

Mother Seton Guild Bulletin

ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE THE CANONIZATION OF MOTHER ELIZABETH ANN SETON

Approved by
The Holy See



Official Publication
Of the Vice Postulator

NUMBER 6

EMMITSBURG, MD.

MARCH, 1943

REMARKABLE CURE

On the twentieth of August in 1942 Sister Gertrude, a Daughter of Charity of the Western Province of the United States, was called to her eternal reward. Her death was sudden and entirely unexpected. It took place in the Sisters' refectory at Villa Saint Louise, Normandy, Missouri, during the regular Community repast. "Her death was instantaneous," wrote one of her companions, "Life left her as suddenly as an electric light goes out when you press the switch." She was for years regarded as a living proof of the sanctity of Mother Seton because almost eight years before her death she was, to all appearances, suddenly and completely healed of what was diagnosed by eminent physicians as cancer of the pancreas. It was hoped that Sister Gertrude would be able to give personal testimony before the Apostolic Court to the effect of her cure. Providence, however, had ordained otherwise. Her death, sudden and unexpected as it was, persuaded her Superiors to permit a complete autopsy to determine her physical condition at the time she was called out of life. The result was nothing short of sensational.

Sister Gertrude's Illness

On December twenty-seventh in nineteen hundred and thirty-four, about eight years before her death, Sister Gertrude whose family name was Korzendorfer, was admitted as a patient into the Hotel Dieu at New Orleans in Louisiana. She was then about sixty years of age, a woman of very fine qualities of mind and heart, a treasure to the Community. For some months before entering the hospital, her health had been failing rapidly. She was jaundiced, suffered intense pain, experienced considerable nausea and was subject to distressing chills and a high fever. She was under the care of Doctor James T. Nix, M.A., M.D., LL.D., F.A.C.S., who had previously operated on Sister for a gall bladder condition and in whom the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu had utmost confidence. Doctor ordered her to the hospital for observation.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII, dated March 3, 1625 and June 16, 1631, as well as to other similar Pontifical legislation, no other credence is to be given to this account of the cure here described than that which is given to human authority. Moreover, the account given is in no way an anticipation of the decision of the Holy See to whom alone is reserved the authority to pass on the nature of such cures.



SISTER GERTRUDE KORZENDORFER

Sister's Condition Grows Worse

The hospital treatment was unable to bring about any improvement in her condition. She continued to fail rapidly. Unable to receive nourishment her weight melted away daily. Her normal weight up to this illness was about one hundred and sixty-five pounds, now she was reduced to one hundred and eighteen pounds. A consultation of physicians was called to consider the method of procedure. Three other physicians together with Doctor Nix agreed on the pre-operative diagnosis that Sister had

a cancerous condition of the pancreas. The symptoms were such that before the operation the doctors felt extremely certain of the patient's pathological condition. Subsequent events proved the correctness of their conclusions. An exploratory operation was recommended and the advice of the doctors was followed by Sister with the consent of her Superiors.

The Operation

On January fifth, nineteen hundred and thirty-five, an Exploratory Laparotomy, that is, an incision made for the purpose of ascertaining the nature and extent of the disease, was performed. The fears of the doctors and of the Sisters were fully realized. The pre-operative diagnosis was only too true. Sister's condition was hopeless. In fact, such was the extreme pathological condition discovered that the doctors judged it futile to attempt any surgical treatment of the case. The tumor which was found could not be removed since according to the best medical authorities, such cases are one hundred per cent fatal.

The Findings of the Surgeons

The head of the pancreas had been enlarged to three times its normal size. It appeared as a firm tumor-mass having all the appearances of a cancer. The cancerous condition was of great extent, so great in fact that surgery of any kind was judged to be out of the question. The condition was utterly beyond surgical aid and the certainty of death to the patient was clearly apparent to the physicians. Like conditions, according to the experience of the doctors, had but one issue, the patient had but a short time to live. The sworn affidavits relative to the findings by the surgeons in attendance will be found elsewhere in the pages of this issue of the BULLETIN.

Analysis of the Cancer Tissue

Following the best approved medical practice in order to assure themselves of the correctness of their diagnosis, the

Mother Seton Guild

Emmitsburg, Md.



REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.
V. Postulator for the Cause of
Mother Seton

THE MOTHER SETON GUILD, as the Apostolic Postulation for the Cause of Canonization of Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in America, is part of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome.

The Guild is, moreover, an organization established in 1939, with the approval of the Holy See, to promote the Canonization of Mother Seton in every way possible, by means of literature, religious articles, etc.

The Bulletin is issued quarterly.
Yearly Subscription 25c

Membership in the Guild includes the privilege of receiving copies of the Bulletin gratis.

Address all communications to
Central Office of the

Mother Seton Guild

Knights of Columbus Building
Emmitsburg, Md.

Communities of the Sisters of Charity:

St. Joseph's College . . .	Emmitsburg
Marillac Seminary . . .	St. Louis
Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson . . .	N. Y.
Mt. St. Vincent . . .	Halifax
Mt. St. Joseph-on-the-Ohio . . .	Cincinnati
Convent Station . . .	N. J.
Seton Hill . . .	Greensburg

The expenses involved in the Cause are met by the donations of the clients of Mother Seton, and by the membership subscriptions to the Guild.

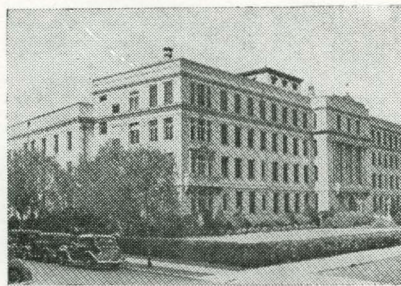
Yearly Subscription \$ 1.00
Perpetual Membership \$10.00

surgeons who attended the operation procured specimen tissue from the tumor which they found and sent small pieces of this tissue to three different laboratories in the vicinity. The result of the finding of the laboratory tests of the tissue was eagerly awaited by the Sisters. The several pathologists, exceptionally skillful in their science, returned a complete report of their tests to the physicians of the Hotel Dieu. This report was submitted not long after the completion of the operation. This was, indeed, fortunate for the proper recording of the actual pathological condition of Sister Gertrude.

The Reports of the Pathologists

The Director of the laboratory of the Hotel Dieu in New Orleans returned the following report to the hospital where Sister was a patient. It may be

HOTEL DIEU, NEW ORLEANS, LA.



Exploratory Operation, January 7, 1935

stated here that photostatic copies of all evidence in this case are on file in the Guild office and available for inspection to all who are interested in the Cause.

THE PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY Hotel Dieu, New Orleans, La.

March 24, 1937

To Whom It May Concern:

"I, Maurice Couret, Director of Laboratory of Hotel Dieu at New Orleans, La., certify to the following:

"That I have received from Dr. James T. Nix on January 5, 1935 a small piece of tissue bearing the surgical S-35-18 and the hospital number I 1909, removed from a mass in the pancreas from a patient bearing the title of Sister Gertrude, Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

"I further certify that this piece of tissue was carefully embedded in paraffin and proper sections made and stained according to standard laboratory methods and proved to be a carcinoma of the pancreas, grade II-III.

"And I further certify that several competent pathologists connected with standard hospitals and universities at New Orleans to whom sections from this lesion have been submitted have confirmed my findings.

"I further certify that I have retained these sections and will deliver them to

whomsoever I may be requested to do so by proper authority."

Respectfully submitted,
(Signed) M. COURET
M. Couret, A.M., M.D., Dir.
Hotel Dieu Laboratory
New Orleans, La.

The above is the true and original signature of Doctor M. Couret.

Witnessed and attested
(Signed) A. Carroll Badeaux
Chancellor and Ecclesiastical Notary
September 2, 1937.

The following testimony was given by Doctor John A. Lanford of Tulane University of Louisiana:

"There is no doubt in my mind of the malignant character of the growth and I believe it to be carcinoma of relatively low grade malignancy."

From Doctor W. H. Harris of the University of Tulane School of Medicine comes the following testimony:

"Section shows a portion of pancreas containing the islands of Langerhan contiguous to which is a neoplasm presenting the histology of an adenocarcinoma."

