



“All those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them and we shall come to them.”

- John 5:25

SISTER VERONICA (M. FLORINA) KUEHN, SSND

May 15, 1915

July 17, 1936

June 30, 2011



Less than a month after celebrating her 75th Jubilee, our beloved Sister Veronica (M. Florina) Kuehn, 96, died peacefully at 2:55 a.m. on Thursday, June 30, 2011, in Notre Dame Health Care, Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. Her health had declined over the past months, and she was close to death on a few occasions but always seemed to rally. Often wondering why others could go to heaven and she could not, she finally realized her longed-for desire.

The funeral Mass for Sister Veronica, with Father Peter Nosbush as presider, will be on Wednesday, July 6, 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 July 5. Loving sympathy to her 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, P. Paul and Theresa (Schwengle) Kuehn, eight brothers, John, Otto, Sylvester, Paul, Ralph, Raymond, Nicholas and James, and six sisters, Florence Kauth, Marie Wesolek, Rosalia Harmer (Sister Veronica's twin), Alice Bebeau, Frances Thompson and Agnes Ahner.

Sister Veronica and her twin Rosalia, the sixth and seventh children in the family, were born May 15, 1915, on the family farm near Loretto, Minnesota. They were baptized two weeks later at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Loretto. Through both her autobiography and an extensive account written for a family history book, Sister Veronica provided ample information about her family life and vocation. She considered it a privilege and an advantage to have a twin sister. They were not identical, as she wrote: “We both had curly hair – she was a blonde with blue-green eyes and I had dark brown hair with eyes to match. . . . In regard to personalities we were different also, and yet we got along beautifully.” Eight more children would be born into the Kuehn family. Veronica greatly appreciated being a member of a large family and considered it a special blessing.

Veronica recalled the importance of the family's Catholic faith: “I remember during the holy season of Lent how my mother would get the entire family together in her bedroom at night and we would recite the rosary together. This seemed to be a daily practice during Lent and also when my mother was sick in bed. We would all kneel around the bedside and say a rosary for her recovery. . . . In the sitting room on the table my mother used to keep a pile of Catholic magazines. In reading these magazines we got a very slight idea of Convent life. How we admired sisters and spoke of them with almost the same reverence and awe as we did of God.” Veronica and her siblings attended a one-room district school, but a friend attended SS. Peter & Paul School in Loretto. Veronica wrote, “I recall that she always said she wanted to be a sister when she got older. When she said this to me, I never once thought of this happening to me. . . . Today she is married and I am the Sister. God's ways are not our ways.”

Veronica wanted to be a teacher from the time she was in fifth grade. “It was in my blood. I saved everything I made each year, especially in the line of art or booklets, so I could have these as patterns when I would be a teacher. I had a large boxful by the time I completed grade school. I wanted so much to go to high school and be a teacher.” The closest high school was in Rockford, but her mother did not want her to go there, and had Veronica repeat eighth grade instead. Veronica did not continue in school after that.

In April 1931, when Veronica was almost sixteen, she attended a parish mission. She attributed her vocation to that night when, during Benediction, she felt Jesus asking her to

serve him in religious life, even though that topic was not the focus of the mission. To her surprise, her twin sister felt the same call that evening, but they did not tell the family. About a month later at supper, her sister Marie told the family she was going to be a sister. Rosalia then said she would also be a sister, and finally Veronica had the courage to speak up. Marie changed her mind in about three days, but Veronica and Rosalia spoke to Sister Honorine at the Loretto convent. In August 1931, the twins entered the aspiranture at Good Counsel and began high school. They returned in 1932 for their sophomore year. During that year, Rosalia was asked to discontinue high school because of a hearing problem and enter the candidature as a home service sister. In 1933 Veronica came to Good Counsel for her junior year, and she was also asked to discontinue school and become a home service sister. She found this extremely difficult because of her desire to be a teacher but accepted the decision. In 1935, she became Novice M. Florina and her sister received the name Mary Florian. During her novitiate year, Rosalia decided that God was calling her in another way and went home. This was the first real separation for the twins, and Veronica found this a hard cross to bear. However, she stayed firm in her desire to be a sister and professed first vows in 1936.

Sister Florina spent the next nineteen years as a home service sister in various locations: Marystown (1936-37); SS. Peter & Paul, New Hradec, North Dakota (1937-38, 1944-48, and 1949-51); St. Pius, North Dakota (1938-44); Assumption, St. Paul (1948-49); St. Joseph, Grenville, South Dakota (1952-54) and Holy Rosary, North Mankato (1954-55). She especially enjoyed her years with boarders, because she could be with children, and this gave her valuable experience for her later life.

In April 1955, one of the teachers at SS. Peter & Paul, Mankato, became ill and could not finish the school year. Sister Florina received a call from Mother Bernardia asking if she would be willing to teach the class. Her response, "WOULD I? YES! At last my lifetime yearning was being fulfilled – I was going to be a teacher." She turned 40 that May, and really felt that life did begin at 40. She loved every minute of her teaching life. She began summer and Saturday classes and completed her college degree from St. Catherine's College. She then did two years of post graduate work in classroom reading at Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee. Sister Florina taught primary and intermediate grades at All Saints, Madison Lake; St. Stanislaus, Sacred Heart and St. Matthew, St. Paul; St. John, Jordan; St. Philip, and St. Bridget, Minneapolis; and St. Wenceslaus, Dickinson, North Dakota. In her later years, she volunteered for a year at Theresa Living Center in St. Paul, and tutored for a year at St. Raphael, Springfield. She concluded her education ministry by tutoring at the Good Counsel Learning Center from 1991 until 2003. Not content to be fully retired, she volunteered in the Development office from 2002 until 2005.

In 1969, Sisters could return to their baptismal name. Sister Veronica wrote, "I did it for the following reasons: I received it at Baptism, a sacrament of the Church; for all legal matters, I had to use Veronica; and I liked it better – my mom made a good choice."

A prolific letter writer, Sister Veronica kept in contact with her family members and was very close to them. In turn, her nieces and nephews were very devoted to her. Her enjoyment of dancing dated to her youth when her brother used to play the accordion in the evening. She loved jokes, puns and word search puzzles. She also showed great interest in spiritual books. With her strong sense of gratitude, she was very appreciative of even the smallest kindness. Her typed autobiography concludes with this handwritten note: "A million 'Thank-yous' to each and everyone who has done any least act to help me grow in the Love of the Triune God."

About a day before she died, Sister Veronica became suddenly alert and said very clearly, "All for the greater honor and glory of God!" She used the "Suscipe" prayer (Accept me, Lord) often to express her desire to be with God. May she now be enjoying the fullness of life with the God who has called her home at last.

Sister Mary Kay Ash