

SISTER M. GERVAISE, O.S.F.  
December 28, 1965

Not in our century's history had anyone died on Christmas. It seemed, however, that Sister Gervaise was about to set the precedent. But December 25th came and went -- and Sister Gervaise did not break with tradition.

Actually, she had been dying since the 10th. At that time, with a temperature above 107, it did not seem that she COULD pull through. But she continued to "linger on the bridge," as Father Alphonse expressed it, unable to make the final crossing. She had always been strong, and that strength grudgingly gave ground now. When the world of speech had closed to her, she spoke with her eyes. Now, however, there was no point of contact. Sister Gervaise was locked in a prism of pain, unable even to moan. And still she lingered on the bridge.

She had quietly enjoyed the weeks prior to December. She had liked sitting up in her chair, being wheeled down the corridor, and visiting with her sister Anna, the mother of Sisters Bernardine, Orestes, and Alcuin, when she came for the Centenary Concert at Thanksgiving. When visitors came to her room, she welcomed them, not in speech, but with the eloquence of her eyes and an appreciative chuckle at their gentle teasing. Then on December 10th, the picture changed. A muffled "Jesus!" was the last tortured word she said before the long dying began.

For Sister Gervaise there was to be no easy passing. Each day appeared to be the last -- each morning Father Alphonse included her in the bidding prayers -- each day Mother Immaculate and the Sisters prayed at her side. Convulsions wracked her on Monday the 27th, and throughout the night. Not until four o'clock Tuesday morning did they subside, and Sister Gervaise sank into the peacefulness that was not to leave her during the four hours of life that still remained.

It had been a hard struggle, but Sister Gervaise had never in her life turned away from the hard things. No kind of work had ever been too much for her. When she retired from the classroom, it was to take up new duties at the Motherhouse. On one of her last trips to 520, she walked into the ironing room and wistfully looked around the laundry in which she had taken such pride. It belonged to the past now, as did so many other things.

Then on December 28th, the Past merged into an Eternal Present, as Sister Gervaise quietly "crossed the bridge."

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!

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