

SISTER M. BERTILLE, O.S.F.

October 5, 1967

She went home to God in the month of the Rosary. Sister Bertille would have liked that. Actually, however, every month was "Rosary Month" for her, and it would have shocked her profoundly to know that her favorite, her dearest prayer was being shunted into an ecumenical corner. How, she would have wondered, could anyone get along without the rosary?

Sister Bertille didn't try to. There were so many for whom to pray -- so many to recommend to the care of the Mother of God: her brothers -- her sister Clara whose cards came so faithfully each week -- her nephew, Father Bill Eckstein, who with the oils of ordination fresh upon him, gave his first anointing to Sister Bertille last July. There was Sister Dorita, who would carry on the Franciscan tradition of the Ecksteins. There was Sister Lucille with whom she had spent two happy years "side by side" at Our Lady of Angels, and who had gone ahead to join their Sister Rita nearly four long years ago.

And there was so much for which to be grateful: "Our beautiful Home where they take such good care of us," -- and the friends who shared it with her -- friends like Sister Rosalinda with whom she could pray aloud the daily Crown of Our Lady's Joys -- friends who would drop into her room just to see how she was.

And there were the memories to be bound in the decades -- memories of wide-eyed children "looking up, holding wonder like a cup." "I'll stay on one more year," she would say, and then "one year more," and "one year more." For always there were children -- always there was need. There were no more children now -- but there had been so many since 1910 when she had stepped into her first classroom. She couldn't remember their names, and their faces had merged with the lines of Time, but they had been her children -- and they still had a claim to her prayers. And so her fingers slipped through the beads and her lips moved in ageless petition: "Pray for us -- pray for us -- pray for us!"

The rosary was in her hand Thursday evening when just a little after 6:00 o'clock Sister Bertille went home. She had slipped into a coma on Wednesday afternoon, and she was never to waken again. There was no struggle -- only a quiet passing at the end of a lovely autumn day.

It was in the same room that had known Sister Lucille's dying -- the same room in which Sister Bertille had sat hour after hour at her sister's side, the beads slipping through her gnarled fingers.

Those fingers are quiet now and the rosary is twined about her hand. Sister Bertille will never say it again. She doesn't have to. There is vision now -- and Mary's Son.

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!!

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