

MARY EILEEN MASTERSON  
March 31, 1988

Victory Noll  
Huntington, Indiana  
April 4, 1988

"God indeed is my Savior; I am confident and unafraid."  
(Isaiah 12:2.)

Dear Sisters and Associates,

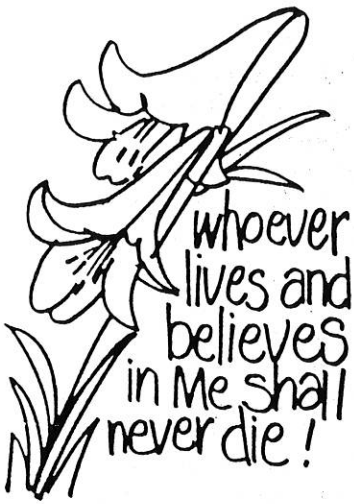
In the early morning hour of 3:10 a.m. on Holy Thursday, Sister Mary Eileen heard the call "Come!" and responded quietly and very peacefully to enter into new life with Christ Jesus. The life-long struggle of "becoming" and the pain of suffering was over. She was with Jesus!

Since 1961, besides an automobile accident and broken bones, Sister Mary Eileen has had three bouts with cancer. After the first surgery, she received cobalt treatments. In 1982, she underwent radical surgery for breast cancer and received chemotherapy following surgery. Last April 20, Sister entered St. Joseph Medical Center for tests and x-rays and the diagnosis was lung and bone cancer. She received radiation treatments to relieve the pain. Later, the treatments were followed by chemotherapy. Through this illness, Sister Mary Eileen expressed her yearning and desire to be with the Hispanic people she so dearly loved. In May of 1987, Sisters Rose Elizabeth and Virginia Schmitt took her to St. Paul's to be present for the First-Communion of the class she had prepared. On October 6, 1987, Sisters Gertrude and Virginia took her to St. Paul's again. This time it was to attend Father Carlos Rosas' farewell Mass before he left for Rome for a year of renewal. This time, Sister had to be carried into the Church, but she made it to be present with her beloved people!

Quite a number of times, Sister Mary Eileen worsened and we thought she would slip away from us, but she rallied and became better. During Holy Week, we experienced another one of those times and a sign-up sheet went up on Wednesday for volunteers. Sisters Mary Joan, Virginia Schmitt and Dorothy Louise had signed up for the early hours after midnight. When Sister Dorothy Louise came on duty, Sisters Catherine and Mary Esther were both very restless. Sister Virginia went in to see Mary Esther while Dorothy Louise went to see Sister Catherine. Sister Virginia just stepped back into the room when Sr. Mary Eileen went home to God. Sister Dorothy Louise came immediately to pray with Sister Virginia.

Forty-nine years of her religious life were spent in seventeen missions in the seven States of Indiana, California, New Mexico, Texas, Michigan, Arizona and Missouri. In 1972, Sister Mary Eileen was invited to work in the Ft. Wayne-South Bend Diocese. She spent five years in pastoral and migrant ministry in Decatur. She was a member of the Executive Board of Indiana Migrant Ministry from 1979 to 1980. She was also on the Health and Head Start Policy Board in Adams and Wells Counties including coordinating the Migrant Day Care in Bluffton. Since 1969, she was an associate member and in 1971 she became an active member of the National Migrant Worker Council. This small group of religious women becoming the NMWC, has accomplished much for the health care of the migrant workers. In 1980, Sister left Decatur to come to St. Paul's in Ft. Wayne as DRE and Pastoral Minister. She was deeply involved at St. Paul's when she had to return to Victory Noll April 23, 1987 because of terminal illness.

