

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
March 9, 1992

Dear Sisters and Associates,

"Teach us your ways, O Lord, and lead us in your paths."
Communion Ant. Friday after Ash Wednesday



Another victory of discipleship was celebrated when our beloved Sister Sophia Renkey died peacefully in the Lord Friday morning at 8:30 a.m. March 6, at Holy Family Health Care Center. We celebrate and rejoice in love made perfect with her entrance into new life with Jesus!

Sister Sophia returned to Victory Noll from Powell, Wy. in September of 1973. She had enjoyed good health for many years until degenerative arthritis and failing circulation caused her increasing pain and disability. Shortly after she returned to the Noll, she did volunteer work for the Cancer Society in Ft. Wayne. Then for three years she worked as a volunteer on medical records at the V.A. hospital in Marion. In 1976, she received a certificate in recognition of the 500 hours of outstanding service she had given. In 1977, she began working on medical records in the nursing department at Victory Noll. She continued this service until 1990 when she gave up her work to move to third floor where she could receive more nursing care. She continued some of her secretarial work in her room, writing community cards and answering letters. Sister was able to attend daily Mass and go to the dining room twice a day, taking much interest in community affairs. On February 26, she appeared to have had a heart attack and was taken to Huntington Memorial Hospital. Here she was diagnosed as being in congestive heart failure and having pneumonia. On March 4, Sister Sophia was well enough to return to Victory Noll. She received the Sacrament of the Sick on March 5. Early Friday morning, Sister became comatose. Sisters Lucy Marie and Monica Haines were at her bedside until 6:00 a.m. until other sisters came to pray. She became noticeably weaker and quietly stopped breathing at 8:30 a.m. Sister Lucy Marie informed us that Sister Sophia had died just before Father Fahey began the celebration of Mass.

Sister Sophia spent 31 years of her religious life in religious education and in administrative positions in the missions of Indiana, California, Texas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Vermont and Wyoming. She opened the Ontario mission. Sister was Novice Mistress at Victory Noll from 1947 until 1958.

Sister Sophia was born May 15, 1899 in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was the third oldest in a family of eight children. She entered the Congregation from Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament parish, Pittsburgh, February 9, 1929 and made first profession of vows, April 4, 1932 at Victory Noll. She celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 1989.

Sister's brother Melvin and his wife Betty, Melvin's daughter Betty with her husband Donald Martin and her niece Katherine with her husband Louis Golia arrived in time for the wake. We were happy to have them with us. After the gathering in the reception room Betty and Donald had to return to Chicago as Donald had to be present for a meeting at 7:30 Monday morning.

The wake service was the Night Prayer of the Church. Sister Francesca McGarry led the prayers. Srs. Helen Danenberg and Mary Rose did the readings. The wake service closed with the Magnificat and the song, "How Great Thou Art," as Sister Sophia had requested.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Thomas Fahey. Srs. Christopher, Evelyn Marie and Frances K. carried the cross and candles; Srs. Dorothy Louise and Florentine placed the pall on the casket; Srs. Callista and Veronica did the readings; Sr. Carmen sang the Responsorial Psalm and Alleluia Verse; Sr. Victoria offered the prayers of the faithful and Srs. Geraldine and Carolyn O. brought up the gifts.

Father Fahey spoke of the importance of considering death. It helps us to consider God, our faith and our purpose in life. Death is the door to our Father's home. The latchkey is Christ's resurrection. It is always good to travel to see different places, people and things; but there is always a time to come home. How good it is to come back home! Our life's journey is the same - there comes a time to go home. Sister Sophia no doubt said last Friday when she reached the shore of eternity: "It is good to be home at last!"

In her eulogy, Sister Mary Louise said: " Our Sister Sophia had a long and full life. Sixty three of her ninety two years were lived as a Missionary Sister of O.B.L.V. During those years, Sister touched many of us in very significant and lasting ways. I am sure that some of you have reminisced about how Sister came to our congregation with her insurance company co-worker and good friend, our Sister Benedicta. Our congregation was only seven years old at the time and to make a decision to enter such a young and struggling group took courage, faith and a real spirit of adventure. This spirit permeated Sister Sophia's missionary life over the years to come. Wherever she ministered and whatever she did, she did wholeheartedly with enthusiasm.

Sister Sophia was one of the first three sisters of our congregation that I met. It was a brief meeting at a school vocation day, but a significant one for me since I declared to three sisters my intention of becoming a Missionary Catechist. Only afterwards did I realize that Sister Sophia had something of an unfair advantage. I had no idea that she was the novice mistress and would be my formation director for three years, while she must certainly have been taking a good look at me and wondering just what kind of a postulant and novice I would make.

As we know, Sister served the congregation in this important position for 11 years. During our recent Chapter we realized that Sister Sophia had directed 24 of the 28 delegates present. That must be some kind of a record!

There are several things that I especially recall about Sister. During the novitiate years she expected a great deal from those in her charge BUT she demanded no less of herself. She loved a good time. Her own vivid imagination often contributed to the antics and fun and she probably laughed with enjoyment more than anyone. She always spoke of her family members with great pride and love and we are deeply grateful that Sister's family is represented here today. We value your presence with us.

The last thing that comes to mind about Sister Sophia is the enjoyment singing always brought to her. Often times, her strong clear voice could be heard above all others in chapel or as she carried the 80's ON THE GO group as they entertained us all. I believe these lines from an African-American spiritual and an old Southern folk hymn are very appropriate for Sister and important for us as we remember her:

I'll be singing up there:, Oh! come on up to bright glory, I'll be singing up there.
If you miss me singing down here, : Oh! come up to bright glory, You'll find me singing up there. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, : And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be, And through eternity, I'll sing on.:"

After the service in the cemetery, Sister's family left as they had an eight hour drive back to Pittsburg. We were sorry that they could not enjoy dinner with us.

Again, we thank God for the reflection of his love in this indefatigable, disciplined Missionary - who loved life and had an intense love for this Congregation.

(: = repeat) Song

Prayerfully,

Sister Germaine Steiner O.B.L.V. M.