

Sister Maurine Therese Thiel, BVM
Funeral Welcome
Marian Hall, July 3, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of the life of our Sister Maurine Therese Thiel.

Barbara Thiel, lovingly nicknamed Skip, was born July 9, 1931, in Chicago, as the first child of Max Joseph and Margaret Keating Thiel. Barbara was very close to her father who, along with his mother, emigrated from Germany. He worked as a clerk at International Harvester all his life while his wife cared for the children. Both were very active at Our Lady of Angels Parish. Mrs. Thiel was even recognized for her contributions to Catholic women and the Church.

Barbara was also close to her paternal grandmother after whom she was named. She lived with her for a period of time when her mother was ill. Although quiet and studious, she enjoyed playing creative games. With the backdrop of World War II, one game included pretending to be a nurse and bandaging other kids whether they liked it or not. Barbara graduated from Our Lady of the Angels Elementary School and St. Mary HS. Later, she was thrilled to return to OLA as a teacher.

Barbara entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1949, and received the name Maurine Therese upon her reception on March 19, 1950. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1952, and lived for 68 years as a BVM.

Maurine Therese was a primary teacher for 44 years. She was missioned at Annunciation, Holy Name, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of the Angels, St. Bartholomew and St. Constance in Chicago; St. Patrick in Lincoln, Ill.; and St. Catherine in Kansas City, Mo. She retired from full-time teaching in 2001 but continued to work part-time as a primary aide at Divine Savior in Norridge, Ill.

After moving to Dubuque in 2001, Maurine Therese volunteered as a special needs aide at St. Francis School until 2011 when she returned to Illinois. There she volunteered as religious education instructor for the kindergarten and first Communion classes at St. Dismas Parish in Waukegan. She also volunteered for the BVM Associate program, then under the direction of Sister Ann Therese Chaput, BVM.

Maurine Therese moved to Mt. Carmel in 2013. She took great pleasure in volunteering with the "Dress a Girl around the World." This project was sponsored by a non-profit that "dreamed of a world in which every girl has at least one dress" and wanted the girls to know that "they are worthy of love and respect." Maurine Therese spoke for all participants when she said, "This will make the little girls very happy."

Mary Frances Clarke wrote, "You have the most laborious duty, but the most profitable for time and eternity; you teach the poor of our Lord. Do thank Him for that glorious privilege." (Letter 21). Maurine Therese most certainly considered teaching to be a privilege. When asked how she wanted to be remembered, she simply replied, "I loved teaching and helping young children." Her ministry to primary children was inspiring. There is no doubt that she loved her students and they loved her. They came with an eagerness to learn that challenged her to be her professional best, to promote learning in unique ways. She delighted in their ability to learn how to read, how to print their name, and how to interact and treat each other as friends.

She considered it her duty to create a happy, peaceful and comfortable environment that fostered positive self-esteem in the “precious human gifts” that God entrusted to her. Through her ministry, she exemplified the words of Jesus, “Let the children come to me . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). The trust, sincerity, love, and concern of the children not only strengthened her belief in the goodness and uniqueness of every child but also gave her great joy and hope. Children brought Maurine Therese to life.

Family and friends were important to her as well. She always sent cards and wonderful notes and bought little gifts at Dollar Tree to remember those dear to her, and not just on birthdays. She loved her brothers Jim, who became Dominican Brother Joachim, and Max, an FBI negotiator. She was proud of her niece and nephews and close to her cousins. Maurine Therese was a faithful friend, especially to Sister Therese Fox, BVM who died last year. When they lived together, she completed many household tasks that, although difficult for her, were impossible for Therese. She also did bulletin boards for Therese’s classroom, and sometimes for the entire school! Even though she may have enjoyed going out, she stayed home with Therese to keep her company. Yet, she always said, “Therese has been so good to me.”

Maurine Therese was a delightful, joy-filled woman with a very open and loving heart. Her prayer and spirituality were very connected to God’s beauty in nature, especially sunsets. One could not keep from smiling at the sight of her beautiful smile and twinkling eyes. While she greatly enjoyed lively conversations, she continued to reflect and inspire love with her eyes and smile even when she could no longer speak.

In honor of Maurine Therese’s silver jubilee, Brother Joachim wrote the following tribute to her 25 years of growth, change, dedication, and happiness. “In the 25 years Barb (as I fondly call her) has served the Church, there is one virtue above all others which really shines out in her and commands my full respect and admiration: Barb is a giving person. [With] complete and dedicated willingness, Barb has always given of herself both to Christ and to her fellow man. As you know, religious life is a long and sometimes difficult road to follow, and Barb has traveled this road well.”

Yes, she certainly has. We believe and rejoice that now she is enjoying her heavenly reward, surrounded by children, of course. She would want it no other way.