

Marian Residence
1104 Toluca Ave
Alliance, Nebraska 69301
April 30, 1981

Dear Sisters and friends of Sister Gertrude Ann;

Amidst the joyful strains of Easter Bells, our dear Sister Gertrude Ann (Fara) Mertens took her flight to eternity early Saturday morning, April 25th.

Sister was well prepared by a long time of illness due to severe heart condition. Her sufferings were intensified by the fact that her eyesight was greatly impaired, which denied her the pleasure of reading and doing things which she had always enjoyed. For the last month Sister was confined to her room because she needed life-sustaining oxygen to keep breathing. However, she was able to attend all the Holy Week services which were held in our own chapel at Marian Residence by Rev. Father Paul Steinmetz, S.J., of Holy Rosary Mission. I am sure that the Lord did not mind the big oxygen tank which adorned the back of the chapel during that week.

Since Christmas Sister spent a total of six weeks in the hospital here in Alliance and in Denver, but was always able to return to Marian Residence.

Though everything was done for Sister to make her feel comfortable, we found it necessary to transfer her to St. Joseph Gerontology Center on April 23rd. However, the time had come for her to give back her soul to her Creator. She died quietly and was conscious to the end.

Everything about Sister Gertrude Ann was large. Besides her stature, her heart was large in more than one way. She loved God and His blessed Mother with a big heart that prompted her to leave her homeland for the Mission field. She worked many years at St. Francis Indian Mission. There, as in every house, she endeared herself to all who were fortunate enough to enjoy her excellent cooking. She seemed to have had a special soft spot in her big heart for the priests and especially for the young Scholastics who made frequent visits to the kitchen. These visits always paid off.

Most of our Sisters have known Sister Gertrude Ann. She left that beautiful Island in the Rhine in 1930 to take up her work here in America. Her first assignment was St. Joseph's Hospital, Alliance; it was also to be her last. Besides Alliance she displayed her culinary art in Minot, North Dakota, O'Neill, Nebraska, St. Francis, South Dakota and Marycrest, Denver, Colorado.

Though Sister's work was always in hospitals or boarding schools, she nevertheless found time to spend her daily hour with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. She also had a childlike devotion to our Blessed Mother to whom she had dedicated herself as a young girl. Her Sodality medal was still around her neck when she died. There might be even a significance in the time of her death; for she waited to die on Saturday. It was 12:17 am when she closed her eyes and slipped away.

Sister's Funeral Mass was celebrated in St. Joseph Gerontology Chapel on Monday, April 27, at 10:00 A.M. with Rev. Father Gerald Harr, our pastor as celebrant. Rev. Father Sheehan, S.J., of Holy Rosary Mission and Rev. Father Cleete Pfab, S.J., of St. Francis Mission concelebrated. Our young Sisters led the music. It was a beautiful Mass. Now Sister Gertrude Ann lies peacefully in Calvary Cemetery, the 70th Sister buried there. Many of our Sisters attended her funeral. Though we bid farewell to Sister Gertrude Ann, we are assured that we have now a powerful intercessor in heaven.

The Sisters of St. Francis
at Marian Residence.