

SISTER MARY THOMA RYAN

Sister Mary Thoma died in Mercy Hospital, Chicago, on March 13, 1955, in the 62nd year of her life and the 34th year of her Religious Profession.

Sister had known for a year and a half that she was afflicted with an internal malignancy, and had but a few months to live. Her resignation to this was beautiful. "Do not pray for me to get well," she would often say. "Pray only for God's will for me." On one occasion she said, "It is not frightening to wait for death; it is like waiting for the great "Profession Day." It was this spirit that animated her until the very end.

Nevertheless, Sister hoped to teach as long as she was able, and was happy when she was re-assigned for her sixth year in eighth grade at Saint Giles.

Towards the end of December, Sister Thoma was hospitalized for a three-week series of X-ray treatments, but her stay at the hospital was prolonged so that she never returned to her mission. She was becoming progressively weaker. Finally, an operation for the removal of the adrenal glands was advised as a last hope of arresting the cancer.

On Sunday, March 11th, after a three-hour operation, it was evident that Sister's chances were indeed slight. Sister Dorine stayed with her all day, as did her sister, Agnes Ryan, who had come in from Minneapolis to be with her. By Saturday morning it was apparent that Sister was in definite danger of death. She was anointed at 5:30 A.M. Throughout the day her condition grew steadily worse, complicated by an extremely low blood pressure, great difficulty in breathing and the development of uremic poisoning. Sister Marie Imelda joined Sister Dorine for an all night vigil. At 8:30 P.M. two more of Sister Thom's sisters arrived from Minneapolis and St. Paul, Mrs. Mark Vaughan and Mae Ryan. The night was a difficult one for Sister Thoma. Her blood pressure went down to 40 and several times it looked as if the end were surely coming. And yet, she did not lose complete consciousness throughout the night. In lucid moments, her chief concern was that those attending her should get some rest. The Salve Regina was repeated many times and the recitation of prayers and aspirations were a consolation to Sister.

At 5:30 Sunday morning a great change came over her. The doctor was summoned again. He said that she would have but an hour to live. The Sisters at St. Giles were notified; they redoubled their prayers at Mass and Holy Communion.

At 7:25 Sister Thoma breathed her last. It was at the precise moment that the hospital Chaplain passed her door with the Blessed Sacrament on his morning rounds.

Sister Thoma's remains were brought to the convent at 4:30 Sunday afternoon. They were met in procession by the Reverend Charles Burnikel, assistant at St. Giles Church, who officiated; by her three sisters, by Sisters Benedict and Amata, the St. Giles Sisters and several Sister guests. Hundreds of Sisters came from all the convents of the Chicago area, as well as many friends, parishioners and former pupils. Sister Thoma's three sisters stayed at the convent Sunday and Monday.

At 9:30 Monday morning in St. Giles Church, Right Reverend Lawrence W. Frawley was the celebrant a Solemn Requiem Mass which was attended by all the school children.

Sister Thoma's remains were brought from Oak Park to Saint Clara late on March 14th, accompanied by Sister Dorine, her Superiorness at Saint Giles, Sister Marita, her companion and our Sister Zacchaeus who is Sister Thoma's cousin. Mother Evelyn joined the funeral party in Chicago and returned after the funeral to Chicago where she was making Visitation at Saint Cajetan's. Monsignor Lawrence Frawley of Saint Giles parish came for the funeral.

The funeral Mass was offered by the Reverend Hugh Cassidy of Springfield, Illinois, who was a first grade pupil of Sister Thoma's at the school of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Chicago. Monsignor Frawley and Fathers Connolly and Mulvey were present in the Sanctuary. Sister Thoma's brother, Mr. Edward Ryan, Sr., of Lakeville, Minnesota and he five sisters, Mrs. Mark Vaughan, Mrs. David Donnelly, Mrs. Robert Hilgers, Miss Agnes Ryan and Miss Mae Ryan, besides sixteen other relatives and Mrs. Margaret Cassidy, the priest's mother and Mrs. Kucera and Miss Mercedes Kucera were present for the Mass and the burial in Saint Clara Cemetery.

Sister Thoma will long be remembered by our Sisters as an earnest hard-working cheerful Sister whose common sense and unostentatious but deep piety made her a valuable teacher and an edifying companion. May her brave soul rest in peace.

Sister Thoma's first assignment after her Religious Profession was to Chicago, St. Sabina's, 4 years; Milwaukee, St. Robert's, 4 years; Chicago, St. Thomas the Apostle, 6 years; Washington, St. Dominic's 1 year; Chicago, Visitation, 5 years; Chicago, St. Brendan's, 7 years; Oak Park, St. Giles, nearly 6 years.