

*Introduction to Wake Service for
Reverend Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.
Chapel of the Holy Spirit
Campion Center
Weston, Massachusetts
April 25, 2016
Reverend William Barry, S.J.*

We gather this afternoon to celebrate the life of Raymond G. Helmick, S.J., a brother to Marie and Stephen Barry and Monsignor William Helmick, and uncle to Raymond and Anne Marie, a brother in Christ to us Jesuits, a teacher to so many students at St. George's College in Kingston, Jamaica, and at Boston College, a priest to the parishioners of St. Theresa parish in West Roxbury, and a Peacemaker Extraordinaire to people in many parts of the world. Welcome to all of you.

Recently I read Ray's Oral History Project and found it hard to believe that one man crammed so much activity and touched so many lives in profound ways in one life time. All of us who knew Ray Helmick can say, without hesitation, that we have met one of the few Renaissance Men in our lifetimes. From a very early age he showed signs of genius, having earned a scholarship to the New England Conservatory as a pianist while at the same time contemplating Architecture as a future field of endeavor. Instead, he chose to join the Jesuits. What other Jesuit, in recent times at least, has loved teaching boys high school boys and getting to know and become friends with Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica, has built his own Harpsichord while doing doctoral studies in Ecumenical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and while doing these same studies began to work with an ecumenical group of students to bring about peace between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland? In that work to bring about reconciliation in Northern Ireland he showed unusual bravery and an almost uncanny astuteness in trying to get the "Hard Men" of the Irish Republican Army and of the Ulster

Defense Association who were imprisoned to come together in spite of their bitter differences to bring about a reconciliation that would preserve their country from continual guerrilla warfare. That same bravery and astuteness showed themselves when he brought together ecumenical groups to try to bring about reconciliation in war-torn Bosnia as well as the Middle East. In the Middle East he worked indefatigably to reconcile Israelis and Palestinians, the warring factions in Lebanon, and the Kurds and Iraqis in Iraq. The people he befriended in these efforts make up a Who's Who List of the people in our time, the Reverend Jessie Jackson, Yasser Arafat, Richard Hauser and his wife Hephzibah Menuhin, Yitzhak Rabin, Collin Powell, Bernard Cardinal Law, Pio Cardinal Laghi, President Milosevic of Serbia, among many others.

He continued these peacemaking efforts while teaching conflict transformation at Boston College and added building a stand-alone Tabernacle and a Mosaic for St. Theresa's Church in West Roxbury to his resume. This remarkable life was lived by a single man, Raymond Helmick, S.J. whose life we celebrate today. I've hardly touched the surface all that Ray accomplished, and both you and I are tuckered out. Now, here's perhaps the most amazing thing of all. All of this our Renaissance Man did in a quiet, unassuming way that avoided ever putting the spotlight on himself. Of Ray it can be said, there was no "I" in his vocabulary. Even though we are saddened at his going from us, we rejoice that God gave him to us and to the World for almost 85 years. Let's now pray for Him and one another.