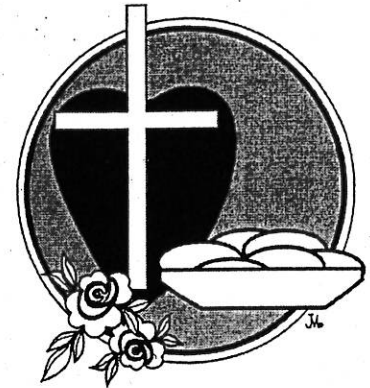


October 23, 2003

Dear Sisters, Family, Associates and Friends,

Sister Mary Rosella Lengerich, age 89, was called by God into eternal life on October 5, 2003. She had been suffering for several months from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She died while the community was celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday morning.



Sr. Mary Rosella was born on March 8, 1914 in Decatur, Indiana to Clement and Catherine Gase Lengerich. She was the oldest of five children and is survived by three sisters, Sister Dorothy Anne Lengerich, OLVN of Huntington, IN, Sister Ancilla Lengerich, CSA of Fond du Lac, WI and Rita Lengerich Weber of Ft. Wayne, IN and her brother, Msgr. Vincent Lengerich of Carthage, OH.

Sr. Mary Rosella entered Victory Noll in 1932 when she was eighteen. The congregation, then known as the Society of Missionary Catechists of Our Blessed Lady of Victory, was only ten years old. It was also the time of the Great Depression. It is interesting to read, from the files, the list of items that she was to buy through the Society, among them: New Testament (\$.24), "The Following of Christ" (\$.50), a set of dishes and silverware (\$2.60), a black leather purse, 11 inches long and 7 inches wide (\$4.10), uniforms and veils (\$25.00), etc. The total cost of all the items was \$47.10. Our congregation never had the policy of asking for a dowry, like many religious congregations of the time.

During her formation at Victory Noll, Mary Rosella was preparing to be a missionary catechist among people suffering from poverty. From 1932-34, she studied Theology, Scripture, Morality, Church History, Spanish, Music, Social Studies and many other subjects. She also received a certificate in 1934 from the local chapter of the Red Cross for "Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick". She made her first profession of vows on March 25, 1935.

Victory Noll had a small farm at that time, to help support the catechists. They raised vegetables as well as chickens and bees. A dairy farm was also part of the operation. Mary Rosella stayed at Victory Noll for two years after profession and was asked to care for the chickens and bees. In 1935, she even attended a course at Purdue University in Lafayette entitled "Poultry Short Course." (Our founder, Fr. Sigstein, believed in the sisters being well prepared for whatever work they were asked to do!)

In 1938 she was missioned to Anton Chico, NM. Not only was it a historic year for Mary Rosella but also for all the catechists. We became a self-governing congregation that year. With the help of Archbishop Noll, we also asked the bishops in whose dioceses we worked to pay \$15 a month for each catechist. (We had been working for free among the poor, depending only on donations from generous people elsewhere.)

Sr. Mary Rosella worked for two years in Anton Chico, teaching children and forming lay catechists. At first, it was an adjustment for her to live in the arid climate and red cliffs of northern New Mexico. She had lived in Indiana all her life, among the tall trees and green fields. However, she came to love the place and the people. In 1940, she was asked to work in Tulare, CA, then in Texas (San Angelo, Big Spring, Abilene and San Antonio). The Spanish she had studied was put to good use.

She worked in Texas until 1963 when she was again assigned to California (Brawley, Solvang, San Pedro). San Pedro, the harbor area of Los Angeles, captured her heart. She worked there from 1966-1979 as catechist and coordinator of religious education. During those years, Mary Rosella also studied at Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Los Angeles Harbor College and Marymount College in California.

From 1981-1991 Mary Rosella worked in Salt Lake City, first in religious education and home visiting and later in pastoral ministry and evangelization. She continued her education, attending various classes and workshops. Her last year there was spent in volunteer ministry. She was honored in a special way by the bishop of Salt Lake City for her dedication and service.

In 1992 Mary Rosella returned to Victory Noll where she was part of the Pastoral Care Team, ministering to our sick sisters. She was tireless in helping the sisters with their personal needs, doing errands, praying with them and always having a welcoming smile for them. In the evenings, she enjoyed relaxing with the "sewing circle" and doing needlework.

Sr. Mary Rosella was devoted to praying the rosary but she was especially known for her love for charismatic prayer. For years she participated in small prayer groups and large meetings wherever she was stationed. She also enjoyed attending the annual charismatic conference in Notre Dame. Even in her final illness, she would pray in tongues for persons who would stop by for a visit. Her gentle smile never failed.

Mary Rosella's funeral was attended by her sisters, Sr. Dorothy Anne, Sr. Ancilla and Rita Weber with her husband, James. Also present were her nephews Tom Weber, Mike and Carolyn Weber, Dave and Jodi Weber with their daughter Elizabeth, of Ft. Wayne. Present were her cousins Sr. Eymardine Lengerich, CSC of St. Mary's, Notre Dame, IN, Noreen and Carl Ehinger of Ft. Wayne and Ed Scott of Ft. Wayne. Her sister Rita's prayer group from Ft. Wayne also came, as well as Brother Francis, OSF and Brother Daniel, OSF from Indianapolis. Our Associates Eleanor Green, Helen Espinosa, Lou Knote and Kellie Giant attended as well as Wallace Meeham and Fr. Raymond Balzer. Her brother, Msgr. Vincent Lengerich, was unable to come because of a recent surgery.

Fr. Thomas Fahey presided at the Mass of the Resurrection on October 8th. The Gospel was from John 14:1-6. Jesus said that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life. Mary Rosella followed that Way faithfully until the end. Now she is enjoying the mansion that Jesus prepared for her and with Jesus, she assures us: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." We thank you, Sr. Mary Rosella, for having shared your life with us.

Sincerely in Our Lady of Victory,

*Sr. Melanie*

Sr. Melanie Persche, OLVM  
General Secretary