

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
October 22, 1985

Dear Sisters,

"Come with joy into the presence of the Lord!"

Another victory of faithfulness was celebrated on Saturday, October 12, 1985 at 12:50 p.m. in Holy Family Health Care Infirmery when Sister Mary Navratil slipped into eternity to begin her new life in Christ Jesus.

Shortly afterwards, at 1:15 p.m., the Sisters assembled in her room and in the corridor for a special prayer service where the rite of sprinkling and the laying on of the pall were incorporated with appropriate and beautiful prayers in a meaningful memorial service composed by Sister Elizabeth Ann Clifford for all those who donate their bodies to medical research. Sister Virginia Schmitt led the prayers. Very soon after the service, Mr. Hart took the body to Indianapolis.

Sister Mary has suffered from arteriosclerosis and arthritis for a long time. Sister had been living on the third floor for some months. She could ambulate short distances with her cane and take care of most of her daily activities by herself. The nursing staff assisted her whenever she needed help. Since July however, her condition deteriorated quickly. She had two episodes of symptoms resembling a stroke which left her helpless. But, she struggled each time to be as independent as possible. A previous stroke had paralyzed her vocal cords and made it difficult for her to speak above a whisper. This discouraged her very much because it was difficult to understand her speech. She had her esophagus surgically dilated several times to help her swallow more easily. This procedure did not improve the quality of her voice as she hoped it would. In October she became very weak and needed almost total assistance with her care. In the last week of her life, she was lethargic and felt poorly. Her breathing became labored and she began to use oxygen therapy. Father Giles anointed her on Saturday morning after Mass. Sisters Virginia Schmitt, Camilla Cray, Marjorie Curran and nurse aide Christine Stoffel were present when she went home to God.

Sister Mary spent 45 years of her religious life in the missions. She had a special love for Nevada and Utah. She spent five years in Ely as superior, nine years in Salt Lake City and the last ten years of her missionary life were spent in Ogden. After that, she was in Greeley for a few short months when she became ill and retired to Casa Maria in Tucson where she spent the next one and a half years before returning to Victory Noll in the summer of 1982. I remember Sister Mary from Salt Lake days when she used to make the week-end run to Southern Utah by train. That was a long a difficult trip for the two sisters who went there. Sister Mary always enjoyed home visiting and made many friends during her years in Utah.

Sister Mary was born September 8, 1900 in Exira, Iowa, the second youngest of nine children. She entered the Community from Holy Trinity Parish in Exira on her birthday, September 8, 1930 and made first profession of vows February 11, 1934 at Victory Noll. Sister celebrated her golden jubilee on August 5, 1980. Seven of her brothers and sisters preceded her in death. Her youngest sister, Lillian Schuck lives in Boise, Idaho.

On Saturday, October 12th at 5:00 p.m., we prayed the Office of the Dead for Sister Mary. On Sunday, October 13th at 7:00 p.m., we had the wake service in Memorial Chapel. Sisters Virginia Schmitt and Florence Garbacz did the readings and Father Giles led the prayers and the rosary.

On Monday, October 14, Father Giles celebrated the Memorial Mass and gave a very meaningful homily where he reminded us that we celebrate her death and view it as the last stage of her growth! All her trials and sufferings of life are over. She has been received exactly as Jesus said she would be. Father also spoke of the Apostles -- of the difference in them after the resurrection because they experienced Jesus in a new way. The way they spoke about him was different because he was alive in a new way! Sister Mary's death was the last stage of her growth and now her life stands before us and speaks more than human words! The readings were done by Sisters Mary Louise Rowney and Marjorie Curran. I sang the responsorial psalm and Sisters Helen Marie Beall and Merced Perez brought up the gifts.

At the end of the liturgy, Sister Mary Louise spoke briefly of her remembrance of Sister Mary in Utah and her intense desire for more time for prayer. Sister then spoke of our constant need for prayer and how important it is for us to affirm one another in prayer. She said we are persons in ministry who minister to the needs of others and we have a need for prayer. With one another, we find the Lord!

Some days before her death, Sister Virginia was visiting Sister Mary who spoke to her and asked her to let her die. Sister Virginia told her it was all right to die but the time was up to the Lord. Sister Mary looked at Sister Virginia and said, "then tell Him to come!"

This is our second death in fifteen days. Sister Mary has had such poor health for so long and was very crippled up with arthritis. She must have suffered a great deal. Now, she understands the tremendous love of the Father for her as she entered with joy into His presence. We will miss you Sister Mary, and we thank the Father for the reflection of His love brought to fulfillment in you.

Lovingly in Jesus and Mary,



Sister Germaine Stadler

P.S. This letter is late because I was gone from Victory Noll this past week.