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I. Quick Biography

- a. Full name as a consecrated nun: *Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation*.
- b. Full baptismal name: Rita Antoinette Rizzo
- c. April 20, 1923—born in Canton, OH (USA)
- d. Early in her childhood her father moved out of the house
- e. Parents John Rizzo and Mae Helen Gianfrancesco divorced in 1929
- f. Her Mom kept full custody of her. M. Angelica recalls:
 - “We pinched pennies just to keep food on the table”
 - Sewer rats would literally eat their way through the apartment floor.
 - Due to many responsibilities at home that fell on young Rita, her school work suffered greatly
 - Rita learned the hard way: “I will fear no evil”
- g. 1943—miraculously healed from severe stomach pains of the past 4 years. That led her to a deep love for God and a huge devotion to Our Most Blessed Mother
- h. Summer, 1944—Rita stopped at a church to pray. Kneeling before the Most Blessed Sacrament, she realized she was to be a nun. So she went out to visit convents
- i. Aug. 15, 1944—entered the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration (PCPA’s, Franciscan Nuns of the Most Blessed Sacrament) in Cleveland, Ohio as postulant
- j. Here began a great adventure of love. The fruit that has been born from this vocation is phenomenal. Only in Heaven will we fully realize the many souls who were saved because of Mother Angelica's "yes"
- k. She worked in the laundry, kitchen, cleaning floors; developed knee problems at age 22
- l. She wasn’t able to kneel before the Most Blessed Sacrament
- m. Nov. 8, 1945—Rita Rizzo took first vows as a Poor Clare Nun of Perpetual Adoration.
- n. Her new name: Sister Mary Angelica of the Annunciation
- o. She was spiritually-minded, a leader, energetic, and responsible
- p. Jan. 2, 1947—made her first holy profession of vows, formally espoused to Jesus Christ.
- q. Jan. 2, 1953—made her solemn profession of vows, final commitment to God & her Community.
- r. 1953—she gave a novitiate retreat. Sr. Mary Raphael was very impressed by this “spiritual giant”
- s. Had serious accident, promised God if she could walk again, she would build a monastery in the South.
- t. Mother Angelica and four others (Sr. Mary Raphael, Sr. Mary Joseph, Sr. Mary Michael, and Sr. Mary Assumpta) headed South.
- u. May 20, 1962—established new house for the order in Irondale, Alabama, current site of EWTN
- v. Aug. 15, 1981—launched Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), feast of the Assumption

- w. 1996 began building Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament & Our Lady of the Angels Monastery (Hanceville, AL)
- x. Dec., 1999 completed Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament & Our Lady of the Angels Monastery
- y. Two strokes suffered since late 2001:
 - 1st stroke: Sept. 5, 2001 / severe / left her physically debilitated / her mouth twisted, a black eye patch over her left eye and under her glasses, she went back on the air Sept. 25, 2001: “Hi, be not afraid. It’s me,” she chirped, breaking the ice. “With all these little handicaps I need to be with you as long as God wills.”
 - 2nd stroke: Dec. 24, 2001 / major / emergency brain surgery / partial paralysis and a speech impediment / had to go off the air permanently



II. Thoughts and Quotes

- a. “You have to be willing to do the ridiculous so God can do the miraculous.”
- b. “You may be the only Jesus your neighbor will ever see.”
- c. “He who loves God, loves everybody. He who hates God, hates everybody.”
- d. “Forgiveness means to give. It means to give before your neighbor does.”
- e. “When you have Jesus, what is there to fear?”
- f. “You must laugh your way to heaven because tears won’t get you there.”
- g. “We’re all trying to get Master’s degrees, and so often we forget the Master.”
- h. “God chooses little things to do big things.”
- i. Mother’s wish: “I wish you heaven.”
- j. “Money is His problem. Working for His Kingdom is mine.”
- k. “Patience is adjusting your time to God’s time.”
- l. “Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good.”
- m. “A soul that trusts God is invincible.”
- n. “The cross is not negotiable, sweetheart...”
- o. “Love is proved by obedience. And we must be obedient to pain and suffering as we are to joy and good times.
- p. “When you start to think of prayer as Someone, you are finally about to speak to God.”

