

Remembering Hilary Boyd 1930 – 2015

Behind Hilary's self-effacing exterior were many qualities for which those who knew her will always be grateful. At St Nics she was a constant presence, week in week out, until she was no longer able to come to church. She will be remembered as a good friend, calm, gentle and ready to help anyone. She'll be remembered for her warm, unobtrusive welcome to newcomers, especially children, for her quiet efficiency in all the tasks she undertook, for the twinkle in her eye – only when you caught the odd throw-away remark did you realise what a sense of humour she had – for making the most of what life gave her and for her acceptance of people as they were, whatever their foibles. She was above all for us at St Nics a precious contributor to an atmosphere of devotion in our worship. My abiding memory of her will be of the way she served at the Thursday morning Mass: she was meticulous, unhurried in every move and she spread peace around us.

Memories of her came from Joy Barrett, Fr Patrick Tuft, Heather Hay and from Fr Simon in his address at her funeral.

Hilary was born on 4 September 1930 in Manor Park E12 and grew up in Forest Gate before moving to Kent. The war saw her in Swindon and then back in London. She went to school at the Convent of the Ursulines, founded by St Angela Merici, after whom she later named her daughter. Trained as a nurse at Middlesex Hospital, she eventually became a psychiatric matron. After her marriage to Peter Boyd and settling in Chiswick, Hilary worked as a midwife at Queen Charlotte's hospital, Goldhawk Road, continuing part-time there when her daughter was born. She came to worship at nearby St Nics and joined the church's Mothers Union branch, which was a flourishing concern.

Joy Barrett got to know her well when she took over from Peggy Tope as enrolling member for the MU at St Nics. Hilary fulfilled both this role extremely well, and for a number of years that of leader of the Deanery MU. One of the local activities she organised was a monthly visit by MU members to Chiswick Hospital, along the Mall, (now, alas, no more) when it was a psychiatric unit. Joy writes: 'We used to hold a short service in each of the wards – I think there were four and a day room. We had to take one of the sisters from the Convent or a priest with us, so that the patients would realise why we had come. We would just say a few prayers and sing a hymn. The patients always requested 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and by the time we had sung it through four or five times we were extremely hoarse !'

Then there was the fabled MU cake stall at the Christmas Bazaar, which at one period used to run for three days. Imagine it – rushing home, after a full day, to bake cakes for the next ! Hilary was very much a part of that.

After Joyce Mercer left Chiswick in the early '90s Hilary took on serving at the Thursday morning Mass. The reverent, focussed way in which she carried out her duties added a calm ingredient to what for several people was their favourite mass of the week. Significantly Hilary was one of the first members of the congregation whom Fr Patrick asked to administer the chalice at Parish Mass, and she also became one of the team

taking Communion to the sick. Joy remembered going to both a Visiting and a Bereavement course with her.

Another consequence of Joyce Mercer's leaving was that a team of six MU members took over the cleaning of the church, which they did on Thursday mornings after their habitual cup of coffee in the Parish Room, following the 9.30 Mass. And Hilary was part of that team too. Well, as time went by the numbers dwindled until only Joy and Hilary were left. Eventually, and quite rightly, they said, 'We've had enough.' And St Nics has had to pay for the church to be cleaned ever since !

Heather Hay has happy memories of organising parish lunches in St Nicholas Hall during the '90s with Hilary's help. Not only was Hilary brilliant at the cooking and serving – the soul of tact when it came to suggesting people left enough for others in the queue – but she made it all such fun. And she helped too at the twice yearly parties held at Heather's home for the housebound, as well as with the Christmas parcels which were distributed in the parish.

Hilary spent her last years at home in Park Road, with its big garden which she had always loved, and then in the Acton Care Centre where she had a lovely garden room. She had always been close to her sister, Ann, and her daughter has memories of taking Hilary to Spain where she and her cousin would push their mothers along the front in their wheelchairs. In earlier days Hilary had enjoyed tennis and had been a regular at Wimbledon with her daughter.

When you enter St Nics and turn to the Holy Water stoup at the door, think of Hilary. She gave the stoup in memory of her husband. The oak for the pedestal comes from Fountains Abbey and the pottery bowl is hand-crafted. Let the stoup now stand in our memory also for Hilary.

Christabel Ames-Lewis