Her Sisters Have Recourse to Prayer

Distressed by the complete report of the pathologists, the Sisters of Charity in charge of the De Paul Sanitarium as well as the Sisters of Charity in charge of the Hotel Dieu, both hospitals in New Orleans, began a novena of prayer to Mother Seton for the cure of Sister Gertrude. The reports had merely confirmed their worst fears because the serious nature of Sister's ailment was apparent to all observers. She was wasting away almost hourly, her strength was fast ebbing. All human means had proven powerless. Science, in which man trusts so completely at times, was utterly unable to offer any assistance in this desperate case. The Sisters in their utter confidence in Divine power turned towards Him in Whose hands is healing from every disease both of body and soul. Because of their filial devotion to their spiritual mother and American foundress, the Daughters of the two hospitals turned in their helplessness to Mother Seton. They placed their petition in her hands, confident that she would carry their message before the Throne of Grace; confident, too, that, if such be God's Holy Will, their esteemed Sister Gertrude would be restored to good health.

Remarkable Recovery

At the very beginning of the novena Sister Gertrude began to improve in health. She began to take nourishment which she had been unable to take for some weeks. Her strength returned, she

regained her lost weight and to the astonishment of all, especially to the amazement of the doctors, Sister was soon to all appearances in normal health. The Sisters could hardly believe the evidence of their senses. Sister Gertrude's Superiors overjoyed at Sister's rapid progress towards health were, nevertheless, reluctant to permit her to leave the hospital. But let us present the testimony in Sister Gertrude's own words.

Sister Gertrude's Own Testimony

"After an operation for gall bladder, April 14, 1934, I felt some relief from pain and nausea, but I never felt entirely well nor physically able to fulfill my duty. I was continually losing weight. In October of the same year my condition grew worse. I had sudden spells of intense pain in the right side of my abdomen, followed by chills and attacks of fever; and my temperature rising to 103. These attacks occurred at intervals of approximately one week. I became dark yellow.

"On December 25th, after a more serious spell, Dr. James T. Nix, who had operated on me, was called and he ordered that I should be transferred immediately to the hospital. I was admitted to the Hotel Dieu on the 27th of December and put to bed. I did not have any more attacks of pain, but the nausea and a general discomfort persisted. Dr. Nix, having called in consultation Doctors A. L. Levin, Marion Souchon, and Edmond Souchon, I was told that a surgical examination was necessary. I was taken to the operating room on the 5th of January. Of course, I did not know for some time what had been found, but later they told me that the operation was limited to opening the abdomen and excising for examination a small piece of tissue from the tumor found there. The abdomen was then closed, as my case was considered hopeless because of cancer of the pancreas.

"From the second day following the exploratory operation I felt neither pain nor nausea. I was able to take with relish and retain any nourishment presented to me. My strength returned; I gained weight and I was discharged from the hospital February 1, 1935. However, my Superiors thought it would be better for me to remain there a month longer, which I did. I returned to my duty the 1st of March. Since then I was able to follow the common life and to attend to all the duties of my office as Sister Servant of a 250 bed hospital for the insane.

"I have never had any relapse of my former sickness, and I attribute my cure solely to a

novena made to Mother Seton in order to obtain it."

(Signed) Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer
This is to certify that the above is the true and original signature of Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer.

(Signed) A. Carroll Badaux
Chancellor and Ecclesiastical Notary
(SEAL)

nessed the operation by Doctor Nix, have declared that in their opinion the recovery of Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer could not be attributed to medical or surgical intervention.