- q. "Holiness is not a match light or a 50-watt bulb, it's a super-nova—one holy person can save a city, a nation."
 - r. "Faith seeks the God of consolations more than the consolations of God."
 - s. "Don't look back because in order to look back you have to stop moving forward."
 - t. "Pray with love—pray as you love—love as you pray. Prayer is your heartbeat in rhythm with His."
 - u. "If you combine all the love of every person who ever existed from Adam and Eve to everyone alive today, that's still not as much love as God feels for you right now."
 - v. "We don't like to speak the truth about evil because we are going to hurt somebody. Let me tell you, you are going to hurt somebody but that somebody is God."
 - w. "Holiness is simple. Holiness is doing God's Will in the Present Moment. That's it. Holiness consists of four words: The Will of God."
 - x. There's a lot of things that you can do, but you've got to do what God has asked you to do, and stick to it! You have all eternity to experience the presence of God, but you have a very short time to do something for Him.
 - y. "Faith is what gets you started. Hope is what keeps you going. Love is what brings you to the end."
 - z. What is prayer? "Prayer is the lifting of our hearts and minds to God. For no matter what we're saying, we're asking: "Do you love me?" And no matter how He answers, He's saying, "Yes, I do."
- aa. "My attitude is, if the Lord inspires me to do something I attempt to do it. I start and it goes like a snowball downhill. I have to start; it's not His will, it will either fall apart or something will happen to really hinder it."
 - bb. "Faith is one foot on the ground, one foot in the air, and a queasy feeling in the stomach."
 - cc. "Where most men work for degrees after their names, we work for one before our names: 'St.' It's a much more difficult degree to attain. It takes a lifetime, and you don't get your diploma until you're dead."
 - dd. "If you're not a thorn in somebody's side, you aren't doing Christianity right."
 - ee. A picture of Jesus with the crown of thorns sat on the edge of young Rita's desk. When accused by a co-worker of "pushing her religion," Rita responded, "If you have a picture of a movie star or someone you love, you put it out there. Well, this is my love, and it's going to stay there."



III. Signs of Divine Providence

- a. This is the mark of her spirituality throughout her entire religious life — total dependence on Divine Providence.
- b. Rita Rizzo came from the hard streets of southeast Canton, OH—an Italian ghetto with everyday struggles and simple joys. Her painful childhood would forever connect her to the concerns of the man on the street, concerns she would bring to her mission years later as she gradually coined a theology of the street.
- c. As a teenager, walking downtown and immersed in thoughts of problems at home, she crossed a busy street without looking. She heard a woman scream. Young Rita looked back and a car was coming at her at great speed. No time to move. She closed her eyes and waited to be hit. Instantly, as if two strong hands lifted her to safety, she found herself standing on the sidewalk. What would God do with young Rita?
- d. Nov. 1941, stomach pains that Rita had since 1939 urged medical attention.
 - X-rays revealed serious abnormalities in stomach and intestines. Pain got worse.
 - Doctors couldn't do anything to relieve her.
 - Jan. 17, 1943 the Lord healed her after a novena to St. Thérèse.
- e. 1953—had serious accident with an electric floor-scrubbing machine
 - Mother explained: "My life was changed from that point on."
 - Lost balance on soapy floor
 - Fell to her knees and was flung against the wall, back first.
 - Spine seriously injured
 - Many months of worsening pain, quite unbearable
 - June 1955—she was hospitalized, fitted into a body cast, and had to use crutches
 - Body cast and 6 weeks of traction did no good
 - Allergy to pain medication only added to her misery, enduring needles to the spine
 - Physicians suggested spinal fusion—surgery on July 31, 1956
 - There was a 50/50 chance she would never walk. She panicked and prayed
 - The night before her surgery, fearing the worst, she made a deal with the Lord
 - *"God! You didn't bring me this far just to lay me out on my back for life. Please, Lord Jesus, if You allow me to walk again I will build a monastery for Your glory. And I will build it in the South!"*
 - Something went wrong in the surgery. The doctor discovered she had an extra vertebra. He made an

