

October 14, 2004

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates and Friends,



Sr. Mary Barbara Desch was called by God into eternal life on September 29, 2004. She was 82 years old and had been a Victory Noll sister for sixty-one years. After ten years of patient suffering, she has entered the fullness of life with all of God's holy ones.

Mary Barbara was born in Topeka, Kansas on May 6, 1922 to Jacob and Barbara Stadler Desch. She was one of six children. Three brothers preceded her in death, Sylvester, Lawrence and Vincent. She is survived by a sister, Matilda (Tillie) Esser and a brother, Joseph Desch, both of Topeka.

Mary Barbara attended grade school and high school in Topeka. While in high school she became a member of "Quill and Scroll," an international honorary society for high school journalists. She must have had a great interest in writing and excelled in it. After graduating from high school Mary Barbara did office work at Woolworth Co. She entered Victory Noll on October 28, 1943 at the age of twenty-one. As a postulant and novice, she studied Christian Doctrine, Psychology, Liturgy, Spanish, Ascetical Theology, Music, Catechetics and many other subjects, all in preparation for her missionary work. She made her first vows on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

Her first mission assignment was San Pedro, California. She and one of her classmates traveled together by train to California. They shared the upper berth for the long trip and slept one with her head at one end and the other with her head at the other end. They could hardly move it was so cramped. But they were young, going to their first mission and ready for any adventure.

Mary Barbara worked in San Pedro for two years. Then she was transferred to Santa Paula and later to Los Angeles. After that, she was asked to be the superior in Ogden, Utah where she served until 1962. She took a year off for full time study and earned a Degree in Philosophy. In 1963 she was appointed superior in Salt Lake City, Utah where she served until 1968. She was known for her kindness, wisdom and joyful spirit. Many young sisters were assigned to her house so that they could get a good start in their missionary lives. They still remember her with fondness.

Her other missionary assignments were Montrose, CO, Willows, CA, Las Vegas, NM, Pharr, TX and Apache Junction, AZ. Over the years, she continued her studies and earned her Masters in Religious Education in 1973 from St. Thomas University in Houston. Much of that study was done during the summer months, in-between mission assignments. Her family said that they got to know the United States because they went to visit her in each mission where she served.

Throughout her missionary life, Mary Barbara loved to be with people. She was a good teacher and taught children of all ages. She was also director of religious education in parishes and on the diocesan level. She trained religious education teachers and worked with parents in preparation for the sacraments. Her special joy was teaching Sacred Scripture.

Mary Barbara knew how to celebrate life. She welcomed sisters who were passing through on their way to their missions. She made everyone feel at home. She would plan picnics and outings. She often would turn off the main road to explore unknown areas and see what could be discovered. She loved music and was good at dancing the polka. That's what she did on the day of her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The young sisters in the house rolled back the carpet and helped her overcome the trauma of turning fifty.

In 1987 because of failing health, Mary Barbara returned to Victory Noll. She worked in the laundry and did household duties as much as she could. She kept the promise she made when she entered: "Are you willing to do kitchen, laundry or any kind of work?" She had answered "yes." "Are you willing to go wherever you are sent?" She answered "yes" to that, also. In 1994 she moved to our Holy Family Health Care Center as a patient and lived there until her death.

In her personal file is the letter of recommendation written by her pastor in 1943: "I can say nothing but good of her. If the religious life is her vocation, she will make good as a catechist – as she would in any other calling." Sister Mary Barbara truly lived up to this praise.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. The family members present were her sister, Tillie and Tillie's daughter, Annetta, her brother Joe and his wife Joanie. It was a beautiful fall day when we laid her remains to rest here at Victory Noll. Her many years of suffering were over. She was truly a gift to our congregation. She was a woman of love, of joy and of faithfulness. We will always remember her.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sr. Melanie*

Sr. Melanie Persche  
General Secretary