

SISTER M. VINCENTIA BROWN, O.S.F. (Dorothy) 67/

Born: February 6, 1899
Parents: John and Rosa (Stahl) Brown
Postulancy: December 8, 1914
Novitiate: August 12, 1915
First Profession: August 12, 1917
Final Profession: August 12, 1920
Died: Saturday, June 16, 1990 at 5:15 a.m. at
Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home



Ministry:

1917 St. Procopius, Chicago, IL Grade 2
1917 - 1921 St. John the Baptist, Joliet, IL, Grade 5
1921 - 1924 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Religion, English, Latin,
Algebra, Ancient History, Spanish
1924 - 1930 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, English, Latin, Mathematics,
History
1930 - 1934 Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
Graduate Student
1934 - 1973 College of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, Department of
Classical Languages, History & Social Science
1973 - 1975 St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL, Archivist
1975 - 1990 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Monday, June 18, 1990 from 2:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Monday, June 18, 1990 at 7 p.m.

Burial: Tuesday, June 19, 1990 Resurrection Cemetery at 8:45 a.m.

Survived by sister, Isabelle Sorner

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

Early Saturday morning, June 16, 1990, at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, our Sister Vincentia Brown was born to life eternal. She died quietly in her sleep, and her death took us by surprise. The past three months had been frustrating for our very active Sister Vincentia. She broke her hip in March, 1990. Her slow recovery from that break, along with increasing blindness which prevented her from reading, made life difficult for her. She was alert the day before she died, engaging in conversation, slowly making her way down the hall with the help of a walker. She remained a determined woman all the days of her life!

Dorothy was born in Duluth, Minnesota on February 6, 1899 to Rose and John Francis Brown. Her mother's family was from Bayfield, Wisconsin. Dorothy was the third youngest of six children, and is survived by her sister Isabel who is ninety years old and lives in Minnesota. In 1984 Sister Vincentia wrote about her mother, "She was the most influential person in my life. She was forty-two years old when my father died, leaving her with six children ranging from five to eighteen years of age. We were living in Mississippi, far from any relatives in Minnesota or Wisconsin. She stunted herself in every way and by every means in order to educate us, and give us the best possible. She stayed up until midnight almost every day, making our clothes, or making some over from those clothes relatives had given us. She lived to be eighty seven and enjoyed seeing us become two teachers, three successful business people, and a nun."

By the time she was fifteen, Sister Vincentia had returned to Bayfield, Wisconsin to Holy Family Parish. It was from there in 1914 she made the long journey to Joliet to become a postulant. On August 12, 1990 she would have celebrated her Diamond Jubilee of Reception, seventy-five years in our Congregation.

Sister Vincentia spent thirteen years as a teacher in elementary and secondary schools in Illinois and Ohio. She loved teaching, and her students always knew she was interested in them, and often kept contact with her.

When she was thirty-one years old, she began her Doctoral studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She majored in Latin, and wrote a dissertation on the "Syntax of Prepositions in the Works of St. Hilary" to obtain her Ph.D. in 1935. She became a faculty member of the new four-year College of St. Francis in 1934, and remained there until her retirement in 1973, teaching classical languages and history. She had a thirst for knowledge, and appreciated her education. She attended conferences on such topics as Orientalists and Modern Africa. Her vision and interests were global. In 1978 she received the distinction of Professor Emeritus from the College of St. Francis.



Those who knew her during her thirty-nine years at the College of St. Francis speak of the very strict Latin teacher who took all measures to make certain her students would learn and love the language. Outside the classroom she was a gentle, kind woman, always interested in her students and enjoying time with them. She was sorority moderator for many years. We will always remember her special concern for foreign students who attended the College. Without any special assignment to do so, she became a "surrogate mother" for these students, making sure that their needs were met, even to their clothing. This kind of care extended even to her retirement years when she dedicated herself to the Hispanic and African American little children in a Head Start Program in Joliet.

Most of all, we remember Sister Vincentia as a "woman of the earth." She spoke of "God's world of outdoor nature", and delighted being on her knees gardening. Hers was a "creation spirituality", where she was most in tune with her God as she turned the soil, and planted seeds. Until this year, Sister Vincentia always had a garden. She planted roses, other flowers, trees, and even had a vegetable garden. She balanced her academic life at the College with hours beautifying the campus. When she retired to Our Lady of Angels in 1975, she and one of the residents, Frank Krenek, could be seen morning, noon, and until dark working in their gardens. She talked to her flowers, called them by name, and witnessed to all of us the beauty of God in nature. When she was asked why all the changes in religious life since Vatican II didn't upset her, she answered simply, "I've learned so much about life and change and the providence of God through my gardening, that I can trust in what I cannot see and not get upset."

There are amusing stories of Sister Vincentia hiding her garden tools under her bed at Our Lady of Angels, much to the frustration of the housekeeping staff. And there are touching stories of Sister Vincentia "letting go" and giving her favorite rake to one of our Sisters this year. Our Sister was a beautifully human person, close to her God. She loved to talk. One Sister who had shared community life with her for fifty years said, "You know, she talked incessantly, no periods, no commas, but I have never heard her speak unkindly about anyone." What a wonderful tribute to our Sister.

Sister Vincentia, we thank you for your seventy-five years as our Sister. We will miss your presence with us. We ask you to intercede for us that we may understand how we must care for our earth. May you rejoice forever in your life eternal, where there is no blindness, where there is no pain of broken bones, where perhaps there are even beautiful gardens to enjoy for all eternity in the fullness of eternal creation. Amen! Alleluia!