

**Sister Helen Matuska, O.S.F. (Joel)**

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Born: June 20, 1919  
Parents: John A. and Emma (Plzak) Matuska  
Entered from: Our Lady of Lourdes, Cleveland, OH  
Postulancy: September 8, 1942  
Novitiate: August 12, 1943  
Profession: August 12, 1945  
Died: Friday, April 11, 1997 at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home  
at approximately 8:45 p.m.

**Ministry:**

1945 - 1952 SS. Cyril and Methodius, Chicago, IL, Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2  
1952 - 1958 St. Ludmilla, Chicago, IL, Grades 1 and 2  
1958 - 1960 St. Mary, DesPlaines, IL, Grades 1, 2  
1960 - 1961 St. Edward, Ashland, OH, Grades 3, 4  
1961 - 1963 Holy Family, Cleveland, OH, Grades 5, 6  
1963 - 1965 Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, OH, Grade 6  
1965 - 1966 St. Francis De Sales, Toledo, OH, Grade 6  
1966 - 1974 St. Procop, Cleveland, OH, Grades 4, 5  
1974 - 1979 Unit #50, Teutopolis, Lillyville, Sigel, Green Creek, Bishop Creek, IL  
Art Teacher  
1979 - 1983 St. Edward, Ashland, OH, Grade 3  
1983 - 1988 St. Edward Parish, Ashland, OH, Religious Education Coordinator/Parish Ministry  
1988 - 1996 St. Edward Parish, Ashland, OH, Pastoral Ministry  
1996 (Nov.) St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL

Wake: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Sunday, April 13, 1997  
2-7:00 p.m. with a prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Sunday, April 13, 1997 at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16 - Mass at 1:15 p.m. and wake 2-7 p.m. - St. Edward Church, Ashland, OH

Friday, April 18 - wake: 2-4 p.m. 7-9 p.m. at Vodrazka Funeral Home, 6505 Brecksville Rd.,  
Independence, OH 44131

Saturday, April 19: Leaving Vodrazka Funeral Home at 9:45 a.m. for 10:30 a.m. Mass at Our  
Lady of Lourdes Church, East 55th and Hamm Avenue, Cleveland, OH. Burial to follow at  
Calvary Cemetery, Cleveland, OH, Section 61

Survived by: her brother-in-law George Kolesnicky of Parma, OH

*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,  
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

Sister Helen Matuska was born in Cleveland, Ohio on June 20, 1919 to Emma (Plazak) and John Matuska. She attended Holy Family and Our Lady of Lourdes grammar schools in Cleveland. Helen and her sister Dorothy grew close as they spent their childhood days learning and playing together. Following graduation from South High School in Cleveland, Helen worked as a stenographer and bookkeeper.

On September 8, 1942 Helen came to Joliet to become a Franciscan Sister of Mary Immaculate. On August 12, 1943, Helen was received into the Novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Joel. (Later she returned to her baptismal name, Helen.)

After her first profession of vows on August 12, 1945, Sister Helen began her teaching ministry at SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Chicago. For close to 40 years, Sister Helen ministered as an elementary teacher in various schools in Illinois and Ohio. In addition to her full-time ministry of teaching, Sister Helen served on committees, participated in presenting a weekly art appreciation radio broadcast, and co-authored a Diocesan Art Curriculum guide. Sister Helen studied Scripture, read, and wrote many letters. In her spare time she developed her painting skills and learned to weave. She became an active member of the Malabar Spinning and Weaving Guild. Her sister Dorothy and her brother-in-law, George Kolesnicky, together with her other relatives, were always an integral part of her life.

In 1983, Sister Helen began a new ministry as a director of religious education at St. Edward Parish in Ashland where she had been teaching. Sister Helen also began to do parish outreach and to minister to the homebound. In 1988, Sister Helen gave her time completely to parish ministry.

One of the highlights of Sister Helen's life was making a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France. Accompanied by her pastor, Father James Cassidy and her friend, Sarah Leonard, Helen prayed with the pilgrims at Lourdes. The grace Helen seemed to have been granted was that of peace in living the final months of her life. After serving for a total of 18 years in Ashland, Sister Helen was diagnosed with cancer. On November 1, 1996 Sister Helen moved to Joliet to be closer to her Sisters. As her strength failed, she who cared for others for so many years, became the receiver of care from others. Sister Helen continued her ministry of outreach and care by her many letters, cards, phone calls and prayers. Her treatment continued at St. Joseph Medical Center and at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home. Her family and her friends gathered along with her Franciscan sisters as she held on tightly to her rosary and firmly clasped the hands of those she loved. On the evening of April 11, 1997, surrounded by prayer and song, Sister Helen peacefully made her final pilgrimage to God.

Sister Helen, we commend you to your God, who you knew as artist, weaver, companion, comforter, spouse. We ask you to pray now for us that we may continue to reach out to others, to comfort and to console, as you join with all your family and friends and your Franciscan sisters who have led the way for you. In the company of Mary, our Mother, may you enjoy God's love forever. Amen. Alleluia.

