

*SISTER MONICA*

*OF PROVIDENCE*

*GRANT*



*BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:  
OCTOBER 26, 1912*

*BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:  
SEPTEMBER 18, 1994*

**Sister Monica Grant**  
**Province of U.S.A. & Canada**  
**1912 - 1994**

Rose Grant was born October 26, 1912, to a Brahmin Indian father, John and a Catholic mother, Agnes. She was a delicate child but bright and alert. Loved by her parents, brothers and sisters, she was idolized by her Indian grandfather. She was sent to the best school in Suva, St. Joseph Convent, and absorbed knowledge avidly. She was tutored in music and art and became proficient in Hindi and Sanskrit. At the age of 12 she contracted typhoid fever from which hundreds on the island were dying. Her saintly mother never left her bedside, pleading for her life. Secretly she promised this beloved daughter to God if she were spared. Rose came quietly out of her deep coma and told her mother she had seen God's hand and heard God tell her she could not come now because there was work for her to do. At 18 she asked permission to enter Cluny. Her father was horrified, fearing the life would be too hard for her. However, he made a bargain with her. If, after living with the sisters for two years her health was good, he would give her his blessing. Rose's determination never slackened and after two years she set out on the six-week long ocean voyage to Paris. Her companion was an elderly Maris Sister returning to France to retire. Each day they prayed together and no doubt the old nun offered many special prayers for this young Indian woman about to dedicate her life to God. The morning they were to land, Rose got up early to catch the first glimpse of France. Finally, there it was in the morning mist. Excitedly she ran to awake her companion only to find her dead in her berth! Alone, she stood by the rail scanning the waiting crowd for the Cluny habit. What joy to see them and be able to pass on the shock of Sister's death.

Postulate and novitiate were hard for Rose. She was an independent spirit and very accustomed to having her own way. The harsh Paris winters added to her miseries--chilblains plagued her. However, she persevered and was professed on the feast of her beloved St. Joseph, March 19, 1935. Her devotion to this great Saint was always strong. They had an understanding! She confided to him all the troubles she

couldn't take care of herself! She wrote him formal requests specifying what she needed him to do. She always thanked him and signed her name, "Sister Monica".

Her first obedience was for her native Fiji and once back she totally immersed herself in the activities of our secondary school. She also worked in the cathedral sacristy. She put her artistic and musical talents at the service of all. Community life was difficult for her and she often said of late that she felt unappreciated and even unaccepted. It is easy to see how this could happen because she tended to be self-opinionated and proud. Add to these natural tendencies her status in the small insular society of Suva as John Grant's daughter and it is easy to understand how there could be moments of difficulty in the midst of the many joys and peak experiences of these years.

During World War II, Fiji was one of the main stops for allied warships. As a result the sisters met individuals from all over the world. Sister Monica's big-heartedness and generosity endeared her to many, and some of these wartime "contacts" lasted a lifetime. Once special friend was Captain John H. Hancock. Sister Monica's friendship with him began as a result of their common delight in seashells.

In 1950 she set off for Rome and the beatification of Blessed Anne Marie. The photo of her in company with Ma Chère Mere and Mother Gabriel Mary speaking to Pope Pius II is well known. In Paris that year she received her second obedience: this time she was sent to Wilmington, California. She had a brand new convent to furnish and a pastor who gave her carte blanche in all that concerned the furnishings, etc. Back and forth she went between Wilmington and Hollywood where she was the guest of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters. She supervised every detail of the convent and school furnishings and when the sisters arrived in August 1951 all was in readiness. The community was young in years and experience and Sister Monica was a very knowledgeable and generous mentor. No matter what anyone needed, Sister Monica had it or knew where it could be obtained. No trouble was too much for her. She was tireless in trying to get good bargains.

She had many ways of charming the storekeepers into letting her have what she had put her eye on. One of her ploys was to bring a younger community member with her, and even after six years in the country, she would introduce her as “just out from Ireland’ and needing whatever it might be that she wanted. She came away with many bargains and stories of how she got them.

She put her gift of calligraphy at the service of all and the spiritual bouquets she produced were works of art. She suffered from iritis and at times was very restricted and in great pain. This eye condition remained a worry to her always and was something she regularly confided to St. Joseph. She studied art at Immaculate Heart College under Corita Kent, IHM and many a time she groaned as she tried to adapt to modern art. She was valued as a true artist in the Corita Kent Circle. Those were happy summers for her and also her time at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She loved to excel in all areas of endeavor and she enjoyed the challenges of higher education.

