

HER PARISH

Mary Virginia Merrick lived her entire life as a parishioner in the Archdiocese of Washington and over 30 of those years as a parishioner of Blessed Sacrament. She devoted her life to assisting poor and suffering children, regardless of race or creed and 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.

Upon her death on January 10, 1955 our Blessed Sacrament February Parish News contained an article on Mary Virginia Merrick's life and work with a detailed summary of her funeral Mass. The Mass was presided over by the Apostolic Delegate, The Archbishop of Washington Patrick Aloysius O'Boyle. Three other bishops were also present on the altar, along with our then pastor Monsignor Roach and many priests from the Archdiocese. The article *begins* "Miss Mary Merrick was one of Blessed Sacrament's most beloved parishioners." It later went on to say "We at Blessed Sacrament joined in that tribute-but for us her passing caused more personal sorrow, for she was one of us." Later, "We all remember how "Miss Mary" would be wheeled in her chair along Brookville Road, accompanied always by her sister, the gentle "Miss Mildred"; How we would all stand aside respectfully as the temporary ramps would be taken from the closet and the blue and white clad little lady would be rolled into church, up the side-aisle, and Miss Mary would hear Mass in the ell near the Blessed Mother's Altar. There always seemed to be an added devotion in attending Mass with Miss Mary there."

Further on the article says "Unable to participate actively in the Sanctuary Sodality, nevertheless her influence was felt there perhaps more than that of other individuals. She was the inspiration for forming one of the first units, the 'Christ Child group' more than 30 years ago (about 1925) in the earliest days of the parish." Parishioners then made layettes for the Christ Child Society and some parishioners continue to do so even today. The Parish News goes on to quote from her, when during a parish discussion group meeting in her home on E. Melrose St., she was asked how to deal with children involved in difficulties of this world. Miss Merrick said "I'd just be as kind as I could." The article goes on to say "This was a characteristic of Miss Mary Merrick-a kindness and holiness that was so intrinsically a part of her that it permeated everything she did. No physical handicap-even the great one she suffered-could stay an indomitable spirit such as hers, stirring to help others, and always in His name." In ending I again quote from the article, "We who knew her as a beloved fellow parishioner, have been blessed in knowing first hand, one completely dedicated to Christ. The familiar wraith-like little figure in the wheelchair will no longer be seen in the ell by the Blessed Sacrament's Altar in our Church-she will be closer than that."