



SISTER JEANETTE HALBACH, OLVN, was born in Primghar, Iowa, on December 2, 1930, to Joseph and Loretta (Cassidy) Halbach. She went home to God through death at Heritage Point in Warren, Indiana, the morning of May 22, 2026, just as many of us had gathered and were beginning our annual in-person meeting in Huntington. She is preceded in death by her parents and sister, Jocelyn Halbach Rafflo. She is survived by her beloved niece Rachel and nephew Donnie, several grand and great-grand nieces and nephews, and her Victory Noll Sisters with whom she lived and served for 71 years.

Sr. Jeanette received degrees in English from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, and the University of Notre Dame. She taught English, music, Social Encyclicals and film appreciation at the high school and college levels. Sr. Jeanette joined the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on September 6, 1955, and made her first vows on August 5, 1958. Her missionary life called her to Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Illinois and Indiana.

Always an advocate of social justice, her ministry in Colorado was in social justice outreach for the entire Archdiocese of Denver. In the Archdiocese of Chicago, she joined four other VN Sisters to open an immigration outreach center in the West Town area of the city. Named in honor of Julia Doyle, the first member of OLVN Sisters, Julia Center opened its doors on the second floor of a four-flat apartment building. The Sisters saw the opportunity to respond to the needs of the people in this mostly Hispanic and poor neighborhood when the parish church in the area was closed by the archdiocese.

As if in commentary on the parish closing, Sr. Jeanette wrote in her Foreword to The Story of Victory Noll 1980-2004, “Our charism will continue to prompt us to be in solidarity with the poor and to ministry on all levels for a more just, peaceful and ecologically sustainable world. In partnership with the laity, we welcome the challenge.”

Sr. Jeanette gave many years to the ministry of elected leadership in our OLVN Congregation. When she accepted the call to be president of the congregation in 1977, she answered, “Our contribution as religious women is not so much in the service we render as in the stance from which we render that service ... Our unique contribution comes from the stance of women of faith who have freely chosen to live and minister and pray as celibate women in community for the sake of the Kingdom.”

As a leader, she encouraged Sisters who felt called to try new ministries, including the beginnings of the VN Ministry Center. She supported the development of relationships with women and men who felt called to live our charism and mission as Victory Noll Associates within their own life callings and locations.

In his homily for Sr. Jeanette at her funeral Mass May 28, Father Tony Steinacker suggested that Sister Jeanette had chosen the readings for her liturgy “to teach us a life lesson to act justly, to love tenderly and walk humbly with God.” (Micah 6:8) Perhaps the same may be said of her other readings: Song of Songs 2:8-13 and 3:4 and Matthew 25: 34-40.

The music she chose for her services shines an additional light on her spirituality. From *We Remember* how you loved us to *The Summons* to *Here I Am, Lord* to *Seed Scattered and Sown*, wheat gathered and grown, many precious aspects of her approach to life, relationships, prayer, ministries with and to and for others are brought into focus for further reflection.

I always found Jeanette to be a person of gracious hospitality and quiet humility as well as “holy boldness.” In a talk she gave at our Homecoming in June 1981, she said, “I am convinced that the really important things in life happen, not at meetings or conferences or workshops, but in those precious moments between friends, sharing what is deepest inside: their dreams, their fears, their failures, their joys, their hopes. Father Sigstein and Archbishop Noll must have shared in this way. There must have been precious moments like this between them. And because of those moments this Congregation came into being.”

Father Tony concluded his homily, “We rejoice with grateful hearts as we remember Sister Jeanette.” Yes, Sister Jeanette, we do rejoice and thank God, and we thank you for the gift of your long life among us, sharing faith and love and service to and with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters in the Church and in the world. May you rest now in God’s peace and joy as you enjoy the fullness of life and love and joy promised to all faithful disciples!

Sister Rita Musante OLVM

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