

## OBITUARY of



Sister M. Viventia (Hildegard) Kaiser  
1914-2009

Sister Viventia Kaiser died at Immaculata Monastery, Norfolk on September 27, 2009. Rosary was held on September 28 and a vigil service was held on Sept. 29. The funeral services were held on September 30<sup>th</sup> with burial in Prospect cemetery. .

Sister Viventia wrote: “I was born on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914 (in Werdohl, Germany) as the eighth child in a happy family. One brother died at seven months and another, three years older than I, was killed in action during World War II in 1941, in a small town near Moscow, Russia.

“I will never forget how we celebrated high feasts, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, in the family. I experienced the first suffering at the age of twelve and then again at fourteen, first when my older brother and then the next one emmigrated to America. I cannot describe how deep was the pain I felt at their leaving.

“The years at school I enjoyed most. Some of my teachers were indeed people to whom I could look up with respect. With two of them I kept in contact even while in the convent. During my home-leave in 1968 I visited one elderly lady-teacher and it was a great joy. My favorite subjects at school were drawing and geography. Especially, since two of my brothers lived in America, I studied the atlas with pleasure.

“Already when at school, it was my duty to collect money in a part of town for the High Mass on First Fridays. After graduation I distributed monthly the “Jungfrauen- Blaettchen” (a pamphlet for unmarried women) to some girls. I liked to attend the youth-meetings, held in the evening, in the parish-center. Every week we young people met for Bible class and also for the 6 a.m. Youth Mass in the crypt of the church. Every time, it was quite an experience. It was at the time of Hitler, and we were utterly dismayed when our pastor had to leave. The next day was Sunday and he could not even give First Holy Communion to the children he had prepared! A truly sad day!

After my years of schooling I attended sewing school, and after that I helped some relatives with housework until my entrance into the convent.

“In 1940 I entered the convent in Olpe, Westfalia. That was the novitiate house for Northern Germany. Already after a short time, the GESTAPO (Hitler's Secret Police) drove us out of the convent. From that time onward I really did not have an orderly time of novitiate. For some months we were occupied in nursing with the Mercy Sisters in Munich. It was there, at the motherhouse of the Mercy Sisters that we received the habit and were then transferred to St. Ottilien to serve in the military hospital until the end of the War in 1945. During that time I pronounced my first vows in 1943, on our farm in Kerschlach. Only after the War was over did we come to our motherhouse in Tutzing, and there I pronounced my perpetual vows in 1946.

“Then, in 1948, after 8 years, I was called to the deathbed of my mother. Because of war-conditions, she had never seen me before in my religious habit. My father was already sick. The same evening on which I had said Good-bye in the morning and returned to the motherhouse, my mother died. All that was very painful and I had to tell myself over and over: “Time heals wounds!”

“In January 1949, together with four sisters, I was announced to be sent to the Missions-- in the Far East—to Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun. In August, we left for Japan. Osaka and Hashimoto. Then in 1961, after 12 years, I arrived with Sister Dorothy Koenig in the USA--Norfolk, Nebraska. Yet, my “First Love” (humanly spoken) has been, and will remain, Japan. Now (1984) I have been already 23 years in America, and that country has – so to speak – become my second home.

“The days of youth are over and it is self-understood, that thoughts about death arise, and I try each day to prepare well for the great moment.”

In fact Sister Viventia spent 47 years in America, always bringing joy and cheerful service to those around her. She served one year in Winnebago, eleven years in Graceville, Minnesota, and 35 years in the priory house. During her last years she was mostly bed-ridden, yet even when she had pain, she would give a smile and never complained. Her nick-name (given by the employees of Immaculata Monastery) was *Sister Sunshine*.

In 1999 just before leaving Graceville, Sister Viventia received an honor that well sums up her entire life. The Bishop's Medal of Service was given on March 21, and was signed by the Most Rev. Raymond A. Lucker, Bishop of New Ulm. It reads as follows:

*The Bishop's Medal of Honor is hereby conferred upon Sister Viventia Kaiser, OSB, in appreciation for her lifetime of service in Germany, America, Japan, and other mission assignments; continued efforts and spiritual care for the sick at Holy Trinity Hospital and Grace Home; service in community with her fellow sisters in Graceville; and for her inspiration to the members of the Graceville community and Holy Rosary Church through her exemplification of the Benedictine motto: “Work and Prayer.”*

*Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus. Gott sei Dank!*

Sister Kevin Hermsen, OSB  
and Sisters of the Norfolk Priory