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Sister M. Rufina Zelina

Early Sunday morning, October 25th, Sister M. Rufina at Annunciation, Aurora, suffered a heart attack to which she succumbed at 1:20 in the afternoon. Sister Rufina's condition was discovered by Sister Illuminata, who awakened about four o'clock to hear Sister moaning. She hurried to her, then called a nurse who lived just across the street. The nurse advised calling a physician, and Doctor Balthazar, who was summoned, ordered Sister to St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital. Here every care was given her, but all feared the attack would be fatal. Sister was anointed by Father Raymond Sennak, O.F.M., of Christ the King Seminary, who was a patient at the hospital. The Sisters remained and prayed with her; she was conscious all the while. At the time she passed away, the Franciscan Father, our Sisters Patrice, Illuminata, and Joan of Arc, and Mercy and Dominican Sisters were with her. She died as she had lived - calmly and beautifully.

Sister was brought to Joliet by Fred Dames for burial from the Motherhouse. The Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated Wednesday morning, October 28th, the Most Rev. Martin D. McNamara presiding. Besides the clergy officiating, present in the sanctuary were the Benedictine Fathers, Rev. Lawrence Riebenthaler, pastor of Annunciation, and Revs. Victor Dux and Hubert Umberg, former pastor and assistant; Rev. Thomas Bermingham, pastor of St. Rita's, Aurora; and Revs. Gregory P. Egan and J. W. Schumacher, present and former pastors of St. Joseph, Pesotum.

Seculars, chiefly from Aurora, filled three-fourths of the chapel, Sister Rufina's class and many friends and former pupils attending. The pallbearers were all former pupils of Sister's: Donald Brummel, LaVerne Konen, Paul Linden, LaVerne Reckinger, Raymond Seltes, and William White. - Father Angelo officiated at the grave in Resurrection Cemetery, assisted by the Benedictine Fathers Lawrence, Victor, and Hubert, and by Fathers Schumacher and Rotondi.

Sister Rufina was sixty-five years of age; she had entered the Convent Mary Zelina of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, fifty years ago - June, 1909. Sister served the Community as grade school teacher and organist. Her first appointment was to St. Stephen, Streator, where she spent four years. Other missions to which she was appointed were: St. Stephen, Johnstown, seven years; St. Joseph, Pesotum, 19 years, eleven of which she was also superior and principal. She again combined teaching with administration at St. Mary's, Rock Island, where she spent three years, and at Annunciation, Aurora, where she now was in her ninth year, her first term there being from 1935 to 1941. Sister also spent seven years at various Chicago missions.

In all these appointments Sister Rufina performed the good and thorough work for which she was noted. To her, a pupil was not only a child to be taught, but a personality to be enriched and a character to be formed. The tributes of the many people who came from Aurora to pay their last respects were proof of the veneration in which they held her. Her appointments at Aurora were so spaced that many of the pupils she now taught were the children of those she had taught during her first assignment there. All loved and praised her; she was a revered teacher returned, and she had lost none of her earlier appeal.

Sister Rufina had a great deal of natural talent, and she used it well. Her music, her art, were almost a "devotion" to her. Father Vincent told of her zeal as choir director in carrying out the wishes of Pius X and the splendid work she did with her children in Gregorian chant. He was very proud of their ability to sing six Masses, all learned under Sister Rufina's direction. - Her art, too, entered in to her work. Always there was an atmosphere of bright beauty in her classroom, and the functional nature of her decorations helped her to do effective teaching.

In the convent Sister was noted for her beautiful character. By her good example and winning ways she inspired a religious observance that was both exact and cheerful. Kindly, putting others at ease, understanding and accepting them for what they were at their best, she spread confidence and joy. Because she had 'learned of Him.' she could show to all the "charity of Christ," - and in the convents under her the peace of Christ reigned.