

SISTER ANNA FARRELL

(October 20, 1895 - July 3, 1964)

THE LORD WAS HER SHEPHERD.

He has called Sister Anna Farrell to the verdant pastures of a life without pain and given her eternal repose.

Born to William and Mary Farrell in New York City on October 20, 1895, Mamie E. Farrell was baptized in the Mountain View Methodist Church on September 19, 1907. On December 27, 1908, she was received on probation, and in full membership on September 9, 1909.

While still a member of the Methodist Church, Mamie found great inspiration from her Bible. Psalm 22, "The Lord is My Shepherd" was always full of special meaning for her. Certain that He was leading her toward new pastures, she resorted to prayer -- and, in communing with God in the inner recesses of her truth-seeking and tortured soul, Catholicism came before her as a beacon-light in the stormy sea of her life. Despite the intense opposition of her family, she followed this inspiration and entered the Catholic Church. She was baptized at the Church of Our Lady of the Holy Angels, Little Falls, (Singac) New Jersey, on March 15, 1924. Great was her joy, when she received her God in Holy Communion on the following day.

A new chapter was opening in her life. She had sought, prayed, and found her faith, despite countless doubts and vicissitudes on the rocky pathway toward conversion. Her "eye became single" -- her one purpose to please her kindly Shepherd Who was leading her on. She no longer questioned, but abandoned herself with the simplicity of a child to His fatherly wisdom -- and, in that total surrender of her being to His, faith became more and more enshrouded in love -- love for Christ Who was inviting her to more intimate union, Who asked her to become His Spouse. Though physically small in stature (as St. John of the Cross, whose works she would ponder), her desire to serve God in souls took possession of her.

How? Where? One day the answer came when she met a Baptistine Sister, Attracted by the radiant charity and the Christlike spirit emanating from the convent of the daughters of the saintly Father Fusco, her decision became a reality. She sought admission to the Congregation, was accepted, and entered as a postulant on August 2, 1925. The year of probation was not easy for Mamie, who was now 30 years of age. Yet she abandoned herself to Providence and strove to be pliable in the hands of the Master Architect of souls. Christ rewarded her loving efforts with perseverance. She received the holy habit on March 8, 1926, and was to be called Sister Anna.

From this day, she strove to be a religious faithful to the cause of Christ. Faithful unto death, she always deemed it a privilege and a sacred trust to be allowed to wear the livery of Christ. Thus, she, who once walked in "dark pastures", could openly declare her allegiance to the true Church of Christ.

Because of her limited stature, Sister Anna's occupations in the Lord's vineyard were somewhat restricted. Yet, she, who would gladly have taken great strides and travelled the world for the cause of Christ in mission lands, was content to put all her energies to performing each duty well. Throughout the 38 years of her religious life, most of her assignments dealt with the Community archives and other office duties which she carried out in silent prayerfulness and great practical efficiency.

Immediately after her Profession of Vows, on March 9, 1927, she was given a teaching post at Our Lady of Loreto School in New York City. In 1932, she was assigned to St. John Villa Academy, Staten Island, New York. In her capacity as secretary, registrar and bursar for resident students, she avidly used every opportunity to counsel both parents and children in their duties to God and their families. "Little One", as one of these grateful parents often refers to Sister Anna, was always ready with a smile, a word of sympathy, wisdom and encouragement. She was, in her dealings with them, "all things to all men", adapting herself to variations in age, temperament, background and nationality. And, where in other cases, language would have been an impenetrable barrier, her straightforwardness, gentle kindness and sincerity endeared her to each heart. Her apostolate was, indeed, a hidden one -- her pulpit, an office desk -- sowing wherever she could, the seeds of truth, joy, and hope in the souls she encountered.

The wisdom gained from this mission, prepared her well for a new task when in 1942 she was given the delicate post of prefect of resident students and orphans in Gladstone, New Jersey. Here, she became an architect of little souls whom she reached in a simple, winning way. She understood them, and they understood her.

But always, she allowed her Shepherd to lead her as He willed. In 1946 He asked her to relinquish this cherished post in guiding His little ones. In her position of secretary at Providence Rest, a home for the aged, she was to bring the radiance of her smile to the elderly women in the twilight of their lives. Difficult at first, she soon surmounted language and other barriers and found a new mission demanding her attention. By now her health had failed considerably, but she still had a mission to perform -- and in her office, in saying a friendly word of encouragement as she walked through the halls, she brought Christ to those about her.

When in 1950, the Congregation undertook a new work -- a guest and retreat house for women, at Peapack, New Jersey, Sister Anna was assigned to organize it.

Finally in 1952, she was transferred to Mount St. John Convent, White Plains, the Motherhouse of the Congregation in the United States where she was better able to attend to the archives. Although she had resigned from the office of Secretary of the Council to which she had been appointed, Sister Anna continued her work with the archives and Community accounts, in spite of failing health and physical obstacles, until, the Shepherd of her soul called her unto himself.

The pen which writes this eulogy could say many more things (especially of her trials of recent years). But, it will suffice to say

that Sister Anna was a religious who deeply loved God and her Institute and strove to be faithful to both. Often younger Sisters would bring their troubles to her. She endeavored to transmit to them her ardent faith in God's Providence, her reverent regard for the holy habit, her sacred view of the religious state.

Sister Anna was a religious who knew and admitted her failings and felt their weight. Yet, she strove to advance in perfection -- she kept always before her eyes the eternal perspective of one in the service of Christ.

She placed no human being before God, and in her love for Him, found little ways of giving pleasure to her Spouse -- postponing the reading of a letter, denying herself the legitimate pleasure of using a new hearing-aid for a few days, enduring the everyday trials of sickness and old age as well as she could.

Shortly before the retreat, which started on June 25th and which was a prelude to her entrance into the valley of death, she sensed that time was running out. She must pray more and immolate her being for Christ. She began to "put in order" her office files connected with the community archives in which she silently immolated the declining years of her life.

Tiredness followed her every step. Her heart was reluctant to help her through each day -- but she still went on -- striving in her silent apostolate among files, papers, account books, typewriter and pen, to prepare the way of the Lord in souls after the spirit of our holy Founder, to whom she was greatly devoted. These tasks were once so simple, but a tired and pain-wracked body bended under a weight intolerable but for her great love. She now rests in sweet repose, having persevered in the Lord's vineyard for many years, until 10:07 A.M. of July 3, 1964, when her breath and the clock in her room simultaneously stopped.

A tear of admiration and gratitude for invaluable lessons of spirituality for many kindnesses, now seals these brief pages. May we learn much as we reflect and pray for one who was a devoted Baptistine.