

MARIAN RESIDENCE

1104 Toluca Avenue
ALLIANCE, NEBRASKA 69301

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family Members and Friends,

In 1874 our first Sisters came to the United States from Germany and the last five of these one hundred and ninety seven venerable women came in 1933. Sister Agnes (Hilga) Gunther was one of these five and was the last Sister from Germany to die.

Sister Agnes was born in Wachstedt, Germany on December 31, 1906. Her parents, Katherine and Leonerd Gunther sent her to Stella Niagara, New York as a teenager to receive her high school education and to be near an uncle, a Franciscan priest, who was living there at the time.

In August, 1930 Agnes Barbara entered the novitiate in Nonnenwerth, Germany. At her Reception she received the name Sister Hilga. She made perpetual vows at Stella Niagara on August 18, 1935. She received her citizenship award in 1939.

Sister Agnes' ministry extended over the years in New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado and Rome. Her education in higher studies including Catholic University of America prepared her for various teaching and administrative positions including the founding of the Aspirant School in Alliance, Nebraska and work at the Generalate in Rome, Italy. Languages were a helpful preparation for future ministries. Over the years Sister Agnes served on the Provincial Council in Sacred Heart Province, was a General Chapter delegate, served eight years in Rome and translated for three General Chapters.

In the homily at the funeral Mass Father Heithoff said of Sister Agnes:

After ninety-nine years of faithful service this very kind and gentle woman of deep faith, commitment and dedication has gone home to God. Today's second reading is appropriate for Sister Agnes' funeral, especially the first line "If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing symbol"... She coupled her gift of languages with the spirit of love. This love and compassion was extended to her numerous students through the years

In addition to her parents, Sister Agnes was preceded in death by a brother and three sisters. Her survivors include a brother-in-law, August Funke; nephews Herbert (Barbara) Funke, Helmut (Monika) Funke, Winifried (Bridget) Funke, Klaus-Dieter (Petra) Funke and grand-nieces and nephews who all live in Germany and whom she maintained a close relationship. They visited here and she visited them. It was such a delight for her to respond in her native language to their frequent calls.

Her nephew, Dieter and his daughter Johanna arrived a few days before her death. She knew them and for a short time they were able to visit. Sister Agnes died peacefully on March 15, 2006.

At the wake service on March 16, 2006, her nephew and his daughter gave a power point presentation. Johanna translated into English, with the finesse of her great aunt, the words about the pictures that Dieter said in German.

The funeral Mass was held in Marian Hall, Alliance, Nebraska, on March 17, 2006 with Father Jim Heithoff officiating. At the cemetery as the Sisters and Associates sprinkled Sister Agnes' coffin with holy water, Dieter and Johanna each lovingly laid a red rose on the coffin.

Sister Agnes was the 118th Sister to be buried in Calvary cemetery, Alliance, Nebraska.

Sisters at Marian Residence