

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

January 12, 1975

Dear Sisters,

Sister Caroline Brower, the oldest Sister of our Congregation, in the 99th year of her Christian life and the 76th of her religious life, quietly gave back that life to God on January 10 at 7:30 p.m. It was the crowning moment of a life that was closely woven with the lives of so many Sisters of our Congregation in love, in prayer, and in service.

Born in Friesland, Holland, of James Brower and Catherine Von der Lee on September 14, 1876, Sister Caroline, baptized Petronilla Brower, spent 18 years with her parents, 2 brothers and 6 sisters in her native land before she came to the United States in 1894. As a parishioner of Sacred Heart Church in Englewood, she became acquainted with our Congregation when they opened a school there on October 1, 1894. Four years later, on August 2, she entered our Congregation as a postulant and received the Franciscan Habit on February 2, 1899. After 6 years of temporary profession, she pledged fidelity to God "all the days of her life" on August 12, 1907.

That fidelity was lived out as a Sister dedicated to God and her Sisters through her service in domestic work. She began this service at St. Procopius in Chicago. Illinois was the scene of her labors for the greater part of her life, at St. Ludmilla's and St. Francis de Sales in Chicago, St. Stephen's in Streator, St. Joseph's in Elgin, and SS. Peter and Paul in Leonore, where she spent 16 years. She served our own Congregation Institutions: Guardian Angel Home, St. Francis Convent, and St. Francis Academy. Some years were spent in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and in Bayfield, Wisconsin. While she was in Bayfield, she became a naturalized American citizen in 1943. However, her longest career was in Mansfield, Ohio, where she gave 21 years of her life and love.

Sister Caroline is survived by nieces and nephews. Two of her nieces are also dedicated Franciscans, Sister Adelene Nyholt from our Congregation and Sister Xavier, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Manitowac, Wisconsin.

We celebrate the death and resurrection of Sister Caroline in a Eucharistic Liturgy at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home on Sunday, January 12, at 3:30 p.m. Burial services will be at 10 a.m. on Monday, January 13, with interment in Resurrection Cemetery, Lockport. We know you will want to join us as we thank God for Sister Caroline and honor her for her many years of service.

Devotedly in Christ,

THE GOVERNING BOARD



January 10, 1975

Dear Sister Caroline,

This is your letter, but it's one you won't ever read -- not now, not anymore, not since this evening when all clocks stopped for you, and Eternity began.

Seven-thirty they said it was -- seven-thirty when suddenly there was no more gasping, no fluttering pulse -- only a sudden stillness and an imperceptible change. Then our urgent prayers came full circle in the first "Requiescat in pace!"

You had left us, Sister Caroline. You'd gone home at last -- not to the Holland you'd loved in a long ago springtime, but to the Eternal Hills and a peace surpassing all understanding.

Something went with you at that moment, Sister Caroline. It wasn't just the snapping of a silver cord, the winding up of nearly 99 years of life. It was that, yes - and more.

We watched your dying, and we knew something subtle, intangible, was passing with you, our Community Patriarch. Something was passing that would not come again. We knew it - and we wept at our double bereavement.

Seven-thirty they said it was, and we stooped to kiss you as you lay in the serenity of fulfillment, all anguish wiped away, your forehead still warm as we touched you.

We would see your still form again, Sister Caroline, rigid, confined, awaiting the burial. We would kneel at your bier and murmur a final goodbye. But it's your passing that will haunt us, Sister Caroline -- your passing and the quiet closing of an unseen door.

This is your letter, Sister Caroline. You won't read it. You won't have to. You know all that it says -- all that it leaves unsaid. You know it all now, our "favorite Hollander." You know.

Remember us, Sister Caroline. Remember us -- we are still in the shadows.