

# Sister Mary Trinitas Papers

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## *Finding Aid*

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**Providence** ARCHIVES

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## OVERVIEW OF RECORDS

**Repository:** Providence Archives, Mother Joseph Province, Seattle, Washington

**Creator:** Sister Mary Trinitas, SP

**Record Group Name:** Sister Mary Trinitas Papers

**Record Group Number:** SP3539

**Dates:** 1947-2016

**Scope and Content:** Contains the personal papers of Sister Mary Trinitas, SP, a noted artist. The papers include correspondence, sketches, and notes, most probably from her time as a faculty member at the College of Great Falls, Great Falls, Montana. Also contains material compiled after her death by St. Ignatius Province Archives including biographical information and descriptions of her art works, exhibits, and memorial efforts such as Galerie Trinitas on the College of Great Falls campus.

**Extent:** .42 linear feet (1 box)

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sister Mary Trinitas (3539)<sup>1</sup> was born Rosalba Marie Morin on June 18, 1908 in Crookston, Minnesota. The daughter of Fred and Rose Morin, she had seven siblings. The family moved to Montana when Rosalba was two years old, and she grew up in Missoula, attending the Sisters of Providence school Sacred Heart Academy. Her father owned a lumber yard, and Rosalba learned about working with wood from watching her brothers. She learned to draw and to sew as a child. After graduation from high school, Rosalba entered nursing school at the Sisters of Providence hospital in Missoula, St. Patrick Hospital. After a few months of school, however, in November 1927 she entered the Sisters of Providence novitiate in Seattle, Wash. She made first vows in November 1929 and final vows in November 1932. Her name in religion was Mary Trinitas, although she is sometimes referred to as Sister Trinitas.

Sr. Mary Trinitas' first work assignments were in Sisters of Providence schools, teaching art and other subjects. She taught at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, Wallace, Ida, and at St. Joseph Academy, Sprague, Wash. In 1933, Sr. Mary Trinitas was assigned to return to Montana, where she taught at the College of Great Falls (CGF) Normal School (a teacher training program of the college) in Great Falls, and at her alma mater, Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula. In 1936, Sr. Mary Trinitas returned to teach at the College of Great Falls where she taught art for almost 33 years, chairing the art department from 1961 until her death in 1965. In the summer of 1962, Sr. Mary Trinitas also taught three art courses at the Sisters of Providence College of Sister Formation in Issaquah, Wash., which at that time was at the forefront of inter-community education for women religious.

Like many Sisters of Providence of the time, Sr. Mary Trinitas earned her Bachelor's degree during multiple terms of summer school. Her undergraduate studies were completed at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore., the University of Washington, Seattle, Wash., and St. Catherine's College, St. Paul, Minn. She finally received her diploma in 1940. Subsequently, in 1945, she studied at the Chicago Art Institute for a year. In 1952, she received her Master's degree from Catholic University, Washington, D.C. While her diplomas proved her academic credentials, her art in a variety of media demonstrated her success in learning new techniques from other artists and craftspeople in non-academic settings. Her art does not fit neatly into one style or medium, although the majority of her work is within the category of religious art. Sr. Mary Trinitas learned to

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<sup>1</sup> Any reference to a Sister will be indicated with the placement of "Sister" or "Mother" before her name. Unless otherwise indicated, these Sisters can be assumed to be Sisters of Providence. Men and women religious who are members of other religious communities are identified by the initials of that community. Sisters of Providence each receive an identifying number upon professing their first vows; this number is indicated in parentheses after each Sister's name.

weave, to weld, and to make stained glass. Her art included calligraphy, painting in oil and watercolor, works in metal and wood, and ceramics.

While at CGF, Sr. Mary Trinitas designed and implemented much of the college chapel's sacred art, including the body of Christ on the crucifix above the altar, the Stations of the Cross, and the stained glass windows. Other sacred art on campus by Sr. Mary Trinitas includes the Via Matris stained glass panels, originally placed between the convent and the chapel so the sisters could participate in the Marian devotion as they moved from their place of residence to their place of worship. Collaboration with other sisters or with her students was an integral part of much of her work at CGF. In addition to large works of art installed at the college, Sr. Mary Trinitas also created smaller pieces such as chalices for the Sisters of Providence and others. Notably, she designed the *Manus Dei* medal awarded by CGF to recipients who exemplified service to the Catholic faith and to the College of Great Falls.

