

## HER LEGACY

Mary Virginia Merrick was a parishioner of Blessed Sacrament for over 30 years. In April of 2003 the Congregation of Saints in Rome declared Mary Virginia Merrick a "Servant of God."

In April of 2011, our Archbishop, Donald Cardinal Wuerl signed a decree initiating the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Mary Virginia Merrick, thus opening the diocesan phase of investigation to inquire into her reputation for holiness and virtue. After the diocesan investigation is completed and approved by the Archdiocesan Tribunal, we are hopeful that the cause will be sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the Roman phase of the investigation.

Mary Virginia Merrick lived her entire life as a parishioner in the Archdiocese of Washington. She devoted her life to assisting poor and suffering children, regardless of race or creed. Remarkably this was all done from her bed or wheelchair, as the result of a spinal injury she received as a young teen. Mary Virginia Merrick serves as an example for us of a person of heroic virtue, with a deep love for the Christ Child, who served children in need in His name, who one day may become a declared saint from the Archdiocese of Washington and our parish, Blessed Sacrament.

Upon her death on January 10, 1955 her funeral Mass was celebrated at Blessed Sacrament. The Mass was presided over by the Apostolic Delegate, the then Archbishop of Washington, Patrick A. O'Boyle and three other bishops serving on the altar, along with our then pastor Monsignor Roach and many priests from our Archdiocese.

At her funeral Mass the late Patrick Aloysius Cardinal O'Boyle said:

*"Miss Mary Merrick's long life was an inspiring expression of the power and beauty of Christian charity. She saw the image of the Infant Savior in every poor child and it was the Christ Child who conferred upon her a long life of amazingly successful activity that defied an almost lifelong infirmity. It was inevitable that she establish the Christ Child Society. Both in spirit and accomplishment, no society has better deserved the sublime name. Miss Merrick from her bed of pain, perpetually dynamic and devoted, has a lesson for everyone who professes to be a follower of Christ."*

Con-Celebrant, Bishop John McNamara, then Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, gave additional tribute to her in his funeral sermon where he also set her forth as a powerful example to others:

*"The memory of this good woman is a treasure which all who esteem what is noble, what is inspiring and what is good will value as a pearl of price. When you think of the happiness she brought to the hearts and homes of the children of the poor, of the opportunities for doing good she provided for those who would share her labors; when you reflect on the obstacles she overcame the while she labored throughout the past fifty years of her life braced in hoops of iron, and when you recall that throughout these years she directed the Christ Child Society in the founding of Chapters, in the erection of buildings and in the establishment of Camps, you will find yourself face to face with a woman, the like whom is seldom met in this our mortal life."*

Later on he continued:

*"She took her cross and out of it fashioned a bridge over which she and others could walk on their way to God."*