



**Eulogy of Sister Ann Ida Gannon, BVM**  
Marian Hall Chapel, June 8, 2018

Good afternoon and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Ann Ida Gannon.

Genevieve Elizabeth Gannon entered this world on April 2, 1915, as the third of six children born to George and Hanna Murphy Gannon on Chicago. Siblings Margaret Mary, Aileen, John, and Elizabeth preceded her in death. Her sister Joan who is a Sister of St. Benedict survives her.

After completing her grade school education at St. Jerome, Genevieve attended The Immaculata HS, where, as a clarinet player in the school band, she played at the dedication of Mundelein College. In light of her connection to Mundelein as a BVM, it is ironic that at this point in her life she turned down a full ride scholarship to Mundelein in order to enter the convent.

Genevieve entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1932, and received the name Ann Ida upon her reception on March 19, 1933. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1935, and lived 85 years as a BVM. Her early missions were as an elementary teacher at Our Lady of Victory in Waterloo, Iowa, and at St. Ferdinand and St. Charles in Chicago, and as a secondary teacher at St. Mary also in Chicago.

Ann Ida earned her BA degree from Clarke College, an MA degree from Loyola University Chicago, and a PhD in Philosophy from St. Louis University. She shared with friends that the Jesuit chair of the Philosophy department did not encourage her to earn a Philosophy degree. He did not think it academically appropriate for a woman to be part of a Philosophy department. Despite this, she graduated with honors and returned to Mundelein College to chair the department.

Ann Ida served as chair for six years before her appointment as president in 1957, a position she held for 18 years. After a sabbatical as a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame, she returned to Mundelein as a philosophy professor until 1986 when she transitioned to the position of archivist at Mundelein. Upon retirement, she continued to volunteer in the Mundelein archives and later, at the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola University.

Beyond her academic responsibilities, Ann Ida was active in BVM governance processes. In 1960, she was the youngest Chapter delegate for the election of the congregation's leadership. She was an active participant at the 1965 Institute, "Problems That Unite Us," during which BVMs grappled with the changes in the post-Vatican II church and the social challenges of the time. Ann Ida repeated as Chapter delegate in 1967 and later served 11 years as Senator-at-Large in the 1970's and 1980's. Fittingly, she was a member of the BVM Higher Education Commission from 1968 to 1975.

Ann Ida's remarkable resume includes multiple categories of personal contribution to the well-being of the world at large. She served on various boards related to higher education, civic committees, accrediting teams, and women's programs. She gave lectures to countless groups and interfaith communities. Recognition came through various award, including the University of Notre Dame's Laetare Medal and *Who's Who in America*. Earlier this year, she was inducted into Chicago's Irish-American Hall of Fame. Throughout her career, she

received 26 honorary degrees and more than two dozen prestigious awards for service in education or as a woman of achievement.

The American Council on Education recognized Ann Ida as “a role model extraordinaire to women and men of all ages; [a] woman of grace, intellect . . . [and] always a seeker of truth and wisdom and a lover of life and its blessings.” The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities acknowledged her as “a woman who shared gifts of mind . . . wedded to a compassionate heart and an outstretched hand.”

In 1993, the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership was established to honor and uphold the Mundelein tradition of educating and fostering women leaders. It was envisioned as an academic center for women’s leadership that would house programs, visiting scholars and a women’s archive. At the dedication, Ann Ida commented, “The important thing for women is to maintain their character and not to feel that in order to get ahead they have to be like men. Women bring their own qualities.”

A gracious woman, who celebrated her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday in April, Ann Ida is remembered as a revered teacher at the primary and secondary level and within the college and university setting. Her young students at St. Ferdinand kept in touch with her through the years via their creative newsletter; former St. Mary high school students remained loyal friends. She was a strong presence to the graduates of the former Mundelein College. At the celebration of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, BVM President Teri Hadro offered her this tribute: “An amazingly fit instrument revealing God’s unconditional love to all you meet.”

In the Parable of the Sower, Ann Ida is the rich soil in which God planted the seeds of faith, vocation, and the BVM core values of freedom, education, charity and justice. In her rich soil, these seeds produced an abundant harvest. However, Ann Ida did not build bins to store the harvest. Instead, she took the seeds and sowed them in the soil of others. At the dedication of the Gannon Center, one speaker proposed, “[Ann Ida’s] leadership, commitment and faithfulness have helped to shape more lives than we could name.” Ann Ida’s response was simple: “My life is a life of service. That’s what the sisters are all about.”

With the words of former BVM President Joan Keleher Doyle, we send Ann Ida off to her eternal reward. “[Ann Ida,] you are gift to us. You are truly the faithful servant who has lived the dictum: ‘Fidelity depends on what one becomes for others.’” Thank you, Ann Ida.