

Servant of God Julia Greeley

Biography

Servant of God Julia Greeley was born into slavery in Hannibal, Missouri. Julia did not know her own birthday and exact age or the full names of her parents. It is thought she may have been born around the year 1840. She was freed from slavery in 1865 when the state of Missouri passed their own Emancipation Proclamation. This was 2 years after two years after Abraham Lincoln passed the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. After being freed from slavery she eventually landed in Denver, Colorado working a variety of jobs and caring for the city's poorest residents.

As a child, a slave master's whip cut her in the face blinding her in her right eye. This didn't stop her from seeing the needs of her community wherever she lived and working hard to meet those need, though. In 1880, Julia converted to Catholicism at the Sacred Heart Church in Denver. Her particular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus led her ministry all over Denver. She became an active member of the Secular Franciscan Order in 1901, committing her life to live simply, love God, and think of all people as her brothers and sisters. She attended daily Mass, always sitting in the front left pew. Her parish priests adored her and fervently defended her from any racist comment made by affluent white folk who took offense to having a black woman sitting in the front of the sanctuary for Mass every day.

Of her many ministries in the city, one was to enlist countless Denver firefighters into a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and what she coined as the Firefighter's Prayer Union — an organization that still exists today. She'd do this by visiting the various fire stations in Denver, often on foot, and passing out cloth patches that firefighters could keep with them in their pockets or wallets to be assured of her daily prayer for them. The organization quickly grew in popularity, and she became well known among firefighters in her city.

Alongside her ministry to those working for the city, Julia also worked with young women and girls in their youth in her parish. When the young women she served didn't have appropriate clothing for church socials, Julia went door to door asking affluent parishioners to donate their daughter's nice used dresses for them to wear. She also led youth programs, often working in the background serving food and cleaning up.

Julia Greeley was a joyfully spirited woman who seemed to have a lot of fun and live her life to the fullest. Once, when some of the young girls of her parish organized a charitable beauty contest, the elderly Julia convinced her firefighter friends to purchase tickets that would each count toward a vote for her in the contest. She ended up with a sweeping win of the entire beauty contest when her firefighters purchased a whopping 3,500 tickets. She was also a self-taught pianist and was known to play at parties.

Julia died on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After her death she was found to be severely arthritic. This surprised those who knew her because she had never complained of the pain that she was likely suffering while she walked miles and miles in service to those in need. She is now

lovingly known as Denver's Angel of Charity and, due to her cause for canonization being opened in the Fall of 2016, her remains were transferred to the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver, in 2017. She is the very first person to be interred in the Cathedral.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Your servant Julia Greeley dedicated her life to honoring the Sacred Heart of Your son and to the humble service of the poor. Grant to me a generous heart like Your son's, and if it be in accordance with your holy will, please grant this favor I now ask through Julia's intercession (insert intention).

I pray this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Prayer Source: Julia Greeley Guild, 1535 N. Logan St., Denver CO 80213.)

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