

Sr. Vera – Funeral Homily, Sept. 4, 2010 – by Thomas Wordekemper OSB

We're in the beginning of the Fall season. The days are gradually getting shorter, the nights cooler; the buzzing of the cicadas more insistent. The evening shadows are longer, the leaves sound crisper in the winds. Most things are done growing, the flowers fading and looking more tired. One can smell the hint of autumn in the air. Students have returned to the classrooms...one season gradually waxes as another wanes.

The ebb and flow of the seasons marches along, the life and hope of one gently fading into the life and hope of another. So it was with Sr. Vera in recent weeks. One can look back and see this gentle, quiet woman gradually fading from us. And so it was shortly after 4:15 on Wednesday, she quietly, peacefully passed from us—dying as she had lived—with little fuss or fanfare, gently surrendering to our Lord, making her journey from this life to the next.

Perhaps Sr. Vera was a rather lowly or obscure community member—not drawing a lot of attention to herself. But today, her birthday into eternal life, she takes center stage. In the great theatre stage of life, the spotlights are on her, all the other stars move to the wings. This innocent, delightful, humble woman of small stature takes the star role in the community life today.

As far as I know Sr. Vera was never interviewed for radio or the newspaper, never appeared on TV. Yet in her own quiet way, she made an impact and contribution to the lives of so many children in her 59 years of teaching. From that 1<sup>st</sup> situation in Stephan with 35 preschool Native Americans (most of whom did not know English) to her next year in Hoven with 59 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to her last years as an aide at Holy Trinity in Hartington, Sr. Vera must have touched and influenced 1000's of lives. Again, her achievements are not written in neon signs but in the lives she touched in quiet ways, people who today live in obscurity, yet contributing to their families and communities in quiet humbleness because of the good foundation they got from her.

Like a seed planted in the earth makes no show of itself, quietly dying, gently sprouting and eventually producing fruit, so was the life of Sr. Vera. From one season to the next, year in and year out, she faithfully performed the duties and tasks assigned to her. From classroom to coffee room she worked in the school for the Lord's service. In her autobiography she did not complain of anything harsh or burdensome in this school of the Lord's service, only mentioning in passing that she enjoyed teaching much more than the duties of being a superior or principal.

Jesus prays in the gospel, "'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'" In the humble life of Sr. Vera we know that God has been glorified. Indeed, even the humblest little pond in the depths of the woods reflects some of the glory of the sky.

The seasons teach us that death does not have the final word. In the fullness of time Spring returns, fields once again burst with life. And so Christ assures us in the fullness of time, all will be restored—suffering and death will be overturned. We're promised, guaranteed, by the God who created all that there is, who set the stars in the sky and placed the planets in motion, who set the seasons on their relentless course...we are promised by God that this is not the end.

At the last we will all be reunited at the close of time. Till then we trust that "the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them...they are at peace...their hope is full of immortality." For over 75 years Sr. Vera persevered in this monastic school of the Lord's service as enfleshed here at Sacred Heart Monastery. She progressed in this way of life, following on the path of God's commandments to the best of her ability and with the grace of God and the intercession of her patron saints. May she now experience the fulfillment of her expectations and rest in the inexpressible delight of Love for all eternity.