Severe arthritis posed an impediment to Sr. Mary Trinitas' quality of life and to creation of her art for about thirteen years at the end of her life. During the early 1960s, Sr. Mary Trinitas was increasingly held back by arthritis and other conditions, although she remained as driven as ever to begin and finish new art projects. She continued to teach as her health allowed, and was given lighter work as the CGF sacristan. Sr. Mary Trinitas died on July 24, 1965, at the age of 57.

Sr. Mary Trinitas left a rich legacy of art, much of which remains at the College of Great Falls, now called the University of Providence. In 1979, Dorothy Thornby initiated a project at CGF to organize and display the work of Sr. Mary Trinitas. For more than a decade, the CGF Guild worked to create an art gallery on campus to celebrate her work and that of other artists. The gallery eventually opened in October 1994, and was christened Galerie Trinitas. In 2019, as a part of campus renovations and construction of new buildings, a space in the new student center building was created for the Galerie Trinitas. The new gallery is set to open in the fall of 2019.

## ARRANGEMENT

The record group is divided into four series: Biographical Information, Correspondence and Speeches, Notes and Sketches, and Subjects.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Restrictions:** Providence Archives is a private repository. Access to some records is closed or limited.

**Preferred Citation:** [Title of cited item]. [Series Name]. Sister Mary Trinitas Papers. SP3539. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

**Acquisition Information:** Records were transferred to Providence Archives, Seattle from the St. Ignatius Province Archives, Spokane after St. Ignatius Province merged with Sacred Heart Province creating a new province, Mother Joseph Province, in 2000.

**Related Record Groups and Other Collections:** Sister Personnel files include biographical information about Sr. Mary Trinitas. The records of the University of Providence (record group 190) contain news clippings and other biographical information about Sr. Mary Trinitas.

In addition to the paper records, Providence Archives holds a photograph collection and artifact collection.

Outside the repository, see art and records held by Galerie Trinitas, the University of Providence art gallery named in memory of the sister.

**Processing Information:** Records arranged and described by Elizabeth Russell, Associate Archivist; completed in May 2019. Photographs separated to the Sr. Mary Trinitas photograph collection in 2019.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### Biographical Information

Much of this information was compiled after Sr. Mary Trinitas' death.

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	Eulogy given at funeral Mass by Rev. Robert Fox, PhD, 1965
	2	"Life Sketch of Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, FCSP" by Sr. Providencia Tolan, 1965
	3	Various biographical articles and information, 1959-

### Correspondence and Speeches

Correspondence only contains a few letters, including a letter from St. Ignatius Province provincial superior Sr. Flora Mary (2977) about engraving of a chalice in 1962. The series also contains written remarks for either speeches or class lectures, all undated. One is identified as a speech to the Great Falls Soroptimist Club.

Box	Folder	Title
1	4	Correspondence, 1947-1962
	5	Speeches, undated

### Notes and Sketches

This series reveals some of Sr. Mary Trinitas' working process. It contains notebooks of practical notes for design and construction of items such as chalices, as well as quotes, pricing and art supply information, and images and articles used for reference. Images presumably collected by Sr. Mary Trinitas for reference or inspiration include colorful drawings in pencil and watercolor of ballet costumes by P. Rizzi, stamped with *Giovanni Pogna choreografeo* and thus probably connected with ballet productions of choreographer Giovanni Pogna, who worked in Trieste, Italy in the late 1800s. Found in the same folder were reproductions of etchings by Ludovico Mattioli, an Italian artist who lived 1662-1747. It is unclear how these works by European artists came into Sr. Mary Trinitas' hands.

Box	Folder	Title
1	6	Notebook labeled "Metal Designs and Ideas" (with sketches tucked into notebook), undated
	7	Notebook labeled "My 'Memory' Book," undated
	8	Notebook labeled "Chalices & Metal Work," circa 1962
	9	Address book containing addresses and notes, undated
	10	Reference images and articles from magazines
	11	Smith Welding Equipment Corporation poster "Oxy-Acetylene Flame Traits," undated
	12	68 theatrical costume drawings by P. Rizzi, circa 1880s
	13	Booklet of five reproductions of etchings by Ludovico Mattioli, undated
	14	Page of handwritten sheet music entitled "Holy Name of Jesus," undated

### Subjects

This series includes mainly news clippings on different topics connected to Sr. Mary Trinitas' life

and art.

Box	Folder	Title
1	15	Art works, general, 1956-2006
	16	Exhibits (not at University of Providence), 1989, 1997
	17	Galerie Trinitas at University of Providence, 1978-2016
	18	Stained glass works, 1952-1986
	19	Students, undated
	20	Teaching, 1952-1963
	21	Trinitas Chapel at University of Providence, 1960-2002