

Sister Benigna Brandl, SSND

Taken from "Enlarge The Space Of Your tent" by" S. Victoria Wiethaler, SSND

Sister Benigna felt that God wanted her to be a missionary. Since sisters were needed in America and were not allowed to teach in Germany any longer, she volunteered to come to this country. As she said, "Abraham left his home country and worked and lived where God led him. So did I. As we passed the Statue of Liberty, it came to my realization that this is to be my new world and home."

Sister had been trained to teach dressmaking and needlework to the students, but in the sewing room of the Baltimore province there were endless numbers of items to be sewn for the sisters, a work she was not prepared for. Later, the charge of the sacristy and the duties of sacristan were added.

Sister says, "The first year was a second novitiate, beginning all over again. The youngest sisters tried to help me become accustomed to the American way of life. Prayer in common, at first, seemed endless

because of language difficulties." But sister became a specialist in making liturgical vestments. The chapel was always a place of beauty and order with perfectly aligned candles, its flowers arranged stem by stem, with infinite patience, displaying an artistry that was Sister Benigna's hallmark.

At the Mass of Thanksgiving for Sister Benigna's service as sacristan, Reverend David Carey concluded his homily, "Sister Benigna, you are a woman of faithfulness above all else. You are a woman of risk, who has not grieved for the old ways, but so wisely opened yourself to the moment. Yes, you are an inspiration to many. All here today, and with your many sisters worldwide, thank you for coming to America. You have enriched us deeply, not only by your years of fruitful service, but by bringing to us a knowledge of SSNDs' European rootedness. We applaud you in gratitude." ■