

June 14, 2010

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family, and Friends,

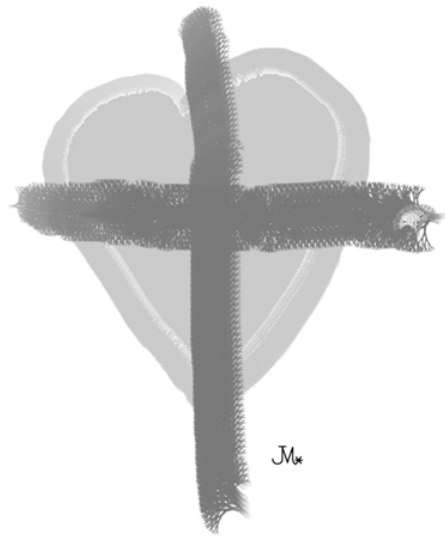
Sister Catherine Johnson died peacefully at 5:45 P.M. on Friday June 4, 2010, at Holy Family Health Care Center at Victory Noll. Sister Ann Shirley Kelly was with Catherine when God called her home. Sister Catherine had fallen in the early morning of April 27th after having had a nice birthday celebration the day before. Because of the fall, Catherine had hip surgery and although the surgery was successful, she did not rally as was hoped. She returned home to Victory Noll and expressed gratitude for the sisters' visits and prayers. Gradually Catherine declined and was kept comfortable on Hospice. During her last week sisters kept quiet vigil at her bedside, and her sister Mary came to spend time with Catherine.

Sister Catherine was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on April 26, 1924 to Martin Johnson and Clara Stansbury Johnson. She had three siblings, one older sister Margaret Passino, and two younger sisters Mary Ellen Zenk, and Elaine Rairden. Sister Catherine was preceded in death by her older sister Margaret Passino.

Sister Catherine entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on January 31, 1943. She made her first Profession of Vows on August 5, 1945, and Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1951 at Victory Noll. Catherine served in the Missions of California, Texas, Michigan, Missouri, and Kansas.

Sister Catherine pursued her college education and received a BA Degree in History from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, and a MA Degree in Religious Education from Fordham College in New York. Later Catherine became a certified member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, and completed an Advanced Clinical Pastoral Education Program at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kansas. Sister Catherine was also certified as a Catholic Chaplain at St. Joseph's Medical Center, Wichita.

After many years in California, ministering in many Parishes as a Catechist and directing the Parish Religious Education Programs, Catherine was missioned for a short time in Texas and Michigan where she continued serving in Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. In the 70s, Sister Catherine moved to Kansas where she ministered as a Pastoral Assistant at Blessed Sacrament Parish. After a few years Sister Catherine's ministry took a unique turn. At this time in history Catherine became a pacesetter for ecumenism. Sister Catherine's desire to become more involved ecumenically was realized when she participated in the Advanced Clinical Pastoral Education course at the Village Presbyterian Church. She had already completed basic training in CPE at Osawatomie State Hospital in Kansas. After completing this advance course, she became a Staff Person at the Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas. Her title was Ecumenical Associate in Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Ministry. While being



faithful to her own tradition she became aware of the value of witnessing in an interfaith setting. Catherine said, "I believe ecumenism needs to be the rule rather than the exception. It should be a continuous education to change attitudes, eliminate prejudices, and help people to work together for peace and justice. I have been enriched by listening to the faith experiences of other Christians, I have come to realize that we are more truly united than divided." Sister Catherine's primary responsibilities were in the area of pastoral care and counseling. She counseled individuals and groups in need of understanding and a listening heart. Her favorite venture was an Inter-Faith Sharing Group. She facilitated dialog and counseled couples joined in marriage but sharing different religious faith traditions, one partner in the marriage was Catholic, the other Presbyterian. Through her guidance she helped them better understand and respect their differences while blending their common beliefs. Peace, acceptance and reverence for one's own and the spouse's faith life were the common experience of the couples attending the sessions. At the time Catherine was completing her ministry at the Village Church, the church family said, "Sister Catherine Johnson is much loved and appreciated. Her beautiful piety, sensitive caring, mature wisdom and genuine sincerity have made her ministry among us something beyond words can tell. We hold her in highest esteem. Would that every Roman Catholic and Protestant Parish could have a Sister Catherine in their midst."

