

All for Jesus through Mary

LOUISE WILBERS
January 13, 1984

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
January 16, 1984

Dear Sisters,

". . . unless the grain of wheat fall into the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit."

John 12:24

Sister Louise Wilbers, olvm, died peacefully in the Lord last Friday morning January 13th at 12:30 o'clock a.m. on the feast of St. Hilary.

This morning, with the celebration of the liturgy for Christian burial, we laid her remains to rest, giving thanks to the Father for the reflection of his love in her and praising him for her presence among us with her example of faithfulness in her commitment to Jesus through Mary during the fifty-one years and four months of her religious life.

Except for some eye surgery in the late 1970's, Sister Louise's medical history was uneventful until 1979 when she underwent a modified radical mastectomy in St. Joseph's hospital in Fort Wayne. Shortly afterwards, she returned to Calexico and had her chemotherapy there. Each summer, she returned to the Noll and continued therapy at the Oncology Center in Fort Wayne and then once again return to her mission work.

In May of 1981, Sister Louise left Calexico to spend time at Casa Maria as a retiree. As her condition deteriorated, she had no choice but to leave Tucson and return to the Noll which she did in November of 1982. She continued with therapy with the cancer having metastasized to the lungs. Sister was also plagued with a constant jerking type motion of her arms and legs, yet she continued to take care of herself totally and even had her work assignment on the third floor.

Since the fall of 1983, Sister Louise became increasingly tired and slowly began to depend more and more on the nursing staff for help. On Christmas Eve, she had the beginning respiratory attack that started her final weeks of agonizing struggle until her death. From January fifth on, it was necessary to have one of the sisters stay with her around the clock. The sisters were more than generous with their time to be of service and also help the nursing staff continue with their day by day duties.

Thursday night, Sister Marjorie came to spend her hour with Sister Louise. At 12:20 a.m. Sister Louise's breathing pattern changed and the night aide called Sister Maria. Sister Maria, Sister Marjorie and Elzada Hensen the night aide were with Sister Louise when she died.

Sister Louise was an indefatigable missionary and worked hard all of her religious life. Forty-five years of her life were spent in the missions of New Mexico, Arizona and California. Her first mission was Grants, New Mexico and she must have loved it. I spent some time going through the old TMC'S and enjoyed her stories of the missions. Most of hers were about Grants. She told

of a ninety-year old woman who had made a quilt from very small tobacco sacks. She described the woman ripping the sacks apart, cleaning them and saving all the thread and then using that thread to stitch the blocks together. The work was so neat that the wrong side looked almost as nice as the right side. Even the yellow string that drew the top of the sack together was saved and crocheted into a dish cloth. In another instance, she told of a two-room house that was papered with pages from the Sears Roebuck catalogue, done very neatly, with dyed gunny sacks on the adobe floor and the familiar quilt of tiny tobacco sacks.

In another entry, I noticed that Sister Louise and Sister Mary Gertrude Siegfried began the work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in the diocese of Gallup with Grants as their starting point. Later, that starting point was Flagstaff.

Sister Louise was born January 2, 1903 near Jefferson City, Mo., the oldest of five children. Prior to her entrance to Victory Noll, she worked in Jefferson City doing office work and bookkeeping for about nine years. She entered the Community September 19, 1932 and made first profession of vows at Victory Noll September 8, 1935. She celebrated her golden jubilee August 5, 1982.

Sister Louise is survived by two brothers and two sisters: Sister Marie of Victory Noll, Josephine and Clarence of Jefferson City and Paul of Bonnots Mill, Mo. Because of the weather, the family was unable to be present for the funeral. However, on Saturday, January fourteenth, at one o'clock, a cousin, Reverend Michael J. Wilbers of St. Thomas, Mo. celebrated a Memorial Mass for Sister Louise at Immaculate Conception church in Jefferson City - the church Louise attended while she worked in Jefferson City. Here, the family, relatives and friends had the opportunity to pray for and remember Sister Louise.

Our liturgy for Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Jim Hast, OFM Cap., with the assistance of Brother Michael Wild, OFM Cap., Deacon at Sts. Peter and Paul parish in Huntington. Father Jim's homily was very meaningful as he used the imagery of the seed falling into the ground to die and bear fruit. He described the soil in which Sister Louise allowed herself to die as that of Jesus Christ, the Victory Noll Community with its challenge to grow, and the Church with all of its needs. Sister's allowing herself to die produced much fruit and touched the lives of many people. Father then shared the very beautiful comments of those sisters who shared their reflections of Sister Louise with him. He summarized her life as the servant's servant.

Sister Jeanette led the prayers of commendation at the end of the liturgy. It was cold but really a lovely day as we walked to the cemetery for the final blessing at the grave.

The cost of discipleship for Sister Louise was this continual living out of the paschal mystery in her life. For her it was a reality! It seems to me that her faithfulness is a beautiful tribute of her love and loyalty to the Father. She touched our lives and we are the richer for it. May she continue to intercede for us as we struggle to be faithful.

Lovingly in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Bernaine Staller