

- 411

SISTER M. GORDIAN, O.S.F.

September 8, 1964

For the first September in 31 years, Sister Gordian wasn't in the classroom. She had closed the final door last spring, knowing she would never come back. The long, painful road she had trudged so long was narrowing; now it was just a matter of climbing one last hill. And so, calm and uncomplaining as always, Sister Gordian "came home to die."

But first there were installments to pay in the compact she had made seven years ago. She must have guessed then that the pain was not going to be a transitory thing. Well, her pain, like her work, would be for God and her Community, and so she made her compact. "Mother must have big problems," she confided once, speaking of a particularly hard siege of suffering. "The pain was so great."

She was not complaining, merely stating a fact. For Sister Gordian had never learned the black art of self pity. To the very end she was apologetic about asking for relief. "I hate to bother you," she would say, "but I have such pain." Pain had been her companion so long that it hardly seemed possible to her that it was making a final assault. "Oh, I don't think I'm so bad yet," she said when Mother asked her on Monday evening if she would like to have the prayers for the dying. However, she added in what was surely the summation of her life, "Whatever you say, will be right."

And so it was that she followed every invocation, and at the prayer's end, "Oh, how beautiful," she exclaimed. "Thank you." Mother lingered for a few moments. "Now, don't forget when you get up there, you have a lot to take care of, Sister Gordian!" Sister smiled, "I've offered everything for so long -- I won't forget!"

She had wanted her Sisters around for her dying. She wanted them near, wanted their prayers -- and she had her wish. Her own sister, Sister Marina, hurrying in from Johnstown, would arrive too late. But Sister Gordian had already said goodbye in late August in a phone conversation with the sister who had worked at her side through the years of blinding pain. Sister Marina would not be there at the end, but others would stand guard in her stead. Not once during the long, hot September day was Sister Gordian alone. For there had been a change in her condition overnight, and everyone who could, went "to see Sister Gordian." Her classmates were there: Sister Celine, dashing back from a dental appointment to "be on time" -- Sister Ancilla, awed and shaken at her first death-bed -- Sister Paul, asking once again at 3:40, "Do you want us to say a Memorare for our classmates?" -- And through it all, Sister Gordian retained consciousness; sedatives quieted her, but did not send her over the brink of oblivion where pain could not reach her. Sister Gordian consciously moved to the very door of death, and closed her eyes only as that door opened to receive her, and heaven began.

It was Our Lady's Birthday -- and the anniversary of Sister Gordian's entrance into the Postulancy 34 years ago. Time and pain had ended. A gallant lady, a valiant woman, had gone home to the embrace of her God.

GOD GRANT HER REST ETERNAL!!

* * * * *