

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
December 17, 1985

Dear Sisters,

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" Let her who hears say, "Come!"
Rev. 22:17

With the uplifting joy of Guadete Sunday around her, Sister Benigna Furst heard what Maria Boulding calls God's creative word "Come!" She heard the call clearly and responded quietly and peacefully to see Him as He truly is. It was December 15, 1985 at 4:10 p.m. in Holy Family Health Care Center when Sister Benigna left us with a little smile upon her face to begin her new life in Christ Jesus. The period of life-long becoming was over! She was with Jesus!

Sister Benigna had a long history of health problems. She survived three different types of cancer. Her left kidney was removed in 1975. In 1979, she fell and fractured her ribs. On August 7, 1981 while she was out for her early morning walk, Winchester came bounding up to greet her and in the excitement she lost her balance and fell, breaking her left femur. We remember the humor of that situation as she didn't want the dog blamed for her fall.

Sister has appeared close to death many times, but she always recovered sufficiently to return to live independently on the second floor of Holy Family.

Sister had many respiratory problems over the years, however, she continued to get around and in the past year even participated in events with the group of Sisters who called themselves, "The Eighties On The Go!"

In November of this year, Sister Benigna became very frightened and dis-oriented. She did not want to be left alone, so the Sisters living close to her would sit and talk with her. The nursing department decided that she could be more easily cared for on third floor. The change of rooms seemed to confuse her even more, but it was apparent that she was coming to the end of her suffering. She was unable to eat and breathing became difficult and at times labored. She asked Father Giles to come and see her each day after Mass. He comforted her very much. On Sunday, December 15, she was very calm all day. Someone was with her all through the day until her death. At 4:10 p.m. there were many of us with her as she went home to God. "Come!"

Sister Benigna spent 36 years of her religious life in religious education, the formation of postulants and novices and in administrative positions in the missions of New Mexico, California, Detroit, Michigan, Brigham City, Utah and Flemington, New Jersey. Sister returned to Victory Noll from Flemington to retire and engage in other ministries at the Noll. Since 1969, she has been engaged in prayer ministry - so dear to all of us.

The Furst family came from Germany with their oldest sons and settled in the small town of Corning, Kansas, a small town just 20 miles south of Seneca, the home of Sister Melita Schmitz. Corning is also very close to Sister Catherine Olberding's home town. Sister Benigna was born December 25, 1892, the youngest of seven children. Her mother died shortly after the family had moved from Corning to Oklahoma. One of Sister's brothers worked for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad and lived in Atchison. When Sister Benigna was eight, she went to live with this brother who put her in school at Mount St. Scholastica.

I have no way of knowing how long Sister was at the Mount, but it was through her contacts there that she became interested in the faith. She was nineteen when she received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist from the community chaplain, Father Matthias Stier, osb, of Atchison.

Later, Sister Benigna moved to Colorado Springs and worked as a finisher in a laundry. She belonged to St. Mary's parish and it was from there that she entered the Community on May 22, 1925 at Victory Noll. She made first profession of vows August 15, 1927 at Victory Mount in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Sister celebrated her Golden Jubilee August 5, 1975 and her Diamond Jubilee this past summer, August 5, 1985.

Sister Benigna's immediate family preceded her in death. She is survived by a nephew, Wayne Miller of Miami, Oklahoma and two nieces, Nellie Anderson and Oma Lea Hague of Cushing, Oklahoma. We were sorry that her nephew and nieces were unable to be present for the funeral.

Sisters Mary Schutz and Mary Agnes McInnis of the Home Visitors of Mary arrived Monday evening by bus. We were so sorry that they had to return home Tuesday evening because that made their arrival in Detroit at 2:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning. They both had engagements in the morning. We certainly appreciated their presence here. Sister Benigna was their novice mistress following Sisters Mary Louise Perl and Helen Flaspohler.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Giles on Tuesday at 10:30 a.m., who reminded us that at a funeral we see the true meaning of our Christian life and our hope of resurrection is placed in proper focus. Sisters Susanna and Agnes Clare placed the pall on the casket, Sister Mary Agnes McInnis gave the first reading and Sister Mary Schutz the second. Sister Carmen sang the responsorial psalm and Sisters Carmelita and Cordelia Marie brought up the gifts. Sister Virginia Schmit said the prayers of commendation at the end of the liturgy. Father said all the graveside prayers in the chapel because it was snowing quite hard. In spite of the snow, many of us walked to the cemetery where we stayed long enough to pray an Our Father and Hail Mary. We sang "Dios de Salve." I'm sure Sister Benigna didn't mind the repetition.

As we returned to the house from the cemetery, I thought of a poem which Sister Benigna had in her room and which someone had brought to my attention. It spoke to me of Sister Benigna. I would like to share it with you -

God, make me brave
let me strengthen after pain,
As a tree strengthens after the rain,
shining and lovely again.
As the blown grass lifts, let me rise
from sorrow with quiet eyes,
knowing Thy way is wise.
God, make me brave - Life brings
such blinding things!
Help me to keep my sight,
Help me to see aright -
That out of dark - comes light!

We thank you Sister Benigna for your example of fidelity and all that you have meant to us, and again we thank the Father for the reflection of his love expressed in this quiet and reflective woman.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Germaine Stadler