

October 7, 2009

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Theresa Egidy went peacefully home to God at 11:30 a.m., on September 26, 2009 at Holy Family Health Care Center, Victory Noll. The Sisters had just finished a Communion Service and most were still in chapel when we were told of her death. Sister Marilyn had just left her bedside to attend the Communion Service and Theresa was sleeping peacefully at that time. The nurses were with her at the time of her death. Sister Theresa was 101 years old. We had been keeping vigil on and off for two weeks prior to her death. Theresa would rally at times and even be in her wheelchair. She would give each one who visited a beautiful smile and tried to communicate with them. She indicated strongly when asked that she wanted to go home to God. Finally she became bedbound and was in a deep peaceful sleep most of the time. In addition to her many years, Theresa had a stroke a few years ago and had several physical problems.



Sister Theresa was born May 19, 1908 in Greeley, Kansas to Adolph and Josephine Egidy. She had one older brother, Frank and four younger siblings. Mary, Louis, Martina, and Ralph. Sister is preceded in death by her sister Martina Rues and her brothers Frank Egidy and Ralph Egidy. She is survived by her sister Mary Oswald of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, and her brother Louis Egidy of Greeley, Kansas.

Sister Theresa entered the Congregation on February 11, 1932. She made her first profession on March 25, 1935 and Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1940 in Redlands, California. Theresa states that her Missionary spirit was instilled in her as a young woman in her hometown of Greeley, Kansas by the Ursuline Sisters. In Greeley, she did much volunteer service until at age 24 she went to Victory Noll to become a Missionary Sister. Theresa served in the Missions of Arizona, California, Colorado, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. Her primary ministry was catechetics. She taught both children and adults about the good News of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Faith with great enthusiasm, joy and zeal. Sister recounted how she worked many years with migrants teaching both children and adults. She provided classes for adults entitled "*How to Teach Religion in the Home and Classroom.*" In describing some of the places she taught, she mentioned garages, under a tree, in mission chapels and "even in a mortuary." She told how the children were scared and asked, "Is there a dead man here?" Sister assured them, "It is not the dead who cause the problem, it is the live ones who give the trouble."

In 1989, Sister Theresa was named "Woman of the Year" In Holbrook, Arizona. Sister ministered in Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Holbrook. She was called one of the community's "unsung heroes." Theresa was honored because she was always there for one and all in the area. She faithfully visited the Senior Center and Extended Care. She reached out to the homeless and needy when they sought food or shelter and tried to meet their needs. She brought hope, encouragement, and confidence to many. Holbrook, a town that cares showed this by presenting this "woman of the year" award to Sister Theresa.

One accomplishment that Sister Theresa was very proud of was her enthusiastic and passionate promotion of solar oven cooking. Since age 80, she had a real interest in this environmentally-friendly way of cooking. She built her first solar oven in 1988 out of a cardboard box, aluminum foil, and a small window pane. She cooked meatloaf, roast, potatoes, carrots, as well as delicious desserts. She guaranteed they would never burn. Theresa went to schools, clubs and food dispensaries extolling the value of solar ovens in saving time, expenses and in utilizing the natural resources of solar heat. She said that this solar oven is a Godsend to poor people around the world. A fold-up unit has been devised that can be used by the homeless. We have been made aware that a group of women in the United States sent three hundred of these ovens to Darfur. This not only helped the poor women in cooking, but also kept them from having to search for firewood outside the camp where terrorists would often attack them.

After fifty-three years in the missions, Sister Theresa came home to Victory Noll in 1991. However, her ministry work continued. She gave private instructions in the Faith to children, and visited three nursing homes each week for 10 years. She developed many meaningful relationships through these visits and touched many with her loving heart and beautiful smile. One precious relationship that she made was with a 40-year-old woman named Donna. It was thought by doctors when Donna was a baby that she was seriously mentally challenged. However, Donna had cerebral palsy and was highly intelligent. Sister Theresa realized this and began giving her instructions so that she could receive First Eucharist. Donna and her parents wanted

this greatly but did not think it possible. Donna celebrated her First Holy Communion in Our Lady of Victory Chapel, Victory Noll with family and friends and a grateful Sister Theresa present. Donna went peacefully home to God sometime later. Her parents John and Mary Sellers came from Toledo, Ohio to be present for Sister Theresa funeral. Donna's sister and her two small children came in the afternoon to visit and pray but were unable to attend the Vigil or funeral.

On June 14, 2000, Sister Theresa was chosen "Senior Volunteer of the Year" for the Northeast Indiana area. Theresa was chosen out of nine counties' contestants. She received the award at the annual Kiwanis Senior Picnic at Franke Park in Fort Wayne, Indiana. On August 10, 2000, she was the honored guest for Senior Day at the Indiana State Fair. Sister was chosen because of her example. At the age of 92, she still volunteered to help those in need of encouragement and support.

Theresa also had a great love for her sisters and community. Before her stroke, she would assist those more disabled than her, carrying their trays at dinnertime, offering encouragement and words of support. She would participate joyfully in activities and games in the Sister Camilla Center and looked forward to the community sing along on Thursday night. Until a few weeks before her death, she was at the sing-along smiling and showing her interest as the songs were played and sung.

She had a special love for God's creatures, especially dogs and asked to hold and pet Kali whenever Sister Rose Anthony visited with Kali. In her room, she had a lovely picture of herself with one of the visiting dogs on her lap and would smile whenever she saw the picture.

At the vigil on Tuesday evening, Sisters shared about Sister Theresa's beautiful and generous spirit and untiring zeal. Sister Rosanne Palmer shared that she visited Theresa in Arizona before she entered and was inspired by her smile and spirit. Rosanne said, "She gave me that smile right up to a couple of days before God called her home." Sisters Carmela and Martha spoke of her passion and promotion of solar oven cooking and shared how Sister Theresa's grandnephew was inspired by her to work on a solar powered car when he was in college. Sister Lucy Marie shared that during her first years in the Missions, Sister Theresa was her superior in El Paso, Texas. She was supportive and provided all the time and materials Lucy Marie needed to prepare her first Catechist Training classes, a challenging assignment for a second-year professed Sister. Sister Grace Marie said that Theresa had worked on two albums of the history of her missionary life. These two albums are in our archives.

On Wednesday, September 30, 2009 we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Members of Sister Theresa's family were present. Her niece, Dorothy Evans and husband Tim Evans from Wichita, Kansas, her nephew Gerald Rues and wife Joni Rues from Wichita, Kansas, her grand nephew Aaron Rues from Indianapolis, Indiana and her grand nephew Nathan Rues and his wife Brenda Rues from Fishers, Indiana. Members of her family participated in the Liturgy by placing the Pall on the casket and presented the gifts at the Offertory. During the homily Father Fahey said that Sister Theresa's life was a living of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as proclaimed in the Gospel for her Mass, Matthew 25: 1-40.

After the Mass, on a sunny but chilly day we processed to the cemetery. There Sister Theresa was laid to rest with the final prayers, 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 Theresa's life followed.

Sister Theresa, "you have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have won the victory." Now, a crown of glory awaits you given to you by Jesus whom you have loved and served as a Victory Noll Missionary Sister for more than seventy-five years. Thank you Theresa, for being our faithful companion on the journey. Pray for us in your heavenly home.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM
General Secretary