

All for Jesus through Mary

Victory Noll
Huntington, Indiana
March 24, 1984

Dear Sisters,

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" Let her who hears answer, "Come!"
Rev. 22:17

The summons came quickly! On Thursday morning, March twenty-second, at 8:05 a.m. as we were assembled in chapel to begin the celebration of the Eucharist, Sister Mary Denis Kelliher passed quickly through the mystery of death to begin a new phase of her life in Christ. When Sister Frances stepped to the podium to tell us that Sister Mary Denis had just gone home to God, we were truly shocked! After Father returned from anointing her, the Eucharist was celebrated for her.

Today, March twenty-fourth, the feast of the Annunciation, after a joyous liturgy, we brought her remains to rest and to thank the Father for the reflection of his love in this kind and gentle woman who always had such a ready smile for everyone.

Through the years, Sister Mary Denis has suffered from chronic health problems with her feet and arthritis. During the seventies, she remained at Victory Noll for longer periods of time, but managed to return to the missions to work. On January 27, 1982 she returned to the Noll from Florida for permanent retirement. She was diagnosed as having cervical spondylosis (the breaking down of vertebra in the neck) along with other problems. In recent years her ability to communicate became increasingly difficult. Sister knew what she wanted to say, but it was very difficult for her to formulate words and painful for the one listening to see her struggle. But in spite of it all, she continue to be active and interested in all that was going on at the Noll and in the community. Only on Tuesday evening she had gone to the North High School to see a travelogue.

On Thursday morning she told the nurses she did not feel hungry and did not want breakfast. Sister Maria asked if there was anything she could do for her and she said she just wanted to rest. Sister Maria returned later and found her sleeping comfortably. About twenty minutes later, Sister returned to see if she wished to receive Holy Communion and she had just expired. Father Jim was notified and he came at once to anoint her. Sister died peacefully.

Sister Mary Denis spent forty-five years of her religious life in religious education and pastoral ministry in California, New Mexico, Texas, Missouri, Indiana, Colorado, Arizona and Florida. During the seventies, in Arizona and Florida, Sister was engaged in parish census work, assessing the needs and services of those on fixed incomes, the poor, the elderly, the sick and the shut-ins. Because of illness, she retired from active duty and returned to the Noll from St. Petersburg January 27, 1982.

Sister was always so faithful in putting out the afternoon lunches at Holy Family. She was always signing up to carry the gifts at Mass. She had already signed up to carry the cross for the stations on Friday. Whenever there was a sign-up list to go somewhere, Sister Mary Denis' name was always there - She just loved to be among people.

Sister Mary Denis was born July 27, 1911 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, one of five children, two of who died in infancy. She entered the Community from Ascension parish in Minneapolis, February 16, 1934 and made first profession of vows February 11, 1937 at Victory Noll. She would have celebrated her golden jubilee this coming August.

Sister is survived by her sister, Mrs. Lillian Mardon and her brother Edmund both of Tucson, Arizona. Lillian was unable to come because of illness, but Edmund arrived Friday evening in time for the wake service in Memorial chapel.

The Liturgy of the feast of the Annunciation was celebrated by Father Jim Hast, OFM Capuchin who also delivered the homily. Father used the imagery of the grain of wheat and compared Sister's life to that image. Then, he used the Sisters' reflections to speak of Sister Mary Denis. Perhaps the most touching remembrance was the "happening" at our Regional Gathering in September when each group named their gifts. When it came time for Sister's group and her turn, her inability to speak was a source of real anguish to everyone, including herself, but it came out quietly in: "I am gift!"

Sister Virginia led the prayers of commendation at the end of the liturgy.

It was a cold day and the rain held off until much later, so many went to the cemetery. After the prayers at the graveside, we hurried in out of the cold to a nice hot meal prepared by Vince and the cooks.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Genevieve Stadler