

The Last Days and Hours of Mother Mary Lange
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The year: circa 1876

“Poor Sister Mary, now extremely old, (She was in her 90’s) was too feeble to go from her room on the second floor to the chapel downstairs and up again after services. The Sisters... asked permission for her to be allowed to sleep in the schoolroom which adjoined the chapel. Sister Mary was now almost blind and walked with great difficulty.

The Time: February 1, 1882-

“...A beautiful thing was to happen to Sister Mary, an unexpected...joy. She who ...provided so tenderly for her mother in her last days was to have her own last hours solaced in a way she could not have foreseen... On the first of February, Father Anwander was returning. Sister Mary was in particularly good spirits, and welcomed Father Anwander joyfully. She, who ... always enjoyed recreation, listened happily to Father Anwander’s traveler’s tales and retired to rest afterward as usual.

“The next morning about 5:30, Mother Mary woke to great pain. She wanted to receive communion, so she refused to break her fast by taking ...medicine. Fr. Anwander [anointed] her hands...stopped and gave the last blessing. She died as she had lived, with hands outstretched in love and service.

As Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange breathed her last, a young novice in the Chapel below pronounced her first vows--(Sister Mary Thaddeus Bennett would become the community’s ninth Superior General.) It was February 3, 1882. ***For Mother Mary Lange, the vision and reality had become one.***

Mother Mary Lange lived a life which few of us will be called upon to imitate in its fullness of trial and difficulty and suffering. Her life then is not held up as an example of how life must be lived, but rather as an example of the way in which we all may aspire to be:

Loved-filled; faith-filled; trust-filled children of a Father whose loving care sustains each one of us our whole life through.”