

October 20, 2010

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Mary Dolores Kotas came home from the hospital on Sunday, October 17. She had been admitted because she was having difficulty breathing. Mary Dolores wanted to die at Victory Noll, and we were most grateful when she was discharged and was able to come home. On Tuesday morning at 2:50 a.m., Sister Lupita was praying the Rosary at Mary Dolores bedside when God called her to Heaven.

Sister Mary Dolores was born in Chicago, Ill., on September 5, 1916, to John and Elizabeth Kocinski Kotas. Her parents and three sisters, Sister Regina Ann Kotas, Sister M. Letania Kotas and Helen Kotas, and one brother Walter Kotas, preceded her in death. She is survived by one brother William Szabelski.

Mary Dolores entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 28, 1942. She made her first Profession of Vows on August 5, 1945 and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1951 at Redlands, Calif. Sister Mary Dolores shares her vocation story. She states that her great love for Our Blessed Mother was instilled in her through the devotion that her Mother had especially for the Black Madonna, Our Lady of Chestohova. When her Mother was dying, she called Mary Dolores to her bedside and told her if she felt called to become a Sister, to please wait until her two younger siblings Bill age 8 and Helen age 11 had grown up. At age 13, Mary Dolores took on the role of mother in the household, doing all the domestic work, and caring for Bill and Helen besides going to school. During the war in 1941, her younger brother Bill told her he was going to join the Navy. Her older brother Walter told her if she still desired to be a Sister she should do so, and he and his wife would have her youngest sister Helen live with them. Now she was ready to pursue her dream of becoming a Sister and consecrating her life to God.

They had a Mission in her parish at that time, and the priest directing the Mission told her about the Victory Noll Missionary Sisters and their ministry. Mary Dolores felt that Our Blessed Mother was directing her to this Community, and she began the application process and entered in 1942.

She served in the missions in Texas, California, New Mexico, Colorado and Iowa. Sister Mary Dolores shares that the missions where she worked were very poor, and she remembers being hungry. The Superior used to divide the food among them, each receiving a small portion. She said she remembers receiving an orange as a gift. She ate the whole orange peels and all. She felt it was a grace to experience how poor people lived. Sister Mary Dolores served in Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. She had a great love for the poor and served them with gentleness, kindness, and compassion.

When Sister Mary Dolores lived in San Antonio, she used to travel with Sister Regina Ann her sister for their home visit each year. One summer Mary Dolores heard that Bishop Flores was sponsoring a Pilgrimage to Mexico City, to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She told her sister, "Let's go on the pilgrimage instead of going home this summer." She shares that when they went to Mass at the Shrine, Bishop Flores told them to meet him at the beginning of the walk. It was a special walk for the Pilgrims. Bishop Flores gave each Pilgrim a



gladiola that was about three feet tall. At the Offertory each one presented their gladiola to Our Blessed Mother and told her that the gladiola represented them, and symbolized the offering of oneself. Mary Dolores said that every time she saw a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe she remembered the Shrine and her dedication.

Sister Mary Dolores retired in 1996 and returned to Victory Noll to do volunteer ministry. She was an excellent seamstress and did beautiful work, and generously assisted with the sewing needs for the Community. She also was a gentle, prayerful presence and a loving companion to the sisters with whom she lived.

At the Vigil on Wednesday evening, Sister Millie shared that once upon a time Sister Dolores played the violin. It happened at Fetterly St. in Los Angeles. The sisters decided they needed to have some fun time to relax from their very busy mission schedule. One suggested that they play their violins together. Sr. Mary Dolores did not have a violin, nor did she play one. So they borrowed a violin for her, and Millie would teach her. Sister Mary Dolores did not quite catch on to the fingering, so they had her play some open string notes, and it seemed pretty good. When Mother Cecilia came on visitation, they played for her and she enjoyed it and had a hearty laugh, especially with Mary Dolores playing the open string notes as part of the "ensemble." They played "Silent Night" which was the first and last piece Sister Mary Dolores ever played.

Sister Terri Nederhiser sent an e-mail in which she describes Mary Dolores as a great and beautiful lady. She said that Mary Dolores was great support to their community group when they faced several difficult challenges. She said Mary Dolores never wavered in her conviction and determination but did so with peace and calm. Terri shared that Mary Dolores was very generous to those in need and she was always grateful for everything. She was very creative as she led the children and their parents in exercises in their Family Program in Keota, Iowa. When Terri had to travel to Cedar Rapids to take care of her mother, Sister Mary Dolores insisted on going to be a companion. One trip found them leaving the hospital at three in the morning. Terri said Mary Dolores refused to be tired and saw that Terri stayed in her lane and did not exceed the speed limit. Terri concluded by saying, "She will always be one of our greatest guardians as she joins her two sisters in God's circle of love. I am very lucky to have lived with such a great lady."

Sister Mary Joan shared that Sister Mary Dolores always had candy in her pocket. She did not eat it, but would give a piece to anyone who helped her. Mary Joan received a piece whenever she cut Mary Dolores's hair. Sister Mary Jo said her first year in Fetterly was easier because Mary Dolores helped her to learn household chores. She also assisted her with hints for good teaching as she began her new experience in ministry. Sister Dorothy Anne commented on Mary Dolores's beautiful gift and talent in sewing, and her generosity in offering it for the needs of the community. Sister Anne Veronica said she and Mary Dolores discussed the Bible together. She said she would often meet Mary Dolores getting on or coming off the elevator. Just before she died when they met this way Mary Dolores said, "We're always meeting here." Anne Veronica said, "I cherish the memories." Sister Martha shared that when she did the monthly article for the Victory Noll Web Site, it meant so much to her when Sister Mary Dolores told her, "I certainly love your Web articles."

On Thursday, October 21, 2010 we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Sister's brother William, his wife Alice, and their daughter Cheryl McGraw were present. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Sister Millicent Peaslee and Sister Mary Jo Maes placed the Pall on the casket and Sister Sharon Rose Eshleman placed the crucifix. Sister Mary Frances Bartsch proclaimed the Scripture reading from the First Letter of St. John Chapter 3:1-2. Sister Marilyn Schatz and Sister Rose Zita Rosonke brought up the Gifts at the Offertory. During the Homily, Father Fahey said that the beautiful passages of scripture that Sister Mary Dolores chose speak to humble, gentle people, and she was a gentle, humble soul. In the reading from First John 3:1-2, we are reminded that we are God's children and Heaven is our home. God wants His children to be with Him. We shall be like God because we shall see God. Sister Mary Dolores had this hope, which is now being fulfilled for her. While still among us Sister strove to be like God, to become holy in all that she did and said. Father said in

Matthew's Gospel again Jesus is speaking to the humble of heart. Jesus calls us to come to Him and He will give us rest, peace and forgiveness. Jesus is telling us to center our lives around Him. Gentle and humble people are nearer to God than the worldly wise, and God reveals Himself to them. Sister Mary Dolores was one of God's children. She is now with Jesus and her Heavenly Father.

After Mass we processed to the cemetery, where we laid Sister Mary Dolores to rest with final prayers, the 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 Mary Dolores life followed.

Thank you Mary Dolores for your gentle, loving presence among us. God has blessed you with countless gifts of love. We count on your prayers as you contemplate the goodness and beauty of our Loving Creator.

Sincerely in Christ,

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

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM  
General Secretary