

Victory Noll  
Huntington, IN  
Sept. 16, 1991



Dear Sisters and Associates,

"Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her  
would be fulfilled." Luke 1:45

On September 13, 1991, at 5:12 a.m. on the feast of St. John Chrysostom, Sister Mary Eleanor Clements answered the call to "come and see" and stepping through the mystery of death, she entered into Eternal Life beholding the Risen Christ. Blest indeed is she who believed that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled!

Sister Mary Eleanor suffered for many years from degenerative arthritis and metastatic cancer. After spending nine years in East Chicago, her last mission, she returned to Victory Noll where she visited the homebound until she couldn't walk well enough to continue. In 1989, Sister had a right hip replacement and in 1990, she had a replacement of her left hip. She made a good recovery because of her optimistic and hopeful attitude and her desire to keep active. Her great interest in the Senior Center Rhythm Band, love of craft work and baking "goodies" for the Sisters kept her occupied. When the weather permitted, she drove the golf cart around the grounds, always inviting others to go with her.

Though sister Mary Eleanor was not feeling well since early summer, her desire to go to the State Fair at Indianapolis was the goal she set for herself. On August 17th, the Rhythm Band met at the State Fair singing and acting, "I've been working on the railroad." This was her last outing as her condition declined rapidly the next few weeks. Sister was very weak, often enduring severe pain and appearing to be comatose much of the time. Often, the Sisters sat at her bedside praying and singing softly. Towards the early morning of Friday, September 13, it became more evident that the end was near. Mary Snyder had spent the last hour of vigil with her and Sisters Lucy Marie and Camilla were called. Nurses Lorrie Reust and Ruby Smith were also at her bedside when Sister Mary Eleanor died peacefully in the Lord at 5:12 a.m.

Some years ago while Sister Margaret Campbell and I were sorting Father Sigstein's correspondence, we came across this letter written by Father Gabriel, O.S.B. of St. Anastasia's Church in Ft. Pierce, Florida to Father Sigstein regarding Eleanor Clements. I hope it strikes your heart as much as it did ours. I quote: "It pleases me immensely to learn that the Clements girl thinks of joining your band. Her parents, both converts, are the pioneer Catholics of Okeechobee County. The first Mass ever said in that section of the Everglades near Lake Okeechobee, I said in their house 12 years ago. When I began to hold services in Okeechobee, the family came regularly a distance of 18 miles over fearful roads in a farm wagon with one old mule for the Mass at 9:00 o'clock, all of them fasting and ready for Holy Communion. . . When I had Confirmation here last February, they actually drove 60 miles in the flivver, all of them fasting. In point of zeal and the spirit of sacrifice, they are far and away the best family I have in my whole vast district." (Letter written in 1925 or 1926)

In the 1970's, Sister spent 5 years in North Miami, Florida home visiting. She dedicated herself to visiting the home bound. She organized a corp of volunteers to visit and entertain at the nursing homes. She delighted in playing her harmonica and her ability to play the familiar old songs made her a favorite among the Senior Citizens. Her home visiting was terminated when she went to Indiantown, Florida to be with her

aged Mother until she died in November of 1976. After the death of her Mother, Sister returned to Victory Noll where she worked as a nurse aide on the third floor of the Holy Family Health Care Center. Sr. Mary Eleanor had obtained her certificate as a nurse aide in 1970 and during the year at Holy Family Health Care Center, she studied and obtained another certificate as a nurse aide from Huntington College. In the fall of 1977, she went to East Chicago to become very active in parish ministry on a part-time basis. In 1986, she returned to Victory Noll because of her infirmities.

Sister Mary Eleanor was born March 29, 1908 in Bassanger, Florida, the third oldest of ten children. Two brothers and two sisters preceded her in death. She entered the Congregation from Sacred Heart Parish in Okeechobee May 17, 1926 and made her first profession of vows May 24, 1928 at Victory Noll. She celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 1986.

We were happy to have her nephew, Father Charles Clements (Joseph's son) with us. Father arrived Sunday afternoon. Sisters Rita Musante and Angline Walczyk brought him from the airport to the Noll.

The wake service was held in Memorial Chapel at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday evening. Sr. Mary Joan Ginsterblum led the Night Prayer of the Church. Srs. Mary Lucille Huegel and Dorothy Louise Wortmann did the readings.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was concelebrated by Fathers Charles Clements, Joseph Pusateri and Thomas Fahey, our chaplain. Srs. Carolyn Louise Neff carried the cross and Florentine and Lucy Marie carried the candles; Srs. Mary Joan and Dorothy Louise placed the pall on the casket; Srs. Callista and Ann Therese did the readings; the Schola sang the response; Father Joseph gave the homily; Sr. Evelyn Marie offered the petitions and Opal Gamble and Marjorie Walker of the Rhythm Band brought up the gifts. Sister Judith Ann gave a very short eulogy and Sr. Mary Louise said the prayers of Commendation.

Sister Judith Ann mentioned that she came to know Sister Mary Eleanor in their years together in East Chicago. Since that time Sister had been her prayer partner, an honor that Sister Judith Ann held most dear. In closing, Sister Judith Ann said: "Sr. Mary Eleanor brought life to me and to us through her simple happy ways. I believe Jesus is saying to her now, 'Come, I give you life abundantly.'"

Father Joseph Pusateri's homily was touching and to the point. I quote some of his thoughts: "I say with the bodies God has given to us coupled with our dedication to the total honor of God and the promotion of his kingdom, we must be holy - we must be saints. The body present before us is useless and unnecessary. It was the dwelling of the Holy Spirit - we know its sacredness - yet far more important than our bodies enlivened by God is the channeling of God's goodness and love. Sister Mary Eleanor was in perpetual motion in bringing God to his people - her dedication - her warmth - her gentleness - her ever ladylike qualities only reflected a peaceful surrender to her Lover - the giver of all things good. Allow me to change her title from Sr. to St. and may we strive to become saints too."

Father Charles came to the podium to speak a little about his family and Sister Mary Eleanor. We appreciated the human and loving touch he added.

How blessed we are to live among such valiant and holy women. Again, we give praise to God for the reflection of his love which shown through so clearly and beautifully in our gentle, loving Sister Mary Eleanor!

With love in Jesus and Mary,  
Sister Germaine Stadler, olvm