

SISTER MARGARET MARY, O.S.F.

January 21, 1965

"Ladylike -- quiet -- reserved." This was the way the Infirmary's lay personnel evaluated Sister Margaret Mary in the hushed moments following her sudden, unobtrusive passing, late on a sullen January afternoon. It was an opinion echoed by all who had known the slight, dark-eyed Sister Margaret Mary.

The end came quickly, though for weeks she had been going steadily downhill. The practiced, professional eye could detect the changes -- the loss of weight, for one -- and there were the "bad days" when she would cry out in protest and turn away from the food she could no longer relish. But until the 20th of January, she was still wheeled down to Chapel each morning, and she was still able to receive on the 21st the Holy Communion that was to be her Viaticum.

Sister Margaret Mary had never really "come back" after the 1960 accident which left her with a broken hip, and terminated forever the sacristan work she loved and to which she had devoted so many of her Franciscan years. She did not look back in anger; her resignation was not a veiled bid for sympathy. This was the way things were; this was to be accepted -- quietly and without fanfare.

Did she guess that she was so near the end of the road? It is hard to say. After her anointing on the 20th, she assured Sister Celine, "I'll get better again!" But there's no way of knowing whether or not she believed it. She had discontinued the embroidery work which she had learned long ago -- stitches so delicate and fine that it was difficult to tell which was the "right side." But it may be that she intended to begin again -- when she "was better." We can never know for sure whether Sister Margaret Mary felt the approaching rendezvous with Death. And this, too, was in keeping with the reserve that had marked her life.

She had enjoyed life. And its closing years at Our Lady of Angels brought their complement of quiet pleasures. There was the soft music that whispered its way into her room at the twist of a dial; there were quiet games of Scrabble and checkers. And -- there was "Lassie." Every Sunday evening found her loyally before the TV -- and not even "Profiles in Courage" could change the Channel!

Through the years, Sister Margaret Mary once confided, she had prayed to the Sacred Heart for perseverance for her classmates. Seven of them had celebrated their golden jubilee with her in 1962, and two of them, Mother Immaculate and Sister Hilaria, were at her side when Sister Peter gently closed Sister Margaret Mary's tired eyes. In Eternity Sister Hortulana and Sister Milada were waiting to greet her; Sister Loyola arrived just too late for her passing. Sister Mildred and Sister Maurilla would hear the news at the Motherhouse and in Johnstown.

And on Sunday evening there'll be an empty place when "Lassie" again flashes across the screen at Our Lady of Angels.

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!
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