



Victory No. 7 MERCEDES GUTIERREZ
Huntington, June 20, 1989
June 23, 1989

Dear Sisters and Associates,

"Come to me. . . and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart!"
Matthew 11:28.29.

Our dear Sister Mercedes Gutierrez went home to God this evening at 9:05 p.m. Tuesday, June 20, 1989 as her niece Maria Elena "Patsy" Roybal, Sisters Camilla, Lorraine, Kathleen L., Geraldine K., and Christopher were at her bedside praying. Sister Margarita Aragon had just finished the rosary for her and had gone to her room when Sister Mercedes died.

Sister Mercedes returned to the Noll from Las Vegas, New Mexico July 3, 1983 to recuperate from a fractured hip which had been repaired in Las Vegas. Sister lived on the second floor of Holy Family Health Care Center where she cared for herself with the limited assistance of her sister, Sister Maria Anita, who had returned to Victory Noll in 1984 to help care for Sister Mercedes. After Sister Maria Anita's death in December of 1986, Sister Mercedes seemed to do quite well for herself and walked to chapel and to the dining room. She continued to help herself until June of 1987 when she was transferred to third floor as she required more assistance in her personal care. Sister Mercedes continued to attend community functions and spent much of her time crocheting. She made lovely doilies and baby clothes and continued to crochet until just a few days before her death.

On June 16th, as some of the nursing staff were assisting her in dressing, she suffered a stroke. Sister Virginia Schmitt was called and Sister Mercedes called her by name when she came into the room. She did not respond verbally after that time, but was able to squeeze one's hand if this was requested.

Sister Mercedes was admitted to Huntington Memorial Hospital for extended tests which revealed a massive stroke. She was brought home from the hospital on Tuesday, June 20th around noon. The Sisters and her niece Patsy, took turns sitting with her to pray. Then, at 9:05 p.m. characteristically, Sister Mercedes died quietly and very peacefully, just the way she always lived!

Sister Mercedes spent 47 years of her religious life in the missions of Las Vegas, Holman, Santa Fe, San Pedro, Brawley, Redlands, Coachella, Ontario, El Paso, Flagstaff and Holbrook. During the 1940's, she also spent three years in the sewing room at VN.

Some years ago, Sister Mercedes mentioned to me that she really wasn't thinking of religious life as her vocation. It was only after Father Sigstein came to their home and invited them to think about a religious vocation, that she began to consider it. She became convinced of a religious vocation after she saw the Catechists teaching in Dilia.

Like her sister, Sister Mercedes also went to Victory Mount as an Aspirant from June 27, 1927 until October 26, 1928. She entered the Congregation from Sacred Heart Parish in Dilia which was a mission from San Jose Parish in Anton Chico, October 28, 1928 at Victory Noll. Because of poor health, Sister Mercedes was sent back to Victory Mount November 12, 1930. She made first profession of vows at Victory Mount April 4, 1932 and on March 25, 1933, she was sent to Blessed de Montfort Mission in Las Vegas. Sister remained there until the following September when she was missioned to Holman. It is interesting to note that twenty-two of the forty-seven years of Sister's missionary life were spent in Las Vegas.

Sister Mercedes was born March 9, 1901 in Colonias, New Mexico, the seventh child in a family of eleven. Her six brothers and four sisters preceded her in death. She is the last of her immediate family! She is survived by several nieces and nephews and also grand nieces and nephews. Maria Elena 'Patsy' Roybal and her daughter Kathy of Las Vegas arrived June 18, so they were present when Sister died. A nephew, Peter Sanchez of Pueblo, Co. was present for the funeral, as was a grand niece, Virginia Bacue with her children, Patrick and Stephanie from Dayton, Ohio.

The wake service was held at 7:00 p.m. June 22, 1989 with Father Leopold officiating. The readings were done by Sisters William Ann and Veronica Bradway. Father Leopold led the rosary and the service was ended with the De Montfort hymn.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Leopold. Sister Elizabeth Ann was the organist; the cross and candle bearers were Mary Cecilia, Mary Barbara and Lucy Marie; Kathleen L. and Mary Jo did the readings; Carmen sang the Responsorial and Alleluia verse; Angeline offered the intercessions; Margarita and Peter Sanchez brought up the gifts; Patsy and her daughter Kathy placed the pall on the casket.

Father Leopold began his homily with the words from the Preface of the Mass of Christian Death - "Lord, for your faithful people, life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven" In following Jesus, a religious makes a journey - all Christ's disciples make a journey. The journey ultimately ends in death. We follow Christ wherever He will go; there is no looking back - there are no conditions! It is not what we do; It is what we allow Him to do in us! Sister Mercedes left her home, she entered upon a journey to do all for God. It is now ended and she is rewarded with the Vision of God!

Sister Mary Louise's reflections of Sister Mercedes: "Born in 1901, to a family who loved her deeply, Sister Mercedes began her adventure of life in Colonias, New Mexico. Her adventure with the Society of Missionary Catechists began in 1927 when she went to Victory Mount as an aspirant. Mercedes followed her sister, Maria Anita, to this small, new and not well known congregation. It is remarkable to recall that five women came to our congregation about the same time, Mercedes, Maria Anita, Margarita Aragon and Monica Ulibarri and all from the tiny little town of Dilia, New Mexico and Bertina Espinosa from nearby Ocate.

Over the years, despite her frail health, Mercedes' adventure took her not only to Indiana, but to California, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico.

Sometime ago, I recall reading something to the effect that, even though we may not be able to remember or be conscious of all that has affected us, we ARE all that we have experienced. As someone put it, "we are full of our own days!" The relationships, experiences and adventures we have during our life don't just pass away, they become essential to who we are, a part of the fabric of our lives. Looking back over our life and remembering is a way of finding a pattern or design of our lives. Often we don't have the time or take time to remember as we should until we are older. Remembering then becomes important to us not just so that we can re-live the past, but so that in faith, we can recollect our lives before God.

Sister Mercedes was blest, as many of our sisters here at Victory Noll are, with time to do this remembering and recollection with others and with God. She was blest to be able to share time and remembering with Sister Maria Anita while the two of them helped one another and deepened their relationship and devotion to one another. I'm sure that together they recalled both family events as well as community and mission adventures and together these two women both charmed us and challenged us with their generosity of spirit, modesty, and graciousness.

Paradoxically, as we grow older and have more time for remembering, we often find that our ability to remember details is slipping away. Maybe, no longer distracted by details, this loss helps us to focus on the meaning of these events and prepares us even better for our final adventure, the adventure through death, the adventure which introduces us to a new and everlasting adventure in life.

The dedication and beauty of Sister Mercedes' life seemed to shine through her quiet modesty. Though we will miss our diminutive Sister, who lived a long full life despite her frail health, it is important for us to recall something of the adventure of her life, not only because it is bound to our lives, but because without Sister Mercedes, her family, we sisters and our Congregation would not be nearly so blest. So, we remember Sister's life with us and we celebrate her new adventure into the fulness of life."

Again, we thank and praise God for the reflection of his love in this quiet, gentle woman who endeared herself to all of us by her graciousness. "May the angels lead you into paradise. May the martyrs come to welcome you into the holy city, . . . may the choirs of angels welcome you . . . and may you have eternal rest!" Alleluia!

Always with love in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Germaine Stadler