



SISTER MARY EDNA BUTLER, OLVM

Sister Mary Edna Butler passed away on Wednesday, January 30, 2013, at the Holy Family Health Care Center, Victory Noll. She was born in Louisville, Kent., on April 21, 1919 to James Butler and Mary Alberta Schwab Butler. She was baptized as Edna Constance on April 21, 1919 in the church of Our Lady, in Louisville. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, James Martin Butler and two sisters, Louise Camp and Mary Elizabeth Fournie. She is survived by one sister, Alberta Long of Creve Coeur, Missouri, nieces and nephews and their children.

Sr. Mary Edna entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 30, 1940 and made first vows on August 5, 1943. She served her first 12 years in the missions in California. She then had missions in New Mexico, Indiana, Missouri, Texas and Florida before going to Oruro, Bolivia in 1970. She remained there for 36 years before she retired in 2006 and returned to Victory Noll.

Sr. Mary Edna earned a Bachelors of Arts degree from Mount Joseph College in Ohio and a Masters of Arts in Religious Education from the Catholic University of America. She taught religious education and then worked in the Archdiocese of Miami office of Religious Education as well as the Diocesan CCD offices for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Mo., and the Diocese of El Paso, Tex.

Once she moved to Bolivia, Sr. Mary Edna took on the challenge of training teachers for religion classes taught in the public schools. Using her connection with the Catholic University of America, she collaborated with CUA to have an extension school in Oruro. Visiting scripture, theology, church history and liturgy professors taught these classes. She dedicated many years to teaching at various grade levels, which included hours of preparation, classroom instruction and then more hours for grading exams.

A true missionary, Sr. Mary Edna shared her faith, expertise and love in Oruro for many years. "I was in prison and you came to see me," were the words of Jesus Sr. Mary Edna took to heart and lived. She ministered at the San Pedro jail by listening with her heart and counseling the prisoners. The prison had many prisoners, many of them innocent, who waited years for a trial date. Sister worked to develop a Pastoral Care Team, mostly lawyers, to assist prisoners in a variety of ways. At one point Sr. Mary Edna said, "Whenever anyone was declared innocent, all the footwork, all the phone calls, and all the difficulties were worth it."

Sr. Mary Edna devoted a great deal of energy and creativity in the prison and religious education areas to share her zest to help the oppressed, because of her deep faith. Sister Mary Edna was deeply respected for her work in Bolivia. I have learned

that there were several memorial masses said for her in Oruro. One that is especially touching is the one for her at the prison where she worked.

Sr. Mary Edna's sister, Alberta Long, along with several of her children and grandchildren were able to join the community for the wake and funeral. The wake took place on Monday evening, February 4, 2013. After the service in the chapel the family and sisters continued to share stories about Sr. Mary Edna.

Sr. Betty Lorenz, Sr. Mary Edna's classmate, had many stories stretching from their time in novitiate, where Sr. Mary Edna's younger sister, Alberta, entertained them with song and dance, to being together in Wagon Mound, N.M. and then both retiring to Victory Noll.

Sr. Rose Zita Rosonke and Sr. Mary Helen Rogers both shared beautiful stories about how Sr. Mary Edna had been a very integral part of their coming to Victory Noll. Sr. Mary Helen and Sr. Mary Edna also shared a love for the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team.

Father Thomas Fahey presided and preached at the funeral mass which took place on Tuesday February 5, 2013. The family members took an active role in the liturgy. Sean Long, her grand-nephew, laid the pall and his uncle, Martin Long, placed the cross on the casket at the beginning of the mass. Michael Long, her nephew, did the reading. Clair and Kelsey Long, her grand-nieces, and Sean Long brought forth the gifts during preparation.

Fr. Fahey in his homily tied the readings from Hebrews and Matthew together by talking about faith and presence. "The world (secular society) lives by sight; we believers live by faith. Sr. Mary Edna was a believer. She was full of faith. She believed that she had that commission and the promise of the Christ's Presence." This idea of presence is found in the last paragraph of Matthew's Gospel, "Remember, I am with you to the end of the world."

Sr. Mary Edna, we rejoice with you and pray that you are now enjoying the freedom and glory of standing in the eternal presence of God.

In the Peace of Christ,



Sr. Ginger Downey, OLM



Stained glass San Pio
Oruro, Bolivia