

Prayers of the Faithful
Mass of Christian Burial for Margaret Brennan, IHM
May 2, 2016

Italicized print from poetry of Jessica Powers, OCD; citations at the end of this document.

Presider:

Gracious God – Creator, Savior and Benevolent Spirit – you have embraced our sister, Margaret, into your intimate and eternal presence. Receive our prayer now for those who mourn her loss, as we bring our needs to you. Finding few words to express them, we rely on the inspiration of Jessica Powers, a Carmelite and poet Margaret loved.

Prayer Leader:

And so, we pray **for our Church** – its leaders; its sons and daughters - especially its daughters -and for our Margaret, ever faithful daughter of the Church. *“God set His heart on a soul; He says to Himself, “Here will I rest my Love.”*¹ Margaret’s lifelong response to that Love has been her great gift to the Church – steadfast fidelity, clear and creative vision, courageous spirit. May our steps forward find strength in Margaret’s faithful engagement with the Church she loved; for this we pray, **Gracious God hear our prayer**

For Margaret, *“enameled now with new light,”*² our memory of her strong, striped with loss, yet soft and fragile as a petal; her path to you suffused in warm light that erases any shadowy doubt of your love. *“I love Abraham, (and Sarah, she’d quote) that old weather-beaten unwavering nomad. When God called to her, no tender hand wedged time into her stay.”*³ And so remembering her ever-varied and ever-present acts of kindness among us, and sure you have already set her loose in your kingdom, we pray for the same, **Gracious God hear our prayer.**

For the IHM Congregation, our community, the one we love – the home that nourished Margaret’s imagination, her boundaryless spirit, the deepest friends of her heart, her colleagues, her sisters, her caregivers.

*“Through the mind’s motherhood (the poet says)
She hoped to bring
Out of this fragrant wood
A new warm thing.”*⁴

And so she did. And so may we – in varied and lovely ways - multiply her expansive legacy with bold imagination and gracious insistence. For this we pray, **Gracious God, hear our prayer.**

For novices everywhere, and for women and men religious, clerical and lay students and friends who sat like so many hungry birds crowding her nest, *“Sparrows who once dreamed to fly into the sun;”*⁵ the ones who asked a thousand times, *“What am I really but a little bird, all feather and no flesh?”*⁶ Through lavish and patient example she taught that *“love has its proper soil, its native land; its first roots fasten on the near at hand,”*⁷ that *“a bird that wings itself with resolute love can travel anywhere.”*⁸ And so they have. That every novice, every searching

soul, have a guide so clear-eyed, so generous and enabling of spirit; so worthy of trust, we pray, **Gracious God, hear our prayer.**

For beauty - deep reservoir that fed Margaret's spirit and, in turn, she ours. For wild thoughts and new ideas, impossible dreams and risky dares; for silent and spoken and sung prayer; for metaphors, tambourines and clear soprano voices; for the liturgy of life and of our Church; for flowers and elegance and small gestures, for words and poems and dance, exuberant and graceful. For books and conversations, contagious energy and optimism and for "all in." "*I am a February child; I love these things.*"⁹ And for artists drawn to great spirits like Margaret's. That we may choose beauty and reflect it endlessly, we pray, **Gracious God, hear our prayer.**

For Margaret's large and loving family of birth and those she pulled into it, "*Her thoughts of you are fair as precious stones out of the memory's deep mysterious mines.*"¹⁰ Knowing that your hearts are careening from the walls of loss and awe; of sadness and gratitude; tears, laughter and intense memory, our prayer for you is abiding and confident peace. For this we ask, **Gracious God, hear our prayer.**

And finally, we pray with confidence because we know our Margaret "*has climbed up out of a narrow darkness onto a ledge of light.*"¹¹ We hear her say, "*Easter to me, little sister, is, and I affirm her April's eminence.*"¹² I see, "*as shades depart, an ocean of peace where I can forever fill the little pitcher of my heart.*"¹³ We believe that "*one day, God, most ready to discover the moment that a heart fills to the brim, burst into*" Margaret's "*time, sat down beside her, eager with delight to give this lover the joy of endless dialogue with Him.*"¹⁴ For such boundless gifts of grace, we can only rejoice and seek the same. And so we pray. **Gracious God, hear our prayer.**

Presider:

"*I would guess,*" (our poet said and perhaps Margaret thought) "*heaven for me will be...a measureless sheer beatitude of yes.*"¹⁵ With confidence in the mysterious, paradoxical certainty of our faith, we place our needs before you and conclude our prayer in silence and peace,

(brief pause)

Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, **AMEN**

All quotes from Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers (ed. Regina Siegfried, Robert Morneau) Sheed & Ward, 1989 or, The House at Rest (Jessica Powers, OCD,) Pewaukee, WI, Mother of God Carmel

1 God Is a Strange Lover

2 No One Can Stay

3 Abraham

4 To a Young Wood Carver

5,6 The Legend of the Sparrow

7 My Heart Ran Forth

8 The Legend of the Sparrow

9 The House of the Silver Spirit

10 The Gift of Love

11 The Ledge of Light

12 O Full of Lilies

13 A Great Sea at Rest

14 About Bruno

15 Yes