

June 17, 2009

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Pauline Wapiennik died peacefully at 3:45 a.m. on June 5, 2009, at Parkview Hospital, Huntington, Indiana. Sister Monica Haines was at her bedside at the time of her death. Sister Pauline went to the hospital on Tuesday evening as she was having difficulty breathing. The following day Pauline's niece Jaynellen, her husband Mic and Pauline's nephew Jim Stevenson visited Pauline. She was able to communicate with them by writing, since the oxygen mask made speaking difficult. Pauline was



cheerful and some of what she wrote to them caused laughter among them. Sister Priscilla was with Pauline during this visit. Our Sisters were with Pauline around the clock until God called her home. She remained conscious until close to the end. Sister Pauline had been in poor health for some time, suffering from heart and kidney problems. However, until Tuesday evening she had been active, available, and cheerfully served the sisters and community in many loving self-giving ways.

Sister Pauline was born December 6, 1920, in Gary, Indiana, to Paul Wapiennik and Agnes Micek Wapiennik. She was the oldest of four children. She had two brothers John and Paul, and one sister Irene. All preceded her in death.

Sister entered the Congregation on October 28, 1939. She made her First Profession on August 5, 1942 and Final Vows on August 5, 1948 in Redlands, California. Pauline served in the Missions of California, Michigan, Indiana, Vermont and Wyoming. Her ministry was primarily in the field of Catechetics as a Religious Education Teacher for children and adults. Pauline was also involved in many other ways through her compassionate presence. She visited the sick and dying, assisted at funerals, counseled the grieving and was available to serve wherever there was a need. She was loved and respected for her kindness, love, joy, and gentle presence.

Pauline was nine years old when her mother died, and Pauline and her sister Irene went to live in a home for girls under the care of the Carmelites in East Chicago, Indiana. Pauline made very close friendships there over the years, friendships that would last throughout her lifetime. She went to the Carmelites on her home visits, kept up correspondence, and received letters and phone calls from her friends. She would also have yearly reunions and visit with them when possible. Lou Martinez and his wife Helen were such friends, and Lou spoke at the dinner after the Funeral. He was raised in the Carmelite home with Pauline's brothers Paul and John in Hammond, Indiana. His sister Frances Ivey was at the Home with Pauline. They became like family. Lou spoke of the love and respect he and his wife had for Pauline.

Pauline spent 22 years of her missionary life in Ida, Michigan. Her sister companion was Sister Liska Monzaney, who was there 11 years before Pauline arrived. Pauline was involved in Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at St. Joseph's Parish. She loved the people and served them with great generosity and joy. It was during this time that she and Liska adopted two dogs, Dooley and Blackie, and a cat. Besides her great love for people, Pauline had a great love for all God's creation especially dogs, cats and birds. Pauline shared this funny story. She and Liska were making a home visit to a family they had never visited before. When they arrived at the house a friendly dog came running up to them wagging his tail. Pauline petted the dog and proceeded up to the door, rang the bell and a woman opened the door. After introducing themselves the women invited them in and the dog followed. The women asked them to have a seat on the couch, and the dog jumped up and sat next to Pauline. Towards the end of the visit the women said, "I must tell you, your dog is very well trained and behaved" Pauline and Liska greatly surprised exclaimed "he is not our dog we thought he was yours." It is believed that this dog was adopted by them and named Blackie. Blackie came back to Victory Noll with them upon their retirement.

After 22 years of loving service to God's people in Ida, it was time to return home to Victory Noll. It was hard for Pauline and Liska as well as for the parishioners when the Sisters made the decision to retire to Victory Noll. The Pastor, Rev. John LaCasse, held a farewell reception for them at the Parish. Approximately five hundred people attended. Father John said, "THE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED THE RECEPTION TELLS YOU HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT THEY HAD IN OUR COMMUNITY. They will be greatly missed." St Joseph's Parish dedicated a stained glass window of the Resurrection to Pauline and Liska for their ministry and service to the church. Sister Pauline also received a letter from Cardinal Maida, Archbishop of Detroit at that time. He stated, "In the name of the priests, deacons, religious, and lay faithful of the Archdiocese, I wish to acknowledge and thank you for your outstanding service, especially in the area of Religious Education and Catechetic." Pauline taught Religious Education until 1994, when lay people were trained to take over this ministry. Pauline continued at the Parish with her compassionate ministry of Christian Service until her return to Victory Noll in 2002.

At the Vigil on Sunday evening, many spoke of Pauline's sense of humor, her kindness, and availability to any one in need. Later, some of the sisters who lived on her floor shared how she would help them with any need they might have, and make them feel like they were doing her a favor by asking. She would decorate her door with beautiful pictures, inspiring sayings and jokes to cheer them. Pauline was always making up jokes or telling one she had heard, and she laughed as hard as everyone would at the jokes. Present at the vigil were two women who bring the visiting dogs to Victory Noll twice a month. They take them to Camilla Center for the sisters to enjoy. Pauline always received them and their dogs and stayed with them during their visit. One of the women shared how their dogs looked forward to seeing Pauline and showed great affection for her. At the end of their visit, Pauline would have them sit in a semicircle and give each one their treats. She said they will surely miss Pauline.

On Monday, June 8, 2009, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Members of Sister Pauline's family were present. Her nephew James Stevenson his wife Katie Stevenson, and his son Randall, her niece Jaynellen and husband Mic Keen, her grand nephew Kevin and his wife Jen Stevenson and their three children Alexis, Aidan, and Aubrey. Members of her family placed the pall on the casket, and

presented the gifts at the offertory. During the homily, Fr. Fahey spoke of the Christian virtues which we are all called to practice on our journey towards eternal life. Some virtues he mentioned were joy, peace, love, patience, and gentleness. Father said Sister Pauline exemplified these virtues in her life and is a model for us in living these virtues. After the Mass we processed to the cemetery where we laid Pauline to rest, with the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn to Our Lady of Victory, "We have a Holy Mother." A delicious dinner to celebrate Pauline's life followed. Eight Parishioners from St. Joseph's Parish in Ida were present and one man representing them spoke of their love and gratitude to Pauline and all the Victory Noll Sisters for their many years of faithful service to the people of their Parish. He said the sisters touched and influenced their lives as Catholic Christians. Our Associates Art and Eva Ortiz were present. Art shared how he had been instructed by Sister Liska, and attributes his growing in and keeping the faith to her positive influence. He had lost contact with Sister Liska, and learned that she was in Ida from Sister Rose Ann Kaiser. It was in Ida that he met Sister Pauline. Her faith, joy and love touched his life. He and his wife Eva felt very close to Pauline and Liska. They were like family to them. Sister Pauline's nephew James Stevenson expressed her family's gratitude for our love, and care for Pauline. He shared the same sentiment as others who spoke, that Victory Noll is part of their family.

Sister Pauline chose "Crossing the Bar" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson as one of the readings at the Vigil. I quote from the last stanza of this poem:

For tho' from out the bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.

Though we miss you Pauline, we rejoice that you now see your Pilot face to face, and are living in the radiant beauty of Jesus light and love. We will always remember you and know that you will pray for us.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M.*

Sister Betty Anderson, OLVM  
General Secretary