

**Reflection**

*If God is Love and if we are made to the image and likeness of God, it follows that it's our primary reason for existence to be an instrument showing to the whole creation God's love by how we love.*  
- Malinda Gerke, FSPA

**News and Events**

[FSPA partners with La Crosse Tribune to bring St. Nick's Boot to deserving organizations](#)

[Blessing of Time: a New Year's Eve FSPA tradition and you're invited](#)

**Prayer Requests**

Text your requests:  
608-308-1849  
[Submit online](#)

[Donate Now](#)

[Join Our Mailing List](#)

[Send to a Colleague](#)

[Like us on Facebook](#)

[Follow us on twitter](#)

[View our profile on LinkedIn](#)

[View our videos on YouTube](#)

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration  
912 Market Street  
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601  
[fspaneews@fspa.org](mailto:fspaneews@fspa.org)

**Sister Rita Mae: Furthering FSPA's mission of education**

*Creating innovative approaches to healing, teaching and praying. FSPA has, is and will continue to care for patients, students and people the world over with this compelling and modern mission in mind.*

*And so throughout the month of December, FSPA is celebrating sisters steeped in health care, education and perpetual adoration: their pioneering ministries of the past and the ever-evolving Franciscan presence they carry forth today and into tomorrow.*

"The wisdom of Sister Mary Alice Foley still rings in my ears," recalls Sister Rita Mae Fischer of the preparation for a ministry of education she experienced as a freshly-professed Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration. "Sister Rita Mae, you don't have to make teaching so hard!" She remembers other snippets of instruction she received: "One of our instructors warned us not to smile until Christmas." When a student accidentally tore his paper while erasing a mistake, Sister Rita Mae gave him a fresh page and said "All we asked is that you do your best. Didn't I realize he had already done his best? Well," she says, "I was learning."



Sister Rita Mae, center, in 2006 as an instructor to Catholic church employees from Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Learning and teaching went hand-in-hand for Sister Rita Mae for 30 years of ministry in Wisconsin, Washington and Mississippi. From the FSPA she lived with throughout those years, "I benefited by their sharing and expertise in the field of teaching. Together," she says, "we were furthering the education mission of FSPA." She went on to become a Catholic school librarian, ministering as such in Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota. "Still teaching," she says, "in a sense."

Now, as a volunteer, Sister Rita Mae continues to foster enlightenment in the St. Rose Convent Media Center. "As my energies lessen," she shares, "willing helpers have come forth ... serving as welcoming presence."

And her ministry of education - to the students she taught - continues to inspire. "In recent years, the impression I made upon children has come to light." Social media and continued contacts have called her to become "reacquainted with primary students of mine from the 1960s in Canton, Mississippi, and Spokane, Washington." As tribute to Sister Rita Mae's presence in Spokane's St. Augustine's Catholic School, a former student recently published "My Dreams to be an Artist Started in the First Grade." Sister Rita Mae, says Patti Simpson Ward, "noted on my report card, 'She loves artwork of all kinds and is a tireless worker.' It is amazing how true that statement remains today. Our beloved teacher is still thriving" at St. Rose Convent, writes Patti, with a nod to their enduring connection. Patti also shares what she calls a "highlight" in her life: the celebration of FSPA's 100 years of ministry in the Diocese of Spokane.

Today, Sister Rita Mae continues to evolve with FSPA in the community's ministerial vivacity. "I am convinced God is the source of all energy and the center of my life. That," she says, "is truly Franciscan."



Sister Rita Mae with her first grade class (including student Patti Simpson Ward, second row from bottom, first from left) at St. Augustine's School