



Eulogy of Sister Isabel Miller, BVM (Acarda)
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 22, 2018

Isabel Miller was born on Aug. 5, 1921, the fifth of the seven children of Nicholas and Anna Scheckel Miller of Davenport, Iowa. She joined siblings Norman, Genevieve, James, and Mildred and was followed by John and Anna Marie. Their father was born in Savannah, Ill., their mother in White Lake City, S.D. Both parents were of Luxembourg descent although Isabel's paternal grandfather was born in France.

Isabel's father worked as a coal dealer to support his family. Her mother was a charter member of the Davenport Daughters of Isabella, a female auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus. Isabel was named after this organization, which was formed only months before she was born. On the 25th anniversary of the Davenport Daughters of Isabella, she received a special invitation to the celebratory dinner. The guest speaker even singled her out by name.

Isabel attended St. Mary Academy through eighth grade, when she felt called to religious life. She received her secondary education at Immaculate Conception Academy and valued her years at the academy with her BVM teachers. Not surprisingly, she chose to live out her religious vocation as a BVM. With the recommendation of Mother Mary Consolatrice, Isabel entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1939. She received the name Acarda upon her reception on March 19, 1940, professed first vows on March 19, 1942, and lived 78 years as a BVM.

Isabel ministered 26 years in elementary education. She was missioned in Iowa at St. Joseph Academy in Dubuque, Our Lady of Victory in Waterloo, Sacred Heart in Boone, St. John in Des Moines, St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs, and St. Mathias in Muscatine. She taught in Illinois at St. Pius, St. Callistus, and St. Gertrude in Chicago, St. Eulalia in Maywood, and St. Joseph in Rock Island. She also served at Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y.; Immaculate Conception in Butte, Mont.; Cathedral in Lincoln, Neb.; and Immaculate Conception in Clarksdale, Miss.

After retiring from teaching, she lived at Wright Hall in Chicago for almost 40 years. During those years, she volunteered at the St. Joseph Medical Center as a receptionist and at Loyola University in the Cudahy Library. She also babysat a 7-month-old girl whose parents both worked. Despite the child's ability to walk and get into everything, Isabel wrote, "I do so like my work!"

Isabel appreciated the spiritual opportunities both at and near Wright Hall, particularly ones offered by the Jesuits. She daily attended the noon liturgy at Madonna Della Strada Chapel on the Loyola University campus, where she formed relationships with both students and staff. After extending an invitation to join her at Wright Hall for lunch, she would introduce them by saying, "They followed me home."

Isabel was friendly, welcoming and obviously a great teaser with a good sense of humor. She was well aware of people in need, particularly the poor elderly sitting on benches on the Loyola campus. They, too, were invited to lunch at Wright Hall, but if they refused, she would make sandwiches to take to them. As a mentor and unofficial counselor to the Loyola students she encountered, she matched those who needed help in a particular subject with just the right BVM. Crocheting afghans was a favorite hobby, but even these she generously gave away. She truly was a sister of *charity*.

Isabel loved Chicago. As an avid Cubs fan, she never missed watching a game. She also enjoyed going out to eat, but always to the same place, ordering the same item—a salad. She moved to Mount Carmel in 2011 when Wright Hall closed. Even though hearing loss made participation difficult in her later years, she retained her teasing nature and hearty laugh.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul wrote, “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.” (2 Cor 5:1-2). Isabel lived a long life of loving service while anticipating the day she would return to her heavenly home. Thank you, Isabel, for your example of faithfulness and charity. May you rest peacefully in God’s loving arms.