

In Memory of Sr. Mary Helena Sproul

~ *reflection by Sr. Susan Boyle & Sr. Margaret Connolly ~

The God of Surprises called Sr. Mary Helena Sproul to heaven on the evening of January 22, 2012. Two of our Sisters from the Washington Retreat House, her niece Mary Migre and a good friend, Sheila, were with Sister Mary Helena as she completed her earthly journey and entered eternal life. We were all truly surprised that she left us so quickly.

Many of Sister's relatives and friends joined the Sisters and Friars of the Atonement in the Motherhouse Chapel for her wake and funeral liturgy. Both of these ceremonies were real celebrations of life for a person who truly loved life! She was remembered as a woman who "used every drop of energy, every ounce of faith in the yes she continually spoke to God. Each day she rekindled the flame with passion and optimism as she modeled our life of Atonement. She was a dynamic organizer steeped in our charism and she ministered with joy, enthusiasm and celebration."

Sister Mary Helena was born in Whitman, MA, a direct descendant of a family coming to America on the Mayflower and she was proud of her heritage. From her New England roots, she ministered at Emmanuel House in Boston, MA; St. Cecilia's in New York City; Rome, Italy; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Washington, DC and in various locations at Graymoor: Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House, Mother Lurana House, and as Administrator of the Residence at St. Francis Convent.

Sister Mary Helena's response to the question, "What legacy am I leaving for those who will come after me?" really captures her life. "I am leaving my legacy of my loyalty, dedication and love to those who will come after me. My loyalty, dedication and love for my God, family, Congregation, friends and all I ministered with in my Atonement Religious Life. Above all, I believe my 'loyalty' is my greatest gift. Loyalty formed the basis for my life's decisions and relationships throughout my life."

We know that "Sister Mary Helena is now following the Flame that together we are rekindling. It is the Flame that will guide her to the Heart of the Eternal Flame which is never extinguished. We believe that Unity does not end with death but that it is in the warmth of the Eternal Flame that we are truly united...not only to God...but to each other. In that Unity Sister Mary Helena lives on in 'A Life that is changed...not taken away.'" *



Excerpts from the “Homily at the funeral Mass for Sr. Mary Helena” by Fr. Ken Cienik, SA

January 28, 2012

“**Sr. Mary Helena Sproul** was 80 years old when she died and she was very excited about becoming an octogenarian! In fact as you may recall she widely publicized the event. However, as those of us who knew her and loved her know, she did not at all seem to act like one might imagine an octogenarian would act, because she was so full of LIFE and LOVE. Her SELFLESSNESS and ZEAL to serve others was the result of the fact that she loved so much.

“She loved her family; she loved Our Lord Jesus Christ and his mother Mary whom we honor with the title of Our Lady of the Atonement; she loved the Church; and its’ saints, especially Saints Francis and Clare, Father Paul and Mother Lurana; she loved the Sisters and Friars of the Atonement; she loved the people she served; and of course ... she loved Boston and its sports teams, The Patriots, Bruins and Red Sox. In fact, she is credited by some with deflecting the field goal which would have eliminated the Patriots from the Super Bowl this year as she made her way to join the saints in heaven last Sunday....

“This “holy mountain” of Graymoor was dear to Mary’s heart and it is the place where we will fondly remember her whenever we visit the Sister’s cemetery. It has been said that life is God’s gift to us and what we do with our lives is our gift to God. The cross between the date of her birth in 1931 and 2012 represents countless people whose lives she influenced in so many ways. Her love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Our Lady of the Atonement and Saints Francis, Clare and Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana, impelled her to be a witness to the Atonement vocation of unity. Because she was at one with herself and God, she was able to go out of herself and serve the needs of so many people in so many places, from Massachusetts to New York to Rome, Italy, Edmonton, and Washington, DC....

“Permit me to conclude with a quotation by the famous “Nun of Amherst,” Emily Dickinson as they apply to the famous “Nun of Whitman,” Sr. Mary Helena:

*“The bustle in the house the morning after death is the solemnest
of industries enacted upon earth; the sweeping up of the heart, and putting love
away, we shall not want to use again, until eternity.”*

These days since the death of Sr. Mary Helena Sproul have been a time to remember all the many wonderful ways in which she lived her life and touched ours.... May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”