

SISTER M. MACARIA, O.S.F.

August 22, 1963

She had come to Our Lady of Angels in January, 1962, just short of her 81st birthday, and for a long time she was not quite sure that there hadn't been some mistake. "Take me home!" was her reiterated request during those first months. "Home" may have been the Motherhouse -- or it may have been St. Procopius where she had begun teaching back in 1906 -- or Chicago's De Sales, Assisi, Xavier, or Boniface. It might have meant old St. Wenceslas or Guadalupe, Peter and Paul or St. Ludmilla's; it could have been Columbus' St. Mary's, Mansfield's St. Peter's, or Joliet's St. Joseph or Holy Cross. It could have been Pesotum or Englewood, Leonore or Johnstown, Fairfield, Alabama or Washburn, Wisconsin. These had all been "home" to Sister Macaria in the 58 years of her Franciscan life. And no one of them had been quite like Our Lady of Angels.

For one thing, she found it difficult to "retire." "I've always worked hard all my life, and it's hard not to work now," she confided. She learned, however, that there was work even for a retired Sister. There was wash to fold, for one thing -- and she loved this; there were pot holders to make -- and her old hands made them well. Characteristically, however, she always thought hers were inferior to those made by the other Sisters, and never tired admiring what they had done.

Gradually, she became a part of her latest "home." She loved to play dominoes with Sister Urban and to walk with her outside. Not until they were outside though would she indulge in conversation. In the corridors or the elevator she refused to talk to anyone -- even to Reverend Mother! Sister Constance and Sister Roseanne persuaded her to try shuffleboard, although she could not be coaxed to play ball because that was "a boys' game and we never played it at home."

Sister Macaria had never gotten used to "extras." "For me?" she would ask. "Has everybody got it?" Only when assured that she was no different, would she accept what was given with a, "God love you. You are so good to me!"

It was July 17th that Sister Constance noticed a change. Sometime after four that afternoon Sister Macaria suffered the stroke that affected her sight and her speech. But her lips continued to move in prayer and there was a smile on her face. The next day Father Louis gave her the last anointing. But it was not yet the end for Sister Macaria. On the 24th when she seemed to be improving enough to receive Holy Communion, Father Chrys brought her what was to be her Viaticum.

She was never without fever during the five weeks that she lingered. To her Dr. Richard Fahrner made his last call at OLA on July 19th, the day before his fatal heart attack. It is doubtful that Sister Macaria knew that the dedicated Dr. Fahrner had hurried into eternity before her. For although for a while she seemed to be better, the end was not far away.

It came peacefully. She had lost consciousness early on the morning of the 22nd, and her final passing was made without struggle. Her breathing stopped -- her pulse faded -- she was gone. It was as though she had made her one last plea, "Take me home!" And the Lord said, "Come!"

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!