



Sister Ferdinand Stalzer

Just one week from the day of the burial of Sister Mathilda another Sister of the Community - one who had attended the funeral Mass and had been present at the cemetery when the remains of Sister Mathilda had been laid to rest - was taken in death at St. Joseph's Hospital, Joliet, on Saturday, January 18, at 5:35 p.m. Sister Ferdinand Stalzer had undergone major surgery on Wednesday, January 15, and died the following Saturday. At the time of her death Sister Ferdinand was in the sixty-ninth year of her age and the forty-seventh of her religious life.

Although the operation was successful as far as the surgery was concerned, Sister's condition from the very first night was not encouraging. A uremic condition set in, and although the doctor and her nurses did all they could to save her, humanly speaking there was no hope for her. On Saturday it was evident the end was near. The last sacraments had been administered as soon as her condition became serious after the operation.

With the exception of the first six years of her religious life -- 1889 - 1895 - Sister Ferdinand had spent all the years of her teaching career at St. Joseph's, Joliet. She was the first, and for many years, the only Slovenian Sister in the Community. In 1895 when St. Joseph's school was opened (St. Joseph's is the Slovenian parish of Joliet and vicinity), Sister Ferdinand was sent to teach there. For the first three years after the opening of the school, the Sisters resided at the Motherhouse. When the Sisters' convent was provided by the parish in 1898, Sister Ferdinand was appointed Superior. She remained in charge until June, 1900. From then until November, 1927 she did not have to assume the Superiorship again. Sister M. Jolenta was transferred to another school of the Community in November, 1927 and Sister Ferdinand was appointed to fill the vacancy for the rest of the scholastic year.

In the summer of 1928 she was elected Superior of St. Joseph's and in 1931 re-elected for the second term. This second term expired in 1934 and Sister Ferdinand had received her obedience for Holy Family School and Saint Mary's Institute, Bayfield. Upon learning this, the Rev. John Plevnik, pastor of St. Joseph's came to request the Superior General not to transfer Sister Ferdinand from St. Joseph's. He maintained that her help was invaluable in teaching the Slovenian language and in countless other ways. The Superior General at once acceded to Father Plevnik's request and arranged to have Sister Ferdinand remain. She was there during the entire scholastic year and the summer following, but at that time her health was so poor that she requested to come to the Motherhouse. In spite of rest and care during the year and a half at the Motherhouse, Sister's health did not improve. As a last resort the doctor advised, even urged the operation. When she left for the hospital on Monday afternoon of the week she died, she was in her usual cheerful and optimistic spirit, hopeful that all would turn out well, yet entirely resigned to holy Will of God in her regard.

After her death the remains were brought from St. Joseph's Hospital to the Motherhouse where they lay until Tuesday morning, January 21. The Rev. John Plevnik requested that the funeral services be held in Saint Joseph's Church. Mother Thomasine, the Superior General, who was then conducting the canonical visitation of the houses in Columbus, Ohio wired her consent at once.

About 7:45 o'clock on Tuesday morning the remains were taken to St. Joseph's Church. The school children formed a guard of honor to meet the corpse in front of the church and then escorted the body into the church. A Mass was then said for the repose of her soul. The children were present for this Mass. After this eight o'clock Mass the children and parishioners viewed the corpse until time for the solemn Requiem Mass of burial at ten o'clock. Father Plevnik was the celebrant of the Mass. He was assisted by the Rev. Joseph Stukel as deacon and the Rev. Mathias Butala as subdeacon, the former pupils of Sister Ferdinand. The Rev. Wencel Skolar preached the funeral sermons - one in the Slovenian language, the other a short one in English. He paid glowing tribute to the spirit of charity and self-sacrifice which were the outstanding virtues of her life. Her thoughts were always of others, the poor were her special favorites. The influence of her kind and gentle spirit would linger long in the hearts of the people of St. Joseph's parish and of the Sisters of her Community with whom she had been so intimately associated. He said that God alone knows how many she saved from the snares of the devil by directing them with the word of good counsel; God alone knows how many bitter tears she dried on the cheeks of the sorrowing. She was a guiding spirit of the youth, and an angel of mercy to all.

Her remains were laid to rest with the other Sisters of the Community in St. John's Cemetery, Joliet.