

May 30, 2009

## **"Muriel"**

We gather together today as a family and as a parish in memory of Muriel Snyder. To you her family Howard, Julie, Beth, Peter and Jane we bid a special welcome to this church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist.

It was here in this holy and sacred place that Muriel worshiped and prayed and did so much more. To all her family we today extend our sympathy at her loss, at the same time we thank you for loaning her to us for all these years.

For some fifteen years now Muriel has been an integral and important member of this church and this faith community.

Muriel endeared herself to everyone. She was kind and gentle and caring. She took communion to shut-ins and hospital patients. Whether she was visiting someone in person, the nursing home or in their own home she was welcomed.

She came bringing prayer and healing and a ready smile. She probably knew more about the Episcopal Church than anyone but the Bishop. She loved to serve and you could find her right here Saturday or Sunday morning arranging flowers, altar linens and so much more that her duties in the Altar Guild led her to do. She was a founder member of the Daughters of the King, a group that prays and serves Christ's mission and his church.

Monday to Friday she spent several hours in the parish office helping the secretary with the bulletins and inserts for the service. She answered telephones and doorbells, assisted with "Food Pantry" and even helped out taking care of the children in the Child Care.

Muriel lived a full life. Her tiny yellow bug carried her to Hazelton each Saturday to Bishop School. There she trained to be a Deacon until health and travel caught up with her, and she felt she could no longer pursue it.

"Our Muriel" that is how we thought of her, wise and good, holy but with that gentle common touch that speaks of years caring for others. Yet, Muriel was also an intensely private person. She burdened no one with her problems, but always sought to take care of herself. She was shy when help was offered. She never spoke of her achievements, but was proud of her children and grandchildren and the path they had cut in life.

More than two years ago, Muriel gave all her books to the church. Most of them were religious and many by the great Catholic Monk and mystic Thomas Merton. Merton wrote of the depths of the human soul on its journey to the center of its being and its relationship with God. There is no deeper, wiser more spiritual writing on the planet. Muriel had read all his books and many times.

You could find her here come Sunday among her 8 o'clockers. It is a quiet service and all who participate in it have seen a year or two fly by. 8 o'clockers are special people. They are the ones who pray for the rest of us.

As her Pastor, I asked Muriel to pray for me and this church and its mission many times. I know she did.

Through illness, she forged on, even in the last few years. She would apologize over and over when she forgot something. We would tell her "you have earned the right."

Her last days in Twin Cedars were days of peace and tranquility. To her surprise she loved it there, and she got such great care from a real fine caring staff at the center. No one could have done more for her in her final days as her family gathered to say their goodbyes.

We have not talked about Muriel's sense of humor or the things that made her laugh. I know many things did. So many times I would go into the office to hear peals of laughter. "You girls are having too much fun." I would say. "Who is doing the work?" Only for Muriel to tell me: "Shut the door on your way out."

Daughter of the King, nurse, Mother, wife, pray-er and saint-our Muriel was all those things. We miss her. We miss her prayer, her healing touch, her kindness, and her humility. We will not see her like again.

Not till we open the Bible and read of Jesus. Jesus the kind, Jesus the healer, Jesus the teacher and we realize who he reminds us all of. She has gone. She is not forgotten.

I know that each of you will cherish a special memory of Muriel. Perhaps, in the months and years ahead she will come into your head. Maybe, that will be the moment that you need inspiration, when you need the wisdom to know what to do. Ask Muriel.

I asked her one day that if she got to heaven before me would she remember to help this old church even then she smiled and nodded. We expect great things because wherever Muriel went she left hope. You can do a lot with hope. Hope and faith, Muriel had both in abundance. Let us pray that hope and faith come into our lives also. And that we too can walk in the footsteps of this special lady. So many people in this church owe her so much. Her life has been a bright day for all of us.

"The day thou gave us Lord has ended the darkness falls at thy behest.  
To thee our morning hymns ascended they praise shall sanctify our rest.  
We thank thee that thy church unsleeping while earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping and rest not now by day or night.  
God bless you Muriel, go with Christ"

Watch over us.

Amen+