

Victory Noll
May 18, 1982

Dear Sisters

The opening words of our gathering song at the Eucharist Wednesday morning, May 12, were from Psalm 122: "I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'We will go to the house of the Lord.'" And at the responsorial psalm we prayed again: ". . . let us go to the house of the Lord." At 12:40 that afternoon Sister Charlene left us to go to the house of the Lord.

Though Charlene had apparently been in good health, a very severe pain developed in her left arm the night of Friday, May 7, and continued for several hours. The next day Sister went to the doctor. In his office examination he could find nothing seriously wrong but he ordered tests for Monday. Monday morning, May 10, these tests were made.

However, at 1:30 that afternoon Sister Charlene lost consciousness. Fortunately she was home at the convent and Sister Mary Marguerite Shields was with her. Mary Marguerite called an ambulance and Charlene was taken to Community Hospital in San Bernardino. Sister Mary Marguerite also phoned Sister Mary Jo Nelson at her office and she went right to the hospital.

A scan revealed that Charlene had a blood clot on her brain. The doctors held very little hope for her recovery. Sisters Lucille Martinez and Helen Rodriguez remained with her all night. Tuesday morning Sister's pulse was 170 and she had not regained consciousness.

Charlene's mother, two of her sisters (Emily and Louise), and her brother George flew to California. They planned to stay several days and then, if Charlene's illness were prolonged, other members of the family would replace them so that someone in the family would be with her constantly. But God had other designs. There was no brain activity whatsoever and Sister was being kept "alive" only by artificial means. Since there was no hope of recovery, Charlene's own family and her religious family agreed that the life support systems be discontinued.

At 11 a.m. Wednesday morning, with Charlene's family and her Sisters present, Father Bob Miller, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena parish in Rialto where Sister was pastoral associate, held a prayer service in the hospital room. It was a very moving experience for everyone present.

A wake service was held in Rialto Thursday evening and the Mass of Christian Burial the following morning. Mrs. Talbott, Emily, and George (who lives in Boise, Idaho) remained for these services. Sister Jeanette, who had left southern California only a few days before, returned to Rialto and gave the homily at the Eucharist.

The visitation book from the funeral home contained hundreds of names from the San Bernardino Valley and beyond. Besides our own California Sisters there were many, many Sisters from other communities. Many priests came, too, and especially the people among whom Charlene had ministered and who loved her very much. Cesar Chavez's son attended Sister Charlene's funeral to show his appreciation for her efforts and support on behalf of the Farm Workers.

Sister Charlene's body arrived at the Fort Wayne airport toward midnight Saturday and was brought to Victory Noll the next afternoon. Twenty-three members of Sister's family were present for the wake Sunday night and the funeral services Monday morning: Helen Rundle, her husband Bob and five of their children from Cincinnati; Joan Sullivan and her husband Tim from Detroit; Pat Talbott Brown, St. Clare Shores, Mi; Thelma and her husband Burt Paynter, Middlesboro, Ky; Louise Dreckman and George, her husband, together with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dreckman, Louisville; Mr. and Mrs. John Talbott, Noblesville, In and their family. Sister Charlene's mother and her sister Emily did not make the trip to Huntington, having attended all the services in California. Victory Noll Sisters from the area who came were: Sisters Carolyn Issenmann, Mary Ruth Kramer, Mary Eileen Masterson, Mary Lou Rowney, Connie Lewandowski, and Regina Marie Morrissey.

Father Jim Hast, our chaplain, celebrated the Eucharist assisted by Brother Gerry Pehler, Capuchin. It was a real family service with Sister Charlene's sisters and brother taking various roles in the Mass. They had brought with them pictures and other mementos of their sister and displayed them around her casket. At the wake Tim Sullivan, Joan's husband, spoke in a touching way about these remembrances. Sister Florentine's homily was especially moving. We are sharing it with you.

Sister Charlene (Mary Catherine Talbott) was born September 29, 1925, in Middlesboro, Ky, the fourth in a family of seven girls and two boys. She entered Victory Noll from Lexington October 27, 1948, made First Vows August 5, 1951, and Final Profession August 5, 1957. Sister spent most of her religious life in California: Coachella, Santa Paula, Ontario, Azusa, Montclair, San Diego, Los Angeles (Soto), and Rialto. She served as superior in Montclair and in Detroit. In 1968 Charlene was elected to the General Council and became East/Midwest Coordinator. In 1971 she returned to California. At the General Chapter of 1974 Sister was elected to the Council once again and became California Area Coordinator, an office she held until 1977.

Sister Charlene was well prepared for her ministry in religious education. Several times she was an instructor for our own Sisters in summer sessions. After receiving her B.A. from Ursuline College in Louisville, Charlene did graduate work at St. Thomas University, Houston, and at the University of Detroit where she received her M.A.

Charlene was generous in death as she was in life. She had arranged to donate her eyes and her kidneys so that others might benefit from them. In 1957 when Sister Charlene wrote to Mother Cecilia from Ontario to request perpetual vows, she included this significant paragraph: "To our Community I owe much gratitude for all I have received during the past eight and a half years. I am proud of our Community and pray that God may continue to bless its work."

We are proud of you too, dear Charlene, for the way you lived your commitment. Intercede for us now with Jesus and Mary and ask them to bless the Community you loved so much and served so well.

Lovingly in Our Lady of Victory

Sister Elizabeth Ann Clifford