

May 27, 2011

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Helen Collis died peacefully at 4:10 p.m. on Tuesday May 23, 2011. Sister Monica had been with her shortly before she died. Helen's health had been declining recently and for several days she was no longer able to eat. Sisters continually visited at her bedside praying and singing to her. Sister Helen was 97 years old.

Sister Helen was born October 13, 1913 to Emile Pierre Lambert and Harriet Rowles (Lambert) Collis. She is survived by one brother, Robert Collis of Payne, Ohio. Her parents and one sister Marie Fritzal preceded her in death.

Sister Helen entered the Congregation of Our lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on February 8, 1933. She made her first Profession of Vows on March 25, 1936 at Victory Noll, and her Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1940 in Redlands, California.

Helen served God and others in the missions of California, Ohio, Nevada, New Jersey, Arizona, Texas and Indiana. She retired to Victory Noll in 1989, where she served as a Nurse to our sisters in Holy Family. She began her mission years as a Catechist. Her warm, energetic personality and her excellent knowledge and love of her faith contributed to making her a very successful teacher of both children and adults. Through the Teacher Training Courses she presented, dedicated lay people were certified to become Catechists in their parishes thus her influence and gifts were multiplied a hundred fold. However, Helen began to realize that she had a call to care for and minister to people in the field of Nursing. She began her education in this field and was successful in being licensed as a Practical Nurse in Tucson in the early 1970's. Helen also obtained certificates in some specialized courses such as, Fundamentals of Electrocardiology, and Social/Psychological problems like Alcoholism. Helen began sharing her skills at St. Joseph's hospital in Tucson, at Holy Family here at Victory Noll, and at St. Elizabeth's Clinic in Tucson. Nursing was a perfect fit for Helen. She was an excellent Nurse and her warmth, compassion and concern for her patients was evident to those who supervised her. In her evaluations she was commended for her skills, her conscientiousness, her dependability and observance of regulations. Helen had great empathy and an awareness of the physical and emotional needs of patients and always tried to assist in meeting those needs. Sister Helen was also attuned to people who because of limited income or poverty were struggling to obtain the basic necessities of life. She had a heart for the poor and would reach out to meet their needs at St. Elizabeth's Clinic.

At the Vigil Service on Thursday evening, Sister Betty gave a eulogy highlighting Sister Helen's ministries especially in the Health field, and the many ways she touched people's lives. She also shared some of the following thoughts that our sisters had shared with her about Helen. Helen was very close to her sister, Marie, and would receive very interesting letters from her that she would share with the sisters in her local community. Many of Marie's letters remain in Helen's file. Helen loved to shop for bargains. She would leave one hour early when she was doing private care nursing to stop at garage sales. She had an "eye" for things people could use, always buying useful things for her patients and the sisters. Helen had a good sense of humor, told jokes and livened up community life. She loved to sing, and could be heard singing some of her favorite songs, one being "The Preacher and the Bear." Sister Helen was always kind and generous with her time. She enjoyed yard work,



and loved cats and fed many of the feral cats in the neighborhood. She also loved birds, and enjoyed watching them, listening to them and feeding them. Betty ended by saying "We are grateful, Sister Helen, for your faithful service in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. We rejoice that you now share eternal life with God."

After the service, we went to the dining room for refreshments and to continue sharing our memories of Helen. Sister Beaty shared that she was a recipient of Helen's yard sales. When visiting Tucson, Beaty received from Helen a beautiful hard cover piano book that Helen had bought at a yard sale. Beaty believes the book is still here at Victory Noll. Sister Grace Marie recalled that Helen looked at her feet one day and said, "I have a pair of shoes that would fit you," and they did. Grace Marie also said Helen was always happy, forgetful of self, never complained, and always looking to help others. When she became a patient on third floor Holy Family she could be heard singing, "Jesus Loves Me." She always kept a song in her heart and a smile on her face. Other sisters told of Helen's generous service to themselves and others. Sister Pat shared that one day in San Bernardino a couple from San Pedro who knew Helen came to visit them. The couple shared with Helen a serious problem they were experiencing. Immediately Helen took the time to contact someone in San Pedro who she knew could help them. Arrangements were made for them to see this person on their return to San Pedro. They left filled with gratitude for the help they anticipated receiving on their return home.

On Friday May 27, 2011, we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Sister Helen's brother Robert Collis from Payne, Ohio, her niece Susan Zartman from Fort Wayne, Ind., her nephew Don Collis from Paulding, Ohio, and her nephew Jim Collis and his wife Jane from Payne, Ohio were present. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Sister Marilyn and Sister Alodia placed the Pall and the Crucifix on the Casket. Sister Sharon Rose and Sister Rose Zita brought up the Gifts at the Offertory. Sister Helen chose John 15:9-16 for the Gospel at her Funeral Mass. In this Gospel Jesus speaks of the Father's love for Him and His love for us. He calls us to live in His love by keeping the Commandments and loving one another. Jesus tells us that the command He gives us is to love one another as he has loved us. Helen truly lived out this Gospel of love, as she laid down her life for all those she ministered to and cared for so generously. Father Fahey in his Homily said that the moment of death must have been a beautiful experience for Sister Helen, for she prepared all her life for that moment and was a faithful servant. He said death means falling into the hands of a most merciful God, a God of infinite love. It must be a most thrilling moment to be welcomed into eternity by God Himself. He said Sister Helen is now transformed, free, liberated and filled with joy.

After Mass we processed to the cemetery where we laid Sister Helen to rest with the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn to Our Lady of Victory, "We Have a Holy Mother". A delicious dinner to celebrate Helen's life followed.

Sister Helen we thank you for sharing your life with us. You have been a faithful servant of God, and a loving companion to us. Now God welcomes you with joy into your Heavenly Home. There you can sing Gods praises with the Saints for all eternity.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M.*

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVM

General Secretary