incision to remove it. He knew right then Mother would never walk again

- The surgery was considered a failure. The original doctor walked out
- A Muslim doctor finished the surgery and sewed her up. Mother bled profusely
- The names on the blood transfusion bottles were all Jewish. Years later Mother would joke about “never being the same since”
- After 4 months in the hospital, Mother returned to her convent in Canton, on a wheelchair
- In late 1956, she took her first wobbly steps of independence
- God fulfilled His part of the deal
- Mother grew more and more persistent to fulfill her promise to the Lord

- f. Referring to pain, Mother once said: “That has always been the preparation that God seems to give me. It always seems to precede something that the Lord wants me to do.”
- g. Without making plans for the future, Mother Angelica, relying completely on Divine Providence, believes in going “where God opens the door”
- h. May 20, 1962—established new house for the order in Irondale, Alabama, current site of EWTN
- i. Early 1970’s Mother was giving spiritual talks all over Birmingham. Some thought the teachings would make a

good book. She prayed: “Lord, I don’t know how to write a book, but if you want me to do it, I’ll do it.”

- Aug. 1972—her 1st Minibook *Journey into Prayer* rolled off the presses with the permission of the bishop and an *imprimatur*. Many more would come later—a total of 57 Minibooks, including the longest of them—which was not so “mini:” *Three Keys to the Kingdom* (116 pages)
- Oct., 1975—book ministry in danger. Mother submitted her latest book about the Eucharist. Her publisher refused to print it.
- She decided to buy printing equipment and print everything in-house.
- No bank would lend money.
- At the Monastery reception, a volunteer was talking to Sister David (who was Mother Angelica’s birth mother.) Mother Angelica walked by and slapped the volunteer on the shoulder and cracked a joke: “Want to lend us \$10,000?” He said: “Yeah, I’ll sign for it.” Mother said: “Are you kidding?” He said: “No, are you?” Mother said: “I was, but I’m not now!” Mother could now pay her equipment delivery scheduled for that afternoon.
- A 9-foot sink arrived for the print shop. The angry delivery man asked Mother Angelica: “Did you think to measure the size of the door before ordering the sink? It will not fit through the door.”

Mother calmly said: “Well, let’s pray over it,” and told the men to proceed. The delivery man hollered: “You expect four men to lift that sink off that truck just to prove to you that it won’t fit? God Almighty can’t make that sink fit through that door!” Mother Angelica insisted: “Try it.” Tipped on its side, the sink slipped past the door with half an inch to spare.

- July, 1976, Mother finally completed her new print shop for the “Minibooks,” at a cost of \$100,000. The handwritten sign hanging over the new room read: *“The Master’s print shop. We don’t know what we’re doing, but we’re getting good at it.”*

j. “Unless you are willing to do the ridiculous, God will not do the miraculous. When you have God, you don’t have to know everything about it; you just do it.”

- The first time she visited a TV studio in a Chicago skyscraper with just a few cameras and a small set, Mother whispered a prayer: “Lord, I gotta have one of these.”
- She returned to Birmingham and started working on 30-minute religious videos she taped at the local CBS affiliate.
- One day on a bulletin board on her way into the studio, she noticed the station would air a blasphemous network movie called *The Word*.

