

SISTER M. OLIVA, O.S.F.

January 9, 1966

You'd never been really sick before until December, had you, Sister Oliva? All autumn long you'd followed your regular routine of Stations in chapel at an hour when most of us were still yawning our way into consciousness. The rosary slipped through your fingers in decade after decade as you kept your long and daily vigils with the Lord. There were so many things you had to pray for -- so many intentions -- so many people to remember. And you never forgot a one, did you, Sister?

There were your "Young Sisters," -- getting older now! -- who had dubbed you their "Teen Age Nun," -- Sisters like Sister Michelyn who still came to give you "spiritual counsel" and to "pray for your perseverance." You loved their teasing, and they knew it!

And there were all those many, many Sisters who said, "She was my Superior," and who said it reverently and gratefully, remembering your kindness, your patience, your desire to "do my best." One of those Sisters, a Superior herself now, Sister Thelma, was with you when your tired heart stopped beating that cold January morning.

There were your old friends of the years -- Sister Thaddeus, Sister Cordula, Mother Immaculate -- so many others to whom you had been so closely and so warmly attached through 74 years of religious life. Was there anyone who hadn't been your friend, Sister? Was there anyone who hadn't been able to learn from you the secret of kindness?

That was one of your outstanding virtues, Sister. You were always concerned about others. Even when you were so sick after you came back from the hospital before Christmas, you could still remember that someone else had a minor ailment, and could inquire through your own pain, "How's your foot?"

And you must have suffered a lot, Sister, especially during your last forty-eight hours -- hours when you wondered impatiently, "How long is it going to be?" But when Sister Peter answered gently, "Maybe you have one more lesson to teach us, Sister," you stopped questioning. Whenever and however it came, you would wait. There were those who would learn from your courage the ultimate lesson of dying. You would not let them down.

You couldn't know that your room was crowded that Sunday morning; you couldn't hear the prayers, couldn't see Sister Cordula's stricken little face as she murmured her goodbye to the friend who had been her "right arm." For you'd lapsed into unconsciousness Saturday night -- where pain could not reach you -- where there was only waiting. At 10:20 the waiting ended -- and surely Heaven began.

Months ago, Sister, you said, "Wonder what you're going to say about me?" The answer had been, "Only the best, Sister Oliva -- that's all there is to say about YOU!"

This is that final tribute, Sister, from everyone who ever knew and loved you.

GOD GRANT YOU REST ETERNAL!

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