

MOTHER CECILIA SCHMITT

August 24, 1965

Dear Sisters,

Mother Cecilia, our second Mother General, was laid to rest at Victory Noll this morning after a Requiem High Mass offered at 10:30 by Monsignor Conroy. Among those present were members of Mother Cecilia's family, our Sisters from all the surrounding missions, Monsignor Crowley, Monsignor Reed and several other priests. The Capuchin Novices helped us sing the Mass.

Only a month has passed since you received the notice that Mother's strength was decreasing, but during that time, Mother Cecilia endured great pain with serene patience. She was bedfast only since August 11 and was able to receive Holy Communion until August 16. After that day, neither food nor water could be taken, and speech was difficult. Mother seemed to be in a coma the last two days of her life. Sister Juliana was with her constantly, and Sister Cletus, PHJC, was here from August 10 to August 13. Bishop Pursley visited with Mother on August 5.

On August 13 she was anointed for the second time by Monsignor Conroy. Bishop Fernandez of Kerala, India, visited Mother on August 14. On the evening of this day the Sisters began to keep watch with Mother during the night. On August 20, the eve of her death, Mother Florentine led the Sisters in prayer at her bedside. Later, Father Hilary, O.F.M. Cap., came to pray there, and still later in the same evening, Monsignor Crowley gave the last blessings and prayed with the Sisters in Mother's room.

At noon on Saturday, August 21, it became evident that death was near. At 5:10 P.M., Mother Cecilia went to God while the Sisters around her bed were praying the prayers for the dying. So easily did she leave this world that it was hard to tell when she actually stopped breathing.

Mother Cecilia was born on May 12, 1904 and entered the Congregation from St. Louis on November 1, 1927. Her first vows were pronounced on March 25, 1930, at Victory Mount, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Of her early missionary years, five were spent in New Mexico, six in California, and one in Gary. She was local superior in Gary and during the four years she spent in Azusa. In 1941 she was appointed Mistress of Postulants and in 1947 she was elected Vicar General. She became Superior General in 1950 and was reelected to that office in 1956. It is interesting to note that Mother Cecilia was present at each of the six General Chapters of the Congregation, twice as an elected delegate, and four times as an officer. She was appointed superior in Clewiston (later Belle Glade) Florida in 1962. After coming to Victory Noll in the summer of 1964, Mother was appointed superior in Durant, Okla., but she remained at Victory Noll until God called her home.

Countless Masses and prayers have been offered for Mother Cecilia. The twenty Masses prescribed by our Constitutions are being offered here by Monsignor Conroy and Monsignor Crowley. Mother's body was brought to Victory Noll at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, August 22, and constant vigil was kept at her side, day and night, until time for the funeral Mass.

Mother Cecilia's patience and courage during her long illness (first signs of it were discovered in 1955) has been a source of edification to all of us, and we rejoice now at her triumph. Surely her prayers for us will be that we may pursue as relentlessly our ideal of sanctity -- the single purpose of attaining with Jesus through Mary to eternal union with God. The model of Mother's holy life and death can give us new courage and strength in our daily efforts toward this end.

May she now enjoy the reward of her labors and may she be a powerful advocate for the Congregation she served so well.

Sister Margaret Ann, General Secretary