

September 29, 2010

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Callista Ley went peacefully to God at 11:05 P.M. on Tuesday September 21, 2010, at the Holy Family Health Care Center, Victory Noll. Our sisters had been with her during the evening. At 10:30 P.M. the nurse Kay Gargiulo checked Sister and Callista was responsive. Shortly after 11:00 P.M. when the nurse returned Sister had expired. Sister Callista had been declining. She was aware that her vital organs were failing and that her time left in this life was short. She spoke of dying and was very much at peace. She said she was ready to go to heaven whenever God called her. Sister was alert until the end. She only spent two days in bed and during that time she mostly slept. However, when asked a question, she would answer with a nod of the head when too weak to talk. Sisters Monica, Betty and Pat Knapp prayed at her bedside after her death and waited until the undertaker arrived.

Sister Callista was born in Pittsburgh, Pa. on February 23, 1911 to William Ley and Cecilia Wohleber Ley. She is survived by one sister Jeanne Ley of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Six brothers, William, Joseph, Edward, Peter, John and Thomas Ley and two sisters, Mary, and Agnes Ley preceded her in death.

Sister Callista entered the Congregation of our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on August 31, 1938. She made her first Profession of Vows on August 5, 1941, and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1947, at Salt Lake City, Utah. Callista served in the missions of Nevada, Utah, Indiana, Michigan, California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Florida and West Virginia. Callista served God and others in many states. No matter what her ministry, she was always a person who showed great interest and compassion toward all those whose lives she touched. She exuded a great interest and enthusiasm in all her endeavors and was perceived by those with whom she worked and ministered as a person of keen intelligence and wisdom. Whether she was catechizing, home visiting, taking the Parish Census or counseling with an individual, Sister Callista invested her whole self to the task with the hope that she might be a witness of the Gospel and Jesus' great love for the people.



Sister Callista was engaged in a very significant ministry in the Archdiocese of Miami where she acted as Director of Health and Welfare Services for 250 elderly retired persons living in an apartment complex. This program was federally funded and sponsored by the Archdiocese to provide secure and dignified housing at reduced rental for persons in the medium and low-income bracket. Callista was often on 24-hour call. She was "all things to all men and women," day or night. She felt great joy in this ministry for she knew God was using her to assist people especially the poor to live in dignity and safety. Sister Callista was a natural as a Social Worker. She used her gifts to advocate for just and humane living conditions and the necessities of life wherever she was missioned.

In 1980 Sister Callista returned to Victory Noll where she generously engaged herself in various works for the Community. She was Buyer, Driver, and Companion for many doctors' appointments for our

sisters. Callista picked up the mail each day and made friends with many people including the postal employees. When she could no longer go for the mail, she would help distribute it arriving in her little mobile each day for her mail duty. She continued this duty until recently when her health declined. A ministry that Callista started that brightened the lives of all of us working in Our Lady of Victory building was her cultivation of beautiful violets. She placed them on the window sills around the building and gave them tender loving care.

Sister Callista offered her time and talents in many other ways here at Victory Noll. She loved celebrations and was always willing to contribute a poem which she composed for the occasion. She wrote poems for Jim Curless when he celebrated thirty years working at Victory Noll. She also created a poem for Vince Parker when he celebrated twenty-five years of service. There were many other times when Sister was called on to write a poem or a special thank you for a celebration. She never refused, and her works were an inspiration to many. Another way she contributed to making life beautiful for all was her artistic creation of beautiful butterflies that have adorned the dining room windows during the Easter season for many years. When we moved from the old dining room to the new one, Callista wrote a chronology of the history of the OLV dining room. When read it was a beautiful closing of the past and the beginning of a new era.

Sister Callista's love for and interest in people caused her to reach out and form friendships beyond Victory Noll. One of the groups she enjoyed and continued to participate in was Church Women United. She would try to attend wherever they were meeting be it here at Victory Noll or another location.

