

November 9, 1993.

Dear Sisters and Associates:

MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD, MY GOD, - Words of Response at Liturgy of Christian Burial for Sister Jo Noreen Gildea.

A very peaceful death made these words ring very true to us as we took part in Sister's "last Mass" in our temporary chapel.

Sister Jo Noreen Gildea breathed her last at 7:45 Tuesday evening, November 2, 1993. Her long years of limitations and sufferings came to a close.

Sister Jo Noreen was the daughter of Augustine R. and Mary McCurry Gildea. She was born March 28, 1904 at Elkhart, Indiana. She was baptized at St. Vincent's Catholic Church and attended the parochial school. She graduated from Elkhart High School and was secretary to the principal of the school for some time.

Sister was received as a postulant into the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on November 1, 1942 and made first profession of vows on August 5, 1945. Her classmates recall those days and agree with the quotes on the memorial board that Sister Evelyn Marie had arranged in memory of Sister, "There was 'sparkle' in her eyes and in her laughter". She was a member of the Golden Jubilee Class of 1992.

From wherever Sister Jo Noreen had been missioned her stories were bubbling with the experiences and of the friends she long remembered in East Gary, Kendallville, West Lafayette, Michigan City in Indiana as well as other states of Utah, Colorado, Texas, Arizona and Michigan.

Sister Jo Noreen's keen mind was at work constantly and seemed so eager to learn more to continue becoming the missionary God had needed in His field. The range of courses she had taken attest to an enthusiasm that did not end with graduation from St. Joseph's in Rensselaer, Indiana, on June 2, 1968, with a Bachelor of Arts in theology, but continued during the summers.

Besides pastoral work and religious education in the missions, Sister spent a few years at Victory Noll in public relations.

In the spring of 1983, Sister retired to Victory Noll and helped with some household duties. In 1987, she moved to Holy Family Health Care Center but her health steadily failed. Tests showed a chronic brain syndrome with dementia. Because of this degenerative disease, for almost the last two years she was unable to speak. However, she always appeared to be cheerful and smiled frequently with any little attention given to her.

It was early in the evening when Sisters were informed that Sister Jo Noreen's condition was serious. Several Sisters (including those of her class living at Victory No11) were with her praying during the last quiet moments of life.

Victory No11 Sisters met the body at 4:00 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon and processed to the temporary chapel. Office for the Dead and rosary were prayed. Wake Service was at 7:00 in the evening.

Sister Jo Noreen's sister-in-law, Marguerite Gildea; her nephew, John R. Gildea and his wife; all of Elkhart, and her niece, Mrs. Cathy Swanton of Lake Bluff, Illinois, arrived for the Liturgy of the Eucharist on Thursday morning. Father Fahey offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and homily. He gave us a reflection: At birth not every baby is anxious to leave the warmth and security of the mother and enter this world. At death not every one is anxious to leave the security of this life for the unknown. The promises we have been given and the faith we have received to "fear not" make the difference. It was a bright, beautiful day for the procession to the cemetery. Father Fahey blessed the grave, led prayers and we sang, WE HAVE A HOLY MOTHER.

As on the memorial board, "An altogether delightful person who kept her quick and engaging smile right into retirement" - - we feel sure it was into eternity - Heaven. Thank you, Sister Jo Noreen, for that 'bit of Irish wit' you left with us.

Christ's Peace,

*Sister Marjorie Curran, O.L.V.M.*

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