

REMEMBERING SISTER ADELE DU ROSS

Nov. 24, 1914-Nov. 27, 2009



Adele's profession number was 1010. Her goal was to live up to John 10:10, "I have come to bring life, life to the full." She wanted to be remembered as a positive person who brought life into a situation.

Adele, named Frances Shirley, was the youngest of four girls. Her sisters were Geraldine, Veronica and Marcella. Frances Shirley was born to Cecilia Voten and Thomas Patrick DuRoss on Nov. 24, 1914 in Detroit. Mrs. DuRoss came from Holland when she was 2 years old. The story is that her father, Adele's grandfather, was in trouble and had to get out of the country! Adele wrote that her mother was a most gentle and caring person. She did not raise her voice with the girls. Gentle persuasion was much more her way. Mr. DuRoss was Irish and as volatile as her mother was gentle. Adele was afraid of her father, mostly because of little contact with him. He always worked nights and there was not much conversation when he was with the family. However, suffering, hardship, the Depression and loneliness

mellowed her father, Adele wrote. In later years he became a much more approachable and loving person.

When Adele was in kindergarten, she was called Frances. However, the children teased because they thought that Frances was a boy's name. She went home crying one day declaring that she wanted to be known by her second name. She was Shirley from then on!

Adele attended Norvell Public School on the east side of Detroit. Her public school teachers also taught her religion during after-school weekly religion classes. Adele was in mortal terror of the sisters who taught at the nearby Catholic school! She wrote, "I took my confession, took my communion and took to my heels!" She even hesitated go to the children's Mass on Sunday because the sisters were there!

When Adele was only 11 years old, her mother died. "What looked at that time like a great tragedy for me proved in hindsight to be a hidden and graced moment," she wrote on her Page of Life. The girls were each six years apart. So, her sisters were considerably older than Adele when their mother died. During the next year, Adele roamed from aunt to aunt. She was growing up much too fast to suit her father. He thought that she needed more supervision. Since Mr. DuRoss was not able to give little Shirley the time and attention he thought she needed, he made the decision to send her to Saint Mary's Academy in Monroe. "Had he decided to put me in jail the decision, as far as I was concerned, could not have been worse," Adele wrote. In spite of her tears and pleading, Adele entered Saint Mary's Academy in September 1927 as an eighth-grader. In less than a week, she had fallen in love with the sisters, her surrogate mothers. She thought that Sisters Marie Dominic Gitre and Venard Murphy, her eighth-grade teachers, must have

fallen straight from heaven! "I had two beautiful years at the Academy before it burned to the ground in 1929," Adele wrote. After the fire, it was her father's intention that Adele live with his sister and attend Visitation High School in Detroit. Visitation was staffed by Adrian Dominican Sisters. "No way! It was IHMs or nothing for me," Adele thought. So unbeknown to anyone, Adele wrote to Mother Domitilla Donohue, the General Superior, and asked if she could enter the Postulate. The Sisters she had in ninth grade tried to dissuade Adele. "There was an explosion in the family," Adele wrote. Her own sisters were furious that their father would even consider allowing her to enter. Why she couldn't even stay away from the movies for more than two weeks! How she ever had the courage to continue to pressure for admission, get an interview with the General Superior, Mother Domitilla and be accepted, Adele said she would never understand. Frances Shirley DuRoss entered the Postulate on Sept. 8, 1929 at age 14!

