

Catherine **Rizzo**

October 1, 1928 - March 28, 2016



Catherine's Life Story

All who knew Catherine Rizzo would agree that she was the heartbeat of wherever she went. She was giving, even selfless, and her love and acceptance was always freely given and given without condition. Catherine made no secret of the fact that she was married to her soul mate, her true companion, and her best friend, and together they witnessed their family tree blossom to include the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren they adored. Upon spending only a few minutes with her it was clear to see that her life was rooted in something different, something deeper, and that something was her Catholic faith. A lifelong learner who was always seeking to embrace new things, Catherine lived her life to the fullest each day. Life will never be the same without Catherine here, but she leaves behind a priceless collection of memories that her loved ones will forever cherish.

It seems only fitting that Catherine's journey began during a time that was as vibrant as she was. It was the Roaring Twenties when jazz music was hot, ballroom dancing was among the latest crazes, and the lights of Broadway never shined brighter. It was as fall began to unfold in Rhineland, Wisconsin, in October of 1928 that Robert and Dolores (Wirth) Albrecht were eagerly awaiting the birth of their new baby. Their big day finally arrived on October 1st when the baby girl they named Catherine Dolores drew her first breath. She was the second of four children in her family as she was raised in the family home in the Humboldt Park area in Chicago alongside her brothers, Robert, Edward, and Thomas. Catherine's father was a trainman and truck driver while her mother was a telephone operator.

For the most part, Catherine was a young girl of her generation. She was outside all the time since that's what kids did in those days, and she loved things like skipping rope, roller skating, and ice skating in the winter. Although the Great Depression affected nearly every American family including the Albrechts, they didn't really realize they were poor since everyone was in the same boat. Catherine enjoyed dressing up and taking the train or bus downtown to hang out in libraries and hotels just to admire the beauty. She became good friends with a young girl named Shirley, and they remained in touch throughout Catherine's entire life. This lifelong friendship brought Catherine a tremendous amount of comfort in the last year of her life. Catherine started working as a young girl of 13, taking a job at a bakery one year earlier than she was technically allowed. She graduated from a local school and went on to college, but earning an income soon became more important and Catherine set aside her studies to do some secretarial work only six months into her college adventure.

Exciting changes were soon in store for Catherine when she met the young man of her dreams when she was only 17. His name was Francis "Jack"





Rizzo, and they met while working at American Coating Mills together. Smitten right from the start, he asked her out the first day they met, however, she made him work a bit before saying yes. True love won in the end as she accepted his invitation, and who could really blame her as he was a good looking, motivated, and smooth guy who was fresh out of the service. Catherine's family was none too pleased about his Italian heritage, but this didn't keep the young couple from falling deeply in love. Jack gave Catherine a diamond when she was 18, but her family wouldn't allow her to get married until she was 20. The couple respected

Catherine's family's wishes and were married the day after her 20th birthday on October 2, 1948. The newlyweds spent their honeymoon driving across the United States on very little money. Of course their car eventually broke down and they needed to have money wired to get home.

There was never anything that was of greater significance to Catherine than her family. Together she and Jack welcomed five children including Mary, Paul, Tom, Bart, and Peggy into their hearts and home. Catherine devoted her life to nurturing and caring for her children, and she treasured each of them. Catherine busied herself making homemade meals including her children's favorite meals and desserts for their birthdays, which she always managed to keep straight. She also made some of her kids' clothes. Mealtimes were always family times, and they also celebrated St. Nicks Day and attended church together as faith was a cornerstone in their family. The Rizzos moved at least 25 times as Jack's career presented him with growth opportunities. They eventually settled into a home on Bridge Street in Plainwell, Michigan. Since Jack frequently traveled during the week, the weekends were devoted to the kids. They spent hours on end outside doing things like swimming, sledding, ice skating, and camping in their pop-up. Jack held his sons to a different standard than he did his daughters, and this was often a sticking point with Catherine.

As her children grew older, Catherine continued to delight in her family. She was so proud of her children as they left home for college, and rather than being sad she was excited to be able to spend more time with Jack. Catherine and her husband cherished their time together, and he took great care of her. Whenever her children came home for a visit, she welcomed them back, and her home was always a safe and secure place to come. When her daughters became mothers to their own children, Catherine was there to offer guidance and support. She loved cooking and sewing for her grandchildren, and she made many of their Halloween costumes and different items of clothing as well. Catherine also taught many of her grandchildren to cook and sew.

In addition to caring for her family, Catherine kept busy in other ways. During their sunset years she and Jack wintered in Arizona where they enjoyed the sense of community and various activities such as regular dances and potlucks.

Catherine and Jack were also very involved in the church and helping local children through the church as both were continually giving of themselves. She was a Eucharistic minister who regularly took the sacraments to those



who were ill or otherwise unable to attend Mass. With a green thumb, Catherine always kept a garden wherever she was living. She took great care in keeping track of everyone's birthday and loved showering her grand-grandchildren with gifts.

Catherine enjoyed and looked forward to attending events that involved her family. Once Jack's health began to fail, Catherine and Jack left Arizona and moved to South Carolina near her youngest daughter. Once there, she spent a great deal of time with her grandkids and great grand kids and formed a very strong bond. In the spring of 2015, when Catherine's health began to fail, she, along with her children decided it was time for her to move to Ann Arbor, Michigan to be closer to her other four children, their children and grandchildren. Once in Michigan, Catherine continued to be submersed in family activities. She attended Holidays, Birthday parties, showers and even a wedding. She also looked forward to the numerous visitors and outings they would take her on while visiting her in Ann Arbor.

A stranger to none and a friend to all, Catherine Rizzo was such a blessing to everyone she met. She was honest, loyal, and generous beyond measure with the ability to accept everyone as a child of God. Although she was deeply saddened to say goodbye to her beloved husband in 2010, she drew strength from her unwavering faith and the love of her family. Catherine will never be forgotten.

Catherine Dolores (Albrecht) Rizzo, formally of Plainwell, MI, passed away Monday, March 28, 2016. Catherine's family includes her children: Mary Rizzo (Tom Krupar) of Ann Arbor, MI, Paul Rizzo (Cindy) of Plainwell, MI, Tom Rizzo (Jeannine) of E. Grand Rapids, MI, Bart Rizzo (Sheila Schmidt) of Saugatuck, MI, Peggy Rizzo of Greer, SC; brother, Robert "Bob" Albrecht of WI; 14 grandchildren; and 9 great-grandchildren. Catherine was preceded in death by her husband, Francis "Jack" Rizzo. Contributions in her memory may be made to The Cradle Society (2049 Ridge Avenue Evanston, Illinois 60201) and/or the Catholic Television Network of Detroit (www.ctnd.tv). A Funeral Mass will be held Friday, April 22, 2016 at 1:00pm at St. Margaret Catholic Church in Otsego, MI, with a luncheon immediately following. Please visit www.lifestorynet.com to leave a favorite memory of Catherine, submit a photo or to sign her online guest book.



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