

All for Jesus through Mary

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana 46750
December 27, 1980

Dear Sisters,

" COME WITH JOY INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD!"

Early Christmas morning, on this beautiful feast of Light and Life, Sister Josephine Cima stepped across the mystery of death into new life and truly entered with joy into the presence of the Lord.

This morning, we came together in love and gratitude to celebrate her new life in Jesus and bring her body to its final resting place at Victory Noll. We thank the Father for His presence among us in this indefatigable missionary who spent the fifty years of her religious life in active ministry.

Sister Josephine's illness was diagnosed as lymphocytic leukemia in 1975 when she was hospitalized for tests, however, she continued her mission work as usual. This summer, she managed to complete her eighteenth year of summer work among the migrants in Torrington, Wyoming before returning to Victory Noll to celebrate her golden jubilee. She had planned to return to Calxico in the fall but those plans never materialized. She was admitted to Parkview hospital in Fort Wayne on September 26 for tests. Her greatest discomfort while there was a severe case of shingles which were most painful. Chemotherapy was started in November, but after two treatments Sister asked that they be discontinued because she became so very ill. Since Thanksgiving, she began to fail rapidly.

Shortly before her death, Sister Margaret Campbell visited her to ask if she could do anything for her. Sister Josephine replied: "Look, I am treated like a queen. You ask what you can do for me? I have everything -- everything but heaven. Can you give me heaven?" Sister Josephine prayed that Jesus would take her.

Throughout Midnight Mass, Sister Amelia was with Sister Josephine, praying and singing with her. Sister was conscious all the while. She died very peacefully at 1:15 a.m. Christmas morning just as the Mass was ended.

Sister Josephine's zeal was evident in a letter written forty years ago wherein she expressed her sentiments to the Superior General in this way: "the only difficulty I have experienced in regard to my vocation is the idea of having to stay around the house so much when there is so much missionary work to be done. I just can't express it, but I feel as if my spirit is all dried up within me."

The zeal that dominated her life was a very definite part of her family, too. It was her family that supplied her with books and the literature which she always had on hand to distribute to the people with whom she worked. Her family truly supported her in all that she did.

Sister Josephine was born March 19, 1907 in Marguerite, Pa. one of six children. Her priest brother, Father Augustine, preceded her in death. She entered the Congregation from Holy Family parish in Latrobe, Pa. on February 3, 1930 and made first profession of vows March 25, 1933 at Victory Noll.

Sister is survived by two sisters and two brothers: Mrs. Mary Panigal, Nellie and Charles of Latrobe and Anthony of San Diego. Her sister Nellie, with her nieces and nephew, Mildred, Grace and Joseph Panigal, were present for the funeral.

Friday evening, Nellie shared with some of the sisters how she bargained with the Lord. Nellie is the sacristan at Holy Family parish in Latrobe (has been for 47 years) and had many things to do to get ready for Christmas. Each day the family kept abreast of Sister's condition by telephone. Nellie asked the Lord not to let Sister Josephine die until Christmas as she was needed in the parish. Sister went home to God on the twenty-fifth at 1:15 a.m.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Jim Maurer, ofm, cap., of the Solanus Center. Sister Virginia delivered the homily wherein she described the virtue of simplicity which seemed to dominate Sister Josephine's life. "Simplicity," she said, "is born out of an attitude of heart which acknowledges one's utter dependence on God. If we love God, then we will really love those whom He loves -- the hungry, the homeless, the sick and the imprisoned-- these were the people that Sister sought out with true missionary zeal. Simplicity cuts through life's glitter and gold and confronts us with what will truly nurture love within us. In prayer, our relationship with God grows strong and the fruits of the Spirit are given space to grow to maturity."

Because of the cold weather and the snow, all the graveside prayers were prayed in the chapel. We walked to the cemetery, sang the De Monfort hymn to our Blessed Mother and went directly to the dining room for dinner.

Sister Josephine's center of focus for meaning in her life was Jesus and Mary. She developed what Father Kilduff had spoken of in his workshop -- this "quality" of life -- wherein she was able to state so positively and gratefully on the occasion of her golden jubilee that her fifty years of service was "a heavenly experience of Jesus in others -- especially in the poorest!"

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Germaine Staller