

**SISTER HELEN MARIE HALEY**  
**November 19, 1910 — April 29, 2008**

“Let my life be honest and holy this present day as I await the happiness to come when my God reveals Himself to me.” Sister Helen Marie wrote this short prayer in a journal of sorts on December 16, 1993. The journal which contains biblical quotations, poems, copies of articles, retreat notes and small prayers was found among sister’s possessions in her room. It so typifies the woman who was Sister Helen Marie Haley that I thought it important to tell you a bit about this treasured book. It appears to be written during the years 1990 and 2002, but in no specific order. One page may have notes from 1991 and another note from 1999. She used several colors of ink and frequently underlined items that seemed more important. While the journal is done in a spirit of prayer, it also gives frequent weather reports, news of the day, comments on celebrations and of life in general. However, the underlying message found in scriptural texts, poems, prayers, quotes of other authors and Sister Helen Marie’s own comments are, “It is good to wait for the Lord. God is good. Live life today and love God and neighbor. Death is coming and then I will be totally united with my God and with my loved ones who have gone before me.”



Margaret Helen Haley was born on November 19, 1910 in Scottdale, Pa, the eldest of seven children born to John Joseph and Alice Minard Haley. Two infant sisters, Rose and Madeline, died shortly after birth. Her parents, her brother Paul and her sisters, Lucille and Evelyn, preceded her in death. We are fortunate tonight to have with us her sister Betty Haley, her husband Gerald, and many of her nieces, nephews, grandnieces and nephews.

Shortly before her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday Margaret Helen petitioned to enter the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. She entered on June 24, 1927, which was the feast of the Sacred Heart. Reverend Lambing, the pastor of John the Baptist Church in Scottdale, PA wrote “This is to certify that I have known Miss Margaret Helen Haley for several years. She is a good sensible girl and I am satisfied that she has a vocation to the religious life and will prove a good candidate.” Reverend Lambing could never have imagined the breadth of heart and life of service which lay ahead for this sensible girl.

Sister Helen Marie completed her high school at Saint Joseph Academy and her teachers could be very proud of her. In 1994, she wrote out the Hail Mary in French which she remarked, “I learned the Hail Mary in 1928, when I took my first year French in my black cap year of novitiate.....I also took English from Sister Theophane Geary before she moved to teach history in the college. She completed her high school and received a bachelor’s degree in education from Duquesne University. Her ministry in the community was as a teacher in both the lower and upper elementary grades. In later years, she worked in the nursing department at Assumption Hall and did some clerical work. She described herself as retired in 1995, at age 84.

Sister Helen Marie was also a pioneer in the congregation. In 1950, she was the first principal and third grade teacher in Saint John’s school in Tucson, Arizona. A news article

written about the conditions for the early sisters describes the car the sisters used to travel from the convent, which was a small home on East Michigan Street, to the newly built school on West Ajo Way.

“Transportation for the sisters was a ‘35 Chevy donated by one of the parishioners. It was missing a few windows, the upholstery was hanging in tatters, one door refused to open and the name ‘Steve’ was prominently lettered on one side. But it could travel the desert as well as any gopher.” Sister also taught vacation school to the Papago Indians at Saint Catherine’s.

She spent 11 years at Saint Pancratius in Lakewood, California. Her teaching career spanned the dioceses of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Phoenix and Tucson. She wrote of her time in the west, “I shall always thank God for the many years spent in Arizona and California... somewhere around 20 years between both states. I loved the desert. I loved the ever ceaseless ocean.”

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know Sister Helen Marie might well say of her that she found life, love and joy wherever she found herself to be. In 1993, she wrote, “As the years pass on, silently one by one, I thank you, Lord, for all you have done for me and for all you have given me: my life, my Catholic faith, my vocation to the Sisters of Charity, my family, John and Alice Minard, my parents, my brother and sisters.” In 1994, she wrote, “Today I am 67 years in community. Thank you for my vocation to this community. Many things have changed since I entered but I love my community and look forward to living the remaining years in love, peace and happiness.”

Sister Helen Marie loved nature. She actually broke both of her hips on different occasions by trudging out to feed the birds around Assumption Hall. She loved the change of seasons. She loved the written word in scripture, novels and poetry. She loved people and sports and had a kind word and a twinkle in her eye for each and every person she encountered. She wondered often why she was still here. She frequently asked God why he was so slow in coming. Her frequent prayer was, “Come Lord Jesus, come.” Perhaps she was here with us so long that we might learn to live each day to the fullest and to radiate to those about us the love of the God who made us, loves us, holds us in his arms.

Dear Sister Helen Marie may your long and happy life be rewarded by the God you knew so well. In the words of one of the Irish blessings which you quoted:

*“With the first light of sun, God bless you.  
When the day is done, God bless you.  
In your smiles and in your tears, God bless you.  
Through each day of all your years, God bless you.”*



*Funeral Liturgy Reflection  
Sister Louise Grundish  
May 2, 2008*