



Sister Mary Lawrence Foley, MM

Born: November 18, 1890

Entered: March 24, 1919

Died: January 30, 1971

Sister Mary Lawrence (Bridget Teresa Foley) died at Bethany about 5 a.m. on Saturday, January 30, 1971. Her death came as a surprise to all of us. In fact, Sister Betty Ann Maheu and I had seen and spoken to her at Bethany the previous afternoon.

Sister Mary Lawrence was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, and received her elementary education there. She attended high school for a year, then transferred to a business school. After a year of training, she was employed as a clerk-stenographer in an insurance office. In her letter to Father Founder, James Anthony Walsh, written in 1918 she spoke of her interest in the "Teresians." Sister was twenty-eight years old at the time. Her mother's long illness and subsequent death had forestalled Sister's ardent desire to devote her life to mission. Sister arrived at Maryknoll on March 24, 1919, and was professed on August 5, 1921. She spent the year before profession in training at Ossining Hospital and on September 12, 1921, left with our first group of Sister missionaries for China. Her letters, vividly recounting this first trip and the early years at Kowloon, Loting and Yeungkong, are permeated with a spirit of joy, courage, and a deep love and reverence for her new land and people. The zest for life and a sense of humor so visibly evident in our young missionaries today are also present in our missionary of fifty years ago. Sister Mary Lawrence reveals these qualities as she shares intimately her experiences through her letters to Mother Mary Joseph and other Maryknollers remaining on our hill-top:

"My feet are just tingling as the Victrola on the ship is playing ragtime. The music is just wonderful and I am finding it a real mortification to sit still."

"The Fathers have asked us to put our clock back twenty minutes so many times that I fear we have lost a day!"

Other facets of early mission life in China such as experiences with bandits, trips on a Chinese junk up the river and the purchasing of newborn girl babies are mentioned simply and naturally as everyday occurrences

without a hint of grandeur or heroism. Rather, her words reveal her deep gratitude for the opportunity of service. She was heartbroken when ill-health necessitated her return to the United States.

Sister's great love for the Chinese and her facility in the language enabled her to work with the Chinese in Hawaii from 1937 to 1941, in Seattle in 1944 and in Boston Chinatown from 1946 to 1956. Sister was then assigned to the Motherhouse and subsequently to Bethany in 1968. Sister celebrated her 80th birthday in November and would have been one of our Golden Jubilee celebrants on the fourteenth of February.

The Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated at the Motherhouse at 11 a.m. on February 1st followed by burial in our cemetery.

As we celebrate with our Golden Jubilarians, let us remember very specially Sister Mary Lawrence and our other deceased members of this first group of Maryknollers as they sing: "Rejoice with me all of you who love the Lord for I have pleased the most high."