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Sister M. Francella Dahms

For Sister Francella a double hope and oft repeated prayer was realized in the sudden death which overtook her the afternoon of December 27th. As she had wished, her passing was "quick," and it occurred on Wednesday. For everyone else the speed was all too swift, and the loss of a loved Sister on this particular Wednesday shattered the tranquil joy of Christmas week.

Sister had accompanied Sister Gregory to the branch post office a block from Ss. Peter and Paul convent, Chicago. They had posted their mail and were making their way to the door when suddenly Sister exclaimed, "I'm so sick," and slumped to the floor unconscious. Dr. Kohler, whose office was in the same building, was promptly called and the inhalator squad was summoned. With the oxygen mask adjusted, Sister was rushed to the South Chicago Community Hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival. The captain of the squad maintained there was still a faint pulse when they put Sister in the ambulance, but Dr. Kohler said he had not been able to detect it. - Coronary occlusion was given as the cause of death. - Sister was sixty-nine years of age and had been professed forty years.

The Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated in the Motherhouse chapel by Father James P. Cuff, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul on Saturday, the 30th. His Excellency Bishop Martin D. McNamara presided and gave the last absolution. Father Cuff also led the prayers at Resurrection Cemetery. - Sister Francella's class of Senior girls attended the funeral Mass.

The former Rose Dahms of Chicago, Sister Francella entered the convent from St. Philomene Parish on February 12, 1921. She began teaching in the grades as second year novice in 1922. After two years, she was appointed to St. Francis Academy at her more natural level, high school work. Her appointment two years later to St. Procopius began the thirty-two years of her Chicago experience, including St. Clement, St. Francis De Sales, Sacred Heart (Engelwood), with the last seven and a half years at Ss. Peter and Paul. There were also six Ohio years - at St. Peter's in Mansfield and St. Mary's, Columbus. The commercial subjects, with history, civics, and religion, remained her chief work. Her single year at the College, where the small commercial class gave insufficient scope for her energy, rounded her almost forty years of service.

During all this time and at all these missions, Sister Francella was the same genial, kindly, efficient teacher. A definite success in office practice before entering the community, she utilized that experience in preparing two generations of students to enter the business world. Employment agencies liked to place "her girls," knowing they would be well trained and would give good service.

But she did not limit the formation of her students to skills and techniques. Home room teacher of large classes year after year, she knew how to handle both boys and girls and did it with mastery. She aimed to develop real men and true women in her students. Her own maturity aided her in this. "She had a way," it was said of her, "of influencing teenagers." With her, the years separating teacher and students did not divide; rather, they formed a bridge where striving and achievement met. The class knew her standards, and, being well disposed, they strove to meet them.

Her frequent practical advice to her class was "Live in the land of reality." And to cope with the problems that reality posed, she utilized the aids of nature and grace. A weak student she would advise to have recourse to the Blessed Mother through the "Memorare." A shy student she once encouraged, "Go to the prom, even if you have to ask the policeman on the corner." This rock-bottom common sense gave solidarity to her guidance, and through the years her students returned to her. The day she died a couple who had been in her 1943 class at De Sales visited her, bringing their children with them.

Sister Francella lived a full life and had many interests. Her "favorites" and hobbies make a motley but wholesome array. They include sports, tating, mystery stories; popcorn, coffee, coffee-and-donuts, a feastday dinner bringing hearty recognition to the cook, "Better than the Ritz!" Items accorded high priority were helping her Superior with clerical work, helping a Sister who needed a service, helping anyone in any need. Then there was her devoted love of her sisters. She often cared for her invalid sister Anne, and she spent the weeks of the summer sessions with Sister Donata, doing her many kindnesses. There was, moreover, her love of good music, especially piano selections; of hymns, especially "Ubi Caritas": of parish Masses, particularly Mass XVI.

But most consistently practiced and best loved of all her pastimes was her custom of spending extra time in chapel. This was her favorite resort. She was devoted to St. Joseph and had confidently put her death into his keeping. She said many extra prayers, particularly the Stations of the Cross. Not merely the Stations, however, but the Novena of Stations-nine rounds, day after day. Was it here she found the charity, patience, and strength that so notably characterized her life? In thus lovingly sharing the Passion, had she not won, at the sudden close of her life, the assurance given that earlier sympathetic sharer of the Passion: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise"? - We pray Thee, Lord, so be it!