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Sister M. Florence Gougé

Our Sister M. Florence Gougé, having commended her valorous soul to God, died Thursday morning, June 19th at eight o'clock in the Motherhouse Infirmary. Sister had all her life a deep reverence for the priesthood and had expressed the pious wish to have a priest at her bedside when she died. Her wish was fulfilled in fullest measure, Father Alphonse Coan, OFM, Father Urban Eberle, OFM, and Father Philbert Ramstetter, OFM, taking turns in attending her and praying with her. She was conscious to the end.

Sister's last illness apparently extended back a year. She had not been well the preceding summer; in fact, she collapsed at the end of Retreat and was taken to St. Joseph Hospital, where she was anointed. Having rallied, she returned to Red Cliff in July, hoping to regain her strength. That winter, after x-rays and tests, an abdominal tumor was discovered, and she underwent surgery on January 2, 1952. The tumor, however, was not removed, the doctors pronouncing her "full of cancer." Sister Consolata had gone North to attend her, and when Sister was dismissed from the Hospital, the two came directly to Joliet. After a short time in the Infirmary, Sister Florence again returned to Red Cliff. On May 25th, however, weak and ill, she took final leave of the North, Sister Consolata once more accompanying her. The trip from Chicago to Joliet was made by ambulance.

Sister Florence's patience and serenity those weeks in the Infirmary were beautiful to see. She endured bravely and with high hope, knowing that heaven was "not far off."

The funeral was held on Saturday, June 21, with the customary Solemn Requiem Mass. His Excellency, Bishop Martin D. McNamara, presiding. Father Gervase Brinkman, OFM, was celebrant; Father Wilfred Cool, OFM, and Father Urban Eberle, OFM, were deacon and subdeacon. Burial was at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Joliet, Father Gervase Brinkman officiating at the grave.

Sister Florence at the time of her death was 61 years of age and had spent 43 years in religious life. Though she was sacristan for a time and was assistant prefect at the Academy for a year, most of her forty-two years on mission were spent in domestic work---twenty-five of them at St. Francis Assisi, Red Cliff. Wisconsin was the state of her birth, and the North was always home to her. She loved the people of the reservation and they all but idolized her. Her quiet ways and kind disposition endeared her not only to the people, but to the priests and sisters as well. All Red Cliff was disconsolate the day Sister Florence left for her final weeks in the infirmary.