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Sister M. Noreen Butler

Sister M. Noreen's prayer, expressed when she learned recently how gravely ill she was, namely, 'that it wouldn't be long,' was answered this morning at 12:20, when life ended for her after a six weeks' stay in the infirmary.

Sister had had surgery the past summer at Little Company of Mary Hospital, Chicago, for breast tumor, the diagnosis at biopsy being "malignant." Sister accepted the verdict cheerfully and continued to improve during her convalescing period. In September she returned to the classroom at St. Francis de Sales, where she was the Senior Homeroom teacher. Toward the end of September, however, she was "always tired," and stairs became increasingly difficult for her.

Hoping to rally her strength, she took a prescribed rest of two weeks, but did not improve--congestion of the lungs had set in. After having the fluid drained and spending a week at the hospital, Sister came to the Motherhouse infirmary, third floor, October 28. Further congestion and further draining indicated her condition. She understood how serious it was and asked to be anointed; Father Gervase administered the sacrament on November 28. After that she awaited the end. Breathing was her greatest difficulty, and in spite of the easing oxygen, she suffered considerable distress, particularly the last week. But comparatively speaking, her release came soon. She had the courage that last night, deliberately to remove the oxygen tube, leaving nature to its own resources, but she had inquired first and ascertained that this "would not be wrong." She was conscious almost to the last.

The funeral was held on Thursday, December 15, the Most Rev. Bishop Martin D. McNamara presiding at the Solemn Requiem which was celebrated by Father Gervase Brinkman. Father A. Memmesheimer, pastor of St. Francis de Sales, and his assistant, Father William Hock, were in the sanctuary; and the Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, together with the Senior boys and girls, attended the funeral. Six of the boys acted as pall-bearers: John Williams, Charles Jakubowski, James Mikulski, Stephen Anton, Paul Engles, and James Letavec. - Interment was made at Mount Olivet, Cemetery, Joliet, Father Memmesheimer officiating at the grave, with Fathers Gervase and Hock assisting.

Sister Noreen was the former Cecilia Butler of Fulton, Illinois, who was received into the Community in August of 1918. At the time of her death she was fifty-four years of age and had worn the habit thirty-seven years. She began her teaching career in the grades in 1920, being stationed at Mansfield, Chicago, Columbus, and Toledo; in 1933 she was appointed as high school teacher. St. Mary's, Columbus; Central High, Johnstown; St. Peter's, Mansfield; St. Clement, St. Procopius, Sacred Heart, and St. Francis De Sales, Chicago--these were her missions for the next twenty-two years--years filled with the activities incident to teaching, counseling, and molding the characters of teen-agers assigned to her. A good teacher especially excellent in history, and understanding and self-sacrificing counselor. Sister Noreen won the respect and love of her students and was able to exert a strong influence for good among them. Particularly noteworthy was her management of the boys and their response to her leadership.

Duties in school and convent finished, Sister would engage in one of her several hobbies--writing articles for school journals, planning crossword puzzles for publication, and chaining rosaries. The latter was her favorite pastime, pursued happily, reverently. How many prayers these beads would tally! Only perfect workmanship would do. And, expertly made, the beads were to her a joy. Moreover, they enabled her to earn a substantial income for the Community, as well as to exercise the generosity that was a basic trait of hers. Repeatedly she made the Franciscan Crowns that were the Superior General's gifts to the jubilarians - but first they were Sister's gift to Reverend Mother. Many an acquaintance also treasures a gift rosary from her.

Satisfying and worthwhile Sister had found her life work; satisfying and remunerative, her pastimes. When both had to be abandoned, she had the comfort of looking back over years "full of works" -- Small wonder that she should be eager to pass on to the activities of eternity, which is at once rest and fruition. May these be hers!