



Eulogy of Sister Ann Daniel, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Oct. 3, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Ann Daniel O'Neill.

Margaret Mary (Peggy) O'Neill and her twin brother Peter Daniel were born on August 24, 1929, to Daniel Joseph and Mary Ann Smith O'Neill of Chicago, Illinois. Their parents were both born in Ireland. At age 16, their mother immigrated via Ellis Island and went to live with her sister in Chicago and did housekeeping for her older brothers. One day, her brothers brought home Daniel O'Neill who had immigrated via Canada and worked on the railroad in Minnesota. Thus was the origin of the Daniel O'Neill family in Chicago.

Peggy and Peter were premature and were baptized in the hospital where they remained for seven weeks. The twins were the eldest of five children and were followed by Daniel Jr, John (Jack), and Philip. Like most twins, Peggy and Peter were extremely close. They were very happy that the BVM educational policy of separating genders in classrooms had changed, so they remained in the same classroom throughout their grade school years. Since it was the era of the Depression, they even shared one set of books. To earn extra money, Peggy babysat and worked as a soda jerk at the neighborhood drug store.

Peggy started piano lessons in second grade under Sister Maryann (Gertrudette) Whelan and continued lessons with Sister Virginia (Matilde) Gaume at St. Mary's High School. Peggy wrote in her autobiography, "I had wonderful musical education in piano from these two dedicated musicians. A privilege for me was playing the organ under the baton of Sister Phyllis (Phelita) Kerrigan for our senior year musical."

Peggy entered the congregation on September 8, 1947, and received the name Ann Daniel upon her reception on March 19, 1948. She recalled, "Having only brothers, it was quite an adjustment rubbing elbows with fifty some other girls in the postulate and the novitiate." Ann Daniel professed her first vows on March 19, 1950, and lived 71 years as a BVM.

In her application letter to Mother Mary Josita, Ann Daniel wrote "[one] thing about the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary that attracts me is that they teach. I have always liked books, school and study and therefore think that I would like to teach"—and teach she did. Ann Daniel taught music at St. Pius in Chicago, Illinois; Cathedral High in Rapid City, South Dakota; St. Raphael and St. Joseph Academy in Dubuque, Iowa; and Holy Name in Wilmot, Wisconsin where she also taught fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth grades. She wrote, "Since I had eleven years of piano lessons it should have been no surprise to me to be assigned to teaching music in the early years of my mission life. The piano was my love, but I had no background for vocal or choral music. One day while practicing with the Cathedral High School Glee Club ... a boy made the remark, 'Sister, you play the piano well.' What did that tell me about how I was dealing with Glee Club?" Ann Daniel taught non-music subjects at Holy Name in Marcus, Iowa; Emmetsburg Catholic in Emmetsburg, Iowa; and St. Odilo in Berwyn, Illinois.

During her Silver Jubilee year, Ann Daniel and her twin Peter took their mother on a trip to Ireland. They spent three weeks visiting relatives and touring the country. "It was a memorable visit, especially wonderful for my mother who spent time with her brother, Jimmy, for the last time." By 1979, Ann Daniel wanted to move closer to her mother who was now elderly so she applied to St. Odilo's in Berwyn. She found her mother a small

apartment three blocks from the convent so that she could watch over her. Her mother died in 1988, but she remained in Berwyn for one more year.

In 1989, Ann Daniel was invited by Sister Laurene Brady, who was a vice president of the congregation at the time, to return to Dubuque and become the associate administrator of Marian Hall. "That was the beginning of my happy years in Dubuque," commented Ann Daniel. She retired to Gilbertville, Iowa, in 1995, volunteering at St. John School in Waterloo. She described her initial retirement as "having leisure for prayer and reflection that I have been looking forward to for quite a while, and I have sufficient ministry time that I feel I am still contributing to the work of the Church." She went on to say, "the challenges of this time of life are to keep in touch with my inner self, deepen my relationship with Jesus, and balance all wisely with active ministry."

Ann Daniel returned to Dubuque in 1998, to continue the balancing act between her prayer when as she said, "God becomes dearer" and her volunteer ministry at the Motherhouse. She became a resident of the Motherhouse in 2007 and enjoyed these years surrounded by her BVM sisters, which harkens back to that first letter to Mother Josita in which she wrote, "I have been thinking a bit about the sisters and observing what they do. Everything about them seems to appeal to me." As resident in the Mt. Carmel community, Ann Daniel was always ready to serve her sisters whether doing small tasks, singing in the schola, or serving on the house council; she seemed to delight in sharing her gifts and gentle presence with others.

Reflecting upon her years as a BVM, Ann Daniel wrote, "Where else could I possibly have had so many wonderful experiences and the educational advantages to enhance my teaching career? This has been a most wonderful life!" Last Saturday, Ann Daniel returned once again to Mt. Carmel to be with her sisters when our loving God called this dear friend home. Rest assured that she will be given "full measure—packed down, shaken together and running over" for her gentle, loving gift of self so graciously shared.