



September 11, 2012

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Helena Smith died on August 26, at 10:25 p.m. Father Thomas Fahey was called to anoint Sister and pray with her around 5 p.m. Sister Monica Haines and Sister Judith Ann Turnock were with her at that time and other sisters visited during the evening. The nurses were with Sister Helena when she quietly slipped into eternal life.

Sister Helena was born in New Oxford, Pennsylvania on August 20, 1916. She was the sixth of ten children of Stanislaus and Catherine Smith and baptized Helena Mary Angela on the same day. Four brothers, Philip, Leon, William and Edgar Smith, and five sisters, Regina Lawrence, Edith Roth, Stella Smith, Margaret Smith and Rita Timmins, preceded her in death.

Sister Helena entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 28, 1939 and made first vows on August 5, 1942. She served in the missions in Utah, Indiana, Florida and California. She once said, "Join the Victory Noll Sisters and see the world," at least the United States. In 1958, one of her many moves between missions, she moved from Punta Gorda, Florida to Monterey, California, a move of almost 3000 miles. She also covered most areas of Victory Noll ministry in her many years of service, religious education, home visiting, service at Victory Noll, and pastoral ministry. When asked which ministry she liked the most, she replied, "I especially enjoyed working in liturgy." She returned to Victory Noll in 2000 to retire and volunteer.

At her farewell party from at St. Pius X Parish in Moab, Utah, May of 2000, the parishioners asked, "Who will do all the jobs Sister Helena has done for 17 years?" Father Rooney, the pastor replied, "There isn't a single thing in this parish that isn't the specific responsibility of the priest that Sister Helena hasn't done. By my experience, she has kept this parish together."

Most who knew Sister would agree with the parishioners of St. Pius. "She always worked in the background taking care of everything; she was the backbone of this parish, she has a very giving heart, and she is a very resilient woman." As Sister Helena left Moab she challenged the Catholic community of Moab to recognize their own vocations in her leaving. She said to them, "When you see something that needs to be done, step up and volunteer to do it, minister to and serve each other."

Six of her nieces and nephews came to Victory Noll for the wake and funeral, leaving Pennsylvania at 3 a.m. and driving straight through to celebrate Sister Helena's life. They each spoke at the reception after the wake talking about how much she shared in their lives on her home visits, their visits to Victory Noll, and even visits to her missions, especially Monterey, California. Each also expressed their deep appreciation for the love and care given to Sister Helena here at Victory Noll her last years.

Sisters spoke of their memories, including Sister Lorraine Master saying Sister Helena graciously welcomed her overnights when she was on her ministry in that part of Utah. Other Sisters remember Sister Helena serving in the kitchen at Victory Noll.

Jim Smith made the comment that he always wanted to ring the mission bell and Sister wouldn't let him. He closed his sharing by saying, "tomorrow I am going to ring the bell, ring the bell for Sister," and he did.

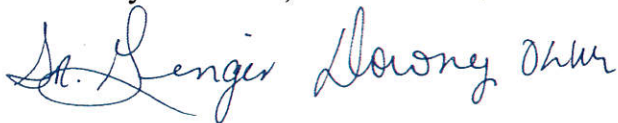
All Sister Helena's nieces and nephews took an active part in the funeral liturgy. Jim Smith and Bill Smith, Jr. placed the pall while Donna Sneeringer placed the crucifix. Sara Sneereringer read the Intercessions and Nancy and Harvey Stimer brought up the gifts. Sister Alma Bill was the lector and Father Thomas Fahey was the presider. Sister Beatrice Haines closed with the Rite of Commendation.

The Gospel at Mass was from Mark 10:35-45. In Father Fahey's homily he said, "In the kingdom of Jesus, the standard of greatness is that of service....Sr. Helena was great. She didn't seek worldly power and authority. Her life was a life of service. She spent her life leading others to God,....She did it all because she loved God. All this was most pleasing to God."

Several of the sisters were taken out to the cemetery by car or their motorized carts while others walked to take part in committing Sister Helena's body back to the earth with prayer and sprinkling the casket with Holy water.

We are grateful, Sister Helena, for your faithful service in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. We rejoice that you now share with all the Saints eternal life with God.

Sincerely in Christ,



Sr. Ginger Downey, OLVM
General Secretary