Sr. Monica was a patient and generous soul as was evidenced by her long stint in Grade 4 where her talents were really not put to good use. During these years she did have an outlet by the drama productions she staged. It was remarkable what Monica could get the young actors and actresses to do! She provided “authentic” costumes from her never-ending store of “things”. Much of the material she procured for a cent a yard or even less. She had a way of asking the shopkeepers – she made it seem as if they were the favored ones by being asked! Many times I witnessed this during my many escapades as her designated chauffeur! (During these years Monica did not drive the car.) She used public transportation without batting an eye. When she did get a car she was very careful and drove very well. That was when she was assigned to St. Anthony’s, Long Beach as the art teacher.

While Monica taught in Sts. Peter and Paul Elementary School, she was sacristan in the parish church. She decorated the altar weekly with her arrangements of flowers - there were many splendid arrangements. Each year she did the Crib at Christmas - no two years were the scenes the

same. She was very creative and though often exhausted, once she started the fatigue seemed to vanish and Monica had no idea of time. She labored long hours for the Church – it was truly a labor of love for her.

The baldachino over the main altar she restored by hand climbing up the scaffolding and delicately bringing the tree of life that had been so tarnished to LIFE! She used gold leaf and it was painstaking work. She could identify with Michael Angelo. Her work is still there to this day. No one has the need to re-do it – she did it so well and used only the best materials. Her artistic ability was often put to work. She restored/refinished many art pieces for Marian Hancock. She often visited Marian and Captain at the Ranch! Usually she would spend some of her vacation there. She was not idle while there, she sewed for Marian and she painted, whether restoring destroyed art works or creating originals.

Many times she visited Marian at her apartment on Wilshire Boulevard. There, too, she often did creative work for Mrs. Hancock. Being in the company of Marian and the Captain gave her much joy; she would come home refreshed and renewed.

Monica had time for everyone. She was gracious and entertaining. She played the piano well and could pick up tunes easily. She never sang herself, but did help others in sharing their gift.

She suffered because she was different. Sometimes she was not understood, but underneath it all she was a true Cluny, devoted, dedicated, prayerful, generous, and gifted. Her entire religious life in USA was spent in the same room in Sts. Peter and Paul Convent. If those walls could speak!

In 1971 she joyfully left Grade 4 in Sts. Peter and Paul Elementary School and joined the faculty of St. Anthony High School in Long Beach. She created an art department on the third floor of the school in an abandoned classroom. It as a sorry sight when she first entered it but in a matter of weekends she had that room prepared to received students.

Each year that room got something new until it had all the necessities for a super art room, including a kiln! Sister Monica trudged up those flights of stairs many times daily often carrying heavy objects. Others marveled and many good friends helped her. She loved her years at St. Anthony's. How happy she was to share her talents with the young people! Many of them achieved remarkable results through her instruction. She became involved in the music and drama also and marched many a mile with the St. Anthony High School marching band. Her loyalty to St. Anthony's knew no bounds. She produced magnificent centerpieces for fundraising dinners, spent hours working the phones for the Phonathon; enlarged the stage; and put on Pancake Breakfasts by the dozen. While remaining a member of the Wilmington Community she resided for some years at St. Anthony Convent so that she would not have to travel to and fro. Reluctantly she gave up the Art Department in the early 90's. The stairs were just too much. It was not that she was growing old! In her mind one did not grow old and age was personal, not to be talked about. Her age was a very well kept secret.

Now she devoted all her energy to public relations for the school. Her health was declining but she never wanted to admit this. One day she fell and broke her hip. This marked the beginning of the last lap. Diabetes and Parkinson's disease added greatly to her infirmity. Little by little Sister Monica was forced to let go of her independence. This was a difficult, frustrating, and sometimes depressing process for her. But even though she was growing weaker and becoming more fragile physically, she was very keen and alert mentally and had a great interest in everyday events. Skilled care became necessary and sister was accepted by the Little Sisters of the Poor through Sr. Marie Noël's influence. In this beautiful home in San Pedro (only 6 miles from Wilmington) she was lovingly cared for and she was content there. Various crises sent her to the hospital but she was always happy to return to the Little Sisters. Sister Monica had a strong will and desire to live. When her pain was great she would beg St. Joseph to help her and often called for "Amon". . . Hindi for "Mother". When asked if she wanted to join Amon in heaven, the immediate response was "Not yet!" She confided to a friend that she had asked St. Joseph for two more years. She only relinquished that

hope when her sufferings became overpowering. Then she asked her sister, Rena, and her Cluny sisters to pray that Jesus would come and take her. She was surrounded with tender, loving care both physical and spiritual until her last breath on the morning of September 18, 1994. When all the tensions of the pain and suffering had ended, Sister Monica's youthful appearance returned and everyone remarked how peaceful and natural she looked. Through tears of thanks and sadness we sang the Beata Anna Maria and Sancte Joseph and praised God for a long and full life.