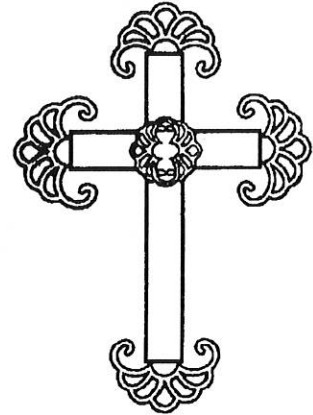


November 20, 2006

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

SISTER MONICA ULIBARRI celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in style! The table in the dining room was decorated with flowers and a pile of gifts was by her place. We sang to her and applauded. One of her gifts was a red stocking cap which she promptly put on. However, it did not replace the blue one, which she continued to wear. Sister Monica lived on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Holy Family Building and often went downstairs for her cup of coffee and to visit the chapel in OLV building. She used her walker and walked ramrod straight. Her life continued more or less the same until she became weaker and a little confused. Towards the end, she rested in bed, with the sisters and nursing staff watching over her. She died peacefully at 12:35 PM on Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>. She was 101 years old.



Monica was born on May 4, 1905 in Bueyeros, New Mexico to Juan Facundo Ulibarri and Maria Teofila Velarde Ulibarri. She was the youngest of six children: Manuel, Gertrudis, Santiago, Canuta, Frank and herself. She attended boarding school with the Sisters of Loretto and finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade. One of her classmates was our Sr. Margarita Aragon. The seed of Monica's religious vocation was sown during that time.

Afterwards, Monica's family moved to Dilia, New Mexico. Her mother died when she was seventeen. Three years later, her father also died. Being the youngest, Monica did not have to assume full responsibility for the family's welfare but they all pulled together and did their share.

In 1926, our founder, Fr. Sigstein, was visiting our sisters in Anton Chico. Dilia was an out-mission from there and four young women were introduced to him as possible candidates. They were Monica and Margarita, as well as the blood sisters, Anna and Mercedes Gutierrez. The four of them and several others were accepted and spent the first year as aspirants at Victory Mount in Las Vegas, NM. (Victory Mount, a former hospital, was envisioned as a preliminary step toward entrance. However, it was closed a few years later because it was a duplication of the training given at Victory Noll.) In July, 1927 Monica went to Victory Noll where she spent three years in formation, preparing herself for missionary work. Our congregation was only five years old at that time!

She pronounced her first vows on August 15, 1929 and her first assignment was Victory Mount, NM. Fr. Sigstein, the director of our congregation, made the mission assignments during those years and Monica was sent to various places in New Mexico: Cerillos (1930-31), Victory Mount (1932), Las Vegas (1933) and Cerillos again (1934-36). There was a change of pace when she began to work with Mexican Americans in Smelter, El Paso, TX (1937-39). By that time, our congregation had elected its first superior general and council and Fr. Sigstein retired as director.

In 1940, Monica was asked to return to Victory Noll, where she began a new ministry – teaching Spanish to the novices and serving as sacristan to care for the chapel and prepare for the liturgies. Many sisters still remember how they practiced pronouncing Spanish, especially rolling the R's and repeating Sr. Monica's last name! It is impressive how many of our sisters became fluent in Spanish, thanks in part to Sr. Monica's efforts.

In 1948, a completely new world opened for Sr. Monica. She and Sr. Mary Bernarda Marquez were asked to go to Panama and help get a new congregation started. Bishop

Beckman of Panama City had several women interested in forming the Missionary Catechists of the Miraculous Medal. Our sisters spent three years with them as their formation directors. We know that Sr. Monica left a part of her heart there because she always wanted to return. She did have the opportunity to visit Panama twice, once in 1965 and again in 1991 when she was eighty-six years old.

In 1951, Sr. Monica returned to mission work in the United States. Her ministry spanned many years and a large territory: Santa Fe, NM, Big Springs, TX, Brady, TX, El Paso, TX, San Angelo, TX (where she was appointed superior), Brady, TX (again as superior), Eagle Pass, TX, Durant, OK, San Antonio, TX, Holbrook, AZ, Brady, TX, Mason, TX, Mathis, TX, Brigham City, UT, Pharr, TX, San Angelo, TX and Lubbock, TX. In 1986 when she was missioned to Lubbock, she had celebrated her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday and felt it was time to retire. She continued working as a volunteer until she returned to Victory Noll in 1995.

Throughout those years, Monica also continued her education. She had taken college-level courses during her formation years at Victory Noll. She also studied at St. Francis College (located in Lafayette, IN at that time) from 1945-46. She earned her GED in 1947. She attended summer school courses at Loyola University in Chicago from 1956-61 as well as the Summer Pastoral Institute at Incarnate Word College in San Antonio from 1966-71. She was awarded a Certificate in Religious Education in 1969. In 1979 she attended the Pastoral Institute in Mexico City. Among her teachers was the well-known catechetical expert, Fr. Johannes Hofinger, SJ.

In 1995, when she was 90 years old, she returned to Victory Noll. She reminisced about her life: *"One thing that really moved me to join Victory Noll was a picture of Sr. Marie Benes on the front page of the Missionary Catechist. Sister was circled by many little lambs. She was holding one in her arms. That told me very, very much of what I wanted to be part of - bringing Christ our Savior to others. The mission life was so rewarding. You felt so much joy and peace. I still remember Sr. Mary Joseph Penning and myself teaching at a mission out of Las Vegas. Every Friday we made our peanut butter sandwiches for our lunch. Before we left, we also put a shovel in the trunk of the car in case we came across high centers on the road. As always, we visited people and taught the children after school. I still close my eyes and relive those beautiful memories. ... As to the prayer ministry at Victory Noll, I think it is a continuous offering of prayer and redemptive suffering. I have a great hope and longing in community to bring the love of Christ to those to whom we are sent. I think our Victory Noll Sisters will always continue in this spirit."*

By 2006, Monica could not see nor hear very well any more. She made her last retreat in June. After one of the retreat talks, almost everyone had left the chapel. Monica went up the aisle with her walker and stood in front of the tabernacle. She began to sing in Spanish and sang her heart out, swaying and almost dancing to the rhythm of the song. She sang for some minutes and then turned to walk down the aisle. One of the sisters who was still in chapel came up to her and gave her a big hug. Monica smiled and said, *"I just love to sing to Him!"*

We know Monica is now in heaven, singing to God with her whole heart. We thank God for her long life among us and hope that one day we may join her, singing one of her favorite songs, *"Bendito Sea Dios"* (Blessed be God).

Sincerely in Christ,



Sr. Melanie Persche, OLV  
General Secretary