



SISTER PAULA WELLNITZ, OLVM, 91, a resident of Saint Anne at Victory Noll, died March 28, 2020, at Saint Anne at Victory Noll, Huntington, Indiana.

Sister Paula was born in Elgin, Illinois, on December 1, 1928, to Paul Andrew Wellnitz and Catherine Elizabeth Brugger Wellnitz. She was the youngest child and the only girl, and had three older brothers; Paul, Gregory and David. She was baptized Marie Theresa in St. Mary's Catholic Church on December 16, 1928. She grew up in

the quiet Chicago suburb, attending St. Mary's Elementary School and graduating from Mount Saint Mary's on the Fox Academy in St. Charles, Illinois. After graduation, she worked at the Elgin National Bank before entering the congregation on October 27, 1948. After making first vows on August 5, 1951, she was missioned to California, first in Redlands and then Coachella, Brawley and San Pedro. For 12 years, she taught religious education and took census, like most Victory Noll Sisters at that time. She also served in Colorado in the missions of Rocky Ford, Boulder and Denver. She attended Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, receiving her Bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor in Psychology in 1968. In 1974, she received a Master's in Religious Education from Seattle University in Seattle, Washington. She used her education working in rural communities, including the Glenmary Missionaries in rural Tennessee and surrounding states. These experiences with the rural poor led her, as the first reading of her funeral service from Proverbs directs, "to open her mouth on behalf of the mute and for the rights of the destitute and to defend the needy and the poor." The poverty and lack of care in these areas led her to attend the International College in Los Angeles, California, to complete a Master's degree in Counseling. Her thesis was entitled "Starting a Rural Counseling Service." She continued counseling among rural communities the rest of her life. Sister Paula worked among the Cheyenne River Sioux in South Dakota. She also was missioned in Hot Sulfur Springs, Colorado, and lastly in Orangeville, Utah. All were places where mental health services were rare, if available at all. She ministered in Orangeville for almost 30 years before coming back to Victory Noll in November, 2018. During those years as a mental health counselor, she also opened "Home Place" in her home for people to have a space "to be." It was her way of creating the space for others to have some peace and quiet to listen to God or the birds, which ever they needed.

Sister Paula's inquiring mind was always active, studying and asking questions. Sometimes the questions were not the ones people wanted to hear nor wanted answer, but she asked them anyway. She continued to read and to explore, to learn and to question. She never lost her hunger for knowledge and understanding.

She also never lost her zeal for social justice and helping others to see, including keeping others aware of current events, people on the margins and the critical state of the environment. When Sister Paula was nominated for the Madeleine Medal of Appreciation of Faithful Service from the Diocese of Salt Lake City, it was said of her work at Mission San Raphael, “Sister Paula is the social conscience of this mission. She concerns herself with the spiritual development of all by providing reading material on a variety of practices and issues as well as encouraging prayer and discussion.” She was honored with the Madeleine Medal in September of 2016.

Sister Paula loved to be in nature and to explore all that nature could offer. She lived in some of the most beautiful places this country has to offer, from the woods of the Northwest to the desert of the Southwest, the Smoky Mountains and the high desert of the San Raphael Swell in Utah. The beauty, diversity and awesomeness of God’s creation were never lost on her. Even after moving back to Victory Noll, she would go outside to sit in the sun, hear the birds and be in “nature.” When she moved to a new place, she would learn the history, the culture and the people of her new home. She wanted to know not only the people but also the place. Once, when she lived near the Manti-La Sal National Forest near Orangeville, she volunteered at the information center, which allowed her to be in nature, share her knowledge of the area and help others at the same time.

The unusual situation created by the Corvid-19 pandemic forced us to change our usual rituals of a vigil and a Eucharistic liturgy. We honored and celebrated Sister Paula’s life on Monday, March 30, but without the gathering of all the community and family and personal friends. In this different atmosphere, we brought her earthly remains to the chapel where she had professed her first vows and started her journey as a Victory Noll Sister nearly 60 years ago. On this day, we sent her not to an earthly mission, but to her final mission, her journey to her eternal home with God.

As we heard in the reading that Sister Paula chose from Romans, “the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.” God’s glory is now revealed. She now knows all she has ever longed to know and even more.

With blessings and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sr. Ginger Downey O.L.V.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Ginger Downey, O.L.V.M