



**Eulogy of Sister Philomena Rosselli, BVM (St. Philomena)**  
Marian Hall Chapel, June 21, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Philomena Rosselli.

Elizabeth Imelda Rosselli was born on Sept. 13, 1920, in Petaluma, Calif., to Genesio and Philomena Zanini Rosselli, both immigrants from Switzerland. Imelda's father was a highly successful farmer whose first wife and two daughters, Regina and Candida, had died. He was raising his two sons, Elvis and John, when he met his future wife while selling eggs from his farm. In addition to her half-brothers, Imelda joined a sister, Agnes.

Imelda was in junior high at St. Vincent school when her father died, and when she was in high school, her mother died of brain cancer. Her sister Agnes had recently graduated from high school and was ready to come to Mt. Carmel, but instead promised their dying mother that she would care for Imelda until she graduated.

Together, Agnes and Imelda made the long train ride to Mt. Carmel to enter the congregation on Sept. 8, 1938. In a *Salt* article about BVM siblings, they commented, "The sale of our family's last cow made it possible to complete the purchase of our train tickets to Dubuque." Upon their reception on March 19, 1939, Imelda received the name St. Philomena and Agnes, Mary Genesio, in honor of their parents. They professed their first vows on March 19, 1941. Agnes died on Nov. 28, 2002, having lived 64 years as a BVM. Philomena lived 79 years as a BVM.

Philomena taught in the primary grades, mostly first grade, for 31 years. She was missioned at Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago; St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception in Butte, Mont.; St. Anthony in Missoula, Mont.; St. Brigid and St. Thomas More in San Francisco; Sacred Heart in Maquoketa, Iowa; and St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa.

While teaching in Butte, Philomena teamed with Sister Incarnata (Inky) Gephart, BVM for the challenging task of teaching religious vacation school at a parish in Boulder, Mont., in the morning and then teaching at the State School for the Handicapped in the afternoon. While there was little time for exploration, when an opportunity occurred Inky was more than ready to take it. Once when a tour of a copper mine was offered, Inky was swift to say "yes" and asked Philomena to accompany her. Inky with her inquisitive mind was ecstatic; Philomena terrified!

Philomena moved to Dubuque and taught at the Montessori School that was located in the Barn here at Mt. Carmel. After retiring, she volunteered at the Language Center at St. Raphael School and with Carmel Creations. She lived at Mt. Carmel for 47 years except for the time of the Motherhouse renovations. She was nervous about moving elsewhere, but discovered a most welcoming temporary home with the Dominicans at Sinsinawa.

In the 1980s, Philomena and Agnes embarked on a memorable trip to Switzerland to visit the birthplaces of their parents. While there, they met roughly 40 cousins of various degrees. Thanks to a genealogy search, relatives in the United States also were able to reconnect with the sisters before Agnes' death. Philomena and Agnes were so excited when a cousin, whom they had not seen for six decades, came to visit them at Mt. Carmel.

Philomena was a gentle, kind, sweet woman, quiet and undemanding. She was sensitive and very aware of others. She remembered all the little things done for her and the people who did them, and expressed her gratitude freely and often. Whenever she was the recipient of goodies, she generously shared them with the sisters on her floor. As Agnes was attentive to Philomena when their mother died, so was Philomena attentive to Agnes when she became ill. They always took care of each other. When asked how she would like to be remembered, Philomena made a simple request instead: "Please pray for me."

Almost 80 years ago, Philomena wrote, "I wish to become a Sister in order that I may love and serve God more earnestly and thus aiming more ardently to obtain the everlasting happiness of heaven." Today, the refrain of our responsorial psalm echoes her desire: "My soul thirsts for you, Lord, like the desert thirsts for rain. It is your face I long for; you alone are life to me" ("Psalm 63: My Soul Thirsts," Dan Schutte). How wondrous the joy that Philomena experiences - reunited with Agnes and her parents in the loving presence of God!