



August 28, 1992

Dear Sisters and Associates,

"Happy are those who die in the Lord ... their good works accompany them." With this quotation from Revelations Father Fahey commenced his homily at the funeral liturgy for Sister Marie Wilbers.

Sister Marie's death was the final phase of a condition diagnosed as organic brain syndrome. This degenerative disease gradually caused Sister to be unable to communicate. She also began to require total care. However, Sister was able to assist at daily Mass and receive the Eucharist.

On Wednesday, August 26, Sister could not be awakened in the early morning. She remained unresponsive through the day, though she did not appear to be suffering. Sisters stayed at her bedside during this time. At 3:30 p.m. the Community joined in the prayers for the dying, and Sister Marie slipped peacefully away.

Sister Marie was the youngest member of her family, which included two sisters and two brothers. Sister Louise Wilbers, a Victory Noll Sister and the eldest in the family, preceded Sister in death. It was on a farm near Jefferson City, Missouri that the Sisters spent their early years. Sister Marie often spoke of these years as a very happy time of life for her.

Visits to New Mexico, where Sister Louise was missioned, apparently contributed to Sister Marie's decision to enter Victory Noll. As a Postulant, Sister Marie shared her observations of the work being done by Sister Louise and the other Sisters. Sister Marie spoke with such enthusiasm that the other members of the class caught her spirit and they, too, were eager to begin their ministry.

Sister Marie made first profession of vows as a member of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in 1941. Religious Education was to be her primary ministry during the next forty years. Sister was missioned to various midwestern and western states, notably Arizona and California where she spent many years. Recently a priest with whom Sister Marie had worked inquired about her. He went on to remark about Sister Marie's exceptional ability to teach Confirmation classes.

In 1981 Sister returned to Victory Noll to retire. Until 1988 she resided in Sacred Heart Building where she faithfully fulfilled many household duties. When she moved to Holy Family Building she was experiencing much confusion. Arthritis added to her distress.

At the Wake Service on Thursday evening the terms "joyful", "zealous", "enthusiastic", even "exuberant" were used to describe Sister by those who were closest to her. Qualities, certainly, that reflect the grace of God. Sister's brother, Clarence, sister-in-law, Mabel, and their son, Morris, all of Jefferson City were present. They commented on Sister's love for children, and also her love of music. She delighted in playing the piano to accompany group singing. Until recently Sister could be persuaded to play occasionally for the Sisters at Holy Family.

Sister Janet Thill led the prayers at the Wake Service and she quoted a few lines from Sister Marie's writings:

"Lord, bless my sleep. Let me be refreshed in Your strength, and then wake me when the light comes."

"To be a true follower of Christ we must submit to God's will in all the happenings of life, lucky or unlucky, happy or unhappy, in sorrow and in joy, in failure and success, in life as in death."

At the Funeral Liturgy Father Fahey went on to comment that, just as Matthew heard the call of Christ to follow Him, so Sister Marie heard His call and followed Him. She travelled the high road and her life must have produced much fruit. Father continued with the thought that each of us is an instrument in God's hands, and this should give us joy.

We extend our sympathies to the Wilbers family. May Sister Marie enjoy for all eternity the happiness Our Lord has promised to those who love Him. May she intercede for us.

In the peace and joy of Christ,

Sister Elizabeth Ann Evans, OLVN