

October 9, 2010

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Fidelis Roels died at 6:00 A.M. on Thursday October 7, 2010, at Holy Family Health Care Center, Victory Noll. Her death was expected. Sister Fidelis was in Hospice and had been kept comfortable. During the past week she was almost always asleep when the sisters visited her. The nurse had looked in on her shortly before she died. When she returned Fidelis had gone home to God. Her entrance into eternal life came on the beautiful feast of the Most Holy Rosary, which at one time had been called the Feast of Our Lady of Victory. It was a beautiful sunny, fall day when Mary took her home.

Sister Fidelis was born in Fairbault, Minn. on November 5, 1915 to Felix and Julia Van Thomme Roels. Her parents and two sisters, Josephine Cunningham and Helen Soule, preceded her in death.

Fidelis entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 28, 1941. She made her first Vows on August 5, 1944 and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1950 at Victory Noll. She served in the Missions in California, Nevada, Michigan, Utah, Texas, Arizona, Indiana, and at Victory Noll. In her earlier years in Religious Life, Fidelis was engaged in Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. Later however, she discovered her first love was nursing. In 1968, Fidelis received her certification as an LPN from Purdue University, Hammond, Ind. After receiving her LPN, Fidelis served in two hospitals in Indiana, St. Catherine's Hospital in East Chicago where she took a Pharmacology course for Licensed Practical Nurses, and Mary Mercy in Gary. She also served as an LPN at Mercy Hospital in Port Huron, Mich. After this, Sister served as an LPN for our sisters in Holy Family for a few years before going to Mathis, Texas, where she ministered as a Visiting Home Health Nurse and Pastoral Minister for nine years. Sister Fidelis also moderated a very successful Youth Club while in Mathis. When Sister Fidelis left Mathis for a new mission, the pastor, Father Garcia Hernando, wrote a letter to the Congregation. In this letter he states, "It was a great loss to us when Sister Fidelis left our Parish." He shared in this letter that she was a dedicated and a very good Home Health Nurse. She served the sick, the elderly, and the needy of the area, and was always available when needed. Sister Fidelis was loved by everyone. After leaving Mathis, Sister Fidelis ministered as a nurse at the Children's Home in Houston, Texas, called Casa de Esperanza for three years. Here she worked with children who had AIDS. Fidelis had great compassion and love for these Infants who were born with HIV. Her compassion and love extended to women who were abused, so her heart took her to Redlands, Calif., where she worked as a nurse and confidant to abused women and their children at Bethlehem House. For the next six years Fidelis was involved in an endeavor and ministry that became one of the most meaningful joys of her life. She was part of the founding days and considered a co-founder with Sister Kathleen Quinn, PHJC, and Sister Barbara Kuper, PHJC of Nazareth Home in East Chicago, Ind. Nazareth Home is a mission of love that is sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. It is a foster home for children with medical problems, who are also the victims of dysfunctional families. Sister Fidelis was the legal guardian of these children. She lived at Nazareth Home with the children. She became a foster mother to these babies, some of whom were born addicted to cocaine or alcohol. Her great joy was to comfort and love them. From 1997-1999 Fidelis was a core member of the Victory Noll Center in Littleton, Arizona. Here she was engaged in ESL and Religious Education Ministry.



In 2000, Sister Fidelis retired at Victory Noll. She was active and volunteered her services in a variety of ways. She helped in the pharmacy and laundry, and was a loving, caring presence to all the sisters. She was especially attentive to the sisters on third floor and those with any physical disabilities.

At the Vigil on Friday evening, Sister Kathleen Quinn, PHJC, shared with us what a blessing Sister Fidelis was to Nazareth Home. She said, right from the beginning Fidelis went with her looking for a place to establish the Home. After they found a place and Sister Fidelis moved in, she was a compassionate presence to the babies and children as their legal guardian, and to the staff that worked with her. Sister Grace Marie Samblanet recalled for us a chronology of all the places Fidelis had served so tirelessly and with such great love as an LPN. She said Fidelis was in love with her life's work. Grace Marie said that in addition to having licenses in Indiana, Michigan, Texas, California, and Arizona, she also obtained a state license in EMT services in Mathis. Grace Marie concluded, "As Jesus wanted the little children to come to him, so Fidelis wanted the little children to be loved and healthy. She was always available for them." Sister Irene DeMeulenaere shared that Sister Fidelis and Sister Barbara Kuper, who was the House Mother at Nazareth Home, lived and worked very closely together. Sister Barbara was out of the country when Sister Fidelis' condition worsened. She was kept advised through e-mail. On her return she called Irene to check on Fidelis, and in two days was here to visit. When told that Sister Barbara was coming, Fidelis was very happy. Fidelis was very ill but perked up when Barbara came into the room. They had the best visit, and Fidelis asked Barbara about some of the volunteers who worked at Nazareth Home. Sister Dorothy Anne Lengerich shared that Sister Fidelis always showed great concern for the sisters at Victory Noll. She said that Fidelis, without being asked, began to bring Dorothy Anne's mail over each day and leave it in her rollator in the tunnel. Dorothy Anne was so grateful for this act of kindness. Both Sisters Mary Helen Rogers and Patricia Knapp were in the Novitiate with Fidelis, and spoke of her as kind and caring, and a great person to live with. Neither of them lived in the missions with Fidelis, but were interested in hearing of the wonderful service she was giving to the needy and disadvantaged, especially the babies with HIV. Sister Mary Helen ended by saying that Fidelis gave joy to the lives of so many, and many will remember her with love and gratitude. Mary Helen said, as Fidelis enters into eternal life, she likes to think of the hymn that says "Now enter into the joy of the lord with gladness, come into His presence singing with joy." She concluded, "Thanks, Sister Fidelis, for leaving us with so many cherished memories."

On Saturday, October 9, 2010 we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Some of Sister Fidelis' close friends were present. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Sister Barbara Kuper and Charlie Hobson placed the Pall on the casket and Sister Grace Marie placed the crucifix. Eileen McKern proclaimed the Scripture reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Dan and Mary Lou Zurowski brought up the Gifts at the Offertory. During the Homily, Father Fahey said that it can be said of Sister Fidelis, "Her life was something beautiful for God." God sent her into the world to imitate his love and compassion for the suffering people of the world. God's love is a motherly love. Sister Fidelis had a mother's love for the sick and forgotten children. Sister treated the children like a mother, and in so doing she reflected God's love to them. Sister Fidelis chose John 10:13-16 as the Gospel Reading. In this reading Jesus blesses the little children, and tells us we must become like them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Sister Fidelis exemplified this child like trust in God. Father said the Feast of the Holy Rosary was a perfect day for Sister Fidelis to die. Jesus and Mary favored her. It was a sign she had won a victory, a victory she will enjoy forever.

After Mass we processed to the cemetery, where we laid Sister Fidelis to rest with final prayers, the blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn to our Lady of Victory, "We have a Holy Mother." A delicious dinner to celebrate Fidelis' life followed.

Thank you Fidelis for your faithful service to God's little ones. The One who you have loved and served now calls you to enter into the joy of your eternal inheritance. We will always remember you and ask that you pray for us.

Sincerely in Christ.



Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary