

May 19, 2006

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

SISTER MARIAN KOZLOWSKI had been suffering from congestive heart failure and not feeling well. In the last year and a half, she spent most of her days in the Camilla Center, part of our nursing care facility. She sat in her chair and although she had her eyes closed and did not speak; she seemed to respond to persons who visited her. When death was near, our sisters took turns staying by her bedside. She died peacefully on May 9th at 10:45 AM. Marian would have been eighty-two years old in July.

Marian was born on July 28, 1924 in Chicago (Cicero), IL to Leo Kozlowski and Casimira Wojciechowski Kozlowski. She was the eldest of six children. Her brother, Eugene, preceded her in death. She is survived by two sisters, Therese Sniegowski and Elizabeth Cassidy and two brothers, Thomas Kozlowski and Ambrose Kozlowski.

The family lived in Lemont, IL where Marian attended Catholic elementary school and public high school. It was during the Depression and her parents had to work hard to make ends meet. Marian remembered how all the children pitched in, growing and canning vegetables. In 1954 the family moved to southern California where Marian took some courses at a junior college. She worked as a stenographer and secretary both in business and government settings. She later became a medical secretary at a local hospital.

Her life changed dramatically when she attended a talk given by the founder of the Lay Mission Helpers Association. She felt called by God to volunteer and after one year of training (three evenings each week and Sunday afternoons), she was sent to Owerri, Nigeria. It was a shock to arrive there during the rainy season, to get used to the bugs and snakes, live with no electricity or running water and adjust to unfamiliar customs. However, the other volunteers were very supportive and the people were friendly. She spent three years in Nigeria, working in the print shop, the bookstore and then, as secretary to the bishop. One exciting memory was sending letters to John XXIII, making suggestions for Vatican II. While there, Marian contracted malaria but seemed to have recovered well.

Marian would have volunteered to stay in Nigeria for three more years but her mother was ill. She returned to California in 1961 and cared for her mother until her death in 1962. Marian continued working as a medical secretary in St. Francis Hospital in Lynwood. Her spiritual director a few years earlier had told her that she probably had a vocation to the religious life. When she mentioned her desire to the senior chaplain of the hospital, he recommended that she contact the Victory Noll Sisters. He had worked with them in Ventura and knew them well. Marian went to Los Angeles to meet our sisters, then on to Victory Noll for a vocation weekend and then her discernment was complete. She entered our congregation in September, 1964. She wrote, "The long search for my life's vocation is realized now." She was forty years old.

Marian participated in the formation program at Victory Noll with women much younger than herself. They admired her for her experience and she helped them by taking notes in shorthand and typing and distributing them to her classmates. She made first vows on August 5, 1967 and was sent to Detroit to continue her college courses for one year. She then went to Santa

Paula, CA for two years and worked in religious education. In 1970 she returned to Detroit to finish college. She received her BA in Social Studies in 1971.

Marian's next mission was to Azusa, CA where she worked in catechesis. The classes were very large and the children not so well behaved. Marian came to realize that she really did not have the gift to teach large classes and could be more effective one-on-one or in small groups. She took a unit of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) to prepare herself for pastoral ministry. This ministry was for her! She continued on for three more units and became a pastoral associate and later a certified chaplain. She was hired by St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank.

The administrator, Sr. Georgette Jean, SP wrote in 1977: *"Sr. Marian has just been outstanding in her efforts, and I can testify that I have received many reports, both written and oral, that indicate her deep spiritual concern as well as counseling competence with the patients, their families, and our staff at St. Joseph's."*

Marian worked for many years at St. Joseph's and loved the ministry and the patients. Every day was a new experience. She met many persons in the hospital, both young and old, whom she served and who touched her life. She never grew tired of giving them her spiritual care.

At the same time, she continued growing in professional competence. She attended numerous workshops and classes. Here is a partial list: Holistic Medicine and Healing; Pain Relief; Prayer in Relation to Immortality and the Resurrected Body; Ministering to Life; Loss and Grief; Death and Dying; Hospice; AIDS Conference; Healing Arts and Management of Aggressive Behavior; even a computer course! Marian was a member of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and was recertified in 1995.

In 1999, our congregation asked her to return to Victory Noll to be a field consultant and member of the pastoral care team for our own sisters. As field consultant, she worked with our sisters in the missions when it was time for them to retire. In the summer Marian continued her outreach by helping with migrant ministry in Bluffton, IN. In 2003, she, too, retired when her health failed and she could no longer serve.

During the Vigil, Marian's classmate, Sr. Lucille Martinez, shared her memories of their time in formation and the years both of them spent in California. She said that Marian actually had four careers – secretary, foreign missionary, catechist and chaplain. She ended her many careers on May 9th and we laid her to rest on May 12th. Her sister Therese and her niece, Mary and nephew, Jim came for the funeral.

"There is a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to live and a time to die." These words from the funeral liturgy truly describe Marian's life. Her time here on earth came to an end. It was her time to die. Her purpose, her vocation, was also fulfilled. She spent forty-two years of her life with us as a Victory Noll Sister, following God's call. We thank God for these years and we thank Marian for the love that she shared with us.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Melanie".

Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVN
General Secretary