



Wake Stories of Therese Frelo, BVM (Ann Carmelle)

Marian Hall Chapel, Aug. 21, 2018

Sister Ann Therese Chaput, BVM (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

I was given Therese as a companion when I entered. She never gave up that special role in my life. Struggling to hear, she would always listen. Therese was always available to talk with, to laugh together, and to say frankly what she thought. She was a woman of blessing and grace who saw the best in each of us. Therese loved life and living, including me and all at her table, by her side, ready to go out and enjoy. For me, Therese embodied the BVM charism. Thank you, Therese. I know you are with me and wait for me as we continue companions, sisters on our journey! You have truly been a gift in my life.

Tony Frelo, Nephew

I want to thank everyone for coming to celebrate the incredible journey of my aunt Sister Therese Frelo. She had an older sister and a younger brother. Her younger brother was my father. Therese was so many things to so many people – a dear friend, a cherished confidant, a loving, compassionate sister among sisters, a gift to all who came into Therese's life. Therese showed her love for us through her willingness to teach, her unconditional love for her faith, her careful ability to help who needed to be helped. Now she will have a permanent place in all of our hearts. I know this is a hard time for all, but together I believe we will definitely get through this. After all the tears, laughs and memories have moved through us, our souls will truly find peace in such a difficult time. I want to thank all of Therese's friends at Marion Hall for their kind words and heartfelt sentiments. It has meant a lot to me, and my family. All the sisters who I have come in contact with have really left a lasting impression of how much my Aunt Therese was loved. Thank you. I want to thank quickly Lori and Beth, nurses who were with my aunt and took special care of her. I want to thank Katie Pfiffner, Pastoral Services, for me, for my family and for my Aunt Therese. I also need to thank Betsy and all the Dubuque Hospice people. They really did a good job of helping my aunt feel comfortable and pain-free. Thank you.

The bond I shared with my aunt was truly special. She was like a mom, grandmother, and a best friend all rolled into one. She was an important influence in my development as a man, always keeping me centered and on point with the importance of my studies. Being a teacher, I was lucky to have someone who was an educator who could give me insight to help me with any type of educational experience. I thank her for that. I must say that she, not having any children, did help and influence me raising my children. Just like a best friend or a mother, I could go to her and she would give that special insight. My children, when they become adults, will be thankful for her influence on them. I must say how important faith was when everyday life got insane like when she lost her father and the Frelo clan got smaller as the years went on. I am eternally grateful to her for giving me the ability to grieve and get through the hard times. There are so many funny stories that I'm hoping others will tell. Most of the stories I know are shared and combined with Sister Joan Stritesky. Between the two of us, we have seen many funny things, but Joan has seen the most. During the times Aunt Therese and I spent together, either I was young or she was older and wasn't into those humorous situations like you would think. So I don't have a lot, but I will tell one.

There is a photo album on display that's all flowery because it was prepared in the 1970s. There is a picture in there of the situation I'm going to tell you. I'm not going to be able to do it justice because at the time I was an eight-year-old boy. This says a lot about my aunt and her friendship with Joan. The family – my mother, father

and grandfather – goes on a little vacation and we decide to stop in Memphis and pick up Therese and Joan. They are always a delight to be with on a long road trip. Adding another Frelø, my grandfather, creates a whole different set of circumstances that are very humorous. We are between Memphis and the Mississippi border. We have been documenting our trip by stopping in certain locations and taking photos. We come upon this military place and, for some odd reason, Therese wanted to take a picture of a brass horse on a pedestal about three or four feet high. Therese had to try to get up on the horse. I believe Joan, being the way she was, said something like, “Hey, Therese, you would look pretty good on that horse. That would be a really nice picture.” In the photo, you can see the back of Joan trying to lift my aunt onto this huge horse. It sounds very funny, but the funny part is that I, as a little boy, didn’t think anything of it; they did crazy stuff like that all the time. To listen to the banter was like a Laurel and Hardy/Abbot and Costello comedic dialogue between these two women. “I can’t get up there.” “Oh, you can get up there.” “I’m not high enough.” “Just put your foot here.” “Why do I have to get up?” “Because I’m tall and you’re short.” It was that type of verbiage that went on. When I think of humor, I never think about my aunt by herself. It was always when other people were around her that things funny. She might have sparked it, but she had to have other people. My funny stories always have to be with Therese and Joan. They honestly were this divine comedy team.

Our family was very Italian growing up on Taylor Street in Chicago and they passed it to the children. I want to thank the sisters of this community. I’m a good face person, but I don’t remember names. However, every time I’m walking in a hallway, people come up and say, “Your aunt was a great person. We loved her.” I appreciate that. I do have to thank one more special person – Joan. I thank you for looking after Therese all these years. I understand it was probably a labor of love at times, but a common labor of love. Your devotion, loyalty and love for Therese were matchless. You were the best friend that she could have. That doesn’t take away from all the other sisters with whom she spent time, but you were matchless. Through thick and thin, you were truly a divine constant, not only in Therese’s life, but also in my life and all the Freløs before me. I am blessed to have you in my life. Thank you.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM

I would like to delineate four adjectives that I think describe Therese – adventurous, wise, consistent, and positive, without being Pollyannaish. In all her ministries, Therese showed those qualities. I especially want to focus on the listening. She was very real, very concrete, and down-to-earth. She could size things up. She could recognize the negative, but she could find the positive and look with a forward vision. It was something to watch when Joan would be telling one of her divergent path stories that went on and on with unrelated details, Therese would roll her eyes and say, “Get to the point.” Yet, she would laugh just as hard as everyone else who was hearing the story for the very first time. She was friend, she was practical, she was loving, and we will miss her.

