



Sr. Rachel West OSF

JAN 13, 1933 - NOV 19, 2023



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WEIGEL Funeral Home

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Sr. Rachel West, age 90 of the Sisters of St. Francis, died on November 19, 2023 at the Motherhouse in Oldenburg, Indiana. Born on January 13, 1933 in Waukesha, Wisconsin, she was the youngest of four children born to Homer and Julia (Nee: Asselin) West. Her father was in the U.S. Army, a farmer and a salesman. Her mother was a housewife and receptionist.

When Rachel was six months old the family moved to northern Indiana, and later relocated to San Antonio, Texas for three years while her father was stationed there as an officer in the Army Air Corps. Rachel describes how important education was for her parents and how that affected family life: "All of us loved to read, and home family evenings would find us all reading books, magazines, or newspapers. As children we also loved to play with a world globe, with map puzzles, and with board games."

After graduating from Amo High School (Amo, IN), Rachel enrolled at Marian College (now University) which was somewhat challenging because she had never been around Sisters and was not well-acquainted with "Catholic ways". Yet this is where she discerned her calling to religious life. Rachel entered the Sisters of St. Francis September 8, 1954. Until she reclaimed her baptismal name, she was known as Sister Audrey.

After teaching in several grade and high schools for eleven years, while also earning an MA from Indiana University, Rachel studied full-time at I.U. for a PhD in History. In 1970 she began teaching American History and Political Science at Marian College where she stayed until 1983.

While Rachel loved teaching, she was becoming more and more interested and involved in justice and peace issues. She spent a year in Washington DC as an intern with Network, a Catholic Social Justice Lobby Group. After that Rachel joined the staff Groundwork for a Just World, an intercommunity justice and peace center based in Detroit. In 1992, Rachel became the first Director of the Franciscan Community's Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. She worked out of a room at Marian while also caring for her aging mother.



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Rachel's next ministry experience kept her at Marian where she worked as part-time archivist to restore the college's archives. She writes that she "greatly enjoyed this work of putting the archives in accessible order, as it gave me an opportunity to explore the college's history from the original written records and photographs."

In June 2010, Rachel moved to the Motherhouse, thinking to begin her retirement years. But she was asked to become the Congregation's archivist on a part-time basis. She writes again, "As with Marian, it was a wonderful experience of learning the congregation's history, and, at the same time, serving the community, my favorite ministry."

In 2017 Rachel was finally able to retire and enjoy living among her sisters without duties. She continued to enjoy reading, keeping up with politics, college basketball, PBS news, all kinds of music, outdoors, time for prayer. She wrote in her autobiography, "I could never give back to this community, much less to God, what they have given me – not even in another lifetime."

She is survived by her brother Douglas, a sister-in-law, a niece and nephews. Rachel was preceded in death by her parents and her brothers Quentin and Roger.

Prayer and visitation will be Wednesday, November 22nd at 9 a.m. followed by Mass at 10:30 a.m. in the convent chapel with Fr. Kenneth Overberg, SJ officiating. Burial will be in the Motherhouse Cemetery in Oldenburg. For those unable to attend, the service will be livestreamed at <https://youtube.com/live/oLwRIL-fuNg?feature=share>. Memorials may be made to the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana, 47036 (www.OldenburgFranciscans.org).



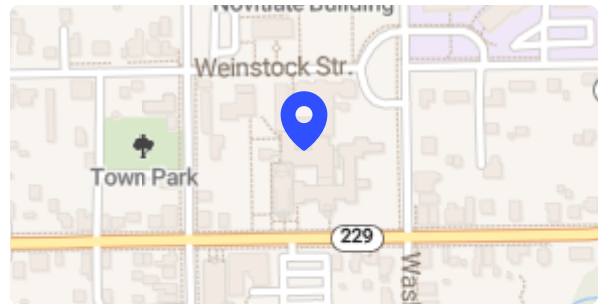
Events

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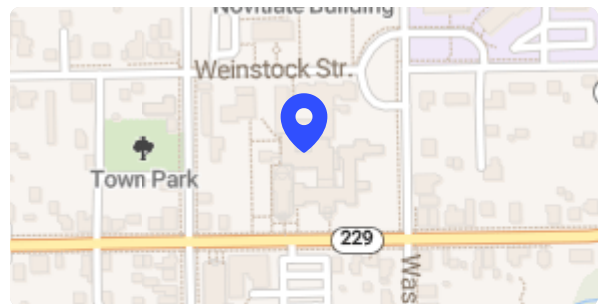
Visitation

- Wednesday**, November 22, 2023
- 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM ET
- Srs. of St. Francis Chapel**
22143 Main Street, Oldenburg IN 47036



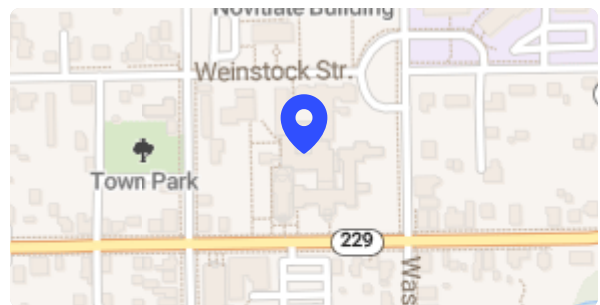
Mass of Christian Burial

- Wednesday**, November 22, 2023
- 10:30 AM ET
- Srs. of St. Francis Chapel**
22143 Main Street, Oldenburg IN 47036



Cemetery Details

- St. Francis Cemetery**
22143 Main Street, Oldenburg IN 47036





Tribute Wall

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Mary F Divita posted:

I was shocked to open this morning's Star and read of the passing of Sr. Rachel. I can recall the many historical discussions Sister had with my late husband Jim and the late Dr. Doherty. God must have had a reason to call three stellar historians home in the same year. May she rest in peace. Mary Divita

November 21 at 1:53 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Rachel by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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