



Eulogy of Sister Clementine Kuhle, BVM (Lioba)
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 14, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Clementine Kuhle.

Clementine Clothilda Kuhle was born on April 26, 1919, to Esther Richard Kuhle in Fair Play, an unincorporated community near Sinsinawa, Wis. Her father, Frank Kuhle, died of influenza five months before she was born. She joined four siblings: Raymond, Richard, Dolores, and LaVern.

Clem completed her elementary education at the Dominican Guardian Angel School, walking the two miles to and from school every day. Before she started high school, Clem and her mother moved to Dubuque where she attended St. Joseph Academy and was introduced to the BVMs. As a professed sister, she earned a bachelor's degree in education from Clarke College.

On her application for admission, Clem wrote that she wished to become a religious in order to "educate children in the Catholic religion, to be in closer union with God, and a desire that I have always hoped for, to work for the honor and glory of God." She entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1937, received the name Lioba upon her reception on March 19, 1938, professed her first vows on March 19, 1940, and lived 81 years as a BVM.

Clem taught first and second grade for 23 years. She was missioned at St. Ferdinand in Chicago; St. Paul in San Francisco and St. Vincent in Petaluma, Calif.; Immaculate Conception in Butte, Mont.; and St. Bridget in Omaha, Nebr.

In 1963, she moved to the Motherhouse to work as the laundry supervisor. Although she appeared very tough and stern, and perhaps tried to be so, the novices and postulants soon discovered she was quite easygoing and softhearted. She added fun to the hard work of wash day.

Four years later, Clem returned to the classroom to teach second through fifth grades at St. Gertrude in Chicago. She added religious education coordinator to her responsibilities nine years later. Clem found her niche at St. Gertrude and happily remained there for 25 years. She was honored with the St. Gertrude Spirit Award for "open[ing] the door to learning for more than a generation of students."

At the time of her golden jubilee, the pastor of St. Gertrude Parish wrote, "[Sister Clementine] has been a fixture on the baseball diamond [and] at picnics, a regular at Bingo . . . , a constant and consistent person of good cheer, an accomplished teacher and a real sister [in that] she seems like your sister. She is as comfortable to be with as an old shoe and someone who has no role to play other than being her natural pleasant self . . . A 50th anniversary is an accomplishment that is met with gratitude, awe and glee, . . . but we are especially grateful that Sister Clem has been such a gift to our school. She always says, 'I had very good superiors and I have a nice gift from God of getting along with people.' We've had a nice gift from God too." Clem obviously made a lasting impression on the pastor for he mailed the parish bulletin along with a personal note to her for many years after she left the parish.

Clem was an avid Chicago Cubs fan who received recognition at a Cubs game in 1989 when Harry Carey announced, "Sister Clem is in the *habit* of going to these games. Ha, ha." Clem also enjoyed traveling, spending time with her many friends and gambling at the casino with the birthday money she received from her family. Purportedly, she was rather lucky. After moving to Mount Carmel in 1992, she joyfully assumed a variety of miscellaneous tasks and generously volunteered to drive sisters around Dubuque and neighboring communities.

Clem was pleasant and funny, a person with whom others desired to spend time. When she decided to leave St. Gertrude, a student honored her with a poem. She must have been delighted and proud of her student when she heard:

When you were my teacher, you taught me a lot.
You are very smart; cleverness you've got!
You taught me cursive. I can write like a pro!
I wish you'd still be here. I wish you didn't have to go!
You taught me spelling; I won the spelling bees.
I'm very good at English, as far as I can see.
The thought of you leaving is very sad.
You were the BEST teacher I ever had!

To reference the letter of St. James, Clem "show[ed] her works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom." Though her former student was sad at her leaving, we celebrate a long life well lived and rejoice that she is reunited with her parents, siblings and deceased friends and BVM sisters in the presence of our loving God.