

916 Convent Road NE, Cullman, AL 35055 ~ www.shmon.org ~ (256)734-4622

Sister Bertha True, O.S.B., a Benedictine Sister of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman,

Alabama, died peacefully on January 30, 2017, with her Benedictine Sisters and family members at her side. She was 89 years of age.

Reception of the Body with Vespers will be prayed Thursday, February 2, at 4:45 P.M. in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel in Cullman. Visitation will follow until 8:00 P.M. The Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 3:00 P.M. on Friday, February 3, at Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel with Rev. Marcus Voss, O.S.B., presiding. Sister Tonette Sperando, O.S.B., Prioress, will offer a reflection on Sister Bertha's life at the conclusion of the Eucharistic liturgy. Interment in the monastery cemetery will follow.



Sister Bertha's long life was marked by dedicated and heartfelt ministry, joyful fidelity to her monastic vows and to prayer, enthusiastic participation in monastic community life, enduring friendships, and ever-present love for her family.

Sister Bertha was born in 1928 in Cleveland, OH, to Benjamin N. True, Sr. and Minerva "Minnie" C. True. As a young infant, her family moved to Detroit, MI, where Sister Bertha was baptized at Assumption Grotto Church. Although most of her childhood was spent in Detroit, her family made many extended trips to central Alabama where her parents had been raised. Sister Bertha described her family as "happy, close-knit," characteristics that continued to define her relationships with family throughout her life.

In 1951, after earning a B.S. in Mathematics at Alabama College in Montevallo and teaching briefly at Providence Hospital School of Nursing in Mobile, Sister Bertha entered Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman. She made her Perpetual Monastic Profession in 1955. A Master's degree in Chemistry and Physics from the Catholic University of America was followed by a lengthy career teaching chemistry and physical science at Sacred Heart College. Sister also served as Dean of Women at the College, and for a time as Financial Aid Director. For many years she served as a dormitory moderator, beloved by students who often sought her counsel. Many former students remained in contact with Sister Bertha throughout the years. It

was not uncommon for her to receive phone calls, mail, and visits from former students from as far away as California, and even overseas.

For many years, Sister Bertha nurtured a strong desire to work in Hispanic ministry and in 1992 this dream came to fruition. Following a semester of language study, Sister joined the staff of the Office of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Birmingham and spent the next five years ministering in northeast Alabama. Her ministry spanned a broad range of activities: arranging for Spanish Masses, offering aid for the sick, providing food and clothing, and finding help for those in need of immigration assistance.

When Sister Bertha was asked in 1997 to serve as Director of Benedictine Manor, she returned to Cullman and enthusiastically took up this new ministry in which she served until her retirement from this role in 2004. As in her previous ministries, strong and lasting ties were formed.

Within the monastery, Sister Bertha served the community in numerous internal roles, including the responsibility of Postulant and Novice Director, a role in which she served for eight years. She also served for eight years as community Treasurer. Additionally, Sister Bertha's strong concern for the poor led to a lengthy stint on the community's Peace and Justice Committee.

In reflecting on her vocation several years ago, Sister Bertha related, "I have always had such a strong sense of God's presence here... [and] the feeling of peace with my Benedictine vocation remains." She also reported that she "especially appreciated the relationships that flow from the vow of stability. We spend our lives seeking God with the same group of Sisters day in and day out though times of both pain and joy... These are relationships that can only be made and sustained by a lifetime commitment of seeking God together. I am so grateful to God for my Catholic faith, my religious vocation, and especially my Benedictine vocation to this particular community."

Sister Bertha was preceded in death by her parents and by her brothers, Benjamin N. True, Jr. and William B. True. Survivors who mourn her passing include her Benedictine Sisters, her sister Sarah "Sally" T. Kresse, 14 nieces and nephews, 32 great nieces and nephews, 22 great grand nieces and nephews, and many devoted friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, AL, 916 Convent Rd., Cullman, AL, 35055.