

April 30, 1985

Dear Sisters and Friends,

Sister Agnesine Hargarten went home to God from St. Joseph's Hospital, Denver, at 5:45 A.M. on April 23. She had been failing for months; in November treatment by transfusions of packed red cells and medication was begun. On February 19 of this year a diagnosis of myelogenous leukemia was made. Sister was immediately rushed to Denver and admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital on the night before Ash Wednesday. Sister Florence Southall was with her, spending her days at the hospital and nights at Marycrest. For two months Sister Agnesine underwent many painful treatments. In the meantime we at Marian Residence were trying to write every day, and continuing to hold a brief prayer service for her every evening.

At times Sister seemed to improve; she was able to attend Mass in the hospital chapel on Easter Sunday and go out to Marycrest for supper. Her condition worsened again on April 20. During the last days her brother, Father Joseph Hargarten, Sister Florence and Sister Miriam Rubel were with her, and many of the Sisters from Marycrest visited and prayed with her. On Sunday Father Hargarten offered Mass in her hospital room and she received a tiny portion of the Precious Blood, her last Viaticum. (She had a great devotion to the Precious Blood during the last months of her life.) Two nurses, Pam Watkins, a postulant, and Rita Cammack, an affiliate of our Congregation, cared for her at night. On the evening of April 21 she entered into her last agony; Rita was with her when she died.

Cathryn Hargarten was born July 26, 1911, in Alliance, Nebraska, the daughter of the late Fred and Emma Hargarten. She was baptized and confirmed in Holy Rosary Catholic Church. After graduating from St. Agnes Academy in 1930, she went to Stella Niagara, New York, to enter the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity. She was the first native of Alliance to enter a religious order of women.

Sister Agnesine taught in Franciscan schools in New Jersey, Ohio, Colorado, South Dakota, and Nebraska, and was administrator of St. Mary Hospital in Scottsbluff for several years. In 1966 she and her companion, Sister Florence Southall, became the first Sisters to serve as pastoral ministers in the Grand Island Diocese. They served in parishes along Highway 20 from Harrison to Valentine and were known as "The God Squad" along the highway.

In 1981 they retired to Marian Residence in Alliance, and Sister Agnesine celebrated her Golden Jubilee of religious vows in Holy Rosary Church the following year. In the fall of 1982 Sister Agnesine and Sister Florence went to Marycrest, Denver, to help out there for a little over a year; they returned to Alliance in October, 1983.

Sister Agnesine then acted as Hospitality Minister at St. Joseph Gerontology Center until she was forced to stop because of health problems.

Sister Agnesine's body was brought to the chapel of St. Joseph Gerontology Center at 5:00 P.M. on April 25, and the Office of the Dead was recited by the Sisters. At 7:30 P.M. Father Hargarten and the two priests of Holy Rosary Parish led the Rosary; the chapel was filled with Sisters and friends.

Rain began during the evening and changed to snow during the night, but it did not keep people away from the funeral on April 26 in Holy Rosary Church. Bishop Lawrence McNamara of the Grand Island diocese and thirty-three priests were present for the con-celebrated Mass, at which Father Hargarten, Father Robert Wiest, and Father Gerald Carlson were the principal celebrants. Over fifty Sisters were present; the congregation was increased by friends from many nearby communities, especially those along Highway 20. Six of Sister's relatives came from Stuart and Bayard, Nebraska, and Loveland, Colorado, to attend the services. Sister Agnesine was buried in her family's lot in Calvary Cemetery with her father and mother and a brother who died at the age of nine.

The presence of so many priests, Sisters, friends, and the people of her home parish was a testimony to the love and respect in which Sister Agnesine was held.

May she live in peace.

The Sisters at Marian Residence