

Sister Helen Pape, CSA

Sister Helen Pape (formerly Sister Mary Hugo), CSA died peacefully Thursday evening, May 26, 2011, in St. Francis Home where she resided.

Born in Evanston, Illinois, on February 28, 1908, to Hugo and Josephine (Didier) Pape, Helen's family included two brothers and two sisters. The family held membership in St. Nicholas Parish, where Helen met the Sisters of St. Agnes. After attending a year at Mallinkrodt High School in Wilmette, Illinois, Helen worked as a dental assistant. The deep religious faith of her extended family was evident from the many religious it produced. Helen had two great-aunts, an aunt, and several cousins who became sisters and priests. Influenced by her grade school teachers and two of her cousins who were Sisters of St. Agnes, Helen answered the call of her heart and came to Fond du Lac at the age of 20.



Helen professed her vows as Sister Mary Hugo on August 15, 1930. She completed her high school diploma and began taking courses at Marian College, completing her B.S. in Education in 1955. At the same time she began a teaching career that took her to Illinois, New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Indiana over a period of 48 years from 1930 to 1978. Students in the primary grades knew Sister as a loving, kind, and creative teacher. Her smile drew them to her and her teaching methods included stories and participative activities that made learning come alive. She made God's love real for them as well as she prepared them for first communion or confirmation. More than one of her students credit her as influencing their decision to become a priest or a sister too.

Having returned to her baptismal name, Sister Helen left the classroom and brought her special gifts to adult ministry. Her prayerfulness and love of God just spilled over into love of God's people as her young students had experienced it in her teaching years. Sister served (1978-80) as a receptionist at Holy Hill, Hubertus, WI, and as parish visitor and catechist (1980-85) in Elmhurst, IL, before returning to her home parish of St. Nicholas in Evanston, IL. For more than eleven years there, Sister Helen visited the sick in hospitals and nursing homes, sang with the parish choir for funerals and greeted people coming to Mass. She was known for her warmth, good cheer and welcoming smile. In 1996, Sister retired to the motherhouse. She was among the first residents of Nazareth Court in 1998, moving to St. Francis Home as her health failed. She enjoyed her 100th birthday in 2008 and reveled in her status as a centenarian for the past three years. Sister Helen was gracious and most appreciative of the staff, showing her gratitude in her always radiant smile.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Josephine and Hugo Pape; two brothers, Andrew and Robert; and two sisters, Marion Sparacino and Katherine Steffen. She is survived by loving nieces and nephews, and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed and ministered.

Visitation: Visitation for Sister Helen Pape will be held Monday, May 30, from 3—7 p.m., and Tuesday, May 31, from 10 a.m. until 1:45 p.m., at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett, Fond du Lac. A prayer service will be held at 4 p.m. on Monday, May 30.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, May 31 at 2 p.m. in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac. Father Ken Smits, OFM Cap will preside. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery.

Memorials may be directed to the Sisters of St. Agnes Development Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the nurses and staff of St. Francis Home and of Nazareth Court and Center for their care of Sister Helen in her retirement years and to the staff of Hospice Hope for their support in this last week.

Zacherl Funeral Home is serving the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Agnes.