

Sister Leonis Fick, SSND

Winning Smile of Laundress, Postmaster, and Mystic

By: S. Victoria Wiethaler, SSND

Just eleven days after Sister Leonis pronounced her first vows in Munich motherhouse, April 20, 1937, she was on her way to the United States, her new homeland. Shortly before entering the novitiate, the postulants had been asked, "Do you wish to go to a foreign mission?" Maria Josepha Fick answered with a firm, "NO!" In one short year of novitiate, this was changed to a generous "YES" which became a lifetime of lived sacrifice and service in the St. Louis province. Her good sense of humor and her candid disposition won the heart of all in Germany as well as in the United States. Two of her older sisters had entered our congregation before her.

After arriving in St. Louis in August 1937 and receiving a short period of orientation, Sister Leonis was missioned to St. Catherine House of Studies (later Notre Dame Hall), where for about five months she did general community service while struggling with English. All the rest of her years she worked untiringly in the service of the motherhouse community doing general housework and laundry work. It

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became part of her task to pack the starched wimples and veils to be returned to the missions and to keep the newly purchased clothing supplies in order. Later years found her busy in the post office for twenty-seven years. Perhaps it was her skill in sorting laundered clothes that carried over into her speed in sorting mail that caused the postman who serviced the Ripa Post Office to remark that he would gladly hire sister for the main Post Office.

Many an anecdote could be told of sister's quaint expressions. When hanging laundry one day she called out in a loud voice, "Where shall I hang those billy goats (petticoats)?" She had the charming abili-

Sister Leonis Fick, as she looked in 1958.



ty to laugh at herself with others. As a young sister she preferred to jump over hedges instead of walking sedately around them until... "But Mother, this way is faster!" she naively replied. Sister kept this natural unaffected approach to others all her life. Very few knew of sister's nightlife, that for all the years she was at the motherhouse she spent a nighttime holy hour every night in the dark chapel. Asked once, if she was not afraid, she responded, "Jesus will help me."

Only once, in 1958, did she return to her native place for a six-week visit, but the sacrifice implicit in all those years is revealed in the documents and letters she cherished because they linked her to her homeland and her family.

Her last years, after coming to the Villa in 1984, were a gradual entering into seclusion and silence. Still, faithful sister companions visited her daily, prayed with her, and polished her Sunday shoes. God called her home March 25, 1993. Chances are she's once again busy in heaven in the service of anyone who might need her to keep things in order.