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*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

October 14, 1978

Dear Sisters,

Last June, Cathedral bells announced the joyful celebration of Mass honoring the jubilarians of our Congregation. Sister M. Carmela Bren had been among them, having served her Lord for 50 years of professed religious life. Today there must be rejoicing in heaven as this same Lord welcomes Sister Carmela home. Sister died in the infirmary of Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home at six o'clock this morning. She was in the 80th year of life.

Sister Carmela was born in Bohemia on January 4, 1899, and christened Rose Frances. Her parents, Wenceslaus and Anna (Zmek) Bren, came to the United States when she was just two months old. She often told the story that her parents had related of the childless couple who approached them on the ship, offering a thousand dollars to purchase the baby. Little Rose, however, was priceless to her parents.

The family settled in Chicago and became parishioners of St. Procopius parish where the children attended the parish grade school. Sister Carmela experienced a peak event in her life that fateful day in 1915 when the Eastland ship capsized at the port of the Chicago River, taking 812 passengers to their death. She had considered taking the cruise, but fidelity to her Sunday obligation of attending Mass kept her from making the trip. The tragedy moved her profoundly and forced her to face the mystery of the meaning of life. She was sixteen at the time and was not to enter the convent until October 3, 1925; but this event had a deep effect upon her vocation.

Sister Carmela became a novice on August 12, 1926, pronounced her first vows in 1928, and made her final profession in 1931. She served as a homemaker for 46 years--at Sacred Heart (Englewood); St. Procopius (Chicago); St. Procop (Cleveland); and Guardian Angel Home, St. Francis Academy, and the Motherhouse (Joliet). During those years, although she enjoyed being housekeeper and cook, she exhibited the greatest expertise in the bakery. Like her three brothers, she emulated her father who had been a successful baker.

In 1973, Sister Carmela retired to Our Lady of Angels. Her hearing and eyesight weakened considerably, and her friends knew she was very sick when even the avid interest she had had in the Chicago Cubs surrendered to her suffering. Nevertheless, the Sisters who knew her so well remember her as a smiling, prayerful Franciscan who had thoroughly enjoyed life.

The wake for Sister Carmela will be from 2 to 7 p.m. on Sunday, October 15, with a special prayer service at 3:30 p.m. The Mass of Resurrection will be celebrated on Sunday at 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Angels. Burial will be at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, October 16, in Resurrection Cemetery, Lockport.

We offer our sincere sympathy to her three brothers, Adolph and James, of Chicago, and Albert, of Riverside, and to her many nieces, nephews, and friends. May she rest in peace!

Devotedly yours in Christ,

THE GOVERNING BOARD

