

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana 46750
September 10, 1973

Dear Sisters

Peace and joy to you in the Holy Spirit!

Once again Our Blessed Mother took a Victory Noll Sister to heaven on her feast day. Sister Aurelia Jane McMahon died at 8:45 in the morning of the Nativity of Mary, September 8. Her death was beautiful, the kind we all hope to have when our own time comes.

Sister had suffered from leukemia for twenty-five years, but it was not until three years ago, in the summer of 1970, that she retired from active work. Like all of our retired Sisters, she took advantage of the wonderful opportunity of having time for more personal prayer and spiritual reading. She also continued her lifelong practice of professional reading, her two favorite periodicals being America and Hospital Progress. She had always followed the activities of the Catholic Hospital Association of which she was one of the first members. She often told us of its beginning under her friend Father Alloysius Muench, who later became Bishop of Fargo, then Nuncio to Germany and a Cardinal of the Roman Curia. Sister Aurelia kept up her keen interest in all community affairs. Even this past summer, weak as she was, she sat in on the courses in Scripture and theology, and of course she always attended community meetings.

Sister expressed all this in a letter to her loved ones written in October 1971, a letter she asked us to keep with her private papers because in it she informed her people of her decision to donate her body to research. She began by telling them about the beautiful fall we were enjoying. Then she wrote: "To me all this is a part of growing older and becoming more infirm; not lessening other interests but rather having them become more meaningful. It is a time to meditate and to look forward to what is yet to come, with joy and peace."

The privilege of donating her body to science was something she valued very much, for, as she recalled in this same letter, she had been concerned with health services since 1910 and had reason to marvel at the progress of medical science since that time. She then quoted the words of Pope Pius XII who said many years ago: "A person may will to dispose of his body and to destine it to ends that are useful morally, irreproachable and even noble. One may make a decision of this nature with respect to his own body with full realization of the reverence which is due to it. This decision should not be condemned, but positively justified."

When Sister gave us this letter, she wrote at the end of it: "Sister, this completes the plans for my final and joyous journey. It is good to be here at Victory Noll while waiting and preparing for heaven."

During the past three years Sister was in and out of the hospital a number of times. She submitted to many treatments and to blood transfusions. The Lord granted her wish to die here at Victory Noll among her Sisters. True to form, she did not go to bed until ten days before her death. On August 29 Sister went to breakfast but was too weak to stay through the meal. She came back to her room and finally went to bed. Father Tom came that afternoon and once again Sister received the sacrament of penance, the sacrament of the sick, and Holy Communion - this time as Viaticum. She had the wonderful happiness of being able to receive Holy Communion every morning until the day of her death.

As the days went by, Sister's sufferings became more intense, but she met them with her usual fortitude and dignity. She remained conscious to the end, though during the last few hours she suffered excruciatingly. Father Tom came over from the friary a little after seven Saturday morning and remained with her until she died. Nearly all of the community was present also. We sang hymns, prayed spontaneously, and Father prayed once

again the ritual prayers for the dying and gave Sister the last blessing and absolution. After she had breathed her last we had a special little ceremony around her bed, incorporating in it the laying of the pall over her body, since the remains would not be present for this at the Mass.

Sister Aurelia Jane Fitzgerald McMahon was born on August 4, 1889, in Marshfield, Wisconsin. She graduated from Cook County Hospital School of Nursing, Chicago, in 1910, and later took more studies at Milwaukee County General Hospital and at the University of Wisconsin in Racine where she specialized in Public Health Nursing. She was a widow when she entered Victory Noll in the fall of 1928. She was professed April 4, 1932.

Nearly all of Sister's life was spent in health services. She was infirmarian, taught first aid and hygiene during the years from 1928 to 1940. She continued to care for the sick during her time as mistress of postulants (1940-41) and of novices (1941-44). In 1944 she was appointed superior of our convent in Goshen, Indiana.

Four years later she opened our clinic in San Diego, and in 1961, the clinic in Tucson. Her accomplishments in San Diego and Tucson are almost legendary. In 1965, when the Arizona Daily Star singled out a number of women as outstanding in their various fields, Sister Aurelia Jane was chosen for her contribution to community welfare.

Many used to remark that she would have made a wonderful doctor. Her hands were the strong hands of a doctor. It happened more than once that she was right and the doctor was wrong, but she never overstepped bounds and "diagnosed" a trouble. Consequently she was held in the highest esteem by the medical profession.

Sister was deeply grateful all her life for the slightest favor anyone did for her. During her last illness her gratitude simply spilled over. When she could scarcely speak, she still would say, "May God reward you." Again we witnessed the devoted, unselfish care our nurses give to our sick Sisters. We always marvel at this, but we could not help think that the loving service Sister Aurelia Jane had given to the sick Sisters throughout her long life in the community and the compassion she showed to the sick poor came back to her a hundredfold during her own last illness.

A special Memorial Mass was offered at Victory Noll Monday, September 10. Father Tom was the celebrant and gave the beautiful homily. The Capuchin novices came and also several people from town. But most of all, it was a family affair. Those in the entrance procession, those who served as lectors, those who brought up the gifts, etc. represented Sisters in Sister Aurelia Jane's class, her former postulants and novices, and those who worked with her. The flowers on the altar were a gift from the St. Elizabeth Clinic Auxiliary in Tucson. Sisters from East Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Kendallville joined us, and we incorporated sung Lauds - Morning Praise - in the Eucharist.

Sister Aurelia Jane is survived by one brother, one sister, and many nieces and nephews. Her nieces visited her a number of times since she returned to Victory Noll, and all have kept in close touch with us as Sister's health continued to decline.

In the words of the final commendation of today's liturgy: "Let us also pray to the Lord for ourselves. May we be reunited one day with Sister Aurelia Jane and all our Sisters. Together may we meet Christ Jesus when he, who is our life, shall appear in his glory."

Devotedly yours in Our Lady of Victory

Sister Elizabeth Ann Clifford