

July 2, 2010

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family, and Friends.

Sister Gertrude Salitrik died peacefully in her sleep at 2:00 a.m. on Saturday June 26, 2010, at Holy Family Health Care Center at Victory Noll. The Nurse had come to her room at midnight and found her awake and talking. At 2:00 a.m. she went back and found that Sister Gertrude had died; Gertrude had a very peaceful expression on her face. Sister Gertrude had been having problems with the weakening of her heart recently. About a month ago, she fell in her room and sustained a hairline fracture. She was receiving nursing care and responding well, but this was her time to go home after a long life of loving service.

Sister Gertrude was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania on March 2, 1911 to August Salitrik and Anna Bezila Salitrik. She had six siblings, two older brothers August and John, and an older sister Julia Lazar who preceded her in death, also two younger brothers Elmer and William and a younger sister Mary who preceded her in death.

Sister Gertrude entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on August 31, 1938. She made her first Profession of Vows on August 5, 1941, and Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1947 at St. Mary's Academy, Amarillo, Texas. Gertrude served in the Missions of Texas, Indiana, Michigan, California, New Mexico, and Colorado.

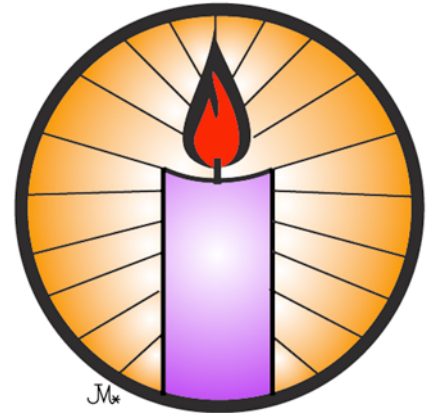
There is an interesting story about Sister Gertrude's entrance into the Congregation. She felt a call to Religious life and saw the ad about Victory Noll in the Our Sunday Visitor. She felt this was the ministry God wanted her to engage in. After corresponding with Victory Noll, she awaited her acceptance letter but never received it. Gertrude felt she was not accepted and was not going to pursue it further. Then a letter came in the mail from Catherine Ley (Sister Callista Ley) from Pittsburgh. Catherine had contacted Victory Noll to see if anyone in her area was going to Victory Noll so they could travel together. She was given Gertrude's name and address and wrote to her. After hearing from Catherine, Gertrude contacted Victory Noll again explaining that she had not heard from them. She received a letter from the Sister in charge of Admissions containing her letter of acceptance with instructions about when she should arrive and what she would need to bring. The Sister also explained that they had sent the packet before and were perplexed that she had not received it. God used Sister Callista's inquiry as an instrument in bringing Sister Gertrude to Victory Noll.

Gertrude pursued her college education at Victory Noll Junior College, and at Loyola College and Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. She also completed The American Red Cross Home Nursing Program given by the Huntington County Chapter.

Sister Gertrude ministered in the fields of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry throughout her Missionary life. She was recognized as having a unique gift in relating to young children. They were drawn to her like a magnet because she made them feel special. She was able to impart the love of God to them by reaching them at their level and giving them a listening heart and undivided attention. Likewise, Gertrude had a special gift when visiting the elderly and sick. She loved this ministry of visiting people in their homes or in nursing homes. She always had a listening ear and a word of cheer or comfort. She would leave them feeling much lighter in mind and spirit than when she first met them.

The following story speaks of an hour in her ministry close to her heart. The Christmas of 1942, during World War II Gertrude lived in El Paso, Texas. She had not been in the Community very long. The Sisters were called by the El Paso Armory to sing the Christmas Mass for the soldiers who were to be deployed overseas. Sister Dorothy Anne Lengerich was the pianist, and Sister Gertrude stood by the piano. She looked out and saw the hall filled with young soldiers, the Priest and Sisters all united in praising God in prayer and hymns. Many nationalities and languages were represented among them. Gertrude felt the unity, that at that hour they were one in ministry for the Savior whose coming they were celebrating.

