

Victory Noll
September 6, 1978

Dear Sisters

"Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children."

This passage from St. Matthew's Gospel that we used for Sister Ida Ann Keller's Liturgy of Christian Burial yesterday seemed especially appropriate. As Father Oliver pointed out in his homily, it is not the things of the intellect that count so much as those of the heart. We are here to live God's love and radiate it to others.

Sister Ida Ann had been in poor health for some time but it was only five or six weeks ago that she began to fail more rapidly. We expected her death around the time Sister Emma Elizabeth died, but she survived her two more weeks. Our Blessed Mother came for her Saturday morning, September 2, at 6:35. Like so many of our Sisters, she was conscious until shortly before she breathed her last. The end was very peaceful. Sister Ida Ann would have been ninety-two years old this month.

We accompanied Sister's body into chapel late Monday afternoon and then prayed Vespers. At 7:30 in the evening we had the special wake service. Since Sister Ida Ann was the last of her immediate family, there were no relatives present. Tuesday, September 5, was a perfect late summer day and because we had to have the funeral earlier in the morning than usual, the birds were still singing in the cemetery.

Sister Ida Ann Keller was born in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, September 14, 1886. She was the youngest of four children, one of whom (Aloysius) died in infancy. Rosalie, the oldest, joined the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit in Techny, Illinois, taking the name Sister Bernice. She died in 1961. Sister Ida Ann and the Techny Sisters always kept in touch. Her brother Jerome died two years later and was buried in Calvary Cemetery in Huntington. Sister Ida Ann often visited his grave.

The Keller family moved from Ohio to Chicago during the early part of the century. Some time after Father Sigstein organized the Missionary Helpers, Ida became a member. She also helped Father with stenographic work.

When Father and nine Catechists came to Huntington to the not-quite-finished Victory Training Institute, Ida Keller was with them. So she was really the first "candidate" at Victory Noll! She was then thirty-eight years old. As was often the custom in the early days, she was sent out to the missions (Chaperito and later Victory Mount in Las Vegas) after scarcely a year and three months at Victory Noll - in March 1926. It was at Victory Mount that she made her first vows December 21, 1926.

In 1929 Sister Ida Ann returned to Victory Noll and became what was quaintly designated on the appointment list: Prefect for Junior Section. It was the position that in later years was called Mistress of Novices. In 1935 she went to Tulare but returned two years later to Victory Noll where she remained until her death.

Sister Ida Ann's special work was correspondence with the members of what was originally called the 2500 Club. Father Sigstein's idea was to find 2500 persons who would pledge one dollar a month for the support of the Catechists. The Club never reached its full quota but there were many faithful members. Through the years the number declined. Sister Ida Ann had a special place in her heart for each person with whom she corresponded. They were her family. Even when she was no longer able to do the work and it was entrusted first to Sister Clarice May and then to Sister Helen Marie Beall, Sister Ida Ann continued her interest, often told the Sisters what to write and signed the letters for as long as she was able.

In the middle of the summer Mrs. Riley and her son Eddie from LaPorte (cousins of Sister Mary Agnes Rauschenbach) visited Sister Ida Ann. Mrs. Riley had long been a contributor. Eddie had "adopted" Sister Ida Ann in a special way from the time he was small. He used to send her candy, money gifts, etc. When he visited her he brought with him a scholastic award he had received at Culver Military Academy that he attends. They had their picture taken together. On Sister's coffin was a dainty vase of lovely white roses with the message: "From the Rileys, especially Eddie." Mrs. Riley and Eddie regretted that they could not attend Sister's funeral. Mrs. Riley teaches school and Eddie had to go to Culver. Tuesday was opening day.

It was Opening Day for Sister Ida Ann, too - an Opening into a New Life, too magnificent for us even to imagine. We can only hope that some day we will all be together to enjoy with Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother that life which will never end.

Lovingly in Jesus and Mary

Sister Elizabeth Ann *Elizabeth Ann*