

February 25, 2005

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates and Friends,

Sister Denise Dean was called by God into eternal life on Sunday, February 20, 2005. She had fallen and broken her hip very badly. She had surgery in Huntington Hospital and was recovering somewhat. However, on Sunday morning at 8:15 AM her heart gave out and she quietly slipped into eternal life. She was 90 years old.



Sr. Denise was born on December 31, 1914 in St. Louis, MO to Edward Dean and Jane Behan Dean. She did not have any brothers or sisters. In her file was an autobiographical sketch in which she shared some of her life. Her childhood must have had some difficult times. She went to live with a foster mother for several years. Denise wrote about how much she appreciated the care that she received from her. When Denise was eleven years old, her own mother was able to return to St. Louis. She went to live with her and her grandparents. Since they were Catholic, Denise attended Nativity Grade School and was baptized the following spring. She also attended Rosati-Kain Catholic High School and graduated in 1932.

Denise was attracted to home missionary work and entered our congregation on February 2, 1933. During her formation, from 1933-36, she studied various subjects: Theology, Social Ethics, Methods of Teaching, Social Problems, Health Education and many more. In 1935 she also earned a certificate in Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick from the Huntington Red Cross. She was preparing for missionary work because our sisters often visited the sick in their homes and cared for them.

In August 1935 when Sr. Denise was a novice, her mother died in St. Louis. The record shows that she went home for the funeral, accompanied by Sr. Isabel Quinn. Denise was only 21 years old. 1935 must have been a difficult year for her.

Sr. Denise made her first vows on March 25, 1936. Her first mission assignment was Grants, New Mexico. The following year she was assigned to Coachella, California. The next year she was asked to work in Tulare, California where she stayed for nine years. Like most of the sisters who worked in the West or Southwest, Denise went to our house in Redlands, CA for her annual retreat. She made her perpetual vows there on August 5, 1940.

Sr. Denise's love was catechetics. In one of her later letters, she wrote: "Unless radical changes come to pass, I have no intention of getting out of catechetics. That is my bag and thanks be to God, I am still able to do it effectively." She did

do it effectively, not only in New Mexico and California but also in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Wyoming, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and Colorado.

Like many religious women, Denise studied for her degree during the summers. In the 50's and 60's, she took courses at Victory Noll Junior College in Huntington and Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. Later on, she also attended St. Norbert's College in Wisconsin, Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Holy Names College in Oakland, CA and the University of Wyoming in Cheyenne. She received a certificate in religious education in 1969. A good teacher never stops learning. Denise continued taking workshops and courses in evangelization, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), tutoring, teaching effectiveness and literacy training.

She retired to Victory Noll in 1993 and did office work and pastoral ministry. As her eyesight began to fail, she became more limited in the ways she could help. In spite of that, she always had a pleasant smile for everyone and was known for her patience, kindness and gratitude. The worst expletive she ever used when frustrated was "applesauce!!!" In her spiritual life, she was devoted to the Little Flower and her way of abandonment to God's love. One of the poems she liked was: "I'm not going to move the mountain; I'm going to teach you how to climb!" Denise said that in all the changes of her lifetime, somehow God always gave her a friend when she suffered some loss. She saw this as a sign of God's tender care for her.

At her funeral Mass, Fr. Fahey reminded us that dying was going home. Dying was also coming to live in the brightness of the light of God. Sr. Denise had many homes during her missionary life. She was a pilgrim who is now completely at home with God. Her earthly eyes were clouded. They can now see God's brightness and glory: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love God." (1 Cor. 2:9)

We thank God for the many years of life that Sr. Denise shared with us. We will miss her smile and her loving presence.

Sincerely,

Sr. Melanie

Sr. Melanie Persche
General Secretary