



## **Eulogy of Sister Therese Frelo, BVM (Ann Carmelle)**

Marian Hall Chapel, Aug. 21, 2018

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

Theresa Christine Frelo entered this world in Chicago on Aug. 8, 1930, as the second of three children born to Anthony and Johanna Weir Frelo. Her Chicago-born parents were of Italian descent. Her father worked for the gas company and was a man who loved life and loved to sing. Her mother was a gentle, courageous woman who was a mentor to many. Therese's older sister Rita was a valiant woman who accepted the suffering in her life with gentleness and forgiveness. Therese considered her younger brother Anthony to be a true friend, a man of diverse interests who courageously fought cancer and demonstrated a peaceful acceptance of suffering and death.

Therese attended Holy Family ES and St. Mary HS. She was drawn to religious life by the examples of her BVM teachers and "the desire to have a more personal relationship with God and the opportunity to be of service to people." Therese entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1950, and received the name Ann Carmelle at her reception on March 19, 1951. She professed first vows on March 19, 1953, and lived 67 years as a BVM.

Therese spent 17 years teaching kindergarten through eighth grade and multiple ninth grade subjects including typing, biology, and chorus. She was missioned at Holy Cross in Chicago; Mary Queen of Heaven in Cicero, Ill.; Immaculate Conception in Clarksdale, Miss.; Sacred Heart in Davenport, Iowa; and St. Thomas in Memphis, Tenn. She also served as principal at St. Thomas and at Fr. Bertrand School in Memphis where she impressed diocesan visitors with quiet and smoothly operating schools. A year after leaving Fr. Bertrand, she returned to give the eight-grade graduation address. "The future is built on the past and shaped by the present – but this can only happen if we have a vision, a dream." She then retold a story told by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. about a wise old preacher who asked a student his plans for the future. In response to the student's reply, the preacher said, "Your plans are far too small. You must make your plans big enough to include God and large enough to include eternity."

In 1978, Therese moved to Mount Carmel to serve the congregation as the coordinator of the Office of Ministry. Afterwards, she moved to Chicago where she worked with a sister from another order to create the intercongregational Ministry Resource Center, which matched sisters looking for positions with ministry opportunities around the country. Her experience as director of development at the Center broadened her understanding of religious congregations and the Church and led her to develop a pre-retirement-transition workshop to assist older sisters in finding meaningful ministries with less responsibility and stress.

Therese returned to congregational service as Regional Representative in 1990. Recalling her experience, she wrote, "I was also blessed . . . to personally share the lives of BVMs and again experience the broader church and society, especially as [a community board] and LCWR member." After retiring, she spent the next 14 years volunteering and living in Melrose Park, Ill., and the Circle Apartments in Dubuque, before moving to Mount Carmel.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled," Jesus said to his disciples. "You have faith in God; have faith also in me." How beautifully this passage is echoed in a note Therese included in her funeral plans: "Throughout my life, I have

trusted Jesus in all my missions, challenges and endeavors.” Secure in this trust and with a firm awareness of her gifts, she made herself available for others. She was an excellent and trusted listener. Her deep empathy, sprung from her own experiences, allowed her to identify with those to whom she ministered. She felt their pain and fears, and shared their enthusiasm and joys. People knew they could rely on her supportive presence.

Therese’s interests were numerous. She loved to read, travel, sing and play piano, frequent the theatre, cook and dine out, garden, work puzzles, and dabble in art. Relationships with the BVM community, family and friends were important to her, so naturally she loved to visit and entertain. She even cooked dinner for residents on her floor. She truly had a habit of bringing people together.

For her Golden Jubilee, Therese wrote, “I have been gifted with many friends, good health and a loving community. Never did I dream . . . that I would have the opportunities for professional and spiritual growth that the BVM congregation has provided for me. My experiences as a BVM, . . . have broadened my view of church, society and [the] needs of the poor and, therefore, have contributed to make me who I am today – a BVM striving ‘to be free in order to free others in God’s steadfast love.’” Confident in God’s love and promises, we rejoice for Therese now at peace in God’s dwelling place.