



Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
July 7, 1992

Dear Sisters and Associates,

"... and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself."
Ephesians 3:19

Sister Mary David Miller died peacefully in the Lord July 5, 1992 in Holy Family Health Care infirmary at 1:25 p.m. Sunday afternoon. Her long period of suffering was over and her discipleship merited her the experience of love which St. Paul says surpasses all knowledge! We rejoice with Sister Mary David.

Sister Mary David returned to Victory Noll from Brigham City June 3, 1976. She came home to retire. A few weeks later while visiting her sister in New York, she suffered a mild stroke and was hospitalized. Her recovery was satisfactory and she was treated with medication.

For several years she remained fairly active fulfilling some of the duties in Holy Family. She spent time answering the telephone on second floor and each day called a homebound lady as part of a Red Cross Program. This was very important to her as was her faithfulness to Community prayers and daily Mass.

In 1981, Sister sustained a fractured pelvis which healed, though added to her inability to stand straight or walk. Parkinson's disease, severe osteoporosis and arthritis caused her condition to gradually deteriorate until she became totally unable to walk. It also became more and more difficult for her to communicate.

These past months her ability to swallow and breathe became more difficult. Early on July 5, her condition became critical and Father Fahey anointed her. The Sisters had been taking turns staying with her. Sister William Ann was with her in her last hour. Nurses Patty Altenhof and Malinda Ferguson were called in as her breathing became more shallow and gradually stopped at 1:25 p.m. Sister Lucy Marie was notified, who then notified the Community. The Sisters gathered at her bedside and prayed the prayers for the dying and the rosary.

Sister Mary David spent 42 years of her religious life in religious education and administrative positions in the missions of New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Vermont. For 9 years she worked with the Native Americans at the Intermountain School in Brigham City.

Sister Mary David was born May 17, 1914 in St. Louis, Mo., and entered the Community September 4, 1931. She made first profession of vows September 8, 1934 at Victory Noll. I think it is interesting to note that Sister Mary David entered from the same parish as Sister Muriel Balch (St. Philip Neri) and both entered the same day. I think they came together.

Sister's brother David and sister Mary preceded her in death.

Sister's body was brought back to Victory Noll at 4:00 p.m. on Monday. The wake service was held at 7:00 p.m. that evening. Sister Gertrude Sullivan led the service which was the Night Prayer of the Church. Sisters Callista and Mary Lucille did the readings. Caron Bell, one of the nurses from third floor expressed her love and devotion for Sister and what her friendship has meant to her. Caron enumerated the gifts of the Holy Spirit and said that Sister practiced all of them. She called her cheerful, uncomplaining and devoted with a wonderful sense of humor! She ended her thoughts by saying that Sister Mary David was a model of strength and perseverance and an inspiration to all on 3rd floor. What a beautiful tribute!

The liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Fahey on Tuesday morning at 10:30 a.m. Srs. Frances K., Mary Barbara and Dorothy Louise carried the cross and candles; Srs. Isabelle and William Ann placed the pall on the casket; Srs. Ann Therese and Mary Joan did the readings; The Schola sang the responsorial and Sr. Carmen sang the Alleluia verse; Sr. Doris offered the intercessions and Srs. Lucy Marie and Carlota brought up the gifts. Father Fahey gave the homily, Sr. Rose Zita the eulogy and Sr. Mary Louise said the prayers of Commendation.

Father Fahey spoke of suffering and its relation to Sr. Mary David who truly hung on a cross the last years of her life. He reminded us that each of us is no accident. We were sent - we have a purpose in life. We must believe that Jesus died for each individual. The problem of sin is disorder, suffering, pain and death. He gave the example of himself working in the garden. While he was there, a wasp stung him on the hand. The relationship was disturbed between him and the wasp. The wasp died and his hand was swollen. The wages of sin is death. Father was angry and the wasp was angry. The same relationship exists with God. Sin does that. We are souls related to the whole body of humankind - the Mystical Body - the Communion of Saints. The Church is made up of saints and sinners. The saints carry the sinners - help them on the way. That is what Jesus did. He died for us. St. Paul says that Jesus became sin for us. That is what St. Paul meant when he wanted to make up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ for us. We are called to suffer for others. Sr. Mary David was probably doing more for souls with her suffering than we can imagine. Suffering is the mystery of life. It is God's secret! Those who suffer are chosen souls. Father ended his homily praying that Sister Mary David will enjoy the fruit of her life.

Sister Rose Zita's theme was the antiphon of the Breviary the day after Sister's death. "When will I come to the end of my pilgrimage and enter the kingdom of God?" Sister felt this question must have been on Sr. Mary David's mind very often as it was often our own question. "How long, O Lord, how long?" Rose Zita compared Sister's life to a harp, the frame representing her years of good health and zealous missionary endeavors. These last years of suffering and pain were compared to the intricate strings of the harp. It seemed, she said, that God in his infinite wisdom and love was fine-tuning the strings of Sister's innermost being until the pitch was in harmony with the melody of heaven.

Rose Zita mentioned the arrangement of flowers with a snowflake in the center which the nurse aides on third floor had placed on the coffin. It seems that earlier in the year they had placed a snowflake above her bed and she had so enjoyed seeing it dangling above her. Last year when Sr. Rose Zita flew her kite, she was told how much Sister followed the movement with her eyes. Afterward, whenever she would fly the kite, she would consciously pray for her and try to fly the kite outside her window hoping that the movement would lift her spirits beyond her physical confinement. What a lovely, thoughtful thing to do!

Sister Rose Zita ended her thoughts by saying that Sister Mary David's life and witness have gone far beyond the limitations of shaping words in speech or the confinement of illness. Where she has been has been made holy. "When will I come to the end of my pilgrimage and enter the presence of God?" Our prayer, she said is with Sister Mary David who no longer needs to ask that question - and we continue to ponder the mystery in God's plan that moves from an earthly farewell to an eternal hello.

Again, we thank God for the reflection of his love in this gentle, loving Sister whose cost of discipleship was suffering and pain. We thank her for her faithfulness and beg her intercession as we continue on the way.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Germaine Stadler
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