

SISTER M. WINIFRED, O.S.F.

November 14, 1963.

She had endured, it would seem, the ultimate. She was overheard to say one day when she had wheeled herself down the hall to "talk to the Sacred Heart," -- "You took away my hand and my eyes and my leg and now this," -- and she laid her crippled hand where her breast had been. "What else are You going to take?" But then, as though to reassure Him, she added, "Well, whatever it is, You can have it!" She was not being dramatic. Sister Winifred was simply talking to the Lord in language they both understood.

It was a matter-of-factness that had characterized her life; it was a directness that did not leave her as she faced her death. Once her moaning brought Sister Peter hurrying to her room. Was she in pain? No, "I just wanted to let you know I'm dying, so you'll all come and pray!"

She could face death realistically, but this fact did not prevent her taking an optimistic view of her chances of survival. Wheeled into the room where little Sister Hermina lay, Winnie observed philosophically, "She won't get better -- but maybe I will!"

And, indeed, for a while it did seem as though she might defy all medical predictions. Twice the word that "Sister Winifred is dying!" sent everyone hurrying to her bedside. Twice she rallied, but after the second bout on November 13th, there was a definite change. Previously she had been alternately tossing and moaning; once she stepped back into some forgotten classroom to teach children long since grown -- "Stand up -- genuflect -- 'In the Name of the Father -- and of the Son -- and of the Holy Ghost' -- Now, that's a prayer in itself -- Say it right!" But now there was the quiet of coma. The world of today and of yesterday had faded; the world of tomorrow still waited for her final breath.

It came quietly; there was no struggle -- just a change in breathing and then -- no breath at all. It was Sister Celine who closed the tired eyes whose sight He had "taken" so long ago.

Two Sisters in particular have been viewing the future hopefully since that Thursday evening when Winnie went home to God. Last fall when Sister Alette was confined to Our Lady of Angels, she enlisted Sister Winifred's help for the Vocation Work, and though Winnie could never remember Sister's name, she never forgot her work. It was, she knew, her job to pray for its success. . . . When the call for volunteers for the foreign missions first went out, Winnie heard about it, but told Sister Peter, "You can't go until I die!" On one of her last conscious days she suddenly observed, "Peter can go to South America now!"

You can hardly blame Sister Alette and Sister Peter for wondering delightedly the outcome of that conversation, when in the splendor of eternity, "Winnie" went to "talk to the Sacred Heart."

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!