



Sister Mathilda Koester

When the New Year 1936 was but a week old, death made a visitation at the Motherhouse. Sister M. Mathilda Koester who had been critically ill since Christmas Eve died at St. Joseph's Hospital, Joliet at 6:55 p.m. on January 8. At the time of her death Sister was in the sixty-seventh year of her age and the thirty-eighth of her religious life.

For a number of years Sister Mathilda had suffered from diabetes. In the late spring of 1932 her condition was so serious that one of her legs had to be amputated. After several months of convalescence, she was fitted for an artificial leg, but she never became fully accustomed to it. For a short time she managed to come to chapel for Mass and Holy Communion and to join the Community at meals in the refectory. During 1934 and 1935 there were times when Sister felt well enough to sew and she took great pleasure in doing what mending she could for the Sisters at the Motherhouse. She spent much time in making scapulars to send to the Sisters in the Mission houses for their First Communion classes. There were other times, too, when Sister suffered much and would have to be confined to bed in the infirmary.

On Christmas Eve she was sitting in her room anticipating the joy of attending Midnight Mass, apparently feeling fairly well. Before eleven o'clock Sister Mathilda had become seriously ill and the doctor had to be summoned. From that time on to January 4, she was in the infirmary at the Motherhouse, but in spite of the constant care by day and by night, her condition was getting worse. On Saturday morning, January 4, she was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital and died there on Wednesday evening, fortified by the rites of Holy Church.

Of the thirty-seven years of her religious life, Sister Mathilda had spent the greater number at the Motherhouse either in the kitchen or the garden or the poultry yard. She delighted in the out-door garden work. For several years before her illness, in 1932, Sister had been in charge of the poultry yard at the Guardian Angel Home, and had been most successful in the work. Had she been able to continue the supervision of this work, this would have been a very successful project of the farm at the Home. Sister Mathilda was always a hard worker, devoted both to the duties assigned her and to all the Community exercises.

The funeral services were held on January 11 in the chapel of the Motherhouse. The Reverend Thomas Rust, OFM was celebrant of the solemn Requiem Mass; the Rev. Angelus Zwiesler, OFM., and the Rev. Pascal Rollmann, OFM., assisted as deacon and subdeacon. The Rev. Francis E. Scanlon, pastor of Saint Raymond's, Joliet, was in the sanctuary. Sister Paulette, a niece of Sister Mathilda, has been a teacher in St. Raymond's School for about seven years.

Sister Mathilda lies buried in the Community plot in St. John's Cemetery, Joliet.