

MOTHER MARY CLARE VINCENT, OSB

(July 18, 1925-January 2, 2016)



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Mother Mary Clare Vincent, OSB, nun and the foundress and first prioress of St. Scholastica Priory, Petersham, Mass., died January 2 at the priory after a few months illness. She was 90 and in her 66th year of religious dedication and 33rd year of Benedictine monastic profession.

Born on July 18, 1925 in Boston, Mass. to Cornelius and Mattie Elizabeth (Ross) Vincent, she was named Muriel Ross at birth. She was the youngest of a family of four children. Her mother was a teacher with a firm belief in education. Muriel attended Girls' Latin School in Boston and in 1942 began studies at Radcliffe College, Cambridge at age 17, finishing an accelerated BA in

literature in three years. The year of her graduation she was received into the Catholic Church at St. Paul's Church in

Cambridge. She then worked towards a Master's degree at the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, and in later life she returned to academic studies and earned an M.T.S at the Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, in 1984.

After teaching at East Boston High School, in 1949 she joined the newly-formed community of St. Benedict Center in Cambridge, which had been instrumental in her conversion, taking the name Sr. Mary Clare. After making private vows as a religious sister and serving as superior of a group of sisters, she was invested as a Benedictine novice together with them on August 15, 1980, under the sponsorship of Stanbrook Abbey, Worcester, England; she professed her simple vows as a Benedictine on September 8, 1981, and made her solemn vows with the first group of her community on September 8, 1984. The same day she was elected as the first prioress of St. Scholastica Priory, an office she served in until her retirement in 2003.

Under Mother Mary Clare's leadership, the community moved to Petersham, Mass. Along with Fr. Cyril Karam, OSB, founder of St. Mary's Monastery, she devoted herself to building the twin community life between the nuns of St. Scholastica's and the monks of St. Mary's. This mutual cooperation could be said to be her great mission. With Fr. Cyril's assistance she started St. Bede's Publications. Both by nature and by diligent preparation she was an extraordinarily gifted teacher: her carefully crafted conferences, retreats and classes on Church history and monastic spirituality were unforgettable, and her writing gifts found expression in her three books *St. Sharbel*, *The Life of Prayer and the Way to God* (also titled *Pray as You Can: A Short Primer*) and *Keeping the Faith in Harvard*, as well as numerous published articles. All her life Mother Mary Clare retained her love of study, literature and music, and her devotion to playing the organ, especially the music of J. S. Bach, enriched the community liturgy for over 40 years; she continued to play for services until her last illness.

It is above all for her loving, generous and selfless service to her community and all whom she met that Mother Mary Clare will be remembered. She continued as an active and vibrant member of the community, served as Prioress Administrator of Our Lady Queen, Tickfaw, La., and continued to teach by her example. A recipient of Worcester Diocese's Retired Religious Award, her love of prayer and faithfulness to monastic contemplative life are her greatest legacy.

Mother Mary Clare was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Cornelius Vincent, Jr. Surviving are her sisters Ruth G. Williams and Elizabeth V. Mayo, nieces Carol W. Roach and Patricia J. Williams, nephews Theodore Mayo and Ralph Mayo, her community of St. Scholastica Priory and the monks of St. Mary's Monastery, and a host of friends.

Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, January 9, in the Church of St. Scholastica Priory and St. Mary's Monastery. Visitation is from 3:00-8:00 p.m. Friday, January 8, at the monastery, and from 8:00 a.m. Saturday until the time of the funeral. Memorial contributions may be offered to St. Scholastica Priory, 271 N. Main St., Petersham, MA, 01366.