After-Effects of the Exploratory Operation

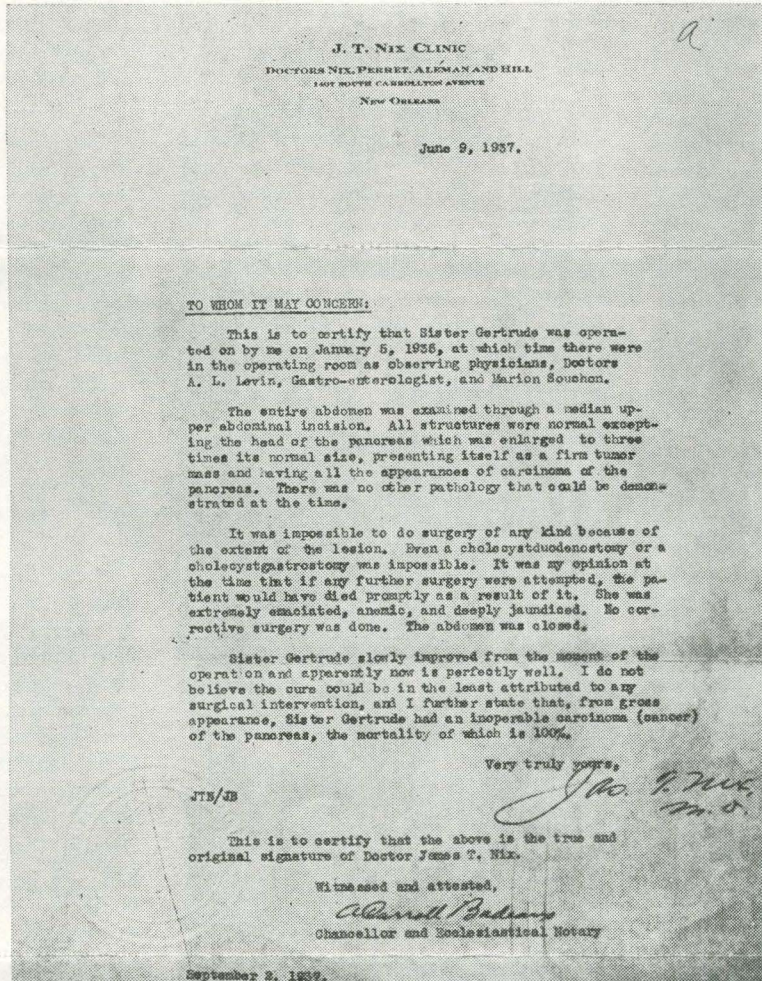
The common experience in surgery is that whenever a cancer is cut and the growth has not been completely removed there follows what surgeons call a metastasis, that is, there is generally a spreading of the cancerous infection throughout the system. In Sister Gertrude's case, the cancer was cut, the growth in its entirety, practically speaking, remained in the pancreas but instead of the infection spreading throughout the system, the disease was arrested and a complete cure effected. This contrary to all the expectations of the medical men in attendance at the time of the operation.

Sister Gertrude left the hospital in less than two months after the operation. Her health was completely restored. For seven and a half years after her cure she carried on the arduous duties of a Sister Superior's office in De Paul Sanitarium, a large hospital, 250 beds, for the insane. She never had a recurrence of her malady and she died in 1942 from a pathological condition that was not related to

her former affliction. She died from pulmonary embolism.

The Death of Sister Gertrude

With startling suddenness Sister Gertrude was called to her eternal reward on August 20, 1942, over seven years and a half after the exploratory operation revealed a cancer of the pancreas. She was at the Villa Saint Louise, Normandy, Missouri, when the summons came so unexpectedly. Sister was taking her repast in the Community refectory when the Angel of Death beckoned and this humble Daughter of Charity was called to appear before the Throne of the Most High. Sister Gertrude went into eternity with her hands filled with



DR. NIX'S LETTER

Physician's Testimony

The opinion of the doctors connected with this extraordinary recovery of Sister Gertrude will manifest their amazement. In a letter to Sister Gertrude, Doctor James T. Nix wrote on June 11, 1937:

"It gives me great pleasure to enclose the certificate which I believe expresses my sentiments in this matter.

"Your cure, as I see it, was the result of Divine intervention."

Two other doctors, intimately connected with the case, Doctor Marion Souchon, a surgeon of great experience and ability, and Doctor A. L. Levin, a noted gastro-enterologist and well-known Hebrew authority, both of whom wit-

good works. She had been a faithful Sister of Charity for forty years. She had led a most edifying life and her death, sudden but not unprovided, was precious in the sight of God. There was nothing particularly strange about her death but its suddenness; it was, however, the occasion of a truly wonderful revelation.

