



July 3, 1997

Dear Sisters:

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with
the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze set our hearts on fire;
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace
and mercy,
Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be light.

During the week of celebrating our 75th year as a community, Jesus called one of our members Home. Sister Mary Middendorf died Tuesday evening about 8:40 June 17, 1997 in Holy Family Health Care Center. Sisters Grace Marie Samblanet and Grace Golenberke were with her. We were enjoying the social following Solemn Vespers when Sister Lucy Regalado announced that Sister Mary had just died. The Sisters returned to the chapel to pray for Sister Mary.

Sister Mary was born December 31, 1923 in Covington, Kentucky to William Aloysius and Mary Elizabeth (Brueggen) Middendorf. Both parents are deceased. She is survived by two brothers: William B. Middendorf, Bethany Beach, Delaware; Richard J. Middendorf, Cincinnati, Ohio and two sisters: Dorothy T. Miller, Columbus, Ohio; Sister M. Ann Middendorf, OSB, Villa Hills, Kentucky and nieces and nephews.

Sister entered Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters congregation, October 30, 1947 and made first vows August 5, 1950. During the mission years, she ministered at different times as teacher, director of religious education, campus minister, pastoral minister, director of R.C.I.A. and liturgy in New Jersey, California, Arizona, Michigan, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois and Colorado. Service in this variety of fields required continual summer schools, workshops, study and Liturgical Weeks.

In the spring of 1996 Sister Mary came to Victory Noll for retreat/vacation. After a visit to her doctor she was surprised to receive a diagnosis of cancer. Sister had "crossed bridges;" she already had plans to "cross more." She with her usual spirit could win again. Diets, exercise, study and investigations were a part of her response to that unwelcome fact. Valiant as she was helping and supporting others, looking to better days for herself and trusting in her God, she was not winning. The gleam in her eye was dimming. This spring as her step was slower it was plain she was suffering but not a word of discouragement or impatience passed her lips. For about five weeks Sisters sat with her day and night. Sisters here for retreat/celebration took turns also and for every one it was a time of inspiration. Her continual simple prayer was, "Help me, Jesus."

Sister Mary was anointed by Father Thomas Fahey one afternoon while her brother, Richard and two sisters were visiting her. She called them to her bedside to participate in this liturgy.

The days of May were here and Sister Mary realized her presence with her classmates at their 50th Jubilee August 5th was becoming less probable each day. She chose May 25 for her celebration. She helped plan a liturgy. The family was invited. Her favorite hymn was practiced, Shine, Jesus, Shine. Sunday morning Mary's jubilee candle was lighted, 33 of her family members were present in the chapel. Mary was in her place, dressed for the occasion, sitting near the oxygen outside her door on third floor and in communication with the chapel. As Mass was closing, Sister Mary Ellen Descourouz carried the burning candle among us in the chapel, blessing us. Family and Sisters were reaching for the symbol. Then Sister Mary Ellen continued via the staircase to the Sisters in the balcony and on to our Jubilarian. Father Fahey, Sister Lucy, the family and some Sisters were following Sister with the lighted candle while the organ and voices were singing out, Shine, Jesus, Shine. Sister Mary greeted them with smiles of happiness and in a steady voice renewed her vows for all to hear. Father prayed, Sister Lucy spoke and then We Have a Holy Mother came loud and clear from chapel, balcony and third floor.

Sister had donated her body to science. Memorial Mass was celebrated by Father Fahey Saturday morning, June 21. About 180 Sisters were present, 18 members of the family and participants of the celebration. Father's homily about suffering closed with the thought, "Could it be that the suffering of Sister Mary these weeks was of more value in the Reign of God than all the other works being performed in the community?"

Sister Mary, you accepted the challenge. It was not your plan this time but you crossed the "bridge", won your crown and we are better to have had a part with you in this time of suffering.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Dr. Marjorie Curran
General Secretary