

Rejoice and Leap for Joy! Your Reward Will be Great in Heaven.

Sr. Mary Dolores of the Incarnate Word

1941 - 2015

Just as this issue of "From the Foot of the Cross" was being finalized, our community suffered the loss of another beloved member. September 8, 2015, the feast of the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has now also become the "birthday into eternity" of our Sr. Mary Dolores of the Incarnate Word. Her Divine Bridegroom came very suddenly to take her to Himself. The above quote from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6, was the Alleluia verse we sang at the Mass which was offered for the repose of her soul.

Sr. Mary Dolores was born Mary Margaret Hornbeck, in 1941, to Joseph William and Mary Elizabeth Boehmann Hornbeck. It was only about 20 months ago that we published Sr. Mary Dolores's full vocation story in our newsletter to honor her Golden Jubilee of religious profession in our community. You can reread the article here: <http://www.passionistnuns.org/newsletter/NLSpring2014color.pdf>

In this newsletter, we want to honor the work of the Holy Spirit in this bride of Christ Crucified by recounting the manner in which she accepted the dementia from which she suffered. Her rapid decline began to alarm us in 2011. As it progressed Sr. Mary Dolores gradually revealed to us the depths of her Passionist dedication to Jesus in His sufferings.

When Sister herself began to realize that something was seriously wrong and that her mental powers were slipping away, she went through all the stages from denial to peaceful acceptance. She cried many times as her realization of what was happening to her became more acute. She who had spent much of her religious life caring for the older Nuns, now had to exercise humility in accepting help for her own needs. Unfortunately, she refused nearly to the end to accept the help of any outsider.

She who had been an excellent cook, who had handled much community correspondence, now did not even know how to type or turn the computer off. She deeply grieved the loss of the ability to read her breviary or spiritual books. Her days were often spent looking for clothing, her glasses and other articles that she had misplaced. Because she moved with great speed it was hard for her caregivers to keep an eye on her, and so she got into the elevator and didn't know how to get out; she locked herself outdoors many times.

Sr. Mary Dolores' primary care physician, Dr. Mark Abshier, was generous in giving us helpful guidance and advice, and Sr. Mary Dolores generally accepted it, trying her best to cooperate. The community greatly profited by Dr. Abshier's instructions, as well as by the excellent course purchased from EWTN: Remembering Jesus: A Catholic Approach to Alzheimer's Disease hosted by Dr. Vincent Fortanasce and Fr. Roger Landry. But no amount of love, care or help could prevent the relentless ravages to mind and body that mark the stages of this disease.

She who was known for her laughter, her wittiness, and particularly her selfless service to every community member, began to be depressed and very different externally from the Sr.

Mary Dolores we had known. However, during these very painful years, it was her great devotion to the Passion of Jesus that carried her through. Sister took refuge close to Jesus praying and agonizing in the Garden of Olives. We placed in the infirmary a small statue of Jesus in Gethsemane so that she could pray before it in her most painful moments.

Finally, as anyone familiar with the relentless decline of this dreadful disease knows, her situation became critical,



and our effort to employ professional sitters only made the situation worse. We were praying for discernment of God's will, striving to keep her among us as long as possible, yet the situation was getting dangerous. Finally, very shortly after Sr. Ann Miriam Mills went home to God, we received our answer through Sr. Mary Dolores herself. After a terrible fall, Sr. Mary Dolores was so frightened that Mother Catherine Marie stayed up with her during the night. All went well until 3 a.m., the hour of Great Mercy. Sister wanted to get out of bed but her entire body was rigid from fright. Mother tried to help her, but finally saw that it was more than either of them could handle. In the midst of this, Sr. Mary Dolores said, in a moment of rare lucidity, "Mother, we have talked about a nursing home. Maybe it's time." This came like balm to our hearts.



Sr. Mary Dolores on the day of her Golden Jubilee Celebration. Seen here with her much-loved confessor, Msgr. **Bernard Powers**, and our local parish pastor, **Fr. Gerald Baker**, who gave the homily on this festive occasion.

home to the Father's house. We pray that the promises of Jesus to those who do good in His name, will be fulfilled eternally for our Sr. Mary Dolores. "Whatever you did for the least of my brethren, that you did unto me."

Our community expresses heartfelt sympathy to her beloved sister, Betsy Brodnax and husband Chuck, and Betsy's two sons, Mark (Fannie) Doyle, and Danny Doyle; also to cousins, Gene (Margaret) Boehmann, Jerry Boehmann, Judy Hoffman, Fr. Bruce Fogle and the entire family. We also express our sincerest gratitude to the staff at Redbanks Nursing Home in Henderson for the excellent care lavished on Sr. Mary Dolores. May this faithful Passionist reap the everlasting fruit of the Passion of Jesus that she generously shared here on earth!

We would like to offer a special tribute to our Passionist Oblates who "came to our rescue" by preparing and serving refreshments during the visitation and after the funeral. Plus they did all the clean up. May our Lord reward your generosity!

**"Well done
good and
faithful
servant!
Enter into
the joy of
your Master."**



Sr. Mary Dolores with her much-loved sister and brother-in-law **Betsy and Chuck Brodnax**.

Not being able to get Sr. Mary Dolores into Carmel Home in Owensboro, we were able, by mid-May, 2015, to have her admitted to Redbanks Skilled Care in Henderson, Kentucky, where Sister was given a room in the "Harbor" unit. She adjusted beautifully, being loved by staff and residents alike. We got beautiful reports of Sister calming an agitated resident by praying with her; also praying over a nurse; Sister helping to push the wheelchairs of other residents; and after finishing her meal, getting up to serve the other residents. Sr. Mary Dolores always had the heart of a servant and even in her decline she was always still thinking of the needs of others.

In the midst of this, Sister's disease progressed very rapidly, to our astonishment. We were all amazed at the gift of peace she manifested. Her great desire was to go home to God. Our Lord answered her prayer. Within four months, her Divine Bridegroom came suddenly to take her