



YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
2013

# Witnesses of Love

Living signs of Christ's  
presence in the world

## Mary Virginia Merrick (1866 – 1955)

In spite of being partially paralyzed and in pain from age 14 until her death at 88, Mary Virginia Merrick was a woman of courage and of accomplishment, a witness of Gospel love. She was born in Washington, D.C., on November 2, 1866. After a spinal injury, Mary Virginia was confined to bed or a wheelchair. She was sustained by her family and friends and by her ever-deepening love of the Christ Child. "I resolved to do something every day for the Christ Child," she wrote in her autobiography. She was also determined to see the Christ Child in every child and not to speak about her sufferings. Instead she asked her teenage friends to go out and look for a need that they could fill. It came in the form of an expectant mother who had no clothes for the

newborn. Mary Virginia with others made a layette for her. This layette, a gesture of love and caring, became the seed and the signature task of the Christ Child Society she founded 125 years ago. Today the National Christ Child Society with more than 6000 members is dedicated to helping children and families in need.

As stated in Mary Virginia's eulogy, "She took her cross and out of it fashioned a bridge over which she and others could walk on their way to God." Mary Virginia was declared a Servant of God in 2003, and her cause for canonization was opened in 2011.

Sister Mary Brady, SND

LIVING  
OUR  
*Relationship*  
WITH  
JESUS CHRIST



"Nothing is ever too much to do for a child."

Mary Virginia Merrick

Mary Virginia Merrick once said "Faith can invest the poor and needy with the person of Christ, and our charity becomes only the expression of our love, and we are not giving, we are receiving an honor when we help."

Thus the 97-year-old Christ Child Society of Cleveland pays tribute to and embodies the spirit of Mary Virginia Merrick on its website home page. ([www.christchildsocietycleveland.org](http://www.christchildsocietycleveland.org))

### For Reflection

1. How do I speak or act when I am in pain?
2. Do I see a need in my family? In school? At work?  
Can I help fill it?
3. If it takes courage to offer help, do I offer?
4. What is my attitude toward children or adults with disabilities?

Photo provided by  
National Christ Child Society  
<http://www.nationalchristchildsoc.org>

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