



We commend to your charity the soul of our beloved

Sister Roberta Grzelak

who departed this life on September 15, 2014

in the fifty-sixth year of her religious life

Age: 73 years, 1 months, 23 days

Resurrection Service: Thursday, September 18, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.” [Matt. 6: 33-34]

Sister Roberta lived her entire life trusting in the God of Providence. She was a wise woman, realizing that who she was and the gifts she had were to be given away, particularly to those in need. Roberta lived with an open heart and hands believing in the goodness of all people and that whatever resources she needed for ministry would come to her. She was a woman who never worried.

Sister Roberta was the older of two daughters born to Josephine Brzezina and Edward Grzelak, in Hamtramck MI. Roberta entered the Community from St. Augustine’s Parish, Detroit MI, on September 7, 1958.

Sister Roberta began her ministry as a teacher in Pittsburgh and Detroit. Early in her religious life she volunteered to teach in Puerto Rico. In 1968, Roberta left her home, moved to Puerto Rico and instantly fell in love with the island and its people. She spent the next 14 years teaching religion, both at the elementary and secondary levels, in Arecibo and Orocovis. She returned to the States for a few years where she taught Religion at Divine Providence Academy and then went to minister in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston as the Associate Director for Religion.

Roberta was lured back to Puerto Rico in 1986 and returned to Colegio San Felipe in Arecibo. Profoundly aware of the social justice charism of the Community, Roberta soon realized that her compassionate and generous heart for justice compelled her to do more. She was greatly moved by the poor living conditions of the people in Arecibo. She approached the bishop and offered her services to seek a solution. She inquired about available resources and a budget for her ministry and was told there was none! “The bishop gave me a pencil, paper, and a \$400 monthly salary and told me to get started.” In 1992, Roberta founded and was the first director of La Oficina para la Promoción y el Desarrollo Humano, where she ministered until 2009. Having enabled others to carry on the ministry, she left her position and returned to Pittsburgh.

Roberta continued her ministry as Parish Social Minister at St. Regis Parish in Oakland where her knowledge of Spanish was a great asset. She shared often how much she needed to learn for her ministry. She was a gentle, loving, generous and inclusive presence and could certainly “be” with anyone. It was here that she began to live the vision of the community that was yet to be written. She cherished our intercultural and international ties, strove for right relationships with all, lived and promoted every form of non-violence, courageously risked being marginalized, and generously shared in the midst of scarcity.

In Roberta’s own words: “I am totally committed to the Social Justice Charism of both of our founders, Bishop Ketteler and Mother Marie. This has defined my life: working to help/empower the poor; compassionately caring for and about the vulnerable, being the voice of the poor, empowering families and communities.”

Who shall find a Providence woman? We have!

Birthday: July 22

SDMG