



## Sister Colette Van Heek, OSB

Sister Colette Van Heek, 83, of Mother of God Monastery died Sunday, January 27, 2008 in St. Joseph Care Center in Yankton, South Dakota. A Liturgical Wake Service will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 29, 2008 at the Monastery.

Funeral Services are scheduled for 10:30 a.m. January 30, 2008 in the monastery chapel with Father Richard Ortmeier as celebrant. Burial will be in the monastery cemetery. Arrangements are under the direction of the Wight Comes & Sogn Funeral Chapel in Watertown.

Sister Colette (Sylvia) Van Heek was born on a small farm near Crofton, Nebraska on June 17, 1924. She was the second of four children of John Van Heek and Mary Arens. She spent the first two years of school at a rural school and later entered St. Rose parochial school in Crofton. She loved the Sisters and at the end of the first day of school she announced that she wanted to be a Sister. Her family's first experience with serious illness came when Sister's younger sister, Mary Ann, was rushed to Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton with a ruptured appendix. It was at that time that Sister Colette began thinking about becoming a nursing Sister. She studied at Crofton Public High School for one year and entered Mt. Marty her sophomore year. She began seriously thinking about a religious vocation during her senior year.

Sister entered the Benedictine order at Yankton in August 1941. She made her monastic profession on June 24, 1943. She completed a three year course in nurses training at Sacred Heart Hospital and later she attended the College of St. Teresa in Winona, MN. Following this education, Sr. Colette began her teaching profession. In 1950, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Education and began teaching in the School of Practical Nursing at Pierre, South Dakota. She became a founding member of Mother of God Monastery in 1961.

Sister Colette's entire professional career was in the health field. Although she enjoyed teaching in the clinical area, Sister longed to return to the bedside nursing she loved. Following twenty years of teaching nursing, she returned to nursing service at St. Mary's Hospital and Maryhouse for an additional ten years as Director of Nursing and Nursing Supervisor. Later, she spent a year as a school nurse at the Indian mission at Stephan, SD. Next, Sister Colette was asked to take a semester course at St. Mary of the Woods in Terri Haute, Indiana to prepare for working with her elderly Sisters. She spent six years caring for her Sisters at the monastery infirmary in Watertown, and later, changed her place of ministry to Tekakwitha Nursing Center in Sisseton, SD. She loved nursing for the elderly there for seven years, but eye sight problems made nursing hazardous for her. She then entered pastoral care ministry at the nursing home in Sisseton.

After breaking her hip, Sister Colette entered Jenkins Living Center. Later she transferred to St. Joseph Care Center at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton where she died. Sister is survived by her Sisters of Mother of God Monastery, her brother Gerard (Jake), her sisters Hilaria Steffen (Victor) and Mary Ann Zavadil (Lawrence) and numerous nieces and nephews.