas School and her last year of teaching was at St. John School in Wasco, California. In the years between, she taught in Tacoma, Washington, at St. Charles School, and in Oregon at St.

James School in McMinnville and St. John Fisher School in Portland. After 20 years of teaching, she returned to St. Charles School in Tacoma, where she served as principal for five years.

Generous with her talents and willing to serve wherever there was a need, Sister Kay Marie served on many committees for the congregation, including the vocation committee. She also served as vocation director and as a provincial council member for six years. Sister Esther Anderson said that "Kay Marie was a very giving person who shared her talents freely. She was also always up for adventure and would drive over the mountains of Oregon in all kinds of weather to be there for her sisters or for anyone in need."

After finishing her time on the provincial council, Sister Kay Marie returned to her home Diocese of Baker to serve as the Vice President of Mission and Ministry for St. Elizabeth/St. Anthony Health Services for 11 years, before ministering for ten years as the chaplain and volunteer coordinator for Pathway Hospice in Baker City and Ontario, Oregon. During this time, she was grateful to be able to care for her mother after her father died. Speaking about her hospice ministry in an article for the *Baker City Herald*, Sister Kay Marie shared, "People open their homes to us, people open their hearts to us at a very important time. I feel like I'm standing on sacred ground."

Sister Jude Connelly remembers Sister Kay Marie as someone who truly enjoyed life—food, travel, and friends. Jude shared, "She was well-liked wherever she worked because she had a great rapport with others. She was also a leader who was able to inspire others." Her niece, Stephanie, shared, "Auntie Kay will be lovingly remembered for her beautiful smile, jokes, and laughter; her habit flying off her head while going down the highway; her courage, her generosity, and her advice to 'never drive faster than your angels can fly.'"

Western film actor Will Rogers' quote, "Love what you are doing and believe in what you are doing," speaks to the cowboy spirit Sister Kay Marie embraced and the way she felt about her call to religious life. Kay Marie, you lived your life with compassion for those whom you served—in education, in hospice care, in administration, as well as in community and family life. Rest now in the God who is Love knowing that the remembrance of your life will continue to uplift others.

*All services will be held in Assisi House on Friday, July 14, and will be livestreamed. A Christian Wake Service will be held at 9:30 A.M. followed by viewing. Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11 A.M.
Internment of Ashes will be in Baker, Oregon at a later date.*