Throughout her Mission life, Sister Gertrude enjoyed all the places of interest she was able to see in her travels. Some of her favorite were Niagara Falls, Carlsbad Caverns, the White Sands, the Ramona play in Hemet, Ca. and the Notre Dame vs. Air Force game especially since Notre Dame won.



Sister Gertrude retired to Victory Noll in 1992. She continued in ministry assisting Sister Mary Joan in the Physical Therapy Department. Mary Joan shares that Gertrude was an excellent and dependable assistant. She had a way of making the sisters feel welcomed and comfortable. Her great sense of humor always brought a smile or a laugh. Gertrude also volunteered making baby afghans for the gift cabinet, watered and cared for the plants especially the huge ferns in the dining room. Sister Gertrude also went to help take the census in South Bend and at Notre Dame. While taking the census Gertrude met Coach Knute Rockne. She loved to tell Notre Dame fans among her family and friends about this encounter.

Sister Gertrude had requested that we not share thoughts about her at her Vigil. At the Vigil on Tuesday evening, instead of the sharing of memories, we prayed three decades of the Rosary. One represented the joys Gertrude experienced in life, another the cross or sorrows she embraced, and the third her glorious entrance into Heaven where she encounters Jesus Christ face to face and lives with Him in everlasting joy. After the Vigil service, we gathered in the dining room for sharing and refreshments. Here, family and sisters were able to share their memories of Gertrude. Martha Sommers, grandniece of Gertrude shared how she and her siblings looked forward to Gertrude's visits home. She would spend time talking and playing with them and teaching them prayers. Her night prayer with them, "Now I lay me down to sleep" ended with, "if I should die before I wake give my toys to brother Jake." Martha said Gertrude brought them fossils, rocks, and yellow jacket nests from her mission in California. Dorothy Lipps, Gertrude's niece, shared that when many of the sisters went back to their baptismal names Gertrude did not want to change from Leo her name in religion to Gertrude because there were so many Gertrudes in the family. Dorothy said that her grandmother was a midwife, and named the first girl she would deliver throughout the family Gertrude. Sister Mary Helen shared that the words Jesus spoke of Nathaniel "there is no guile in him" characterizes Sister Gertrude. She put on no airs, was humble, and had a great sense of humor and an interest in people. Mary Helen shared that Gertrude loved football especially the Notre Dame and the Denver Bronco teams. She said Gertrude did not understand that much about the game but did know a touchdown and reveled when Notre Dame won. She was delighted to go to a Notre Dame game with Mary Helen. Sister Mary Ellen shared that her decision to enter Victory Noll was largely prompted by her experience of meeting Sisters Gertrude and Pauline in Gary, In. before entering Victory Noll. Their witness of naturalness, joy, kindness and humor influenced her choice of our Congregation. Sister Marilyn said that Gertrude was a wonderful companion on the journey, and a joy to be with at all times. They journeyed 500 miles by car together, and after prayer Gertrude kept Marilyn laughing all the way.

On Wednesday June 30, 2010, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Members of Sister Gertrude's family were present. Her niece Dorothy Lipps and her husband Edward Lipps, her grandniece Martha Sommers, and her grandniece Sheri Bruno. After the sprinkling with Holy Water Ed and Dorothy placed the Pall and the Crucifix on the casket. Martha Sommers and Sister Lupita presented the gifts. The Gospel chosen for the Mass was John 14: 1-6. In his homily, Father Fahey shared that in this Mass we celebrate the victory of Christ over death. We also celebrate the victory of Sister Gertrude. She ran the race, finished it and won. It was a long race 99 years. She kept the faith and fought the good fight. She has now won her way into eternal life with God, something to celebrate. Father said, "I feel Sister Gertrude is present here. She had a special love for the Mass and the Lamb of God. I feel that if I asked her what to say at her funeral, she would have said, "Tell us about the Mass."

After Mass, we processed to the cemetery where we laid Gertrude to rest with the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and singing of the hymn to Mary, "We Have a Holy Mother." A delicious dinner to celebrate Gertrude's life followed.

Gertrude we thank you for your life among us, we rejoice that you are now with the Lamb of God who is your light and your salvation.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M.

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary