

+
+
+ + + + +
+
+
+

Sister M. Joachim Smola

Just as the community was reciting Compline on Saturday evening, December 10, Sister M. Joachim went peacefully to God. Brought to the Infirmary in September, for three months she had been living the compline prayer: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." In her last hour, Father Bellarmine, O. Carm., repeatedly gave her the blessing, and Mother Immaculate, Sisters Peter, Grace, and Cephas continued to pray with her.

Sister Joachim had in August attended the Superior's Institute at Notre Dame, and at its close returned to her post at St. Ludmilla's, Chicago, for the coming school year. Late August, however, she was taken to Little Company of Mary Hospital because of a bowel obstruction. She was shortly transferred to the Infirmary and then to St. Joseph Hospital, Joliet. Here after biopsy on September 13, the verdict was "incurable cancer, with only a few months to live."

Sister spent these months well, calmly awaiting the end. "As He will, whenever He wills," expressed her attitude. She had complete trust in God's love. "I am at peace," she said, "and ready to go. I am not attached to anything or anybody." This did not mean she was insensitive. She was humbly appreciative of the care given her by the community and the special privilege of being at the Motherhouse. She loved prayer in common and followed the community prayers to the very last. Daily up to the Monday before her death she had someone do the customary spiritual reading for her. She often spoke of eternity and of her desire to "work for the community after reaching Heaven."

Sister lived her spiritual life frankly. "I love Jesus very much," she would say. Once she remarked, "It is important to give all to the Lord... I have always tried to give everything to Him." A favorite aspiration of hers was "My God, I love you," and appropriately on the last day of her life her most frequent ejaculation was "My God and my All." That evening, as the hour of Compline struck God called her to rest. With Simeon she could say, "Now, Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace."

The former Mary Smola of Chicago, Sister Joachim had entered the convent from St. Procopius parish in September of 1940, and at the time of her death was thirty-seven years of age. The entire seventeen years of her teaching career she had spent in Chicago - three years at Sacred Heart, Englewood, ten years at St. Procopius, and three years at Ss. Cyril and Methodius. In 1959 he was appointed to her last position, that of superior-principal and eighth grade teacher at St. Ludmilla's.

As a teacher, Sister Joachim gave herself wholeheartedly to her work. She taught secular subjects efficiently and was ingenious in devising little techniques to ground her pupils in faith and religious practices. Not a strict disciplinarian, she was very understanding with the children, gained their good will, and commanded an easy, relaxed good order in the classroom. She worked well with her fellow teachers and was always willing to assume the extra tasks that arose in school and convent.

2.

As a superior, she was most considerate of others. She was especially kind to the sick, whose duties she often performed herself. She was loved by all her Sisters, who attested, "She couldn't do enough for us and never seemed to consider herself."

Sister had always shown a great reverence for priests and highly valued the priestly blessing. In her last illness she had the consolation of having Father Bellarmine visit her frequently, almost daily, and in her final hour remain at her bedside to give her the last blessing. At her Requiem Mass on Tuesday, the 13th, in addition to the presiding Most Rev. Martin D. McNamara, Bishop of Joliet, there were, as recorded in the Obituary, thirteen priests in the sanctuary. Six of these were at her graveside in Resurrection Cemetery -- the Church's last prayers over the remains of Sister Joachim were full-voiced, resonant, Requiescat!