Sister Mary Eileen was born January 13, 1913 in Mineral, Kansas the oldest of four children. When she was a month old, her parents homesteaded in Colorado and when she was eight, they moved to Colorado Springs so that the children could attend Catholic school. Sister always felt she had a vocation to religious life and she prayed for guidance. One summer, she stopped at the parish church to pray and noticed the OSV's in the rear of the church. She was attracted to the ad which pictured a Victory Noll Catechist sitting beside the bed of a sick woman. Beside the bed was a barrel turned upside down for a table and a candle for a light on it. She was convinced! She went



home and told the family: "This is the life for me." "I want to work with the poor people in New Mexico!" Her Mother was sure she would starve to death and probably never have the money to write and tell them." Reluctantly, she was given permission to write. She did and was accepted! Sister entered the following February 8, 1932 from St. Mary's Parish in Colorado Springs and made first profession of vows at Victory Noll March 25, 1935. She celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 1982 and had a lovely celebration at St. Paul's April 24, 1982. Many of us were there to celebrate with her.

Sr. Mary Eileen's family preceded her in death. She is survived by two nephews, William Voss of Rahway, New Jersey and Edward Voss of Kent, Washington. Neither William nor Edward were able to attend the funeral. One of Sister's several cousins, Paul Carlson of Cassody, Kansas and his friend Theda L. Lockhart of Andover, Kansas arrived in time to meet the body at 4:00 p.m. Easter Sunday afternoon. We were so happy they could be here. Evening Praise of Easter was said after the body was placed in chapel. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Mauricio from St. Paul's arrived just as we were finishing Evening Praise.

At the wake service, Father Giles led the Night Prayer of the Church which was so appropriate that evening. Many parishioners from St. Mary's in Decatur and St. Paul's in Ft. Wayne were present. Sr. Florence Poulin, RSM, President of NMWC, was present for the wake and funeral as was Sister Dolores Marie Jehl, SSND of Ft. Wayne, and Sisters Judine Ebsch, CSA, Celeste Schultz, CSA, and Guistina Frigo, CSA of Decatur, Ind.

Fathers Giles Soyka, OFM, Cap., Joseph Gillig of St. Paul's and Joseph Pusateri of Immaculate Conception in East Chicago concelebrated the Mass. Camilla and Miriam placed the Pall on the casket; Florence G. and Mary Ellen D. did the readings; Carmen sang the responsorial psalm; Fr. Gillig read the Gospel, Virginia S. offered the prayers, and members of the parish council, Bernice Ocken, Jane Doswell, and Betty Rodriguez with Magdalene Smith, Sister's dear friend, brought up the gifts.

Father mentioned in his homily that the texts chosen for the liturgy spoke to us as if it were Sr. Mary Eileen, proclaiming her deep faith in Jesus, who was the core of her hope. "Through Isaiah," Fr. says, "she calls to us to imitate her missionary zeal: 'Among the nations make known God's deeds; proclaim how exalted is his name.' And if we draw back in fear or false humility, she encourages us: 'God indeed is my Savior.' 'I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord.' Then through John, he continued to show us where she received her inspiration, motivation, guidance and perseverance in her commitment. 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me.' 'Let him drink who believes in me.' With St. Paul, he explained how Sr. could bear her intense sufferings with patience and calm by making St. Paul's words her own: 'Now that I have been justified by faith, I am at peace with God through Our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'I know that affliction makes for endurance and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave me disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in my heart through the Holy Spirit who have been given to Me!' (Rom. 5:1-5) Father ended his meaningful homily by calling Sister Mary Eileen the "completely credible Christian" who made a difference while she lived and who continues to make a difference."

The final commendation prayers were led by Sister Mary Louise Rowney. In her comments, Sister observed that Sr. Mary Eileen's fidelity to her commitment to the mission of Jesus, led her to a whole hearted involvement with the people she served. "Sr. Mary Eileen not only respected and accepted the Hispanic Community's language and rich culture, but was accepted and respected and loved by the people she served. The presence of so many of you is a tribute to Sister's great and generous heart. As we come together to reflect on her life and celebrate the Eucharist, this Easter season invites us to recall the triumph of Jesus and our own triumph over sin and death. Let us rejoice in the gift of life everlasting that Mary Eileen now enjoys."

The words of Coleridge came to me again as we walked to the cemetery: "Earth with all its voices praises God!" It was lovely that morning. We thank you, again, Lord of Heaven and Earth, for the reflection of your love and goodness in this "completely credible Christian" who allowed Love's work to be brought to completion in her.

Much love in Jesus through Mary, *Sister Bernice Ocken*