

September 5, 1994

"Like a deer that longs for running streams,
my soul longs for you, my God."

(Communion Antiphon - This Week's Liturgy)

Dear Sisters,

At 9:15 on Monday evening, Sister Catherine's longing was fulfilled. After a very long and extremely debilitating illness, Sister quietly returned her beautiful soul into the loving hands of her Creator.



Sister Mary Catherine Koenig (Theophora)
Born: January 3, 1907 in Northampton, PA
First Profession: August 26, 1926
Died: September 5, 1994 in Reading, PA

Sister Catherine was received as a candidate in 1924. After her novitiate, Sister served in the capacity of homemaker in Cincinnati, Dayton, Beacon, Malvern, Geneva, and Wellsburg. From 1940 to 1956, she was engaged as a seamstress at the Motherhouse. She also served refreshments to the sisters' visitors, a gracious service still fondly remembered. From 1956 to 1962, she was local superior at St. Joseph-in-the-Hills Retreat House in Malvern.

Failing health necessitated Sister Catherine's retirement to the Motherhouse in 1979. By 1989, her Parkinson's disease had progressed to the point where she could no longer swallow. The doctor advised the surgical insertion of a "peg tube" directly into her stomach to make her "last weeks" more comfortable. Those weeks turned into almost five years, during which all nourishment and medicine were administered through the tube. About four years ago, Sister Catherine was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. The cancer progressed steadily, and yet Sister lived on.

Her devoted sister Sue and niece Susan visited her frequently, sitting by her bedside for hours, even when Sister Catherine was

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too weak to open her eyes or give any sign of recognition. Sue (Susanna) developed lung cancer and died about a year ago. Sister Catherine was told of Sue's death, and it was clear that she understood what had happened, and grieved her passing.

Sister Catherine received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick frequently, since she was often at the point of death. The last time was about two weeks before her death. Father Jung and all of us in attendance remarked that Sister Catherine was exceptionally alert all during this ceremony.

This past Monday evening, Sister took a turn for the worse at about 7 P.M. Many sisters came to her room to pray quietly. Sister Catherine's breathing was labored, but she opened her eyes wide with a very peaceful look on her face. It was almost as though she saw something that none of us could see. After the nurses again changed her and ministered to her needs, we re-entered the room. Her breathing became more shallow and then stopped altogether. Her many years of suffering had finally come to an end and we rejoiced with her, even as we grieved her passing.

Sister Catherine will always be remembered as a kind, gentle, and prayerful person, an outstanding model of patience in suffering. The Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated at 4:00 P.M. on Friday, September 9, 1994. After that, she will be laid to rest in our convent cemetery.

United in the Heart of Jesus,

Sister Rita M. Ehrmann, MSC