

June 4, 1982

Dear Sisters and Friends,

Sister Marina Wernsmann died at St. Joseph Gerontology Center on May 28, 1982. Her funeral Mass was offered by our pastor, Father Gerald Harr, in St. Joseph chapel at 10:00 A.M. on June 2, and she was laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery.

Sister Marina, Mildred Wernsmann, the second of eleven children, was born to Philip J. and Mary Cecilia Wernsmann on December 22, 1917, at Houdek, South Dakota. Through the influence of Father Thomas Martin, S.J., a missionary to the Sioux Indians, she attended high school at St. Mary's Academy, O'Neill, Nebraska. At the end of her sophomore year, she entered the congregation at Stella Niagara, New York, in August of 1936. She made her vows August 17, 1938, and began a lifetime of teaching.

Sister Marina taught at both Holy Rosary and St. Francis Indian Missions in South Dakota; St. Elizabeth's School, Denver; Immaculate Conception in Rushville, St. Agnes in Alliance, and St. Mary's, O'Neill, all in Nebraska; and recently at St. Mary's of the Valley, Beaverton, Oregon; and St. Mary's, Santa Maria, California. Meanwhile she continued to study and improve her work; she held degrees in theology and mathematics and also to make use of her skills in art, as well as cooking and sewing.

Last October, following surgery, Sister was diagnosed as having a malignant tumor of the bladder. She returned from California, November 2, 1981, to have further surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital, Minot, North Dakota. From there, she was sent to Mayo Clinic for chemotherapy. On her return to Minot she had three more chemotherapy treatments, but when the doctors told her they would not affect a cure, she decided not to have any more.

Sister Marina was still able to be active when she came to St. Joseph Center May 5, 1982, but she was failing fast. Members of her family were able to visit her before her condition became critical; during the last week the Sisters took turns remaining with her day and night. She died peacefully about eight in the evening.

During her religious life, Sister Marina remained close to her large family. Her parents and one brother preceded her in death; five sisters and four brothers and their families survive her. Some thirty-five members of the family came from several states to attend the funeral; six nephews served as pallbearers. Several members of Holy Rosary Parish choir sang for the services, and members of the Altar Society served a hot lunch afterward.

The theme of Father Harr's homily at the funeral Mass was fidelity, that devotion to duty without which no great undertaking can succeed, no good life can be lived. Though he knew Sister Marina only in her last days, he cited the story of her life as an example of faithfulness to her religion and her vows.

As we remember Sister and those whose lives she touched in our prayers, we ask that we too, like Sister Marina, will lead lives of fidelity.

Peace and All Good,

The Sisters at Marian Residence