

SISTER M. CORDELIA, O.S.F.

July 19, 1965

She had sobbed aloud that November day when an assassin's bullet cut down John F. Kennedy. President Johnson thereafter remained only the man with an impossible job, because "No one can take Kennedy's place!" So, Sister Cordelia consigned the United States to the direct care of the Lord, and prayed for "Kennedy and Jackie."

She probably included Kennedy's successor, however, in the prayers with which she began her day. "Always at five o'clock!" marveled Sister David Ann, "even today!" It was to be her last morning. She faced it with ravaged face and tired eyes -- she had been literally dying by inches since June 3d -- but when Sister Peter asked how she was, "Fine!" was her automatic answer. But when Sister probed compassionately, "Aren't you sick, Sister Cordelia?" she admitted, "Yes."

However, she was able to receive Holy Communion as usual and to respond to Father Alphonse when he made his regular call after Mass. In fact, she was still very much aware of what was going on about her. And if she called her favorite aide, "Sarah," instead of Marge, and if Sister Alice Emile was just "Big Sister," it was not because she did not know who they really were. She knew -- just as she knew Sister Estelle, who sat at her side through the summer hours and watched her sister's dying.

On Jubilee Day the Juniors came out to serenade Diamond Jubilarian Sister Ernesta. They stopped in Sister Cordelia's room to give her a special concert. Did she have any requests? Only one: "Home Sweet Home," and as the Juniors began "Mid pleasures and palaces," there were tears -- but they were not Sister Cordelia's. She may have been looking ahead to Eternity's home -- or her musician's mind may have reverted to the many times she had herself played and sung the tune, but one thing was certain: Sister Cordelia was not repining, was not looking back regretfully to the home she had left in a far-off yesterday.

Death was long in coming. Saturday was particularly bad, but when Sister asked, "Going traveling tonight, Sister Cordelia?" she shook her head. Pain looked out of her eyes -- but not fear. "What should I be afraid of?" she wondered. And it was in that serene confidence that she approached the moment of truth, when from out the shadows, the stranger whom she did not fear, beckoned at last, and Sister Cordelia, with hardly a change of breath, went to meet him.

On Sunday night she was murmuring unintelligibly, and, concerned that she might be wanting something, Sister Peter asked, "What are you trying to tell us, Sister Cordelia?" Her answer was blurred, but recognizable, "Thank you -- for everything!"

She was, it would seem, making final arrangements for the morning's rendezvous.

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!!

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