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Sister M. Vita Stack

"Ready to die and unafraid," was her smiling reassurance as she prayed with Sister William at the noon hour on Wednesday, April 27. About one-thirty a sudden change occurred; she lost consciousness and, soon after, quietly stopped breathing. It was 1:45 o'clock -- our Sister Vita had gone to God.

Sister had been an infirmary patient for the past seven months. She had had surgery for cancer five years earlier at Toledo; the last three years she had been teaching at St. Raymond's. Assigned there again this fall, she was too ill to continue, and on September 20th had been brought home. Sister was but thirty-four years old and had spent seventeen years in religion. Besides St. Raymond's she had been stationed at Ss. Peter and Paul, Chicago; Our Lady of Mercy, Granville; and Immaculate Conception, Toledo.

Sister Vita was a good teacher, eager to help her pupils and ingenious in enlisting their interest; she was especially kind to the underprivileged. She was, moreover, a gifted writer, inheriting an artist's touch from her musician father. Uppermost in her writing was the idealism by which she lived, striving ever on and up. The courage and serenity of her last years, weakened by illness and beset by pain, were idealism made real. She was putting into effect under new circumstances what she had earlier written of her religious life and her teaching:

I am glad for the hardness, the tiredness, the Christ-like-ness of this life.... At first I was out to remake society. Now I know that I have only to remake myself, that the big thing is not to escape difficulties but to adjust myself to them.

Certainly, Sister had "adjusted" to the last series of difficulties life would offer her. Though she would have been happy to work many more years for her Community, she accepted her illness with love, and anticipated death as attaining a goal, as "entering into the joy of the Lord."

The one disappointment Sister had voiced--her inability to see the new Cathedral which for a year she had watched a --building ended in joyous fulfillment when, a week before Christmas, Monsignor Hoover engaged Fred Dames to bring her in an ambulance. At the Cathedral he with the Sisters of St. Raymond's received her. As she entered, Mr. Lyons played a solemn processional on the great organ. The full flood lights brought out the harmony and variety of color and revealed the magnificence of the structure. "It is like Heaven!" she whispered. Wheeled into the sanctuary facing the great crucifix, she loved the "O Holy Night!" resounding from the organ chimes. Here was indeed "the starkness" of crib and cross, which, as she had intimated in a recent essay, we must choose to match in ~~our~~ lives. That this was written when she was herself "matching starkness" gave it point and poignancy.

The tour over, she was brought back to her infirmary bed with new material for meditation on the glory of God and the beauty of serving Him.

When word of Sister Vita's death reached Monsignor Hoover, he asked that the funeral Mass be celebrated at the Cathedral, and arrangements were made accordingly. His Excellency, Bishop Martin D. McNamara, presided; Rev. Gervase Brinkman, OFM, was celebrant, with Rev. Quintin Fullam, OFM, and Rev. Benedict McCarthy, OFM, as deacon and subdeacon. Assisting at the throne were Revs. J.M. Schimanek and J.D. Sullivan of St. Raymond's. Rt. Rev. Msgr. E.V. Hoover was archpriest. In the sanctuary were Rev. John D. Liebreich, pastor, of St. Francis Xavier, Chicago, Sister's home parish; Rev. Peter Seidl, Rev. Roger Kaffer and Rev. William Condon.

The Novitiate choir sang the Requiem "a capella." Many Sisters and many of the St. Raymond parishioners and school children attended the funeral Mass, it being Saturday.

Burial was made at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Joliet. Father Gervase officiated at the grave, assisted by Father Shimanek.