



“Those who hear the voice of God will live.”

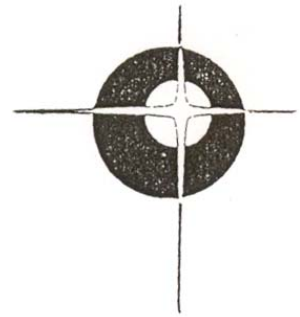
– John 5:25

SISTER ROSEMARY NOHAVA, SSND

December 18, 1918

July 20, 1942

June 4, 2011



As the Mankato Province gathered for a weekend of closure and celebration, our beloved Sister Rosemary Nohava, 92, died peacefully at 12:10 a.m. on Saturday, June 4, 2011, at Good Counsel Provincial House, Mankato, Minnesota. Her sister, Sister M. Yvonne, and Sisters Janet Wermerskirchen and Shirley Steines were present with her when she died.

The funeral Mass for Sister Rosemary, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, will be on Thursday, June 9, at 10:30 a.m., in Good Counsel Chapel, followed by burial in our cemetery. The vigil service will be at 7:00 p.m. on June 8. Loving sympathy to her older sister, Sister Yvonne Nohava, SSND, who so lovingly cared for Sister Rosemary these past years, and her sisters Julia (Roy) Washa and Theresa Zitzow, her sister-in-law Clara Nohava, nieces and nephews and their families, her former students and colleagues, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank and Mary (Jirik) Nohava, her stepmother Mary (Malecha) Nohava, her twin sister, Sister M. Lillian, SSND, her sisters Agnes Hincks, Josephine Mamer, Catherine Frank, Leona Tupa, and Magdalen Nohava, and her brothers William, John (who died at age 14), Francis (who died as an infant), Francis and Johnny.

A week before Christmas, December 18, 1918, double joy entered the Nohava home in Lonsdale when identical twins were born. Named Rose and Mary, together they weighed five pounds. Mary, our future Sister Rosemary, was born first and was about one-half pound heavier. She later commented, “We can boast of being incubated in the oven and baptized [the next day] on the oven door with the rest of the six children kneeling on the kitchen floor, reciting the rosary. No wonder Our Lady claimed us as future SSNDs.” Their father ran the local hardware store, and the family lived next door to the store.

When the twins were about 18 months old, another child, Francis, was born. Their mother died shortly after his birth, and he died about two weeks later. Sister Rosemary wrote in her autobiography about her mother’s death, “We were all gathered around her death bed, and her dying request of Dad was that he should keep us all together. With God’s help and Mother’s own intercession, our daddy fulfilled this last request most wonderfully.” Initially the children’s grandmother took care of them while their dad was at the store, and he later hired someone to help out. He remarried when the twins were four, a happy event for them.

The twins entered Immaculate Conception School in Lonsdale when they were five. Since the convent was only a block from their home, the Nohava girls spent much time there. Sister Rosemary described this early influence on their lives, “They often asked us if we would be sisters, and my ready answer was ‘Yes,’ and Rosie always said, ‘I don’t know.’ Later, however, it was just the opposite. I decided that I could never be a sister and Rosie was always sure of becoming one.” Mary and Rose continued their education at Immaculate Conception through tenth grade, and then in 1935, enrolled at Good Counsel Academy, Mankato, for their last two years of high school. Their sister Lillian, our future Sister Yvonne, entered the candidature that same summer.

Graduating in 1937, the twins made plans to go separate ways. “For the first time in our lives, we had to face separation and to be dressed differently. Rosie made her decision to enter the candidature, but I felt that God had different plans for me so I remained at home to help Mother and Dad.” Mary felt an extreme loneliness in this separation, and she thought about becoming a sister, too, but she wondered if it was just the lonesomeness that made her think about this. She daily prayed the litany of the Blessed Virgin, asking for

grace to know what to do. Mary's decision to become an SSND was kept secret from Rosie, now Novice Mary Lillian. On July 16, 1940, one week before Sister Lillian's profession, Mary entered the candidature with the hope that her sister would not see her, but three days before profession they accidentally met – one of the happiest days for both of them.

One year later, Mary was received into the Novitiate and given the name Sister Rosemary. She wrote about that day, "For Mother and Dad, it was also a very happy day, for now Daddy realized that his prayers were answered. After Mother's death, Daddy asked God to take special care of us three since we were the youngest. Now as we look back we can only thank God for having called us to be His own." Sister Rosemary professed first vows in 1942 and in August received her first obedience from Mother Annunciata, who said, "There is a surprise for you in this." The surprise was that Sister Rosemary would be going to teach at SS. Peter & Paul School, New Hradec, North Dakota, where Sister Lillian was stationed. Sister Lillian did not know who was coming, so Sister Rosemary's arrival at the Dickinson depot was a complete surprise. Both sisters were very grateful to God and Mother Annunciata for the privilege of being together. Sister Rosemary's first teaching assignment – her first classroom experience of any kind – was grades one and two. She also supervised boarders.

Sister Rosemary remained at New Hradec until 1949, taught at St. Stanislaus, St. Paul, for one year, and then returned to New Hradec. She taught again at St. Stanislaus for one year (1953-54) and then was assigned to SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato (1954-62). She taught and was principal at St. Albert, Albertville (1962-66) and St. Donatus, St. Donatus, Iowa (1966-68). By that time, she had earned a bachelor's degree from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, and a master's degree in developmental and remedial reading from St. Thomas College in St. Paul. Transferred to Blessed Sacrament School, Waterloo, Iowa, an I.G.E. (Individually Guided Education) school, in 1968, Sister Rosemary was the director of the math and reading non-graded individualized programs for levels one through four. She commented on her experience there, "To me it was a great innovation in the educational system. As a non-graded system, it required much teacher-preparation time. In I.G.E. the needs of the child are a priority, motivating each student to use his/her own potential to the fullest. . . . The happiness of these students was clearly evident."

In 1976, Sister Rosemary joined the staff of St. John School, Searles, Minnesota, as a primary teacher. In October, 1981, she fell while working on a bulletin board and severely injured her leg. Immediate recuperation took almost a year, and she wore an ankle brace for several years. In the fall of 1982, she began tutoring in the Good Counsel Learning Center, and in 1984, she became its director, a position she held until 1994. In 1993, Sister Rosemary reflected on her life as an educator, "After being an educator for over 50 years, one begins to consider, in retrospect – what impact did I make on the hundreds of students I taught, as well as on their parents and the teachers with whom I worked? How do I value the teaching vocation that is mine? I have always loved teaching, and of more importance, I loved all my students. Some of my first students in North Dakota still write and share news of their families with me." After completing her term as director, she continued to tutor until she retired in 1997.

Sister Rosemary's love of her students extended also to her family, and she anticipated their visits. She also enjoyed working on crafts, and with her sisters delighted in making items for the gift shop and craft fair.

Throughout her life, Sister Rosemary was attentive to the voice of God. May she now experience eternally the fullness of life gained through hearing God's voice – and being reunited with her beloved twin sister.