

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

## **The Sisters During the Spanish Flu**

Considering all the references we've been hearing to the Spanish Influenza of 1918, several sisters have asked how we were affected by that outbreak. This is what we've found in the archives about that time period.

On October 11, 1918, Sister Mary Ruth (Carolina Williamson) died in Richmond at the age of 25 years, 3 months and 29 days. She spent only 4 years and 5 months in the convent. She taught in Richmond, Indiana and was loved by her pupils. She contracted influenza and died several days later. Her corpse was brought home to the Motherhouse and in the presence of all the Sisters she was buried. May God grant her eternal rest!

On October 14, the Sisters lost another good friend of many years in the death of Father Anton Scheidler of St. Mary Church, Indianapolis. He was almost 84 years of age and had already been ailing for a number of years. Our Sisters had been on various missions where Father Scheidler resided. They always found him a good, spiritual father and advisor. The Sisters regretted that he was buried very privately. This was due to influenza spreading everywhere, even churches and schools had been closed. May God reward him for the great amount of good he did in his parish and for us as well!

Among the thousands of victims whom influenza claimed, Sister Margaret Mary (Catherine Moellers) was the second Sister to pass away. She was on mission in Middletown, Ohio. The schools were closed because of sickness. Since all the hospitals and houses with sick people were filled to capacity and there were too few nurses and attendants, they tried to enlist the Sisters to help attend to the patients. The Sisters were happy to help. The result was sad when some of the Sisters also fell victim to the sickness and had to be brought to the hospital. Margaret Mary, one of them, became sick. She died, well prepared, a quiet death and her corpse was brought to the Motherhouse and solemnly buried there. She had lived for 13 years and 6 months in the convent and was in the best years of her life. She was 33 years of age when the angel of death called her to a better home. God grant her eternal rest!

On December 2, 1918, Sister Joseph Marie (Clara Holtel) died of influenza in the hospital in St. Louis. Her body was brought home and was buried on the same day as her brother George Holtel (who likewise died of influenza). Her burial was held the next morning.

All the Sisters felt sympathy for an aged father who in two days attended the funeral of two of his children. Sister Joseph Marie spent many years at Holy Trinity Parish in St. Louis as a teacher and was loved by the children and sisters. When she contracted influenza, they took her to the hospital where she passed away after receiving the last sacraments. May she rest God's presence.

The much feared influenza also broke out in the convent, even though the Sisters had been shielded from it. On December 3, a number of the children became sick and the others were

dismissed to their homes as soon as possible. Some of the Sisters of the Academy and some novices became sick, however not seriously.

On December 8, 1918, Sister Dorothea Marie (A Pluckebaum), a novice, died of pneumonia in spite of all medicine prescribed. She first had influenza which developed into pneumonia. She felt herself fortunate to die on the feast of the Blessed Mother. Hopefully, the Blessed Mother of God accompanied her to heaven.

On December 9, 1918, Sister M. Madeline (Lorena Wagner) died in the hospital in Dayton of pneumonia. She first had influenza which developed into pneumonia and caused the death of the young Sister. Sister M. Madeline and Sister Dorothy Marie were only 24 years of age when they went to rest with God. Both showed great promise to the other members of the community, but God had decided otherwise and they both died making their profession, happy to have been dedicated to the Lord. May they rest in peace!

Still the angel of death was not satisfied. On December 17 he appeared again and took another young novice, Sister Clara Marie, into eternity. She, too, was only 24 years old but died of consumption, well prepared after she likewise made her vows on her death bed.

On December 25 death asked for another victim. This time it was an older sister, Sister Marie Laurentia. She was 66 years and 8 months old and had given faithful service to the community for 45 years. She was a housekeeper and carried out her services with industry. Work and prayer went hand in hand until her last year. She had had severe strokes during the last year which left her lame and which caused her much pain. She had the unusual fortune to die on Christmas, well prepared and resigned. Hopefully, the Baby Jesus accompanied her to heaven on His birthday, rich in grace, in order to reward her eternally for her faithful services.

Also, one of the children in the Academy, who had gone home, became sick with influenza and died. The Sisters and classmates were grieved by this sad news because Alma Kuntzler was a dear, good child, who was supposed to have graduated this year. The parents, whose only child she was, felt it keenly. But she died as an innocent child and is surely in heaven. "What God does is well done, even if we do not understand it."

So finally the sorrowful and suffering year came to an end, and the sickness also became less intense and finally came to an end.

The feast of Christmas was celebrated as was usual and the dear Christ Child brought peace, joy and renewed courage into the hearts of His poor children.

At the end of the year we gave thanks to God for all His blessings and graces during the entire year and sang the "Te Deum."