



Eulogy of Sister Marian Hurley, BVM (William Marie)

Marian Hall Chapel, May 8, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Marian Hurley.

According to her autobiography, Marian Alice Hurley was “joyfully welcomed into this world on a cold, snowy St. Paul, Minn., day, Jan. 26, 1928. My parents [William and Marian (Clark) Hurley] were thrilled with the new idea of their own darling daughter who followed two energetic sons, [William and Frank].” Marian was such a beautiful baby that her father lovingly named her his “Doll.” The name stuck as siblings Catherine, John, and James arrived to complete the family. With everyone calling her Doll, the family tale is that Marian was about 11 years old before she knew her real name. Even today, her nieces and nephews and their children know her as Aunt Dolly, and some were surprised to learn that she was not Sister Dolly.

The Hurley children, including Marian, enjoyed the great Minnesota outdoors, spending long hours sledding in the winter and visiting the many lakes in the summer. However, at the end of her first grade year, the family moved to Chicago. “It was a great stroke of luck that landed us in St. Gertrude Parish,” she commented. “I loved St. Gertrude and all my new teachers and friends.” She attended high school at The Immaculata where “my teachers were fantastic and many of my friends are still close to me.”

Marian entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1946, and received the name William Marie at her reception on March 19, 1947. She professed first vows on March 19, 1949, and lived 71 years as a BVM.

Marian was missioned as an elementary teacher in Illinois at St. Charles in Chicago, St. Gilbert in Grayslake, and St. Eulalia in Maywood, and in New York at St. Thomas the Apostle in West Hempstead. She served as both teacher and principal at St. Brigid in San Francisco, and St. Cornelius in Chicago.

At her first mission, Marian was deeply grateful to Sister Mary Joseph Byrne, the superior at St. Charles, who not only mentored her as a teacher, but also arranged for frequent trips to the hospital to visit her mother, who had suffered a heart attack shortly before Marian’s profession. Her mother died later that year.

Her mission at St. Gilbert was quite different from St. Charles. The school was not completed until October and classes were large. Most of her first graders did not have desks so they knelt on the floor and wrote on the seats of their folding chairs. “Everyone seemed to thrive on such difficulties,” she recalled.

At St. Thomas the Apostle, Marian was pleased that “academics were uppermost in the minds of all—teacher, parents, and students.” She also enjoyed taking advantage of the cultural and historical attractions in New York City.

Her first year at St. Cornelius (1967–68), was extremely contentious due to racial tensions in the neighborhood. After the principal publicly supported bussing black students to the school, a large number of parents made life very difficult for the principal and the faculty. When the principal left in April, Marian was asked to assume the role while still teaching her eighth grade class. She continued to serve as principal for nine years. Reflecting on that turbulent time, she wrote, “The agony that the teachers and staff went through united us so deeply that we would have done anything for each other.”

While the influx of black students never happened at St. Cornelius, Marian was blessed with the opportunity to teach at St. Eulalia, where the majority of the population were black students. “The children proved to be one of the highlights of my teaching career,” commented Marian. “The energy and honesty of the students kept me on my toes each minute of the day . . . I loved the experience.”

In 1981, Marian moved to Los Angeles to serve in the religious education program at Our Mother of Good Counsel Church. She ministered at all levels from pre-school to RCIA for 29 years, serving eight years as the director. During this time, she volunteered at a wellness center in Glendale, Calif. The holistic approach to wellness led her to pursue a second career as a massage therapist. She ministered to AIDS patients at a Pasadena, Calif., clinic, offered acupressure to homeless women, and offered her gift of healing to veterans returning home from a war zone.

Marian enjoyed “the feeling of partnership in helping people love themselves and honoring their whole being as the temple of the Holy Spirit.” She served as a board member of the Collaborative Program for Aging Religious, an effort designed to assist religious congregations faced with the intricate issues of aging members. After her retirement, she remained in Los Angeles and continued to volunteer at the wellness center until moving to Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa, in 2016.

Marian loved everyone with whom she came in contact—family, students, parishioners, clientele and her BVM sisters from the novitiate to the missions and clusters and back to Mount Carmel. In the words of St. Paul to the Colossians, Marian truly “over all these things put on love . . . and let the peace of Christ control [her heart].” She was a beautiful person who lived kindness. It pained her to witness mean-spiritedness, yet her presence remained peaceful and inspiring. Preparing children for First Communion gave her great joy. She was passionate about teaching, especially teaching grammar and could get her students to love diagramming sentences. Now that is an accomplishment!

Marian loved fun, laughter and adventure. Early last Tuesday morning, when Jesus beckoned, Marion surely responded as she had to every invitation—with a laugh and a “Why not?” In her honor and in gratitude, may her peacefulness, kindness and love live on in and through us.