

June 9, 2011

Dear Sisters, Relatives and Friends of Sister Muriel;

Cora Delores Witte was born February 6, 1917, the sixth oldest child in a family of 47 six boys and five girls to Theodore and Clementon Wiwode Witte. Her home was in Des Lac on the prairies of North Dakota. She entered the convent of The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Stella Niagara, New York in October of 1937. In August of 1938 she received the name Sister Muriel and the Franciscan Habit. The United States was divided into three provinces in 1938-39. Sister Muriel and two other canonical novices came from Stella Niagara to the new provincial house, Marycrest, Denver, Colorado at the very end of 1938. In August of 1939 she professed first vows and in 1942 final vows.

In 1944 Sister received a B.S. Degree in Dietetics from St. Mary's in Leavenworth, KS and after an Internship in Oklahoma City began her ministry as a Dietician and ministered in both St. Joseph's Hospital in Alliance and in Minot, ND. She was Administrator in Minot, ND at St. Joseph's Hospital for six years during which time she was a member of the Provincial Council. In 1963 she was elected Provincial Minister of Sacred Heart Province and served in this capacity for a total of twelve years. In the homily at the funeral Mass, Father Jim Heithoff spoke of the fact that she had the privilege, or the task, of implementing the Documents of Vatican 11 and seeing the sisters through some trying times. She moved ahead keeping her life simple by living very simply. She had the same desire St. Francis had of living the Gospel and helping the poor. Sister Muriel reached out to the homeless during the 1965 flood in Denver by opening Marycrest to Emergency Housing. She also established a Center for Native Americans in Alliance, NE and a Clinic for the Otomi Indians in the Valley of the Mexquital, a very dry and impoverished area in Mexico. Sometime after her terms as Provincial Minister she was elected to the General Council, headquartered in Rome. Then she spent a year living among the Otomi in Mexico. When she returned to the USA she went to the Rosebud Reservation in SD and lived at Spring Creek and later at St. Francis making herself available to the poor and needy. She helped them with food, money and other necessities. She tutored in the GED Program and schools. In the summers she would return with Sister Anne Hays as far as Dexthi, Mexico. Over the years she made a supreme effort to provide the Otomi there with a well for water. Her efforts were successful. When she could no longer travel to Mexico she spent all her time and efforts at the Indian Mission until health reasons necessitated her move to Marian Residence in February 2006: a move which ended 120 years of a Franciscan Presence at the Mission.

Sister Muriel died on May 31, 2011 on the Feast of the Visitation. Our celebration of her personal Easter was at Marian Residence on June 3rd. Father Jim Heithoff was the Celebrant. Her body was taken to St. Francis, SD where she was welcomed "HOME" by her many friends, who expressed great gratitude for the years she spent with them. Her remaining siblings Sister Monica and Jim Witte, several nieces and nephews and several sisters went to St. Francis and were present at the impressive burial. She was preceded in death by her parents, five brothers and three sisters.

Her Sisters at Marian Residence