



Name: Sister Roselani Gomes
Date of Birth: March 21, 1927
Place of Birth: Puhi, Kauai, Hawaii
Parents: Joseph C. and Mildred Marceline (Marques) Gomes
Religious Profession: August 15, 1950
Date of Death: May 26, 2017
Age: 90
Years Professed: 66

Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Mildred Agnes Gomes was born on March 21, 1927 to Joseph C. and Mildred Marceline (Marques) Gomes in Puki, Kauai, Hawaii. She was the ninth child of ten. She was baptized at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Kapaia, Kauai, Hawaii on April 9, 1927. At the age of 10, Mildred took the name Mary when she received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The family lived on the island of Kauai where her Dad worked for McBryde Sugar Company until his son, Manuel, was fatally injured when hit by a drunk driver. Besides the loss of his son, the funeral expenses were a financial hardship for the family, especially for her Dad. This caused him to move his family to Grove Farm Plantation in Puhi where Mildred was born.

There were no Catholic Schools on the island of Kauai so Mildred went to public school in Lihue. Her mother was a prayerful, generous, hospitable and loving woman. She had deep faith in God and nurtured Mildred and her brothers and sisters in the Catholic Faith. Every evening the family prayed the rosary. In the months of October and May the family attended devotions in honor of the Blessed Mother, and during Lent, the Stations of the Cross. Weekly Saturday Catechism classes were held in the Lihue Protestant Parish Hall.

After many years at Grove Farm Mildred's Dad was transferred to Kekaha Sugar Company. Mildred found this move hard. She felt as if she had gone to the ends of the earth since Kekaha is the farthest western town on the island of Kauai. It was hot and humid compared to the coolness of Puhi. She missed climbing their mango tree, sitting on the roof of the house eating mangoes, going wild fruit picking in the valleys. She missed her friends and her old school. Shortly after the new school year started her family suffered another tragedy. Her youngest brother, Harry, at the age of seven, was hit by a driver who had been drinking. Faith and love of God saw the family through this grief. A deep consolation was that Mildred's little brother was able to receive his First Holy Communion before he died.

When Mildred was 14 she began to think about being a Sister. She saw an ad in *Our Sunday Visitor* newspaper sponsored by the Marist Missionary Sisters in Bedford, Massachusetts. The caption that caught her attention read, "Fill These Empty Shoes." Mildred began corresponding with a Marist Sister. She thought she would like to be a missionary. She spoke to the assistant pastor whose sister was an Ursuline Sister in Cleveland, OH. He let Mildred read the letter she had sent to him. This started her on her journey toward Religious Life.

In High School Mildred was taking classes to prepare for being a secretary. One day Father Robeck asked Mildred if she could type some letters to Superiors of different Religious Orders. There were 145 in all! It was a begging letter for Sisters to staff the school he wanted to open at St. Theresa Parish in Kekaha. Father received some affirmative responses and among them was one from Mother Perpetua, the Superior of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity from Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Bishop Sweeney was the one who decided that the Franciscan Sisters would be the ideal group to staff the school. Mother Perpetua assured Father that four Sisters would come by the time the school was ready in August 1946.

Mildred was instrumental in helping to prepare the Convent for the Sisters. She befriended the Sisters and got to know them. This confirmed for her the desire to be a Sister. She prayed the St. Andrew Christmas Novena for Favors to help her know what to do. She knew her leaving home would be a hardship on her parents. However, when she talked with them, they gave Mildred their blessing.

Mildred wrote the following letter to Mother Edna dated February 9, 1947:

After looking over the field, I have decided that I would like to enter your community. The Sisters have told me all I should know, except the dowry and other expenses and clothing that I will need. If it is possible at this time, could you please send me the application forms? I would like to receive them as soon as possible. Sister Rita told me that I have to take my credits along, but I think the school sends it to wherever you go. I had a let-down feeling when I heard that because when I was in high school, I never bothered to study, but took it easy. How I wish I had studied harder.

I always remember you in my prayers and hope that someday I'll be able to join you and the others in your Community. Until then, I will keep on storming heaven with my prayers. Please don't forget to send me the information I desire and the application forms.

*Respectfully yours,
Mildred Gomes*

Mildred was accepted to enter on July 19, 1947. She traveled to the Mainland aboard the ship S.S. Matsonia. While she was on the ship she wrote to the Mother Mary Cyr, the Superior of the Marist Sisters, to inform her of her decision to join the Franciscans. Mildred did get a letter back assuring her of prayers. At her Reception on June 13, 1949 Mildred asked for a new name

because she had read that when God gave Saul and Peter new names, it signified the beginning of a new life vocation for them. She wanted the same for herself. She was pleased with her new name, Sister Roselani which means, "Rose of Heaven."

Sister Roselani had completed her High School at Waimea High School in 1945. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Holy Family College on July 26, 1963 with a major in Education and a minor in English. She gained further credits to support her teaching at the Chaminade College of Honolulu and the University of Honolulu. Sister Roselani taught for 31 years in Wisconsin, Hawaii and Arizona. After being Principal for two years she used her secretarial skills for 30 years. The past year Sister Roselani was residing in St. Rita Health Center. In her Jubilee message she wrote, "I have received more blessings and love than I could ever have imagined....I am filled with gratitude to God for gifting me and calling me to be a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. My heart abounds with love and gratitude for my dear parents, my family, priests and everyone for their loving support, encouragement and guidance along the way." She ended her earthly journey with many expressions of love and gratitude for all who cared for her and visited her.

Aloha, Sister Roselani. May you rest in peace with God and all the angels and saints in heaven.