

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates, and Friends

SISTER MELITA SCHMITZ had returned to Victory Noll in 2004, and was living at Holy Family Health Care Center. For the past several weeks Sister Melita had been declining. She spent several days in the hospital due to difficulty breathing, and developed pneumonia. After returning home to our Health Care Center, she was unable to retain food and became weaker. During this time, Melita's brothers Raymond and Leon came to visit. This visit brought her comfort and joy, though the length of time that she could converse with them was short because she was so weak. Melita was alert and received the sisters' visits with graciousness, expressing gratitude for the visit or any little kindness offered like a sip of cold water. The last two days before her death she was no longer able to converse, but would open her eyes and try to say a few words. On September 4, 2008, the sisters began a round-the-clock vigil at her bedside. At 9:45 a.m. on September 5, 2008, God called Melita gently home. Sister Monica Haines, Sister Dolores McGinley, and Nancy Crunk were with Melita when she died. She was 84 years old.



Sister Melita Schmitz was born on March 30, 1924 to Frank and Augusta Droge Schmitz in Seneca, Kansas, and baptized on April 2, 1924 at St. Mary's Church in Seneca, Kansas. She was the second-oldest of six children: Edwin, who died in 1981; herself; Genevieve Nolte, who died in 2002; and Gerald, who died in 1952. She is survived by two brothers, Raymond Schmitz and Leon Schmitz.

Melita entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 28, 1943, and made her first vows on August 5, 1946. She served in the missions of California, Texas, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Sister Melita shared that at the time she was preparing to enter high school, she was thrown off her horse, Tony, and suffered a broken leg. While recovering, she began to have thoughts of becoming a sister. At first she dismissed the thoughts, but God pursued her during her high school years. When she read St. Augustine's "We are made for you O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You," Melita said yes to God at that moment, and experienced great interior peace. She began to write to several Congregations. When the letter came from Victory Noll, her search was over, and she said, "I found the place to which God was calling me." That day, she began her journey to and with Victory Noll and she said she never regretted her decision.

Melita was involved in the ministry of Religious Education with children and adults for several years. In 1962, Sister Melita wrote a drama, a play entitled "Tom Dooley, M.D." based on the life and works of Tom Dooley. It was presented by the high school students in Big Spring, Texas, and in Sebring, Florida. It was very well-attended and received in both places. Melita then took time off to earn a Masters Degree in Psychology, and in

Social Work, and was certified in Clinical Pastoral Education. After receiving these degrees, Melita ministered as Staff Psychologist at Corpus Christi State School, as Coordinator of Therapeutic Foster Care Programs, as a Clinical Social Worker at a Family Guidance Agency in St. Joseph, Mo., and at the Kansas Health Care Center in Hiawatha, Kan. She also served as a Hospice Chaplain before she retired and returned to Victory Noll.

Melita was always aware and concerned for those living in oppressive conditions. She wrote many articles in the local paper where she served on the evils of poverty and discrimination. She wrote of the plight of the marginalized and those suffering from inadequate education, lack of jobs, poor housing, and hunger. She was trying to raise the conscience of others to respond to the plight of the poor.

Sister Melita Schmitz was preceded in death by her parents Frank and Augusta Droge Schmitz, two brothers Edwin and Gerald Schmitz, and one sister Genevieve Nolte. She is survived by two brothers, Raymond Schmitz of Seneca, Kan. and Leon Schmitz of Baileyville, Kan.

Several members of Melita's family were able to come and celebrate Melita's entrance into eternal life with us. Melita's brother Raymond, his wife Joan and son Ray; her brother Leon and his wife Janice; and the son and daughter and their spouses of Melita's deceased sister Genevieve were with us for the Vigil. It was a very meaningful Vigil. Several shared of Melita's love, trust, kindness, and her many accomplishments. Mass of the Resurrection was at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 9, 2008. Four nieces and one nephew - children of Melita's deceased brother Edwin - joined the other family members at this beautiful celebration of life. Family members took part in the Liturgy as lectors and gift bearers, and her brothers placed the pall on the casket. At the cemetery we sang "We Have a Holy Mother". We each blessed the casket saying our goodbyes and giving our sister to the merciful love of God. Melita, thank you for sharing your life and gifts with us. Now we hear God say to you, Come good and faithful servant receive the reward that God has prepared for you, because you served and loved God and God's people so well.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Betty". The ink is black and the signature is fluid and personal.

Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M.
General Secretary