

Hooda Germack: A Servant of Christ in her Neighbors

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It is fitting and proper on this Orthodox Education Day, dedicated to "Loving Christ in our Neighbor," to honor Mrs Hooda Germack.

"Aunt Hooda" is one of the leading philanthropists among Orthodox Christians known to us at St Vladimir's Seminary in the last quarter century. The word philanthropist means literally a "friend of human beings." Hooda Germack surely fits this definition. She belongs to the blessed list of wealthy believers in Church history who have used their means for the good of others.

We at St Vladimir's have benefited again and again from Mrs Germack's extraordinary kindness and generosity. Our students relax in the sitting room that "Aunt Hooda" remodeled and exquisitely furnished in memory of her beloved husband John. A whole series of seminarians participating in octets, choir trips, retreats and other seminary duties and activities have ridden in a series of "Hooda vans" provided by our benefactor. And everyone who has worshipped in the seminary chapel has prayed with inspiration and comfort before the fresco of Christ distributing the Holy Eucharist to the apostles which adorns the "high place" in the sanctuary where Hooda once received a special blessing of healing from the Lord.

Many in addition to St Vladimir's have boundlessly benefited from the philanthropia of our friend and supporter. The ambulance service "Bravo" has always been highest among Mrs Germack's interests. How many sick and suffering men, women, and children have been aided and assisted, even to the point of saving their earthly lives, from the emergency medical service made possible by the resources of this good woman. How many bishops, priests, churches, and people have been blessed by her generous gifts? The number is literally countless. The Lord knows who these people are, even if many of them have themselves forgotten.

In addition to her gifts of money, "Aunt Hooda" has blessed many people with her gift of faithful personal friendship. To use the over-used expression that here is perfectly fitting, "Aunt Hooda," like every true and loyal friend, always "tells it like it is." She speaks her mind directly, strongly, and clearly. Her words are always straightforward. She cannot be misunderstood or ignored. You always know where you stand with Mrs Germack. And you always know where she stands. There are never any doubts. How refreshing and reassuring this is. It is a rare quality, even among church people; rarer perhaps than many of us would care to admit or acknowledge.

According to tradition, "Aunt Hooda" visits the seminary at least once a year for a special meal which she, of course, sponsors for the seminary community first of all her beloved students. Every year, in one way or another, she tells us the same thing that she once put in these words: "A good priest is a great blessing for many people. About a bad priest, it is best not to speak." Every year we listen to our "Aunt Hooda." We express our thanks to her, and we ask her for still more help for our school, which she unflinchingly gives according to her possibilities.

It is always a joy to be with "Aunt Hooda." It is always refreshing and encouraging. Yet it is always a bit scary and frightening. You can't fool Mrs Germack. You certainly cannot deceive her. She sees you clearly. She knows when you are looking for something. If you are straightforward, open, and honest, you will surely get what you ask for if Mrs Germack is able to give it. And you will always also hear a few things that are necessary for you to hear.

May God bless Mrs Hooda Germack for her goodness to people. May He show mercy on her for her kindness and goodness that she has shown in serving Christ in her neighbors, and for permitting others, through her support, to do so as well. She will remain a most precious person in the seminary's history for as long as students are studying and classes are held and services are celebrated within its walls. The life and work of the seminary are made possible only through the gifts, both small and great, by people like her.

Our boundless thanks go to Mrs Hooda Germack for her extraordinary love for St Vladimir's, and for others as well. May God grant her every blessing for many years.