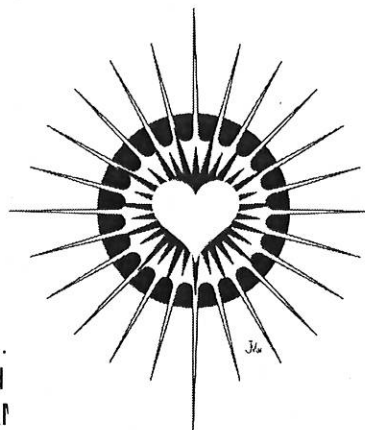


April 4, 2007

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

SR. MARY CECILIA NIEHAUS had not been well for several years and had been suffering from memory loss. She spent her time in the Camilla Center, being cared for by our staff. When she was no longer able to participate with the other sisters, she stayed on 3rd floor for more nursing care. As she diminished physically and mentally, she touched our hearts with her suffering. She was put on Hospice and received the medication she needed to make her more comfortable. Her suffering came to an end at 4 AM on Wednesday, March 21st. She was ninety-two years old.



Mary Cecilia was born on December 21, 1914 in Cincinnati, OH to Joseph and Anna Feldhaus Niehaus. She came from a large family and was the fourth of thirteen children, three of whom died in infancy. Her two brothers, Edward and Paul, are still living. She was preceded in death by Sr. Rose Alma, OSF (Oldenburg Franciscan), Joseph, Henry, Richard, Frank, Robert and Ida Niehaus Carter.

Mary Cecilia attended grade school for eight years and went to high school at night for five years. She worked at home, helping care for her younger brothers and sisters. She also worked in the furniture store that her family owned. We heard that she went to dancing classes once a week. I am sure she enjoyed getting out of the house and doing "fun things." Her care for others and her willingness to do more than her share were virtues that she lived from her youth.

Mary Cecilia entered Victory Noll on October 28, 1942 when she was almost 29 years old. During her time of formation, she studied all the subjects that postulants and novices were required to take. She did very well, getting mostly A's and B's. She made her first vows on August 5, 1945.

A heavy cross that Mary Cecilia had to carry was her poor hearing. On her application form she wrote: "[the doctor] is giving me a vibration treatment which he said induces or rather stimulates blood flow on the ear drum. He will be glad to answer anything you may like to ask him concerning my hearing." Later, in 1956, she did have surgery on her ear but not much could be done. This limitation affected her missionary life very much.

After first vows, Mary Cecilia was sent to Detroit. This was one of our larger mission houses and Mary Cecilia became the homemaker. She volunteered to help with the children's classes, listening to their prayers. She realized that even this was not possible for her. It was evident that God wanted her to serve in a different way.

In 1948 she was sent to Redlands, CA, our largest mission house. It had been an empty mansion on top of a hill with orange groves around it. Archbishop Noll had purchased it for the congregation for back taxes. There were usually 15-20 sisters stationed there and Mary Cecilia was asked to be the cook. There was never-ending work around the grounds as well and Mary Cecilia enjoyed working outdoors in the beautiful climate. She served in Redlands for five years. It was there that she made her perpetual vows in 1951.

She returned to Victory Noll for one year and in 1954 was missioned to Ft. Wayne, IN to work in Archbishop Noll's house as homemaker. Archbishop Noll was our great friend and benefactor and our sisters were happy to help him just as he had helped us. In 1956, our records show that Mary Cecilia was "loaned" back to Victory Noll for one year and in March, returned once more to Archbishop Noll's house for a few months. In August 1957, she was reassigned to Victory Noll where she worked for the next six years. It was during that time (1962) that her mother died in Cincinnati and Mary Cecilia was able to go to the funeral.

In 1963, Mary Cecilia was sent to El Paso, TX. She enjoyed life "out in the missions" very much and continued working hard. In the summer, she helped out in Santa Fe, NM. In one of her letters she writes, *"We canned two lugs of white cherries last week and the week before, two of little sour ones. We froze them. A lady nearby has a pitter that we borrowed. ...I was in Holman (AZ) last weekend. Sr. Hildegard must take me for a PRINCESS, she treated me so royally."* Mary Cecilia visited her aged father that summer and he died the following year.

In 1967, Mary Cecilia was assigned to Salt Lake City where she stayed for three years. That was the last time she was "out in the missions". In 1970 she returned to Victory Noll. She was put in charge of the Housekeeping Department. Over the years, she helped in the main kitchen and the laundry as well. She began the Recycling Program, rescuing cardboard, paper, plastic, glass and aluminum. She was ahead of her time on environmental issues. She worked in the orchards and gardens, driving the truck, harvesting apples and caring for the flowers. She was an assistant to Sr. Effie who was in charge of maintenance at that time. Jim Lund, one of the young men in our maintenance department, remembers Mary Cecilia as his "boss." She helped him get oriented to Victory Noll and adjust to the schedule and the requirements of his job.

Mary Cecilia had a big smile for everyone and respected each person she met. She loved God's creation and cared for it untiringly. She was always of service, in big and small ways and continued working as long as she was able. In 1995 when she was 81 she retired and went to live at Holy Family, our Health Care Center here at Victory Noll. Even there she was active, helping where she could. In 2002 she moved to 3rd floor to get the nursing care she needed and later, the memory care in the Camilla Center.

Mary Cecilia did not know what life had in store for her when she entered Victory Noll. She followed God's call in a ministry of service. The Gospel at her funeral Mass says it all: "Lord, when did I see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink? When did I see you a stranger and welcomed you, naked and clothed you, sick or in prison and visited you?" And Jesus replied to Mary Cecilia: "When you did this to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." (Matthew 25)

We laid Mary Cecilia to rest on Saturday, March 24th. Family members from Cincinnati came for the funeral: her brother Edward Niehaus and his daughter Barbara Niehaus, and three children of her sister, Ida: Dennis Carter and his wife Lynn, Colleen Carter and Anita Carter. We bless and thank you, Sr. Mary Cecilia, for your example and for all the good that you did throughout your life. Your good works follow after you.

Sincerely in Christ,



Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVM
General Secretary