



Victory Noll
Huntington, IN
September 1, 1990

Dear Sisters and Associates,

"...experience this love which surpasses all knowledge so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself." Eph. 3:19

Very early on Friday morning, August 31, at 2:45 a.m., Sister Carmelita Vigil answered her call from the Lord to "come" and "experience this love which surpasses all knowledge!" At that moment, the reality of her new life in Christ Jesus began - in peace and joy forever!

Sister Carmelita had a history of malignancies, but always seemed to remain in the mission field to continue the work she loved. She returned to Victory Noll from Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1983 after a severe bout with pneumonia and a painful back situation. X-rays revealed her back pain to be osteoporosis with the resulting deformities. Despite all this, Sister Carmelita continued her daily activities and lived quite independently in Holy Family Health Care Center.

Early this year, she was taken to third floor because of extreme back and abdominal pain. Gradually her condition deteriorated and her back pain worsened, eventually incapacitating her. Members of her family visited her at different times during the summer. On August 27th, her sister Helen arrived from Las Vegas, Nevada. The next day, Aug. 28th, her sisters Caroline and Rose with her daughter, Betty Lopez, arrived from Denver. At almost the same time her brothers Tom and Jack arrived from California. All took turns staying with Sister. At 2:00 a.m. Friday morning when Sister Virginia Schmitt came to stay her hour with Sr. Carmelita, she saw that Sister was dying and called the family. Sister Madelon LoRang was with them as they prayed the prayers for the dying and said the rosary. Sister Carmelita died quietly in the Lord at 2:45 a.m. Friday morning, August 31, 1990.

Sister Carmelita's fifty-six years of missionary life were spent in New Mexico, California, Texas, Colorado and Utah. The greater part of her missionary life was spent in New Mexico. In 1986 Sister Carmelita wrote an interesting account of her entrance into the community and subsequent experiences in the missions. This account was written for the Challenge Story. What she did not mention was the fact that she was Sister Blanche Marie Richardson's co-worker in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine work. Sister Blanche Marie organized the schools to train lay teachers and her first co-worker was Sister Guadalupe Vasquez. Sister Carmelita followed Sister Guadalupe in this important work. Sister Helen Marie told me that Sr. Carmelita was the driver and had to contend with all the rough roads, mud, rain and snow to get their equipment to their destination. In Chapter 14 of her book, THE STORY OF VICTORY NOLL, Sister Elizabeth Ann Clifford describes the planning of the schools (such as they were in those days) and how they were carried out.

In one of her TMC stories, Sister Carmelita describes what they put up with when they tried to find a place to live. She said the settlements were so isolated and poor and the people usually lived in a small adobe home of two rooms. Privacy was hard to come by! Usually, they sought the one room sacristy attached to the church. Getting settled was always an adventure because they carried books, class materials, army cots, blankets, food stuffs and cooking utensils. The children were always on hand to bring water and wood. Then, she would add, there was always the problem of cleaning before they could get settled.

Sister Carmelita was born July 22, 1901, in Walsenburg, Colorado, the oldest in a family of fifteen children, one of whom was adopted by her parents. She entered the Congregation from St. Leo's parish in

Denver, October 31, 1925, and made first profession of vows at Victory Mount in Las Vegas, New Mexico, on December 8, 1927. She celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 1985.

Rose, Caroline, Helen and Sister's niece, Betty were here for the funeral. Tom and Jack had to return to California Friday morning. We were grateful and pleased that they could stay as long as they did and that they were at Sister's bedside when she died. That was a rare privilege for Sister Carmelita to have so many of her family members present when she went home to God.

The wake service was held at 7:00 p.m. with Sister Lorraine Noon leading the prayers. The theme was LIGHT and Sister Carolyn Issenmann lit the Easter Candle after a special prayer was offered. Sister Madeline DeGroot and Mary Joan Ginsterblum did the readings and Helen La Grandeur gave her thoughts about Sister Carmelita in a short message and thanked the staff for their loving care and the Community for their prayers.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Leopold. Sisters Mary Cecilia, Frances and Mary Lucille carried the cross/candles; Betty and Caroline placed the pall on the casket; Virginia Schmitt and Helen La Grandeur did the readings; Germaine sang the Responsorial and Alleluia Verse; Martha W. gave the homily; Susanna offered the prayers of the faithful and Betty, Caroline and Sr. Mary Barbara brought up the gifts. Sr. Mary Louise offered her thoughts on Carmelita just before the final prayers of Commendation.

Sister Martha said: "There always was a gentle strength in Sr. Carmelita's special morning greeting: 'Buenos Dias le de Dios!' 'May God give you a good day.'" Each Mass, but especially today's makes real the greatest gift of God: the dawning of the eternal day! Softly, graciously, God comes into our lives, like the dawn of a new day. Have you noticed?

Usually we are not even conscious of dawn until it has brightened enough for us to see. So with God. We might weep and fret, mourn and thrash about in the darkness of the night and then, gradually, we become aware of the lightness like early dawn. We begin to sense that it is God removing the mist and the web that governs our world. If we stay and do not run away, God offers us rich food: faith and courage and sparkling wine - peace and joy. God assures us, 'you are mine, I will take care of you.' This is Saturday, the day we Victory Noll Sisters dedicate especially to Mary. Today, God is giving us three persons who have lived through deep darkness into the bright and lovely dawn. First, there is Jesus, who, in today's Gospel assures us that he will lose nothing of what God has given him. Then, there is Mary, who through great sorrow, loss and steadfast faith, earned her title, 'La Victoria!' Then we have our Sister Carmelita, who now gives new and special meaning to her morning greeting, 'Buenos Dias le de Dios!'"

Among her thoughts about Carmelita, Sr. Mary Louise mentioned how easy it is for us to accept growth and the gifts of life, but it takes great courage to accept the challenge to find God in the midst of vast, varied and constant diminishment. It takes true holiness to accept with patience and with a spirit of thankfulness the diminishments that are the process of dying. She said Carmelita never failed to express gratitude - an indication of the way she embraced and came in union not only with us but with life and the God of life. Sister said she believed that the gentle, joyful, courageous way she lived life had taught her that dying is the way to life. From her experience in growing up in a large family, Carmelita grasped the Christian vision of an interdependent community of persons who are all both weak and strong in various ways. Sr. Mary Louise said Carmelita not only recognized but embraced the dependencies that are part of every mature life and offered us an example in the way she did this. She ended her thoughts by saying that only in heaven will we know how many lives she touched. But we do know she touched our lives and the lives of her family. We celebrate her entrance into the fullness of life where this faithful religious has received great stature!

Carmelita, we will miss you, but we know that now you "experience this love which surpasses all knowledge ...!"

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Sister Germaine Stadler
O. L. V. M.