



Obituary

Sister Marianne Schmitz, O.P.

July 15, 1927 – January 4, 2026

Sister Marianne (Rita Annita) was born on July 15, 1927 in Brakel/Hembsen (North Rhine-Westphalia/Germany), the second child of Franz and Maria (Weber) Schmitz. She would be one of eight children born into her family, though two would die as infants, Juliana at 10 months and Franz at 2 hours.

Eugene, Rita, Roswitha, Friedhelm, Leona, and Maria enjoyed a simple and happy childhood. Sister Marianne as the second oldest took on responsibility appropriate to her age. She helped care for the garden, the goats, sheep, pigs, and chickens, and together with Eugene, the oldest, she helped her mother with the younger children. Sister Marianne attended grammar school from 1933 - 1941

Sister Marianne's father, fought in World War I as a 19-year-old. He sustained a wound to his left leg, which resulted in its amputation. He returned from the war disabled, but married and with his wife looked forward to raising a family. Life would call him to be steadfast and courageous. When Sister Marianne was 10 years old, her mother developed pneumonia and needed to be hospitalized. She never returned home from the hospital, but died, leaving six children ages 1.5 to 11 years at home. Franz became both father and mother to his grieving children.

Fortunately, Franz's mother came to help with the household, and stayed for three years, until she was needed by another family that had lost their mother. It was decided that this would be a good time for Eugene to go to "domestic school". When she returned, Sister Marianne, age 15, and Eugene, age 16, took care of the household together: the house, the younger siblings, the garden, and the animals.

It was 1944, and since Sister Marianne and her sister were both at home, Sister Marianne took her turn to go to "domestic school". She was there for half a year before she was drafted for service to her country which was at war. She and seven other girls travelled to a military base in West Germany, close to Muenster in Westfalia, (124 miles away) and trained to operate the big

lights that needed to be turned on and toward the skies when planes were heard. She served for four months until the war ended in 1945.

At the war's end, everyone was trying to get home! The bridges in Germany had been bombed and roads were torn up. Trains were packed to standing room only, and none were available for civilians during the day as soldiers filled them up. Sister Marianne was fortunate to finally get on a train which stopped at a nearby village, from which she walked home! How happy her father was to have her home, and the family reunited!

Time passed and Roswitha got married. Sister Marianne, now 24 years old, took part in a Church mission in their parish of St. Nicholas in Höxter. The priest asked her if she had ever thought of entering the convent. Sister Marianne said yes, but as a child. The priest gave her the address of Mother Joachim in Neustadt, and Sister Marianne wrote to her, visited, and decided to enter the community. Her youngest sister, Maria, turned 18 and was able to take over the household and care for her father, who never remarried.

Sister Marianne entered the Oakford Congregation on January 15, 1955, at the age of 27. She joined Sisters Aquilina, Beatrix, and Birgitte, with Sister Joachim as their Novice Director. She received the habit on September 8, 1955, and made First Profession a year later, on September 12, 1956.

She was sent to Freckenhorst in November 1956, to a *Landvolkshochschule*, where spiritual classes were taught to the local farmers and youth. The Sisters did the domestic work, and Sister Marianne served as a cook there for six years. She returned to Neustadt, which had a large community of postulants and novices, and served in the kitchen from 1962 to 1965. She then went to our *Marienkrankenhaus* hospital in Flörsheim, as a cook for patients needing special diets.

In January of 1968 she found it hard to believe when she was told she was going to the United States, to Oakland, California to help at St. Albert's Priory with the cooking and laundry! There she served faithfully until 1974 when she was sent to our school, St. Justin's in Santa Clara, CA. There she kept the house and cooked for the nine Sisters who were teaching and staffing the elementary school.

In December 1976 Sister Marianne was asked to go to our home for the elderly, Villa Siena, in Mountain View. Sister Marianne became a Resident Assistant, taking duty and sharing her love for arts and crafts with the many residents. In 1981 Sister Marianne was given nine months for renewal and rest in our House of Studies in Rome, which she thoroughly enjoyed. She then returned to Villa Siena and to her work with the residents. In 1998 she moved from Mountain View to our community in Sunnyvale, and drove each afternoon to Villa Siena, for her night duty, returning home the next morning. She worked at Villa Siena for 24 years.

In 2001, Sister Marianne retired from active ministry at Villa Siena, and moved to San Leandro, CA to our Regional Center, which had just been renovated and was ready for a new community. She joined Sisters Nicolina, Dolores, and Gemma. Sister Marianne settled into gardening, cooking, and spending time making cards and candles, crocheting and knitting. In 2005, an arts and crafts room was built for her on the premises, and for the rest of her days in San Leandro, she loved the quiet and creative space it gave her for her projects.

In 2005, at the age of 80, she traveled to Germany for her last homevisit, spending time with her remaining siblings, Friedhelm, Leonie, and Maria. She especially enjoyed hearing the church bells ring, calling people to Mass. She always held close to her heart the land of her birth, the German language, and the happy years of her childhood.

In October 2017 at the age of 90, with her need for additional healthcare support, she moved to St. Martin Residence at Mission San Jose. There she found that her creative work of crocheting and knitting was very welcome, for the Sisters held a yearly boutique selling handmade items made by the Sisters. Sister Marianne also enjoyed walking outside, staying in touch with her family through phone calls and handwritten letters; she enjoyed plants in her room, and multiplied them by repotting and re-seeding. She read and kept up with the news of what was happening in the world.

Over the years her legs became weaker and her eyesight diminished. Her mind, however, remained clear, and we enjoyed her wisdom and insights on life as we visited with her. Into her nineties, she often said that she had been in the world too long: she could not fathom how *Zoom* made possible to see and talk to people halfway across the world! In her time she had been proficient on a typewriter, and had chosen not to enter the computer age.

As her world became smaller and she became more dependent on assistance for her daily activities, and turned to God, deepening her trust in Him.

Sister Marianne died on January 4, 2026 from a slow-growing cancer. She accepted her weakening with dignity and grace, fully aware that she was leaving this world for the next. She was accompanied by the Sisters at St. Martin and her Oakford Sisters to the last.

Sister Marianne, may you be embraced by the arms of the loving God
in whom you put all your hope.