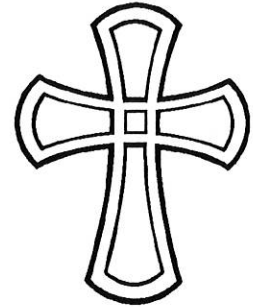


June 25, 2005

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates and Friends,

SR. FLORENCE LUECHTEFELD entered eternal life in the early hours of the morning of June 15, 2005. The sisters had been taking turns sitting with her and holding her hand. She slipped away peacefully, ending her long missionary life among us. She was 94 years old.



Sr. Florence was born on March 12, 1911 in St. Libory, IL to Libory J. Luechtefeld and Anna C. Terveer. She was the oldest of eight children. Two sisters, Dorothy and Gertrude, preceded her in death. She is survived by two brothers, Ralph of Belleville, IL and Leonard of St. Libory, IL and three sisters, Clare Schmidt of Belleville, IL, Sister Leona Luechtefeld, ASC also of Belleville, IL and Rita Pajares of Smithton, IL.

Florence entered our congregation on September 2, 1931 when she was 20 years old. The Society of Missionary Catechists of our Blessed Lady of Victory, as we were then known, was just nine years old. It was during the Great Depression and our founder, Fr. Sigstein, was struggling to make ends meet. Each candidate who entered was asked to bring several small items, like two small statues and a crucifix, three ring binders, a plate, cup and saucer, silverware, several spiritual books and a uniform. Florence was part of a group of seven enthusiastic young women preparing to be missionaries.

Between 1931 and 1934, she studied a variety of subjects, from theology and liturgy to Scripture and Canon Law, twenty-two courses in all. She also received a certificate from the Red Cross in "Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick," all in preparation for the varied challenges of being a missionary.

When she professed her first vows on September 8, 1934 she also made a "pledge of stability", promising to dedicate herself "...to the work of imparting Religious Instruction and of giving Christian Training to the poor children in needy, scattered missions...to go wherever sent, ...to uphold the original spirit of the Society...and not attempt to change the end and purpose for which this Society was founded." A realistic fear of Fr. Sigstein was that the catechists would be drawn into teaching in schools, like other religious women of his day.

Florence remained true to her calling, ministering in **Arizona:** Tucson; **California:** San Pedro, Redlands, Santa Paula, Azusa and Solvang; **Colorado:** Colorado Springs and Denver; **Indiana:** Goshen, Wabash and East Chicago; **New Mexico:** Santa Fe and Roswell; **Michigan:** Ida, Dundee and Coldwater; **Missouri:** Neosho; and **Utah:** Moab. Even in her retirement in Tucson, she was active as a volunteer. An additional joy of her religious life was to help care for Fr. Sigstein in his last years, when he lived at Victory Noll.

Florence was known for her zeal. She had the gift of motivating others to help with God's work. Besides teaching children of all ages, she also trained catechists and ministers to the sick, worked with RCIA and did adult education. Her special love was evangelization, reaching out to others with the Good News. Even in her retirement at Victory Noll, she organized a group that met regularly called "Evangelization 2000."

All through her religious life, Florence continued studying and updating herself. She attended numerous summer school classes, workshops and conferences. In 1975 she took a course on "mind control"; in 1978, she attended a workshop entitled "Sick and Tired," geared to ministry with the aging. At the age of 69, she went to Berkeley, CA for yearlong studies in "Applied Theology". She knew the importance of keeping her mind active!

Florence had a joyful spirit, hearty laugh and love of Hershey kisses. In Azusa, she was superior of the local house. When the sisters came home all tired from their work, they often found a little pile of Hershey kisses by their plates. In fact, after her funeral, there was a basket of three varieties of Hershey kisses in the dining room for all to enjoy!

Her funeral was a glorious celebration. Her nephew, Kevin, helped to plan it. He was the cantor and enhanced the liturgy with meditative songs. Many family members were present. Ralph and his wife, Georgia Luechtefeld, Clare Schmidt, Sr. Leona Luechtefeld, ASC, Rita Pajares and her son Ken with his wife, Barb, Rita's daughters Sandy Jenkins and Dottie Miller, as well as Rita's grand daughter Krista Toenjes. Leonard was unable to attend but his daughter Ann with husband Tom Hoffman, along with their children Michael, Amy and Ryan, were present. Lena Woltering, a friend of Rita's from Ft. Wayne and Sandy Morris, a friend of Kevin's, from Fairview Heights, IL also came.

Sr. Jeanette gave an inspiring homily. She reminded us that Florence came from a farming family. Farmers are natural contemplatives who know how to depend on the providence of God. Florence came from a loving family. She learned the values that her family taught her and carried those with her throughout her life. She was filled with zeal and a true missionary spirit till the end.

In Florence's file is a letter of recommendation from her spiritual director, dated Jan. 16, 1931:

*"I believe that you need no better recommendation than the sight of the girl herself and a few words from her happy and sincere heart.*

*I will be greatly disappointed if Miss Luechtefeld does not prove to be a valuable unit in your band of noble little workers at Victory Noll. Her health and ability I cannot vouch for, but her moral qualities are of first class and so far as I can read the kind suited to her work, and with these she has a strong desire.*

*It was a pleasure to meet her and direct her, it is a pleasure to wish her God speed and it will be a pleasure to anticipate her perseverance."*

We thank you, Sr. Florence, for spending your life with us in the service of God's Reign. We joyfully look forward to meeting you again, in the company of all the angels and saints.

Gratefully,

*Sr. Melanie*

Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVM  
General Secretary