- Mother tried to get the VP of the station not to air it. But he refused.
- Mother warned “I will not put my programs on this station nor make any other programs here if you run that movie.”
- The VP tried to reason his way out of the conflict, reminding Mother of the few TV studios in town: “You leave here, you’re off television, and you need us.”
- Mother was now on her feet, yelling: “No, I don’t. I only need God! I’ll buy my own cameras and build my own studio.” The VP said: “You can’t do that.” Mother replied: “You just watch me.” She gathered her materials and returned to the monastery.
- Back at the monastery, Mother realized: “I blew it. I told the man we would build our own studio and I wouldn’t even know where to begin.”
- Some of the nuns shouted out: “The garage. Mother, let’s make the garage a studio!”
- A salesman came from New York to submit an estimate for studio lights. \$48,000. Mother knew she could not afford that so she told him: “Go back and sharpen your pencil.” He said: “The best I can do is \$14,800.” Mother said: “Sold.” She didn’t realize it was for low-quality instruments. But at the time of delivery, the bargain-variety units were

out of stock so the distributor sent what he had—an expensive Italian light package worth \$48,000. But Mother still paid only \$14,800. She said: “I’m going to have the most lit-up garage in Birmingham.”

- Aug. 15, 1981—launched Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), feast of the Assumption



IV. Trivia Tidbits

- a. Before becoming a nun herself, she had disliked all the nuns she had met, describing them as "the meanest people I've ever known."
- b. Young Rita Rizzo's mother was opposed to her desire to become a nun.
 - She ran away from home to enter a convent under the name Sister Angelica, which nearly ended their relationship entirely
 - Years later, her mother not only reconciled with her daughter, but became a nun herself.
 - The first postulant of Mother's convent in the South was Mae Francis (Sister Mary David), Mother Angelica's natural mother
 - She was admitted into the same convent as her daughter, just as Sister Angelica was promoted to Mother Angelica.
 - Mother Angelica recalls "I called my mother Sister and she called me Mother."
- c. Mother raised funds to build her convent in the South making and selling fishing lures

V. A Monastery! In the Deep South?

- a. Mother Angelica, a cloistered, Poor Clare nun
- b. Dedicated to perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament
- c. Promised Our Lord to open a monastery in the Deep South.
- d. Founded Our Lady of Angels Monastery in Irondale, Alabama—1962.
- e. She began writing "mini-books", short teachings on practical aspects of life, prayer, and community.
- f. "Mini-books" grew very popular
- g. Nuns obtained a printing press and started duplicating and distributing them worldwide.
- h. This was but the beginning of a journey of faith and adventure in Providence that would bring the Light of Christ to the very ends of the earth, through the largest Catholic TV, radio and internet network in the world.



VI. A nun on TV! Yes, she had absolutely no broadcast training.

- a. Mother Angelica didn't even see TV until the early 1960's during her first visit to Birmingham.
- b. Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) launched August 15, 1981, feast of the Assumption
- c. Largest religious media network in the world
 - 24 / 7 / 365... TV and radio in English and in Spanish worldwide
 - 148 + million homes
 - 144 + countries
 - 4,800 + cable systems, wireless cable, Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS), low power TV and individual satellite users.
 - Over 500 Radio affiliates world wide
 - 80% + original Catholic programming,
- d. Mission: bring the Eternal Word of Jesus Christ to all
- e. Talk shows, children's animation, exclusive teaching series, live coverage of Church events, thought-provoking documentaries
- f. Started out in the garage on Monastery property
 - Soon after founding Monastery, Mother received requests for speaking engagements

- That led to a TV series at a local TV station in Birmingham, AL.
 - Built her own TV studio
 - Today, it's a state-of-the-art audiovisual complex, with radio, TV and publishing
 - Runs on donations.
- g. Thousands visit EWTN each year & the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Hanceville, AL)

VII. Radio reality

- a) The Lord spoke to Mother one night: "Angelica, I've trusted you with the small things; now I want you to do something big."
- b) Mother told Deacon Bill: "The best thing to do is to go to Italy."
- c) Deacon: "why do that?"
- d) Mother: "That's where all the languages are. Don't you need languages in shortwave?"
- e) Deacon: "I don't know anything about shortwave, let along languages."
- f) Mother: "We've got to go to Rome tomorrow."
- g) Jan. 28, 1989 Mother, Deacon and Sisters Michael and Regina arrive in Rome. No appointments, no plans... only a scheduled meeting in Holland later in the week with a millionaire Deacon Bill hoped could finance the radio adventure.
- h) Dutch Catholic millionaire and philanthropist Piet Derksen canceled their scheduled meeting in Holland and instead flew to Rome to meet Mother on Feb. 1, 1989.

- i) Derksen said: “my wealth has been like a stone around my neck. I’m glad to get rid of it.”
- j) Derksen –What do you need?
- k) Mother –Maybe 2 million dollars.
- l) Derksen-I’ll get it for you.
- m) Where to put the shortwave station? On a mountaintop one hour outside of Birmingham.
- n) Mother visited the summit of the mountain, and hopped off the car: “here, right here. Do you see St. Michael up there?”
- o) She saw a handsome, strong, manly-looking, 6-foot tall warrior atop the mountain.
- p) Nobody else could see anything.
- q) Mother insisted: “Well, I do and we’re buying it.”
- r) Dec. 28, 1992: After incredible obstacles, Mother and the Derksens sent out the first shortwave signal around the world.
- s) England, Russia, Japan, India and other countries soon confirmed reception of the signal.
- t) Initially, the shortwave network broadcasted Scripture, catechesis and devotions in 26 languages.
- u) Today it airs 24/7/365 full-strength programming in English and Spanish, via more than 330 FM and AM affiliates across the U.S. and over 500 affiliates around the world, plus shortwave, satellite radio and the internet.



VIII. Publications about/by Mother Angelica

- a. 57 mini-books about practical aspects of life, faith, prayer and community
- b. Living Prayer. By: Mother Angelica (1985)
- c. Mother Angelica’s Answers, Not Promises. By: Mother Angelica, Christine Allison (1987, 1991, 1996)
- d. Mother Angelica Her Life Story. By: Dan O’Neill (1992)
- e. Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles. By: Raymond Arroyo (2005)
- f. Mother Angelica’s Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality. Editor: Raymond Arroyo (2007)
- g. Mother Angelica's Private and Pithy Lessons from the Scriptures. By: Mother Angelica and Raymond Arroyo (2008)
- h. The Prayers and Personal Devotions of Mother Angelica. By: Mother M. Angelica. Editor: Raymond Arroyo (2010)



IX. Awards

- a. **Honorary doctorate, Ave Maria School of Law / May, 15 2010**
- b. **Abbess Emerita for Life, Oct. 15, 2009—Feast of St. Teresa of Avila**
 - For her long, devoted guidance of the Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration at Our Lady of the Angels Monastery
 - Appointed by: Holy See to Mother Angelica
 - Presented by: Bishop Robert Baker, Diocese of Birmingham, AL
- c. **Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, Oct. 4, 2009—Feast of St. Francis**
 - Cross of Honor for distinguished service to the Church and Pope, in recognition for founding EWTN.
 - Highest honor Pope can bestow upon laity & religious.
 - Awarded by Pope Benedict XVI to:
 1. Mother Angelica
 2. Deacon Bill Steltemeier, Chairman EWTN's Board of Governors
 - Presented by: Bishop Robert Baker, Birmingham, AL
- d. **“Arguably the Most influential Roman Catholic woman in America” / Aug. 7, 1995**
 - Feature in Time Magazine
- e. **John Paul II Religious Freedom Award / May, 1983**
 - From the Catholic League
- f. **Honorary Doctorate in Theology / May 7, 1983**
 - Franciscan University in Steubenville, OH
- g. **Italian-American Woman of the Year, 1983**
 - Presented in New Orleans