

July 30, 2007

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,



SISTER MARIE SCHENE retired from active ministry in 1993 and returned to Victory Noll. She was part of the pastoral care team until her health began to fail. When her memory loss became more serious, she moved to third floor of Holy Family Health Care Center to receive skilled nursing care. She also benefited from activities offered in Camilla Center, our memory care center, until she was no longer able to respond. When she became bedridden and the end was near, our sisters kept vigil at her side until God called her home at noon on Saturday, July 21st. She was 90 years old.

Marie was born in Jennings, MO on November 10, 1916 to Ignatius Schene and Anna Marie Scheiperpeter Schene. She had three brothers, Herbert (who died at age 7), Virgil and Leonard as well as three sisters, Virginia Farishon, Sr. Margaret Schene, OSU and Agnes Schermann. Her sister, Virginia is still living.

Marie attended school in St. Louis: St. Catherine of Siena Grade School for eight years and St. Alphonsus High School for two years. The subjects she liked best were Religion, Algebra and English (Public Speaking). Like so many young people during the Depression, she left school to go to work to help her family. She did light factory work, office work and after special training, became a comptometer operator. (She said she was good at "figures.") She was also very active in the Legion of Mary, where her missionary spirit took root. Her father died in 1940 and Marie continued working to help her family.

In November, 1948, when she was 32 years old, Marie applied to enter Victory Noll and was accepted on January 31, 1949. She was part of a group of over twenty-five young women who prayed, studied to prepare themselves for missionary life and had fun at the same time. It is told that Marie, even though she was a little older, joined right in with the activities, jokes and laughter. Marie entered the novitiate in August of that year and received her religious name, Jacinta (the name of one of the children who saw the Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima). On August 5, 1951 she pronounced her first vows.

Then her busy missionary life began. From 1951-1967, she worked in our missions in Texas: Brady, Big Spring, San Antonio, El Paso, Abilene, New Braunfels (where she was appointed local superior) and San Antonio. During the school year, she taught religion on all levels and did home visiting. During the summers, she was assigned to various towns in Texas for summer school. In 1967, Marie was missioned to Elko, NV where she worked for three years and also served as local superior. In every place where Marie was stationed, we are told that she brought much joy.

Marie wrote to our General Secretary in 1967: "I would like your opinion on taking the GED testing for high school equivalency. I am not a scholar but would like to do whatever I can to improve myself in order to be of more use." What that wish entailed was several years of study! She had already taken many courses at Victory Noll Junior College as well as courses at other places during the summers. Now, it was time to work towards a degree. First, she got her GED in Texas. Then, in 1970, when she was 54 years old, she began to study full time at Brescia College in Owensboro, KY and received her BS degree in Sociology and Psychology in 1972.

After graduating, Marie was asked to work in the kitchen at Victory Noll. That was a big change! Maybe it helped Marie get her feet on the ground again. Or perhaps she needed a break from books. We don't know. We did hear that she enjoyed cooking and was good at it. She worked in the kitchen for two years. When she was assigned to Powell, WY in 1974, she wrote back saying how she missed everyone at Victory Noll. Studying, however, was still in her blood, so for seven summers in a row, she attended the Pastoral Institute in San Antonio. She earned an MA degree in Religious Studies from Incarnate Word College.

Marie's next mission assignment brought her to Brigham City, UT (1976) where she did pastoral ministry as well as religious education. In 1979, she was assigned to East Chicago, IN. In 1981 she was missioned to Salt Lake City, UT and then to Provo, UT (1983). Part of her ministry there was working at a correctional school. Marie had a real heart for the poor and her joyful spirit carried her through the rough spots.

In 1988, Marie was again asked to serve at Victory Noll, this time as sacristan and receptionist. She did this ministry for two years. She then returned to East Chicago where she did pastoral ministry on a part-time basis. By this time she was 74 years old. This did not stop her from enrolling in a clowning school, along with a group of young people from the parish. When she finished the course, she was officially known as "Smiley." Her gift of humor and cheerfulness had found a new expression: clowning.

In 1993, it was time to retire. She returned to Victory Noll and was an active member of the pastoral care team, visiting our elderly and infirm sisters. She was also in charge of our guest rooms to make sure they were ready for visitors. In between, her mental curiosity continued to be active. She took Hospice training, received a certificate for Pastoral Care and attended various workshops at Lutheran Hospital and Parkview Hospital in Ft. Wayne. She gave of herself generously and served her God faithfully until the end.

We laid Marie to rest on Wednesday, July 25th. Members of her family who were able to come for the funeral were three children of her sister, Virginia: Tom Farishon and his wife Donna, Jane Farroll and Mary Ann Immekus; Don Schene, son of her brother Leonard and Ann Schermann, daughter of her sister, Agnes.

For her funeral, Marie selected a reading from the Letter to the Ephesians: "God chose us in Christ before the world was made!" The second reading was from the Beatitudes according to Matthew: "Fortunate, blessed, happy are we!" The readings showed Marie's joyful spirit, truly a reflection of the joy of God. The joy that she lived here on earth has now been transformed in eternity. The quote she chose for her memorial card says it beautifully:

*As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
so shall your God rejoice in you. (Is. 2:5b)*

Sincerely in Christ,

Sr. Melanie

Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVN
General Secretary