



Eulogy of Sister Ann Regina Dobel, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Sept. 6, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Ann Regina Dobel.

Catherine Helen Dobel was born on Sept. 3, 1916, in Kansas City, Mo., to James and Mary Ann Cavanaugh Dobel. Her siblings include older sister Mary, older brother James, who died before Catherine was born, and a younger sister Regina. During an interview, Ann Regina commented, "I had a happy home life in a solid Catholic family: parents, sisters, grandparents, and a maiden aunt . . . Our strong neighborhood included Catholics, Episcopalians, Russian Jews and strict practicing Jews, all of whose children played together."

Her father worked for the telephone and telegraph department of a meatpacking plant. When Catherine was fifteen, her father asked if she would like a summer job relieving operators going on vacation. "I could see money. [Later,] thinking about it, I got a terrible headache, but by the next day, I was all right so I worked for him several summers . . . [It] helped me develop maturity."

Catherine's sister Mary Dobel (SM James Rita) entered the congregation in 1930 and was professed shortly before Catherine graduated from St. Aloysius in Kansas City in 1933. "When I said [to my family that] I wanted to enter the BVMs," she recalled, "my father said, 'One BVM in the family is enough!' So, I said I would go a year to college. After one year I was having so much fun that I went another year, and then I joined the BVMs." Catherine entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1935, received the name Ann Regina upon her reception on March 19, 1936, professed her first vows on March 19, 1938, and lived 82 years as a BVM. Remembering her days as a postulant and a novice, Ann Regina said, "I cannot recall much about our instructions in spiritual life. After we had to run to the gate of the cemetery for our morning 'walk' and then do a house duty, we had our religious instructions. My place was behind a pillar and sometimes I napped . . . [It's] very possible the instructor was better than I realized."

Ann Regina spent 31 years in both elementary and secondary education. She was missioned as a teacher at Gesu and Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee, Wis.; Our Lady Help of Christians and Annunciation in Chicago; St. Paul HS in Burlington, Iowa; and Mount St. Gertrude Academy in Boulder, Colo. She served as superior and principal at St Paul HS in San Francisco and at Mount St. Gertrude, where she was given the task of closing the Academy. Reminiscing about her early mission to Our Lady Help of Christians, Ann Regina recalled, "Faith Lautz and I were roommates. I would read to her at night while she was painting Spiritual Bouquets. Once we quit when the rising bell rang!"

Ann Regina served the Southwest Region as one of the first Regional Representatives. She was a good leader who knew how to talk with people and handle difficult situations in a discrete and respectful manner. Recalling her election, she said, "There were the five of us candidates for Region 1: two in religious habits, two were in black with veils, and there was I in red. I looked over the group and all but five of the other sisters in the audience were still wearing the habit. All I could do was to give the talk I had prepared." We will probably never know if it was the talk or the red dress that won her the election. Regardless, she loved every bit of her time as Regional, especially visiting individually with BVMs in her four-state region. "I didn't have a car [and] was flabbergasted by BVM generosity when I was offered one at each convent in the region. [However,] learning to drive the freeways in Southern California was an act of deep faith."

Ann Regina credited her involvement as a Regional and the study of Vatican II documents with preparing her for a very meaningful experience in parish ministry. She served 26 years in St Agnes Parish in Phoenix, which she claimed was her favorite mission. "I worked with the Carmelite Fathers. The parish sent me to Rome for the canonization of Carmelite Brother Titus. We had good relations with the pastors and parish councils . . . I had equal voice and equal vote on all matters concerning the parishioners. It was a good experience . . . My little group of parishioners met after Saturday evening Mass. We often had Mass in a home, followed by a potluck supper. It created a wonderful close-knit group."

Ann Regina loved to play tennis and basketball in her youth. As a junior college student, she lost her two front teeth by crashing into a wall while playing tennis. Nevertheless, she embraced the opportunity to play tennis with the students at St. Paul in Burlington. On the missions, she could assemble the other sisters for a good game of basketball after a long day of teaching. Her love of sports created a common bond with her nephews as she could hold her own in any sports discussion.

Like her mother, Ann Regina was a talented seamstress. As a self-made tailor, her mother transformed men's suits into women's jackets and skirts for daily wear. Ann Regina enjoyed making her own clothes and even made a dress for her sister Mary's golden jubilee as a BVM.

After moving to Mount Carmel in 1999, Ann Regina volunteered for many years at the Mount Carmel receptions desks. It must have brought to mind the summers she worked for her father. "I have always felt comfortable being at a reception desk," she commented in 2011, "but at 94, I think I'm entitled to give that up."

A spirit of adventure dwelled within Ann Regina as she eagerly embraced new experiences. She had a positive attitude and a great laugh that drew people into her circle. She never took herself, or situations, too seriously, not even the sudden and mysterious loss of her sight in one eye over ten years ago, when she simply commented, "I can read fine without glasses using the good eye."

During the Thank-A-Nun campaign a few years ago, a former student wrote, "Sister Ann Regina is one of the strongest, wisest, most encouraging women I have ever known. She is the epitome of a woman of culture and of a woman of God." Her wisdom included sound advice for determining a college major. "Find something you love and you will find a way in which to make a living." They were words by which she lived.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus said, "I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me." The promise was fulfilled when Ann Regina was taken home to her heavenly dwelling the day before her 102nd birthday. What a glorious celebration it must have been, Ann Regina united with her parents, siblings, set members and friends, in the loving presence of God!