

December 18, 2011

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Carmen went to her eternal reward at 11:55 p.m. on December 14, 2011. Carmen had been on Hospice for approximately one month. She was aware of the nurses and sisters visiting her room, but was unable to hold a conversation. She did speak the name Maria several times. Her sister Maria was like a Mother to her and she loved her very much. We think it was her sister she was calling. Shortly before her death Sister Rita Musante visited Sister Carmen. She sang and prayed with Carmen, and Carmen became increasingly peaceful. Soon after she was experiencing her new life with God.

Sister Carmen was born in Smelter, El Paso, Texas on April 29, 1912 to Pilar Montoya and Nicolasa Garcia Montoya. Sister was preceded in death by three brothers; Martin, Anastacio, and Alfonso Montoya, also three sisters preceded her in death; Maria Rangel, Margarita Vasquez and Maria Luisa Escandon.

Sister Carmen entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on February 7, 1932. She made her first Profession of Vows on March 25, 1935 at Victory Noll, and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1940 at Redlands, Calif.



Carmen writes a beautiful vocation story to her grandniece, Sister Marie Kolbe, O.C.D. In it she shares that one's Religious vocation is a mystery and a Religious must thank God daily and remain faithful to her commitment to her vows. Carmen said her first desire to become a Religious was born when her father, Pilar gave her the biography of Therese of Liseaux, "La Historia de Una Alma," "The Story of a Soul." Carmen fell in love with St. Therese and her "Little Way." This was the beginning of Carmen's desire to become a Religious. She desired to become a Carmelite, however, God had other plans for Carmen. When her Pastor asked, "Carmen, what are you going to do with your life? Without hesitation Carmen answered, "I wish to be a Religious." She then told him her dream of becoming a Carmelite. Father Costa said, "I think you will make a good missionary out in the world." Father Costa introduced Carmen to Our Sunday Visitor, and told her about the Victory Noll Order, known at that time as the Missionary Catechists of Our Lady of Victory. After reading about the Missionary Catechist and learning of their work Carmen said that it became very exciting to her, and after prayer she knew that Victory Noll was the place the Lord wanted her to enter. Father Costa accompanied Carmen on her train trip from El Paso to Victory Noll. He was concerned that she would arrive safely. When Carmen stepped into the Victory Noll Motherhouse, she said to Jesus, "forever Lord."

Carmen served God and God's people in the missions of Indiana, Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico. Carmen's primary ministry was religious education, but her outstanding gift in music both as a singer and as organist, was a great blessing in the parishes where she ministered. She had a great love and talent for organizing plays and special programs. These events not only brought joy to the people, but helped those involved especially the children come to recognize and discover their own gifts. Carmen found great joy in her life as a missionary sister. In 1970 Carmen earned a BA in Religious

Studies at Marymount College in Los Angeles. In 1984 Sister Carmen was asked to return to Victory Noll to take charge of liturgy and music. To assist her with this new assignment she studied and earned a Certificate in Liturgical Music from St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind. Carmen also completed a series of seminars on music in the liturgy from the Organ Training Program, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. She enjoyed attending these courses where she was required to attend choral work and give a concert at the end of the summer program. A high point for Carmen was taking part in the Mass at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. Her beautiful soprano voice must have made a significant contribution to the chorus. In her eulogy during the Vigil Service Sr. Beaty stated, "Carmen retired in 1989 and continued to volunteer with liturgy and music, and enjoyed crafts and painting." In Carmen's words to her grandniece she says, "I am very happy that the Lord has called me to be His disciple and to bring Good News in whatever manner I am able." Whether in the missions teaching the little ones and adults or at Victory Noll sharing her special gift of music with us, she was always bringing the Good News of God's love to others.

Members of Sister Carmen's family were unable to attend her funeral, however they were with us in thought and spirit.

At the Vigil Service on Friday evening, Carmen chose Revelation 21:1-5,6-7 for the reading. This is a beautiful scripture in which God tells us that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that God will dwell among us and will be always with us. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will no longer be death or mourning. God will make all things new. At the closing of the eulogy Sr. Beaty said, "We thank you Carmen for sharing the Good News in so many ways for so many years. No doubt you are now singing a new song to and with our loving God."

After the Vigil we went to the dining room for refreshments and to continue sharing our memories of Carmen. In general all shared about Carmen's beautiful gift of music, her angelic voice, and also her artistic abilities. Sister Beaty shared that in her file there were many inspiring things about Carmen written by her Pastor Father Costa to the Superiors at Victory Noll. He shared what a valuable parishioner Carmen was in her service at the parish, especially her musical contributions. Beaty also shared that at Christmas in Fabians, Texas during the year Carmen was missioned with her and Ramona Renteria, she worked hard at a dramatization of the gospel for a parish Christmas program. A little girl sang "What Child is This." It was so beautiful that everyone was in awe listening to her sing. Sister Grace Marie shared that Carmen loved art and loved to make sun catchers. She painted very fast and Sr. Grace Marie could not keep up with her request for having her work matted. She had to go to Fort Wayne to buy the matting. When Grace Marie mentioned this to Carmen, she soon found other Sisters who would go to get the matting for her many art works. Ann Shirley shared that before Carmen entered she and her Mother would go to choir practice at their parish. After practice they would come home, make milk shakes and share about what happened at choir practice. Sister Rita shared an e-mail from Kevin Luechtefeld expressing his deepest sympathy at the loss of Sister Carmen. He shared that he remembered her playing the organ in chapel before it was renovated, and also her lovely voice, a true gift to all. He also recalled writing her Christmas letter several years ago and how she was looking forward to Las Mañanitas and Las Posadas. He said, "How fitting she has gone home to God during this time." Rita also shared how grateful she is for everything that had been said about Carmen and her love

for liturgy. Rita worked with Carmen for many years. She said she found it so difficult when she and Carmen had to come to the realization that Carmen was no longer able to be in the Schola.

On Saturday December 17, 2011, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Sisters Alodia and Millicent placed the pall on the casket, and Sister Mary Joan placed the crucifix. Carmen chose as the gospel reading the beautiful passage from St. John chapter 6:37-40. In this Scripture Jesus says that he will never reject anyone who comes to Him. Jesus tells us that it is the will of the Father that everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. This was Carmen's belief and hope, and she is now realizing the reality of this hope she had in Jesus promise. In his homily, Father Fahey shared about how Carmen loved to sing and is now singing God's praises forever with the angels and saints. He said Carmen had a thirst to learn ever more about God. She read many books to advance her spiritual life. She will not forget us. She will intercede for us in surprising ways to bring God's blessing to us.

After mass we had the final prayers in the gathering place because of the inclement weather. We blessed the casket and sang the hymn "We have a Holy Mother." A delicious dinner to celebrate Carmen's life followed.

Carmen we thank you for sharing your many gifts with us . We are richer because you walked the journey of faith with us. We rejoice that you are now singing God's praises in heaven.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Sister Betty Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary