

January 16, 2004

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates and Friends,

Sister Margarita Aragon was called by God into eternal life at 7:10 a.m. on Tuesday, December 23, 2003. Her death was very peaceful. Sr. Monica Ulibarri, a friend and companion since school days, was with her when she drew her last breath. If wisdom is measured by years of life, Sr. Margarita attained a great deal of it. She was 99 years old when she died.

Sr. Margarita was born on May 24, 1904 in Dilia, New Mexico to Fernando Aragon, Sr. and Julianita Gallegos Aragon. Her older brother, Frank and her younger brother Fernando, Jr. and sister, Lucia Aragon Carrillo preceded her in death. She is survived by many nieces and nephews. In her file is a 1921 photograph of her extended family (thirty-five persons). Margarita is identified in the blurred picture as a young girl with a big bow in her hair.

Margarita was eight months old when her mother died. She and her brother Frank went to live with their grandmother, Lucia Aragon, who died two years later. An aunt and uncle took them in. When that aunt died, her father married Loretta Marquez (an aunt of our Sister Mary Bernarda Marquez). Margarita was six years old. Her brother Fernando and sister Lucia were born of that union. Five years later, her stepmother also died. The family went back to live with the other grandmother, Felicitas Gallegos, in Dilia. The love and care of an extended family was a big help to Fernando Aragon, Sr. and his young children.

Margarita attended grade school in Las Vegas, NM and was taught by the Sisters of Loretto. In those days the sisters, in full habits, taught in the public schools in New Mexico. (That was later contested in a much publicized court case.) Margarita then went to Bernalillo and was a boarder at the high school staffed by the Sisters of Loretto. She graduated in 1925. If the size of the diploma is any indication (13 x 16), the graduates were very proud of their achievement. (Another diploma dated 1924, same size, was for "Natural Touch and Speed Typewriting." It had a picture of a young woman typing on a vintage typewriter, blinded by a newspaper across her face! Margarita certainly earned that, too.)

In the summer of 1924, Fr. Sigstein, our founder, came to see Margarita in Dilia. He had gotten her name from the pastor! He invited Margarita to join the Missionary Catechists of Our Blessed Lady of Victory and two years later, on October 22, 1926, Margarita did. (That same day, Maria Anita Gutierrez and Monica Ulibarri also entered and that afternoon, Bertina Espinoza joined.) On the application form was the question: "Will you be obedient to your teachers and superiors and will you strive to acquire virtue and holiness of life?" Margarita answered, "Yes." It was the beginning of her life of dedication to God and to God's people.

The first year of training was at Victory Mount in Las Vegas. Then she came to Victory Noll and continued her preparation from 1927-29. She took courses in theology, scripture, sociology, religious education, music, Spanish, etc. (Of course, she got an A in Spanish!) She made her first vows on August 15, 1929 at Victory Mount in Las Vegas so that her family could celebrate with her.



From there her missionary life led her to Gary, El Paso, Las Vegas, Chaperito, Santa Paula, Santa Fe, East Chicago, Lubbock, Brady, Hawthorne, Greeley, San Angelo, Callexico and back to Victory Noll. She spent the 74 years of her religious life in religious education, home visiting and visiting the sick in hospitals. Wherever she went, she brought joy. Her goal was to make others happy. She had a beautiful singing voice. Children were attracted to her because she was small in stature. (When her nieces and nephews were little, they all wanted to be taller than Sr. Margarita.)

She retired to Victory Noll in 1981 and helped with household duties, visiting the sick sisters and prayer ministry. She even joined a senior citizen's band that entertained in nursing homes and hospitals. She played the melodica. Towards the end of here life, when she was confined to a wheelchair and had very bad hearing, she would still respond with a big smile and sounds of recognition when someone greeted her loudly in her ear, "Buenos dias."

Sister Margarita's vigil service was Friday evening, December 26 and her funeral was Saturday, December 27. Her sister-in-law, Eva Aragon, wife of Fernando, Jr. was able to come from New Mexico for the funeral. Eva's daughter, Carmella Lee from Maryland, also come. Sister Margarita's two nephews also attended: Milo to represent Frank's family and Fred to represent Lucia's family. They shared many happy memories of Sister Margarita during the vigil.

There is a letter from Sr. Margarita, undated, that was posted on the bulletin board:

"I, Sister Margarita Aragon, wish to give thanks to each and every one of my Sisters for being so good to me, especially during my illness. In my illness when you visited me, please say a prayer or prayers - to my Saint, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque - make Sign of the Cross over me and please use plenty of holy water. My books are in top drawer of my dresser. ... Anything good I have, please give it to Salvation Army to be given to the poor - and anything that is no good, throw it in the garbage can. If any Sister wants any of my private devotion books, they can have them, with love to all and thanks to all of you for many kindnesses and deeds you gave me during my life. Please forgive me for all hurts and pains I caused to any of you during my life. I love all of you for all you did for me, especially for putting up with me.

Your Sister, Margarita Aragon

We love you, Sr. Margarita, and thank you for having loved us. You truly fulfilled Jesus' command: "As God has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept God's commandments and abide in God's love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:9-12)

Sincerely in Our Lady of Victory,

Sr. Melanie

Sister Melanie Persche, OLVN
General Secretary