

Sister Helen Therese Nienhaus, C.PP.S.

Born: December 14, 1929

Professed: August 10, 1950

Entered into Life: February 27, 2016

Verse on her memorial card: **“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, what God has ready for those who love him.” 1 Cor 2:9-10**



March 2, 2016

Dear Sisters,

On Saturday, February 27, at 1:10 p.m. our Sr. Helen Therese Nienhaus peacefully and quietly slipped away into the joy of heaven. She is now rejoicing with her parents Harry and Hilda (Heinkel) and her brothers James and Gerald. We can envision Sr. Helen Therese welcomed by two of our Sisters that were her companions in Villa Theresa Haven, Sisters Mary Carol Scanlon and Gene Marie Moellering. They looked out for each other and were good company.

Mary Shirley Nienhaus was baptized on December 28, 1929 at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in South St. Louis. She entered the Precious Blood Sisters in 1947 and made final vows in 1953. In 2009 Sr. Helen Therese celebrated sixty years in the community.

Sr. Helen Therese loved her family very much especially her sister Betty and six brothers: Jack, James, Gerald, Harry, David and William. Her brother Jack said that she would often babysit for the younger children and he has fond memories of those days and referred to her as a “sweetheart.” Sr. Helen Therese’s sister Betty says of her: *“She loved me, advised me, and helped me. I think my sister had more influence on my life than, perhaps, any other person. I loved her very much.”*

The children called her “Aunt Sister” and recall her kindness and love of them and the guidance she gave them. She was a confirmation sponsor for one of the nieces and always remembered to give spiritual guidance and words of encouragement to her. Brenda Campbell, her godchild, wrote a poem about Aunt Sister. Here are some excerpts from the poem:

“Sewn with love, Hand-made dress/Do a twirl, Spoiled princess
Ice cream runs, Special days/Just with you, So many ways
Teach the skills, That were your own/I use them still, Now that I’m grown

Fried apples, favorite things/Little smiles, I hear you sing
My heart is happy, and a little sad/Thinking back, On the times we had
Now, my angel, be with me still
Loving you, I always will.”

Sr. Helen Therese was a scholar, a linguist and a dedicated student and teacher. She knew Latin, German, French and English. At St. Louis University Sr. Helen Therese earned a master’s degree in Latin, and at Notre Dame University completed a master’s degree in modern and classical language. These studies prepared her for teaching German in secondary schools in the US and in Germany.

She was an educator and taught for twenty-one years in various parish schools in the St. Louis Archdiocese. For seventeen years, Sister Helen Therese taught German and French at St. Elizabeth Academy, St. John the Baptist High School and Bishop Du Bourg High School. While at DuBourg High School, Sister took her German class to Germany for an “immersion” experience. On one trip Sr. Helen Therese spoke German so well that the people there thought she was a native. Even in the last years suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, Sister still could speak some words of German.

Sr. Helen Therese had a beautiful singing voice and a deep love for the liturgy. She loved to read, always had a book with her, and had a big smile when meeting the Sisters, the staff and visitors. She liked crossword puzzles and had a good sense of humor. We are so grateful to Sr. Nadine Flott and the staff of Villa Theresa who cared for Sr. Helen Therese through all the stages of her life especially these last years.

Sr. Helen Therese’s body will return to St. Joseph Chapel at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 6, 2016, and her wake will be from 3:30 - 8:00 p.m., with a Prayer Service of Thanksgiving at 7:00 p.m. Her wake will continue on Monday, March 7, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. with a Funeral Mass at 1:30 p.m., all in St. Joseph Chapel.

During her studies at St. Louis University, Sr. Helen Therese wrote a paper about “Grace” titled “Everything is Gift: Grace in the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood.”

“To write about grace is daunting. The mind falters and language fails, for what is grace but God communicating his life to us? Yet we should not ignore grace; it is the very fabric of our daily life. Our loving response to grace, minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day, makes God’s self-communication a reality in us... Whether in joy and in sorrow, in success or in failure, many people think of grace as ‘call’ -- call to transcend the merely human aspects of the situation.”

Pray for us, Sr. Helen Therese, Aunt Sister, as you experience the closeness, the “grace” of being with God, being free from the constraints and sufferings of Alzheimer’s disease. You now can tell us what you see and hear and how it feels to be in touch with God’s loving, freeing, unlimited love and care.

Auf Wiedersehen, bis wir uns wieder in den Himmel.

Au revoir, au revoir dans le ciel.

Goodbye, until we meet again in heaven.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Fran".

Sr. Fran