

All for Jesus through Mary

Victory Noll  
February 10, 1979

Dear Sisters,

"When the evening of life comes, you will be judged on love!" (John of the Cross)

Thursday morning, February 8, we celebrated love made perfect and victorious in Sister Theodora. This morning, with the liturgy of Christian Burial, we laid her body to rest.

Sister returned to this "hill of grace" almost three years ago to receive her final transformation of love from Jesus. She allowed this mystery of suffering to perfect her love and throughout this long agony, she edified us by her patience and struggle to keep her sense of humor!

Sister Theodora has had a long history of illnesses, many of which involved malignant problems. Since her return to Victory Noll from Ida, Michigan in March of 1976, she has had surgery twice. In spite of all her handicaps, she was able to be up and around. Even through January, she continued to get up daily to sit in a chair in her room, and only became bedfast about the last ten days of her life.

On Thursday morning, she seemed to enjoy her breakfast of liquids. Later, she tried to speak to Sister Virginia. Because her speech was not clear, Sister Virginia could not understand what she was struggling to say. One word came out very clearly and that was "Jesus!" Sister Virginia assured her that Jesus would soon come for her. Sister smiled. Shortly after, about 15 minutes before she died, her respiration became labored. Four of the nursing staff were at her side when she died very peacefully. It was 7:45 a.m. and the community was assembling for Morning Praise and Mass. The Mass was celebrated for her.

Sister's body was brought back to Victory Noll about 4:15 p.m. on Friday. We formed the honor guard into chapel where the body lay in state. Sister Liska arrived by bus in time to accompany us and pray the rosary.

I suppose it is correct to say that Sister never really retired. She loved to teach and struggled to keep her classes until it became physically impossible for her to do so. She always spoke so enthusiastically of her high school classes. She loved young people and they loved her!

Sister was born July 5, 1904 in Barnesburg, Ohio. Her priest brother, Father Edgar, s.v.d., preceded her in death. She entered the Congregation October 27, 1927 and made first profession of vows March 25, 1930 at Victory Noll. She celebrated her golden jubilee August 5, 1977. I recall her determination to walk to the front of the chapel to be with the rest of her class as they renewed their vows. With her brother Ralph's help, she made it!

It was touching to note the devotion of Sister's family throughout her illness. They were so faithful in visiting her whenever they had the opportunity to come. Sister always looked forward to their visits.

Surviving her are two brothers and one sister, all of whom were present for the funeral. Adolph and his wife Betty from Cincinnati; Ralph and his wife Jo from St. Louisville, Missouri and Catherine (Kitty) Kiefer from Cincinnati. Kitty's only son Bud, could not come, so his wife Barbara drove with her Mother from Cincinnati. Kitty's only daughter, Mrs. Henry (Catherine) Vonderloos of Montana could not be here. Mrs. Arlene Metz with her daughter Sharon drove down from Ida, Michigan.

Father Oliver Bambanek ofm, cap., celebrated the liturgy with the Novices assisting him. In the homily, he reminded us of God's love for us and that it is His love that saves us and nothing we do. When we surrender to His love, we come to know Him!

Sister Theodora surely came to know God's love in her self-emptying and total surrender. We are grateful to Sister for her example of loving faithfulness and patience through this very difficult illness.

Because of the cold and snow, all the prayers ordinarily prayed at the graveside were prayed in chapel. Nevertheless, many of us walked to the cemetery as it was sunny and not too cold. Father blessed the grave, we sang our hymn to Our Lady of Victory and went directly to the dining room for dinner.

With love to all in Jesus and Mary,

*Sister Germaine Staller*