



OBITUARY OF  
SISTER HEDWIG BAHIA, OSB

March 22, 1948 - April 15, 2007

*" Sister Hedwig's dream was to visit Rome and see St. Peter's Basilica. Now her dream has been realized and more so, because what we are celebrating in faith – the resurrection of Christ and ours – is already hers. "*

These lines appeared in Mother Angela Strobel's common letter to all priories the day after Sister Hedwig was found dead in the bathroom of our Casa Santo Spiritu in Rome on April 15, 2007 due to a cerebral hemorrhage.

Sister Hedwig eagerly uttered her dream-come-true statement when the encounterees were asked to say a line or two over the microphone before they left for Rome. She was the most excited and happiest among the Filipina encounterees. Who would ever think that St. Peter's Basilica would be her pre-departure area to heaven's gate?

Evelyn Bahia was *MANAY* to all her brothers and sisters. She had to wear the pants and skirt to fend for all her siblings even while her parents were still alive. It was only after her youngest sister graduated from high school that she listened intently to what her heart longed for, the convent life. She was then 32 when she joined the Missionary Sisters of Tutzing through the proddings of Sister Victricia Landstorfer, OSB. Before that she was employed as an assistant librarian, cashier and payroll master at St. Agnes Academy, Legaspi.

It was her great admiration for the late Sister Hedwig Espinas, OSB, who did a lot of catechetical and pastoral work in Bicol all throughout her religious life that inspired her to adapt the name *Sister Hedwig* for her religious name. Evelyn was already into religious activities and social action before her entrance to the convent. She was in the mission section, a member of the Sodality of our Lady, Student Catholic Action and Legion of Mary. She was the secretary-treasurer of a barangay organization called *Bagong Sirang Society*. In the convent, she was made treasurer in school and community, maintenance supervisor and canteen manager.

Sister Hedwig continued to be *MANAY* to her peers, the sisters and the people she worked with. Sister Isabel Orito comments, *"She was everybody's MANAY and she seemed to relish that role. She took care of things that an 'ate' would often do for her younger siblings."*

Sister Ana Maria Raca and Sister Fatima Celestial remarked this trait when they were together during the treasurers' meeting held at the San Fernando farm just this April 1-3. She made order after meals and saw to it that food was properly consumed or be kept for the next meal.

Sister Pia Lansang who had the opportunity to stay for a whole week at the Alang-alang Retreat House of Tacloban recalls, *"It was Sister Hedwig, in person, who was on hand almost everyday to give us a treat of Benedictine hospitality. Pleasant and attentive, she manifested good people skills, gently dealing with all the house staff everywhere. She was hands-on all the way, including peeling veggies and helping to cook as*

*needed. She would see to it that daily, the dining table was laden with fresh fruits and garden produce, including fresh carabao milk and kesong puti. In Sister Hedwig I will remember this recent vivid lesson in cheerful Benedictine obedience, hospitality and availability. It was I who was giving the retreat lectures, but it was she who concretely exemplified lived Benedictine values to the retreatants."*

Her fellow encounterees, Sisters Catalina Dery, Edita Eslopore and Rosario Obiniana still miss her especially when they went on group tour to different churches in Rome. In their April 18 common letter, they relived:

*"How she showed her concern for us and for the rest of the sisters, how she loved and cared for her family, brothers and sisters. She was a person who would go out of her way to help others. She had a certain charm that would make one like and love her. She could be very strict but could also earn at the same time the respect of everyone who knew her and had the pleasure of working with her. We also fondly remember her sense of humor and the sound of her laughter"*

She was fun to be with as attested by her remaining companion in her batch, Sister Juana Maria Rivera:  
*"Sister Hedwig loved life, enjoyed outings and always had a contaminating laughter."*

Sister Shirley Roble gives distinct memories of Sister Hedwig, *"her smile, her laughter and her comforting presence."*

Sister Mary Thomas Prado comments, *"Sister Hedwig did not laugh. She giggled. She did not dominate, she collaborated and knew how to work with others as an equal. It took little to make her happy. Contentment is the best word to describe that state."*

Indeed, in peaceful contentment, Sister Hedwig lies with her Maker. In peaceful contentment, she can now shout with the other Easter women, "I have seen the Lord."

Together with your brothers and sisters, Armando, Ofelia, Nelia, Tita, Marcelo Jr., Julio and Evangeline, your other relatives, friends and co-workers, we, your sisters say

*THANK YOU AND GOOD-BYE, DEAR SISTER HEDWIG!*

M. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, Prioress

Manila Priory, April 22, 2007