Adele's years of Formation were very difficult for her. She was young, happy-go-lucky and always in trouble. It seemed as if her Superiors in the Postulate, Novitiate and as a young professed were trying to make Adele "grow up" before her time. As a novice, Adele wrote that she was proud of herself! She had completed her high school, was taking college classes with the other novices, was learning to pray, to teach and how to find out plenty without saying a word. "In September 1932, while still a novice, I was sent out for my first Mission experience and my third life crisis," Adele wrote. (After her mother's death and the burning of the Academy.) She was assigned to teach primary grades at Saint Agnes School in Detroit. The Superior/Principal was extremely hard on Adele. Things became so intolerable that into her second year at Saint Agnes, Adele decided that she would finish the school year and leave the Congregation. Life was not worth all of this hassle! It happened that Adele had a lung hemorrhage on Easter Monday of that second year on mission. After a week in the hospital, she was sent to Monroe with TB. She thought that if she was going to die, she might as well stay and die in the convent. However, Adele wrote that she had a good doctor and didn't die. When she was up and about Adele had a talk with Mother Ruth Hankerd, the General Superior. Adele thought she had made a mess of her life and would be better off trying something else. Adele spoke of Mother Ruth's extreme kindness as she encouraged her not to make a hasty decision.

Adele believed that her illness was a sign of God's providence in her life. God wanted her where she was! She strongly believed that her mother's death led her to her first contact with religious life; that the burning of the Academy led her to entrance into the congregation and that her TB prevented her from leaving religious life. Rather, she rededicated herself and made final vows.

From the early thirties until 1971 Adele taught and/or was principal in several elementary schools in Michigan with one year at Saint Felicitas in Chicago, Ill. She also taught for three years at IHM High School, Westchester, Ill. In spite of the fact that Adele did not have much confidence in her ability, as she looked back over her life, she knew that God intervened, led her and was always with her. (And so, she felt that she had good experiences with everyone with whom she worked.)

Adele wrote that the time of Renewal in the Church in the late sixties was a traumatic time for her. She felt that the roots and foundations of the Church, the congregation and herself were shaken. "It was difficult," she wrote, "to see dear and good friends leaving religious life, to struggle with ministerial changes and to accept our changing lifestyle...I moved into the change cautiously." (However) she continued, "In hindsight I know they were growth-filled years."

In the early seventies, Adele took a position at St. Ephrem Parish, Sterling Heights, Mich., as the administrator of the religious education program. She stayed for 10 years and found this to be a very positive experience. In 1981 Adele participated in a renewal in Saint Louis, Mo., with the intention of going into prayer ministry. During the renewal, however, she discovered that she was better prepared for parish ministry. So for the next seven years, she served as pastoral minister at St. Bernard Parish, Alpena, Mich. This was an extremely enriching ministry for Adele. She lived with an inter-community group. She had fond memories of working with the Sisters' Council and with the Ministerial Association. Adele said that it was enlightening for her to see how dedicated all of these ministers were in their work for God. It helped with her own dedication to see all the good that was going on. Adele loved living on Lake Huron. That great body of water spoke to her of God's abundance!

Adele left Alpena in 1989, had a short stint at St Henry's, Lincoln Park, Mich., as a pastoral minister then moved to an apartment in Monroe with her dear and long-time friend, Sister Bea Faucher. Here Adele volunteered in the Central Administration Office as receptionist. In 1994 she retired and was of service in many ways in the Motherhouse. Adele loved apartment living but after her second stroke in 1998, she thought it wise for her to move into the Health Care Center.

Adele spoke of a special moment of union with God when she was praying to see the Face of God. "I have many faces," God revealed to her. And so, she wrote that she "learned to find God in the faceless, the fugitive, the forlorn, the gaunt, the gay, the garrulous, the hunted, the hungry, the helpless, the aged, the agile, and the arrogant."

During her many years of life experience, Adele learned to have great confidence and trust in God. "No matter where you go," she said "God is there. I have often felt the Divine Presence."

Adele lived these final years of her life with the same spirit that marked her years of active ministry.

She continued relationships with her family members; she and Sister Bea Faucher continued their card games; she sustained interest in her last Mission Unit – Cosmic Dance, now under its new name, The Earthlings. All those who daily cared for Adele – the nurses, aides, and housekeepers - became her friends.

The four walls of Adele's health care room could not contain the spirit that marked her long, fruitful life devoted to others.

Adele, your name means "giver of great joy." What a joy it has been to have known you; to have had you among us! Your goal was to bring life and joy into your piece of the world. You have done that and we are grateful! Now is the time for you to experience joy and life to the full! May you dwell in peace.

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