The Autopsy and Its Findings

Immediately after the death of Sister Gertrude, her Superiors, both because the suddenness of her death and the remarkable cure of the cancerous condition of seven and a half years previous, decided that a post-mortem examination should be made. Thus it was that about thirty-six hours after Sister's death an autopsy was performed in the laboratory of the De Paul Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. The post-mortem was performed by Doctor Walter J. Siebert, the hospital pathologist. His autopsy was complete in every detail. All the major organs were thoroughly and minutely examined. The report submitted to the Sisters lacked nothing in thoroughness. The immediate cause of death was determined as "*This massive pulmonary embolism.*" The particular interest of the Sisters was to learn the result of the examination of the pancreas which was known by them to have been in a cancerous condition at the time of the exploratory operation in 1935, seven and a half years previously. The summary report of the autopsy is here given in Doctor Siebert's own words:

Summary of Autopsy

"There is no question but that the biopsy section removed from the head of the pancreas in 1935 shows an adeno-carcinoma of the small ducts of the pancreas which invaded slightly into pancreatic tissue. The autopsy showed no evidence, whatever, of this cancer and furthermore does not even show evidence of a scar in the pancreas where this tumor had been. From the medical standpoint this is a clear cut case of complete spontaneous cure of a cancer of the head of the pancreas.

"The original biopsy section which was sent to me by Doctor Maurice Couret is included in the files with the autopsy sections at De Paul Hospital."

(Signed) Walter J. Siebert, M.D.
Pathologist.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of December 1942.

(Signed) Mary L. Ratchford
(SEAL) Notary Public

My commission expires August 5, 1945.

Conclusion

This simple and direct narration of the facts in this remarkable case of sudden and complete cure of cancer of the

pancreas is to be taken merely as a scientific and medical testimony. It is in the province of the Holy See and the Holy See alone to decide the nature of this cure. The Holy See will not render judgment, however, until after a most rigorous and thorough investigation by the Apostolic Court. This Court will examine every evidence of the case, and will gather all the testimonies of the doctors and other witnesses.

The Next Step

To all the thousands of clients of Mother Seton, to her spiritual Daughters throughout the United States and Canada, to the countless number who have felt that they, too, have been beneficiaries of her power, the news of this remarkable recovery will bring to them the most inspiring message of the history of her Cause. Perhaps, they

DE PAUL HOSPITAL, ST. LOUIS, MO.



Where Autopsy Was Performed

may think it a direct answer to their own prayers for the success of that which they hold so dear.

Several years ago this case of Sister Gertrude was prepared for the consideration of the Holy See. Records were obtained concerning the previous illness of Sister Gertrude; the sworn statements of the doctors and surgeons who attended her were duly prepared; the testimony of Sister herself and her companions was carefully gathered and notarized, and all was bound in book form and forwarded to Rome. There the evidence is being considered by the Papal Court of investigation.

Now, however, a new report will be prepared for the Holy See. The sudden, unexpected death of Sister Gertrude makes it possible to submit our new evidence of the cure that seems to be beyond the natural order of things. The result of the autopsy, the testimony of the doctors who were intimately connected with this event, and a great deal of medical and surgical opinion must be prepared for our new reports. These reports will be made out as soon as we

can obtain the necessary information. All will be forwarded to Rome at the earliest opportunity.

Because of the unsettled condition of world communications due to the war and because of the very many obstacles that will have to be overcome, the process that usually takes much time will doubtless be somewhat delayed. In cases of this kind Rome acts very, very slowly. The investigation must be complete scientifically down to the minutest detail. We must wait with patience and with hope for the final decision.

Therefore, we ask all Mother Seton's friends and well-wishers, all who are interested in her Cause, her spiritual Daughters especially to pray without ceasing that a favorable decision may come from Rome in reference to this extraordinary event. We shall not anticipate in any way that decision, but we shall hope and pray fervently that God in His goodness may see fit to glorify the Servant of God, Mother Seton, by means of the Remarkable Cure.

Special

It has been found necessary in this issue of the BULLETIN to eliminate all its regular features in order that the facts of the striking cure of Sister Gertrude might be told with all possible completeness. This was done with a great deal of reluctance. However, it is hoped that this account of a remarkable happening will prove of deep interest to all who have the opportunity to read it.

During the last several months many items of great importance and concern to Mother Seton's many devotees have come to the office of the Guild. There has been an increasing number of inquiries about the Cause and its progress; the number of acknowledged favors has greatly increased with the passing weeks; the school activities have continued and developed; the membership list of the Guild has shown considerable expansion. In the next issue of the BULLETIN all the usual features will be presented in their accustomed form.

WARNING

We would warn anyone who desires to give publicity to this cure in order to inspire confidence in the intercession of Mother Seton to be careful not to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See in regard to the nature of this sudden and complete recovery.