

May 19, 2008

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

SISTER ANTOINETTE GOLABOWSKI was living on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Holy Family Building, our Health Care Facility. She was using oxygen due to a chronic pulmonary disease but continued to participate in everything she could. She was literally on the move, physically and mentally and kept in touch with family and friends by phone or letter. As her strength diminished, her niece Karen Todd came to be with her, later joined by her other niece Toni Johnson. Antoinette's life slowly ebbed away. She died at 1:45 PM on Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. She was 94 years old.



Antoinette was born on August 3, 1913 in South Bend, IN to Roman Golabowski and Helen Hosinski Golabowski. She was the sixth of eleven children: Leo, Edward, Joseph, Irene, Erwin, herself, Stanley, Clara, Roman, Jr., Marie and Helen. Leo, Edward and Irene died in childhood, before Antoinette was born. Although both of her parents were from South Bend, they spoke Polish at home and Antoinette learned the language as a child.

She attended Catholic grade school and public high school. After graduating, she studied at the College of Commerce and began working as a secretary. It was 1932, the middle of the Depression. Antoinette was a faithful and accurate worker and was appreciated by her supervisors and colleagues. She had many outside interests as well. She took courses at night (Public Speaking and Practical Psychology). She had a good singing voice and took voice lessons. She also belonged to several organizations: CYO, Daughters of Isabella, St. Cecelia's Choir, Chopin Fine Arts Club and the Third Order of St. Dominic.

In September 1952, when she was 39 years old, she sent in her application to Victory Noll. She entered in January 1953 and joined eight other women, studying, participating in varied activities and deepening her spiritual formation in preparation for missionary work. She made her first vows on August 5, 1955.

Antoinette's first mission assignment was Punta Gorda, FL where she served in religious education for two years. To get more mission experience, she was then transferred to Indio, CA (1957-59). Her third mission was San Diego but because she did not drive (something that was needed in that mission), she was transferred to Tulare, CA, where she worked until 1961. In August of that year, she made her perpetual vows and committed herself to God and to God's people for life.

She then spent two years in Azusa. There the sisters had a unique classroom. It was a trailer that had been a hot dog stand. The men of the parish had renovated it and it became an ideal classroom. Each morning one of the men hitched it to his car and took it to a different location, near a public school. The sisters taught release-time classes in that trailer-classroom all day. At night, the same man towed the trailer back to the convent. It was evident how creative and adaptable missionaries needed to be!

Antoinette then went to other parts of the country. She worked in Denver for two years, Brighton, CO for a year and Springfield, VT for two years. She was asked to be the local councilor in both Brighton and Springfield. During the summers she attended college and worked towards her degree. In 1968 she studied full time at Siena Heights College in Adrian, MI and received her BA in Sociology in 1969.

Her next assignment was Santa Fe, NM, the area where our first sisters worked. She only stayed there for a year. In 1970 she was asked to go to East Chicago, IN. That mission was also historic for us since our sisters had worked there since the beginning. It was a steel mill area and immigrants from many countries lived there. Antoinette stayed in East Chicago for eleven years and left a piece of her heart there. During the school year, she worked in the parishes of the area and during the summers she attended the University of Detroit. She received her Masters in Religious Studies in 1977. She was 64 years old!

In 1981 she spent one year at Victory Noll, volunteering with our sisters. Then it was on to Provo, UT for four years where she served as pastoral minister and religious educator. It seemed that she was beginning to slow down; her work report said that she was working  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. Not so! She kept on going!

In 1986 she went to one of her favorite missions again, East Chicago. She was 73 years old. Besides pastoral ministry and religious education, she began the Family Enrichment Program, which was especially dear to her heart. It was a team effort that brought couples together and helped them have a better marriage and better family life. In all, 200 couples participated. The program was even translated into Spanish. (In her retirement, Antoinette presented the Family Enrichment Program at Victory Noll (1999) for people of the Huntington area.)

When Antoinette was 81 years old, she knew it was time to leave the missions and return to Victory Noll (1994). She had been suffering from scoliosis of the spine and the pain was often intense. She continued helping the receptionist as well doing secretarial work, medical records and the mail. When she actually did slow down and moved to Holy Family, she was 93 years old! Her indomitable spirit was still active even there. We marveled how she kept going and how her interest in her Victory Noll community, her family and her friends never diminished. She loved and served until the end.

When God called Antoinette home, she died peacefully in the arms of her niece, Karen. We laid her to rest on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Family members who were able to be present for the funeral were her nieces Karen Todd, Antoinette Johnson and Mary Ellen Golabowski and her nephew Robert Paulk with his wife Nancy. Several friends from her East Chicago days were also present: Rev. Rick Leone and his wife Diane, Petra Vaca and Gloria Samano. Three of our associates also came: Helen Espinosa, Lu Knote and Carol Clark.

The readings Antoinette chose for her funeral showed her deep faith and trust in God. They are also a message that she left for all of us:

*“My dear friends, we are already God’s children;  
what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed.” (1 Jn. 3:2)*  
*“Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places...  
I am going now to prepare a place for you.” (Jn. 14:1-2)*

Antoinette, we thank you for your long life with us, your missionary zeal and the love that you shared with us and all of God’s people. We look forward to seeing you again in the heavenly dwelling place.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sr. Melanie*

Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVM  
General Secretary