Jacqueline Lifka, Niece of Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM

I am Therese Frelø’s “adopted” niece. I have something to say to you, dear Joan.

The comrade that once marched with me,
Or dared adventure keen,
My spirits’ comrade still shall be
Tho Silence intervene.
The friend with whom I once have shared
Some banquet of the soul
Can never from the heart be spared
Tho’ seas between us roll,
This lasting quality of love
A part I take to be
Of that safe treasure laid above
And Immortality.

William Goodell Frost

Just a small little prayer for our sister, aunt and dearest friend Therese who has received Your invitation to come walk with You in life everlasting. Gentle God, Giver of the day and all the days to come, hold us close when we are weary and hurting, especially today when there is rain in our hearts.

Sister Mary M. O'Connor, BVM

I was a friend of Therese Frelø and I am grateful that she became my friend. When I entered the BVMs, I was right out of high school. I always had a sense of humor. I thought everything was funny when I entered. The sister who was my partner was very, very serious. I said, "God, I don't think I can make this. She's too serious. Everybody's serious." Within two minutes, I got a special partner – Therese Frelø. She thought everything was funny as I did. We enjoyed one another's laughter. We had a little problem because we had long sleeves and long undergarment on our shoulders that we had to move in order to make our laugh less loud. We would laugh about everything. Even when a priest came for a day of recollection, we'd always find something that was funny. The poor priest didn't know what we were laughing at. We were laughing at things in general, and God was happy. We were good for one another. I will never forget her for her laughter and for being a friend. Thank you, Therese.

Sister Carol Cook, BVM

I am in the same set that Mary was just describing. Therese and I never lived together, but as I listened to all the places Therese had been it was like we were opposites. The longest time together was summer school, which seems to have gone on half of my life. It wasn't quite that long, but at least twelve summers at St. Ambrose in Davenport, Iowa, in the same science classes. We got to know each other very well. The years we spent closest to each other we were in Clarksdale and Memphis. There wasn't a whole lot going on in Clarksdale so going to Memphis was wonderful. I'm going to tell a story from Halloween. Joan told one the other day, but this is mine. We went up there in costume. This time Therese was R2D2. She had a cardboard box around her waist with Christmas lights, the blinking kind, attached to the top. She had a nice, long extension cord so that she could walk all around with these blinking lights. That was just one of the fun things we did. I don't know how many remember Therese playing the piano. Boogie-woogie was her specialty and she really got into it; that hand flipped all over the piano. One of the last places I lived was at Holy Family in Chicago. I was coming from California and had lived in Chicago a long time ago. I had no problem finding the convent. I just heard Therese's voice say all the names of all the streets. That's how I got there. I'm so grateful for all the years of friendship. Thank, Therese.

Sister Emelyn Malecki, BVM

I am also a member of the set. I'm telling a story of Therese's gentle, loving encouragement. It was at the time when the community was asked to start clusters. Therese was the Regional at the time. She said to me, "Emelyn, why don't you start a cluster." I said, "Oh, Therese, I don't think I can do that." "Oh, you can. I know you can. I know you." So I started a cluster. Therese was a very, very dear friend. Therese and Joan were very good to me. I lived alone. They invited me to their house for dinner many times. I've been to Colorado with them at least three times. We did the Rocky Mountains together and we did Hawaii together. Joan and Therese, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Sister Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

When I think of Therese, laughter and smiles come to my heart. I have a couple of stories. Back when we were Regionals and traveling together between Chicago and Dubuque. When we got in the car, Therese began telling me stories and never stopped until we got to Dubuque. During the course of one ride, it was getting dark. Lo and behold, a deer came up to the side of the car. I saw these big, brown eyes before me and swerved a little. Therese kept talking telling her story. Suddenly, she said, "Was that a deer?" I said, "It was a deer. That's for sure." It was always a delight to be with Therese. Some of you know the other story already. We have a mutual identity as Italians. This story also goes back to when we were Regionals and were at The Spiders preparing

dinner. We got up early to start the Italian sauce for the spaghetti we were going to make. We were in the kitchen not even realizing or noticing others were sitting around the table having their breakfast. We were beginning the recipe. I said, "Well, my mother didn't put garlic in her sauce." "Well, my mother does." Back and forth, we were bantering about the garlic and the sauce. I called it sauce; she called it gravy. Meanwhile, everyone behind us was getting a big kick and laughing about this scene about making spaghetti sauce. Thanks, Therese, for your love, memories, and all that you have been to us.

Sister Suzanne Effinger, BVM

Therese had an uncanny way of getting you to do what you never thought you would ever do or could do. I would like to thank her for that. She was my Regional and a great inspiration to me. Thanks, Therese.