

April 9, 1999

Jesus stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace to you."  
Liturgy for Easter Thursday

Dear Sisters,

Throughout Holy Week and the days following Easter Sunday, our dear Sister Secunda waited in prayer and longing for her Lord and Saviour to take her home. During this extended period, sisters supported her with prayer and vigil. In the stillness of late Thursday night, Jesus rewarded His servant with the eternal peace of Easter.



Sister M. Secunda - Mary King  
Born: September 25, 1902 in Allentown, PA  
Professed: November 27, 1920  
Died: April 8, 1999 in Reading, PA

Sister Secunda was a young girl when our sisters responded to a plea for help during the diphtheria epidemic of 1912. Her contact with these brave pioneers led Sister Secunda to seek admission to our missionary congregation. She came to St. Michael's in September of 1918 and pursued her studies under the direction of one of the professed. Sister was received into the novitiate in November of 1919 and because of her age had to receive special permission from Rome to make her vows in 1920. Sister Secunda taught in the parish schools of Palmerton and Lansford before her desire to serve in the foreign missions was fulfilled.

In November of 1925 Sister Secunda became the first U.S. Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart to be sent to Papua New Guinea. It was 23 years before she had the joy of welcoming three more American sisters to the islands. At that time she was the regional superior.

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Sister Secunda's first ministry in PNG was that of teaching in the mixed-race school in Vunapope. After her years of service as regional superior, she helped the sisters in Bitapaka who staffed the Government hospital for the treatment of tubercular patients.

In 1941 Sister Secunda had to go to Australia for surgery. Because of the war, she was not able to return until 1945. At that time she learned that the Japanese had searched diligently for the "American sister".

Sister Secunda made her third visit home in 1973 and was eager to return to her beloved mission. However, realizing the severity of her failing vision, she decided that it was best to remain in the States. As the years progressed, her vision grew steadily less and less. This was a cross that she bore patiently throughout the years until eventually she was enfolded in almost total darkness.

For the last twenty-six years, Sister Secunda has been for us a living testament of early missionary experiences. Novices and postulants loved to hear her stories firsthand and she was always eager to make that part of community history come alive for them. It was special joy for Sister Secunda to witness a rebirth of missionary zeal in the Province these past few years. She rejoiced in the coming and going of every missionary.

Sister Secunda loved community and, as long as her health permitted, she joyfully attended common prayer and meals. She was interested in all community news and prayed especially for the missions. Other former PNG missionaries were a special support by praying with and reading to her.

Sister's general health failed slowly. Some months ago, she was diagnosed with cancer and gradually became very weak. Her sturdy, robust frame disappeared and with time, Sister was only a shadow of her former self.

Sister Secunda's 79 years of vowed life as a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart were a blessing and inspiration for the many people who knew and loved her. Secunda was very proud of being our eldest professed and we are very proud of her long life of faithful service.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for Sister on Monday, April 12, 1999, at 3:30 p.m. Following the liturgy, she will be laid to rest in our convent cemetery.

Yours in Jesus' love,

*Sister Marie Clark, wsc*