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Sister M. Sylvia Kozak

A sudden and unexpected death took Sister Sylvia from us this afternoon, Tuesday, February 3, 1953. Sister had just three days ago come in from St. Procopius mission, Chicago, to the 4th floor infirmary. Though her condition was known to be grave, no immediate danger was anticipated. Sister William had just helped her from her bed when the attack came upon her and she was seized with intense pain in the heart region. The nurses immediately administered oxygen and put her to bed. She remarked that the oxygen did not help the pain. Before they could attempt anything further, they noted a change. They said several ejaculations with her, and she expired. All had occurred in the space of a few minutes.

Sister Sylvia was a golden jubilarian of last summer; she was then apparently in fair health. In October, when Sister Bernadone was transferred from St. Procopius, Sister Sylvia took over her classes part time with Sister Cassilda, but in December, consulting her doctor, she was sent to the hospital for tests and observation. After a week's stay there and a diagnosis of chronic myocarditis due to generalized carcinomatosis, Sister returned to St. Procopius. However, she failed visibly from day to day, and late in January her condition became critical. Father Peter Mizera, OSB, was called Friday evening, January 30, and he anointed Sister and gave her Viaticum. The next day she was brought to Joliet, Mother Immaculate and Sister Miriam Edward accompanying her in the ambulance. Tuesday at noon she remarked to Sister William that so many Masses were being read for her, she was sure she would recover. Would she not now say it is better so?

Sister had attained her seventieth year and her fifty-third in religious life. Her fifty-one and half years on mission show a remarkable "history of stability." In all that time she served in only two cities--Chicago and Cleveland--and lived at only five missions. She was superior and principal at Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Chicago, six of her eight years there. At St. Procop, Cleveland, she was superior and principal for ten of her seventeen years. Of her twenty-three and a half years at St. Procopius, Chicago, she was superior and principal the last five and a half years. Two early years at St. Ludmilla and one at Assumption complete her Chicago record. From 1901 to 1937 Sister taught in the grades; after 1937 her teaching was in the high school.

Wherever she served, Sister Sylvia was devoted to the cause of Christ. As superior and principal she was systematic and orderly in school, affable with the children, mild and understanding with the Sisters. In the classroom she was a competent religious teacher. A letter addressed to Mother Immaculate by a former pupil of hers, Sister M. Victorian, BVM gives the following characteristic description;

Like all her pupils, I was fond of and admired Sister Sylvia. She was kind, gentle, sympathetic and understanding...Through her good example and sound teaching, I grasped the meaning of sacrifice, and acquired a strong desire to practice it. Her teaching pupils how to supernaturalize everything they did stands out prominently in my memory of Sister....

When such a valued friend dies, one feels the need of telling those closely associated with her how very, very much she meant in the life of the individual left to continue striving for the Eternal goal.... I wanted you to know that one of your dear daughters played a tremendous part in drawing me to Christ, and that with you I pray for the repose of her soul.

Funeral services for Sister Sylvia were held February 3 in the Convent Chapel. The Office of the Dead recited in Community was followed by a Solemn Requiem Mass presided over by the Most Rev. Martin D. McNamara and celebrated by Rev. Peter Mizera, OSB, pastor of St. Procopius Church, Chicago. Rev. Urban Eberle, OFM, and Rev. Alphonse Coan, OFM, were deacon and subdeacon. Rev. Benedict Pfeifer, OFM, and Rev. John C. Then of Guardian Angel Home were assistants at the throne. Burial was made at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. Father Gervase officiated at the grave, assisted by Father Peter Mizera.

Approximately one hundred parishioners of St. Procopius attended the funeral, ten of Sister Sylvia's "boys" being present from the high school. Six of them served as pallbearers.