

+
+
+ + + + +
+
+
+

Sister M. Amata Lais

Another of our venerable Sisters passed to her reward this morning, Sunday December 2nd. Sister M. Amata Lais, who, was stationed at St. Joseph, Pesotum, Illinois, died unexpectedly at the convent here at approximately 9:15 o'clock.

Sister Amata had been sick for some time, but would not give in or give up her usual activity. The evening before her death she was up until nine o'clock but the following morning did not appear for morning prayer. Sister Rufina, going to her room, found her sick, lying across her bed. Sister Amata explained that she had been up and had fallen; how long she had been there she did not know. Sister Rufina wanted to send for the doctor at once, but Sister Amata pleaded with her not to do so. Since it was time to go to the church, Sister Rufina acquiesced, saying she would come back during the sermon to see how Sister was faring. Again Sister insisted that she do not do this.

Immediately after mass Sister Leo went to Sister Amata and saw at once that she was either dead or dying. She hurried back to get Sister Rufina, and Father William Schumacher, pastor, came back with the Sisters to the convent. He anointed Sister and said the prayers for the dying. When the doctor arrived he requested a post-mortem. This examination showed that a cardiac condition and nephritis had caused Sister's death.

Following the anointing, Sister Rufina phoned Joliet, Mother Immaculate being away, Sister Mercedes suggested that Sister Amata be brought to the Motherhouse. Fred C. Dames was given charge and that afternoon he brought the body to Joliet by ambulance. Sisters Rufina and Leo accompanying the remains.

Funeral services were held in the convent chapel on Wednesday, December 5th, at 8:15 a.m. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Martin D. McNamara, presided at the Solemn Requiem Mass. Revered Gervase Brinkman was celebrant, with Rev. William Schumacher and Rev. Wilfred Cool assisting at the Mass as deacon and subdeacon. Interment was made at Mount Carmel cemetery. Father Gervase and Father Schumacher recited the prayers at the grave. Sister Amata was survived in the Community by her sister Sister M. Henrietta.

Sister Amata's age and deeds had won for her the honor due her eighty years of life and her fifty-seven years in religion. Beginning to teach in 1894, her earlier years were spent in various elementary schools of the Congregation, among which were St. Francis de Sales, Chicago and St. Joseph's in Elgin. For thirty years she was appointed superior and principal, holding this office for five separate terms; St. Joseph's at Elgin and in Chicago at St. Clement's. At St. Francis Xavier where she was appointed for two separate terms, and at St. Francis Assisi. This brought her record to 1949. Her last two and a half years she was content to do domestic work at St. Joseph's, Pesotum.

At each of these placements the same appreciation attended her work. One Sister who lived under Sister Amata at St. Francis Xavier wrote characteristically of her as follows:

I was still a junior professed when I first met Sister Amata in the parlor of St. Francis Xavier's. As she greeted me, her kind but firm face with the deep-set eyes told me more than her words did that I was welcome.

For three years she was almost a daily visitor in my classroom. She never took over the actual teaching, but from her attitude and actions I knew she was a great teacher. The children loved her. The poor ones (there were many), for it was during the depression, knew the depths of her solicitude and her generosity. Often she quietly provided them both food and clothing obtained for them from wealthier parishioners.

Directing the plays and programs in the school was one activity that was hers and hers only. She was a genius at making the slow lad feel that he was important. Under her direction the shy girl forgot her self-consciousness.

One slight inconsistency in her make-up always amused me; her fear of storms. Undaunted though she was by any duty or difficulty ready for any emergency, when a storm struck, she was helpless. Lightening and thunder frightened her, and she would try to avoid seeing "nature in majestic revolt". Was this, I wondered, due to her own calm and gentle disposition?

Of an artistic nature, Sister Amata loved flowers and loved to decorate the altars in church for all great feasts. She was fond of pageantry and processions and always sought to make First Communion Day an unforgettable occasion for the little communicants.

Always she was kind to all of us; very appreciative of even the least act of thoughtfulness done for her. Living with her was a "lesson in living", and I shall always remember her with gratitude and affection. May her dear soul rest in peace!