At the Vigil Service on Friday evening, sisters, her sister Jeanne Ley and nephew William Ley were present. Jeanne shared that Sister Callista wrote a letter about how much her veil meant to her. She said the family called her Kitty. Jeanne shared that because Callista was such a great talker, their brother used to say that he didn't learn to talk until she left home. Marilyn Stoffel said that she met Callista as a Family Association Member in the 1970's and 80's. She said Callista spoke of her family and had great love for them. Callista visited her home one day and shared that she would love to ride on a combine. She asked her brother Danny if he could give Callista a ride. He agreed and they met him in the field. Dust was flying all over, but Callista was very anxious to go on the ride. She said, "I have my old clothes on." Callista loved the ride and Danny told her all about the farm. She was 85 years old at the time. Sister Mary Joan shared that Sister Callista had a tremendous mind and learned so much by asking questions. Sister Anne Veronica said with Sister Callista a "spade was a spade." There was no deceit in her. What she believed she stated truthfully. What she believed she loved. Religious Life was very important to her. Anne Veronica was pleased that Callista was her prayer partner. Sister Mary Helen shared that Sister Callista was a great entertainer. She said that she used to tease her and call her the "poet Laureate" of our Congregation. She said we can sing now of Callista "Enter Now into the Joy of the Lord." Sister Rita shared that two memories are special to her. The first was when they shared in the same Focus Circle, Callista would often say "I never knew this before." Rita said Callista was always open to learning. The other memory was Rita's visits to Jeanne's house with Callista and observing the love exchanged between them. Sister Beaty spoke of Callista's gift for nourishing violets, which gave her and all of us great joy. She said she saw Callista over in OLV building just recently, and asked her "What are you doing here, checking the violets?" Callista responded, "I'm just casing the joint." Sister Dorothy Anne shared that she had many happy times living with Callista. They enjoyed card games, and Sister Callista would serve "High Tea" some afternoons on St. Joseph's 3rd floor. Sister Marilyn shared that she

loved Callista. She said, "I often thought she was my mother because she loved to boss me around." A few days before Callista died Marilyn saw her driving the motorized car outside. Bill, a choir member said, "she went everywhere in that motorized car even to the cemetery for services." Leslie Haines a friend from Fort Wayne, who is Executive Director of the Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries, shared about her friendship with Sister Callista. She said that she adopted Sister as "my grand-sister." Leslie shared that Callista started catechizing Leslie. Callista would tell her "you just have to watch Journey Home." Leslie said shortly before Callista died, Leslie offered to watch this program with Callista but she was not able. Callista shared with Leslie just before she died that "You have to appreciate what you have, appreciate your relationships, and being here." Leslie said her goodbye to Callista the night she died. Andrea Rodriguez, an Associate, sent an e-mail saying she admired Callista's strengths and insights so much. Helen Gallagher, another Associate, sent an e-mail saying that there was nothing bland about Sister Callista. She had strong opinions about people, life (especially religious life), and God. She lived for almost 100 years, she experienced the Great Depression, and was careful not to waste resources. She had a keen sense of fashion, the classic jumpers she designed, sewed and wore were still stylish after many years. She was peaceful and waited patiently for God to call her home. Helen says, "I can picture her joining the Victory Noll party in heaven, leaping for joy." Sheila Barry sent an e-mail stating "Callista was larger than life and I will miss her so very much. I will be there in spirit."

On Saturday, September 25, 2010, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Sister Callista's sister Jeanne Ley, her nephew William Ley both from Pennsylvania, and her cousin Sara Miller from Kalamazoo, Mich., were present. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, William and Sister Marilyn placed the Pall and the Crucifix and a small statue of Our Lady of Victory on the casket. Sisters Beaty and Rose Zita brought up the gifts at the Offertory. Sisters Beaty and Rose Zita brought up the gifts at the Offertory. Callista chose John 15: 9-17 for the Gospel at her Funeral Mass. Father Fahey shared in his Homily how Sister lived this Gospel. He said she loved God, people, nature and every inch of Victory Noll. She followed Jesus' directives to love one another as He had loved us. She believed Jesus had called her to be His friend, and to grow deeper into the knowledge of God and the love of God's creation. Father said that Sister Callista bore much fruit by helping many people on their journey toward God. She can now praise God with many of them for all eternity. Father said the world has been blessed and is a better place because she lived.

After Mass we processed to the cemetery, where we laid Sister Callista 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 Callista's life followed.

Sister Callista we thank you for your faithful service as you walked the journey with us. We rejoice that you now see the God who you loved face to face in the joy of Heaven.

Sincerely in Christ,

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

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM

General Secretary

