

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO SAINTHOOD

Until Pope John Paul II's papacy most saints were priests, bishops, religious or martyrs and most were men of European/Anglo descent. Pope John Paul II believed in Vatican II's universal call to holiness and he believed that by holding up witnesses to Christ, we would have models to emulate of ordinary people who lived heroic, virtuous lives. Living a heroic virtuous life means that you lived your life in an ordinary way but loved God and others in an extraordinary way. Yes miracles are necessary as part of the official recognition of a person as a canonized Saint, however a saint is any baptized Catholic who is united with God in heaven, who lived a life of great charity and virtue, and who is worthy of imitation.

The Initial inquiry into the life of Mary Virginia Merrick, who was a Blessed Sacrament parishioner for over 30 years, was begun by the then Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. After his initial investigation he wrote to Rome to determine whether the Vatican had any objections to officially beginning the Diocesan phase of investigating her Cause for Canonization. The Vatican indicated it had no objection by issuing a document, called a *nihil obstat*, and the Title "Servant of God" was then given to Mary Virginia Merrick. Cardinal Donald Wuerl, our current Archbishop, officially opened the next step on this journey through his decree in April 2011 initiating the official Diocesan phase of investigation into her life. Shortly, when the Diocesan phase is completed it is hopeful that their findings will be submitted to the appropriate office in the Vatican to pursue the Roman phase of the process. If the Vatican gives approval, that she lived a life of heroic virtue, then a decree would be issued declaring her "venerable".

Miss Mary was known for her direct service to children, a service born of and constantly inspired by her love and devotion to the Christ Child. She devoted her life to children because she saw each child as the Christ Child. She took seriously the Gospel call, "whatever you did for one of these least of My brothers, you did for Me." Due to an injury in her teen years she spent the rest of her life in a recumbent position in either bed or a reclining wheelchair. Despite her disability and constant pain, Miss Mary worked tirelessly and dedicated her life to meeting the needs of the poor and she inspired others to do likewise.

What an example she is for us in today's world, she refused to be cast aside by society due to her physical handicap, what a model she offers us on how one can follow Christ despite physical limitations. Her life provides us with an exceptional witness to the faith and to a "culture of life." The fact that she founded the Christ Child Society and formed its outreach while confined to a wheelchair, with only the use of her arms and hands, raises her virtue to a heroic level. For her God's presence was most fully experienced through the Incarnation, the Incarnation of Christ as an infant was central to her spirituality and to the work of her Christ Child Society.

We first and foremost are asking you, parishioners of Blessed Sacrament, her parish for over 30 years,, to pray for the cause and to encourage others to do so as well.