In 1982, Sister Catherine asked for a sabbatical for spiritual renewal, education, and to discern her next ministry. She spent three months in Europe and saw herself as a Pilgrim as she traveled to the great Shrines and Churches throughout several countries. It was a profoundly enriching and spiritual experience for her. After her sabbatical, Sister Catherine began her ministry of Chaplain at St. Joseph's Medical Center, Wichita, Kansas. Here she would use her gifts to bring comfort and spiritual solace to the patients, always keeping Ecumenism at heart.

In February 2001, Catherine retired and lived in Alpine, Ca. and did some volunteer work with Sister Millicent Peaslee. In 2008, after 60 years of faithful service to God and God's people in the Missions, Catherine retired to Victory Noll.

At the Vigil on Wednesday evening, sisters and family shared their memories of Sister Catherine. Catherine's nephew Michael Passino shared that when he was a little boy, and Sister was on a home visit at his Grandmother's house, he was amazed when he saw Catherine ironing her Habit, how many pieces there were to it and how large it seemed. Later when he heard that Sister Catherine was missioned to California, he had a picture of her in his mind in that heavy, long Habit in the heat of Southern California. Sister Mary Jo Nelson shared that while she was on the Team, she visited Catherine in California. Catherine shared with her that quiet and contemplation were becoming ever more meaningful in her daily life. Their conversation was special to Mary Jo. Now Catherine's quest is over and she sees God face to face, was Mary Jo's closing thought. Sister Fidelis shared a humorous incident. Catherine had picked Fidelis up at her mission to give her a ride home. Catherine told Fidelis that she wanted to stop at a family's home for a short visit. Fidelis said she would wait in the car. Catherine had parked on a hill, and Fidelis did not drive at that time. The car started to roll down the hill. Fidelis, shocked and frightened, knew she had to find the brake. Meanwhile the car was on a downward path toward the bottom of the hill, and by God's grace no other car was in its path. Fidelis found the brake and stopped the car. When she stepped out of the car she saw Catherine at the top of the hill looking for

Fidelis and the car. Sister Rita shared that she was probably the last one to talk with Catherine prior to her fall. On Catherine's birthday, Rita went to her room rather late in the evening with birthday greetings. Catherine, though already in bed, heard Rita and invited her in. They were able to share some quality time and meaningful conversation. Rita was grateful that she had knocked gently on the door.

On Thursday, June 10, 2010, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Members of Sister Catherine's family were present, her sisters Elaine Rairden from Vallejo, Ca. and Mary Zenk from Cincinnati, Ohio, Mary's son's Jim Zenk, Richard Zenk, and John Zenk and his fiancée Aimee, Mary's daughter Catherine Healey and her daughters Shannon and Kerry. Also present was Catherine's deceased sister Margaret's son Michael Passino, his wife Debbie and their sons Andrew and Juan. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Mary and Elaine placed the Pall and the Crucifix on the casket. Michael Passino was the Lector, and Jim Zenk prayed the Intercessions. Niece Catherine, who is Sister Catherine's namesake, and her daughters Shannon and Kerry presented the Gifts. The Gospel chosen for the Mass was John 14: 1-6. Father Fahey in his homily pointed out the beautiful promises of God contained in this Gospel. Jesus has a place for each of us in the heavenly realm, and will return to take us there to be with God forever. It is by our fidelity to Jesus that we are assured of eternal life. Father said that Catherine remained faithful to Jesus her Savior and Jesus has taken her to be with Him, and to see Him face to face.

After mass we processed to the cemetery, where we laid Catherine to rest with the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn to Mary, "Tu Eres La Victoria". A delicious dinner to celebrate Catherine's life followed.

We rejoice with you Catherine as you begin your new life with Jesus in the Dwelling Place that God has prepared for you from all eternity.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary