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Sister M. Ignatia Devine

With Sister M. Ignatia's call to eternity the morning of January 30th, Our Lady of Angels was hallowed by its first death, and on February 1st the first Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated there. His Excellency Bishop Martin D. McNamara presided and gave the final absolution. Sister Ignatia, the former Elizabeth Devine of Joliet, was seventy-two years of age and had been a member of the Congregation for fifty-four years.

This first death occurred only five days after the Sisters of the Infirmary moved in to their new home. Sister Ignatia had been anointed at the Motherhouse the day before her transfer. Because of her grave condition, she was the last patient to be moved, Sister Peter, nurse, accompanying her in the ambulance. As she was carried into the building she remarked how good the fresh air was, and inside, she observed that everything was beautiful.

Sister's passing was quiet and peaceful. Earlier, she had been confused, but this condition cleared up the last days. She had received Communion that morning and had continued lucid until the end, devoutly following the prayers that were being recited.

Her sickness had taken its course for a year and a half. Neither surgery the summer of 1959 nor cobalt the following spring could keep her from returning to the classroom. Further surgery and cobalt the summer of 1961, however, ended her teaching. At the Motherhouse, she continued uncomplaining and self-sufficient, still hoping she might return to her mission post. Then in September, she was consigned to the Infirmary for better care. Here she resigned herself to the will of God.

Sister accepted the fact of "cancer," but did not speak of it. Once she had informed her brother and two sisters, asking them to look upon it as God's will, the matter was closed for her. And with the illness she accepted the pain and privations. She was patient in suffering and did not want sedation. She would even have renounced the more frequent visits of her brother and sisters because "others did not have company that often," had not Sister Peter assured her that Superior had invited her people and wished them to come.

This was typical of Sister Ignatia's entire religious life. She was unwaveringly exact. In prayer, in common life, in her school work, her aim was always high. To her "striving for perfection" was a life-time commitment and deserved her unflagging endeavor. As a teacher, she held one's education was never finished. She always carried a book under her arm and diligently used spare moments for self-improvement.

She looked back on her fifty-two years in the classroom as a happy and rewarding experience. Her first thirty-three years were in the grades, chiefly at Johnstown, Cleveland, Mansfield, and Columbus; and at Shelby and Manhattan, where she was also Superior and Principal. In 1943 she was appointed to the high school, spending fifteen of these years at Ss. Peter and Paul, Chicago.

Though her students might at first think her strict, they soon found her a pleasant teacher with a quiet Irish wit that came in unexpected flashes. A student, returning after an absence, might be greeted with, "I missed you--it was so quiet around here." - Latin was her favorite subject, and her fond teaching of it made her students love it, too. She also handled English and history competently.

Dainty about herself, meticulous about her surroundings, she kept her classroom and her charge immaculate. Though she was no longer young at the end of her career, she asked for a regular convent charge and enjoyed doing it.

Her concern for perfection revealed itself also in her personality and her relations with others. She sometimes referred to her education under the Loretto Sisters at St. Mary's, and at least on one occasion told of their special course in culture. And culture, it was clear, had become part of her, or perhaps it had merely intensified an instinct or natural heritage, for she was, as the Sisters testified, "always a lady, always courteous and considerate." At table, she was alert to the needs of others, and it was she who saw that everyone was taken care of. In a social group, she knew how to draw out a shy companion and put her at ease. There was, moreover, a noble delicacy of feeling about her; in any personal difficulty she preferred to suffer a hurt rather than inflict pain on another.

Though each life is hidden in God, in details such as these concerning Sister Ignatia, the Sisters saw another vocation happily consummated, another life sanctified, another soul victorious. They could, as their prayers for her Eternal Rest rose to God's throne, hope confidently that He had "crowned her with glory and honor."