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Sister M. Julia Lagger

Sister Julia, a native of Joliet was the daughter of a former mayor of the city. She was a student at St. Francis academy before her entry into the convent, and after her profession she taught music there for six years. For seventeen years she combined elementary teaching with music. In 1922 she combined Superior-Principalship to her duties. Her mission at that time being Ss. Peter & Paul, Leonore, IL. In 1925 she was transferred to St. Boniface, Chicago, as Superior, Principal and music teacher.

In 1927 when the New Guardian Angel Home was ready for occupancy, Sister Julia was appointed Superior and Superintendent. She continued as Superintendent for twenty-four years until her health made it impossible for her to carry on longer. Seriously ill, she was taken to St. Joseph Hospital on July 16th of the past year for necessary medical care and remained there until her death. Father Alphonse, chaplain at the Hospital, took care of her spiritual needs and the Sisters were with her in her last hours.

The morning following her death, Sister Julia's body was taken to Guardian Angel Home by Mr. S.J. Harrigan, of Haley and Sons Funeral Home and was met at the front entrance by the chaplain, Rev. John C. Then and the servers. In the large reception room the children and Sisters of the Home gathered around the casket and recited the rosary. Father Then led additional prayers and blessed the corpse. After several hours the body was brought to the Convent.

The funeral took place on Thursday, February 14th. As a special tribute to Sister Julia, the Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by the Most Rev. Wm. A. O'Connor, Bishop of Springfield, IL and the Most Rev. Martin D. McNamara, Bishop of Joliet. The Bishop presided and Rev. George Wunder, pastor of Sacred Heart parish, Chicago was deacon. Rev. Francis J. Ecimovich, SVD from Temple, Texas, one of Sister Julia's former boys at the Home was subdeacon. Rev. Gervase Brinkman, OFM, was assistant priest. Rev. T.J. Holbrook of Catholic Charities, Chicago and Rev. J. Nellis of Manhattan were honorary deacon and subdeacon.

Among the fifteen priests present in the sanctuary were the Right Rev. Monsignor E.V. Hoover of the Cathedral of St. Raymond; M.J. Butala of St. Joseph Church; and V.W. Cooke, archdiocesan supervisor of charities, Chicago.

Father Alphonse Coan, OFM, preached the sermon, opening with the remark that preaching at a Sister's funeral is not customary because a Sister's life is in itself a sermon. He explained that Sister Julia through her association with the Guardian Angel Home had become a public figure but had at the same time preached a wonderful sermon by her life dedicated to God. For many years she gave all unselfishly for the homeless, and the hardest thing she ever did was to leave the Home and the children she had both mothered and fathered knowing she would not return.

Her lasts months' stay at the hospital, Father stated, was a sign of her greatness. Though in severe pain, she did not get discouraged but bore all with courage and resignation. She was thoughtful and considerate, always trying to do something for others; for the Sisters and the nurses. He pointed out that she was able to suffer patiently because she loved God and because she desired to suffer that she might offer it for others and take them to Heaven with her.

It seemed a last significant grace that she died on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Lady she loved so much and prayed to so faithfully and devoutly. We know, Father ended, that her soul went back to God. Her spirit will remain at Guardian Angel Home as an inspiration and guide to those who remain.

Burial was at St. John's cemetery, Joliet. Father Gervase officiated, assisted by Rev. Nicholas Christoffel, OFM, Father Benedict Pfeifer, OFM, Father John Nellis and Father Francis Ecimovich.

Sisters from Guardian Angel Home and the children from grades four to eight attended the Mass. The services were also attended by many religious, laymen, city officials and former boys and girls of Guardian Angel Home.

Sister Julia was widely known and honored and many tributes were paid her. To give but a few: Cardinal Stritch sent Bishop McNamara a telegram saying, "The death of Sister Julia takes from us one who was a living canticle of Christ's love for souls. Please accept my sympathy and extend it to her Community. I shall remember her at the Altar".

Monsignor Romeo Blanchette wrote Mother Immaculate expressing sympathy and regret at Sister's death, adding, "She certainly did a great deal of good for many people. I said Mass for her...."

Mr. H.F. Reinhart of New York wrote, "Well do I remember Sister Julia and what a wonderful person she was. Her life will be lived many hundreds of times over through the lives of the boys and girls she served so remarkably and so unselfishly at Guardian Angel Home.... My life is finer and better because of her influence and inspiring example. She was truly a good servant in the finest sense of the word. Sister Julia was my friend and I can think of no finer honor that could come to a man than to be able to claim her as friend".

Sister Julia was a niece to our former Mother Lucy Raub.