

May 6, 2008

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

SISTER CAROLYN LOUISE NEFF lived in Holy Family Building, our Health Care Center and was active as part of the Pastoral Care Team, serving our sisters in their retirement years. In 2004 her own health began to fail and two years later, she moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to receive nursing care. When her condition became critical, her one surviving brother, Tony, came to be with her. Carolyn Louise was cheered by his presence and her health improved. Tony was able to return to Nebraska. However, it became evident that God was still calling Carolyn Louise home. Tony came again and stayed with her until the end. She died peacefully at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, April 23. She was 92 years old.



Carolyn Louise was born on June 18, 1915 in Indianapolis to Otto Neff and Caroline Joerger Neff. She was the oldest of seven children: herself, Margaret, Sr. Mary Helen, SP, Bertha, Otto, Anthony and Joseph. In high school, her favorite subjects were bookkeeping, math and religion. She also learned to play the violin. The family owned a shoe store and after graduation, Carolyn Louise began working there. Before too many years, she became assistant manager. Her skills in math and bookkeeping were put to good use.

In back of her mind, Carolyn Louise must have been thinking of religious life for a long time because when she was 35 years old, she applied to enter Victory Noll. It was 1950 and fourteen other women of various ages also entered. They studied together and made first profession in 1953. As required before profession, she was interviewed by Archbishop Noll, probably the last class he interviewed before his death in 1956. Carolyn Louise's name in religion was Sister Carolyn Marie.

From then on, Carolyn Louise lived "out west." Her first assignment was Ontario, CA where she worked for two years. In 1955 she was missioned to East Los Angeles (Fetterly St.). It was the inner city and certainly challenging work. In June, 1956 her father died and in October of that year, her mother also died. Carolyn Louise went home both times to be with her family. It must have been a very difficult time for all of them.

Carolyn Louise continued working in Los Angeles until 1959. She then requested to make perpetual vows and wrote: *"God willing and with His grace may I have the happiness of publicly vowing myself for life to His service in this wonderful family, in which during the past eight years I have been the recipient of so many graces."* After that, she worked in San Pedro (1959 to 1961) and Solvang (1962 and 1963). In addition to her ministry in religious education, she was asked to be the assistant to the local superior (councilor) and the bookkeeper for the house, something she enjoyed.

In 1964, Carolyn Louise returned to San Pedro. Those were busy years. Besides her ministry, she was again the local councilor and bookkeeper. She began her college studies at Marymount (Palos Verdes) and Loyola University (Los Angeles). She studied Economics, Math Analysis, Finance Planning, Credit & Banking, as well as Philosophy and History and received her BS in Economics in 1970. Her natural mathematical gifts were honed into skills for the future.

In San Pedro, Carolyn Louise was the Director of Religious Education for "Mary, Star of the Sea" Parish. The city was multi-ethnic: Basques, Yugoslavs, Hispanics and many others. It was rich culturally as well

as geographically. The ocean was nearby; the mountains were not far away. Carolyn Louise spent 12 years in San Pedro and was very happy in her ministry. Her beautiful smile spread cheer wherever she went.

In 1976 she was transferred to Azusa, CA where she worked for 7 years. Carolyn Louise celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1978. St. Madeleine's Parish in Pomona honored her with a special Mass and reception. *"In behalf of the whole parish, we extend sincere congratulations to Sr. Carolyn Louise, our CCD Coordinator and Eucharist Minister, on this celebration of 25 years of religious commitment. Sister has been a gift from God to our parish and CCD program. We pray for long long life, good health and much happiness in the years ahead and in her relationship and association with St. Madeleine's."* (Parish Bulletin)

In 1983 she went to Victory Noll to be on staff. Carolyn Louise worked for three years as Assistant General Secretary and Assistant Sacristan. After that, in 1986, she was missioned to Cheyenne, WY. Two years later, she was again asked to come to Victory Noll. This time her work was in the finance department, in charge of bookkeeping, accounts payable and cash. Skilled in that field, she served our congregation in the finance department for thirteen years.

Her intellectual curiosity continued strong throughout her life. During the 70's and 80's, in the missions, she attended many classes and workshops in Scripture, RCIA, RCIC, Spirituality, Christology, even one on Positive Thinking! While working at Victory Noll, she took courses in her spare time: computer, needlepoint, astronomy, literacy training (to help tutor adults) and pastoral care training. Later on, she also enjoyed painting, in spite of her diminished eyesight.

After 58 years of loving service, Carolyn Louise's life was drawing to a close. When the end was near, we kept vigil with her. Her brother Tony, Sr. Gertrude Sullivan and Julie Ceravolo, a volunteer who had become her friend, were with her when she died on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We laid her to rest on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Tony was the only family member who could be present for the funeral. Julie Ceravolo, her husband Guiseppe and their two sons, Alexander and Raphael came, as well as Rita Johann Berg, a former classmate and her husband Jack.

Tony shared a poem that Carolyn Louise had sent him years ago:

*The world is as big as your Dreams; so never stop Dreaming.  
The future is as bright as your Hopes; so never stop Hoping.  
Your life is as full as your Heart; so never stop Loving.*

Carolyn Louise lived that advice to the full. She never stopped dreaming, hoping and loving. We will miss her smile and her loving presence among us. Her dreams are now fulfilled, her hope has been secured and her love has found fulfillment in the loving arms of God.

Sincerely in Christ,



Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVM  
General Secretary