



Wake Stories of Marion Murphy, BVM (John Patrice)
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 20, 2018

Father Jerry Boland, Former Holy Family Pastor, Chicago (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

I so deeply regret I cannot be here today; I am en route from a Mission Trip to El Salvador.

When I was in the seminary a hundred years ago, about the highest compliment you could pay someone was to describe him or her as someone who “walked the talk.” Someone whose personal integrity and convictions were beyond reproach. Marion Murphy “walked the talk.” She gave it her all wherever she served as a teacher, a principal, a parish coordinator, a religious. She had a deep passion for justice and made a difference.

I first met her in the winter of 2002 when I was discerning the possibility of serving at Holy Family, a parish that figures prominently in the history of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Marion Murphy followed in the great tradition of Sister Agatha Hurley, the first of so many BVMs that served that parish. I would be awed by her commitment to the poor. Marion, along with Otilie Sana, Mary Angela Buser, Francilla Kirby and Theresa Marie Gleeson, reached out to hundreds of residents of the housing projects that were within walking distance of the front door of Holy Family. She never missed a Thursday directing the Food Pantry that provided food for so many that lived in this food insecure community. She was as powerful as any alderman! There wasn't a Christmas that everybody didn't have a chicken dinner or a ham dinner with all the fixings for Easter.

She not only fed the poor but also was so committed to the educational process for the children and young adults of the Near West Side. Through the Westside Employment Outreach, she along with others helped provide many skills from learning how to prepare a resume to role-playing job interviews. No one will ever know how many young people were able to get a GED as a result of hours of tutoring she provided, helping these young people grasp very necessary literacy skills. She gave so much of herself so that Holy Family could thrive despite the formable challenges of chronic poverty, gun violence and unemployment that plagued the community.

She was deeply spiritual, loved her BVM community and forged deep friendships in the community. She was a great preacher; one of the best homilies of the year would be the one she delivered every year for the Retired Religious Fund. It was far more than an appeal for financial support; it was a powerful reflection on her vocation.

I will never be able to thank her enough for her friendship and encouragement. She is one of those great treasures you are blessed with in your journey of life. I loved serving with her and will be forever grateful for the influence she was in my life. Marion you “walked the talk”!

Joan Rossi, Former BVM (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

My deepest sympathy and prayers are with the BVM sisters upon the death of dear Sister Marion Murphy. Sister and I lived near each other growing up in Our Lady of the Angels Parish. Her cousin, the late Bishop Ed Conway, also lived nearby. I remember when she became principal of OLA in the new school. I also fondly remember visiting her at Holy Family Parish in Chicago. She gave of herself as a dedicated Sister in so many ways. We shall all miss her and will especially remember her as we participate in the 60th Anniversary Mass at OLA on Dec. 1.

Nancy Murphy Rice, Niece

I am Sister Marion's niece and this is my husband Bill, our daughter Mary Ann, her husband Jack, and their children Kaylin and Ronan. Our daughter Elizabeth cannot be here today as she and her husband Spence are awaiting the birth of their first child, to be named Patrick, any day now. You all know my aunt as Marion Murphy, but we know her as Aunt Cookie. Aunt Cookie first came into my life when I was about eight years old. She had left Portland, Ore., to teach in Chicago, her hometown. She came to our home often, always with a companion sister as was common at the time. To my amazement one day, she rode our bicycle-built-for-two with her companion both in full habit. It caused quite a stir in the neighborhood. I think the picture is on the display table. Aunt Cookie, over the years, was always present for special occasions and holidays. At MaryAnn's birthday party, she joined the kids and adults for a game of baseball in the backyard. She was a great baseball player. Often she stayed overnight at our home in Wisconsin for the holidays. Early in the morning, we could find Aunt Cookie and Elizabeth sitting on the couch playing poker. Aunt Cookie was a woman of courage who took it upon herself to stop the sale of drugs on the school street corner. She was a woman of charity who organized a food pantry with a wonderful group of volunteers. She was a woman of hope who realized the importance of education, teaching all her life, which included an adult education program in her later years. Most of all, she was a woman of love.

Bill Rice, Nancy's husband.

As Nancy mentioned, we have very special memories of Aunt Cookie over the years. We would see her often throughout the year and on holidays. One of our fondest memories of Aunt Cookie was of the cards she would send recognizing an event in our lives such as a birthday or anniversary. The thoughts contained in those cards were different depending on the occasion, but the basic message always referred to things that were really important in our life. Aunt Cookie always mentioned how grateful she was to have us in her life. She was grateful for all the family and friends in her life including all of the people here today. Aunt Cookie would always include the message "You are in my prayers" in every card she sent. She loved her faith, she lived her faith, and she believed deeply in the power of prayer. Every time she sent a card, it would end with the phrase "Lots of love." She loved people and she lived for other people. While she believed in the power of prayer, she didn't just rely on the power of prayer, sitting back and hoping for good things to happen. She was also a doer. She spent her time and energy helping others and making good things happen, as so many can and probably will attest to. We always referred to her as Aunt Cookie. However, she referred to herself as Sister Marion and always signed her cards "Sister Marion, BVM." That's who she was. Aunt Cookie was a grateful person who loved her faith and lived her faith, who loved others and lived for others, and who loved being a BVM.

Bob Murphy, Nephew

Over the past months, my aunt – Sister Marion as you know her, Aunt Cookie as we know her –always introduced me as her brother when we were visiting. The Irish genes are quite strong, as you might know, and I happen to look like my father who is also named Bob. But, I am her nephew, not her brother. Although, she really was like a mother to Darlene, my wife, and I. We had many good times together. We would talk on the phone almost every Sunday night and try to catch up on what was going on in her life. She was always more interested in what was going on in our lives, particularly with our sons and our four grandchildren. It was evident to us in her life that she lived the BVM Core Values – justice, charity, education and freedom. We particularly knew her relative to her efforts in education and in charity. We would occasionally come to visit and spend time with her at the Westside classroom assisting her and volunteering with her and Sister Otilie. It was a very special time with her. We enjoyed that because afterwards we always had the opportunity to go to Hawkeyes Sports Bar in Little Italy with Sisters Theresa, Mary Angela, Otilie, and others occasionally. They always remembered us from one year to the next as we came back. We had a lot of fun there. It was always rewarding to see what was happening in that classroom and the progress the students would make. I'm sure many of them went on to receive their GEDs.

We are from California. My aunt did not like to fly. She would make every effort to avoid flying if she could take a train or a bus. Regardless of that, she would always come to visit us. Over the years, we enjoyed many good times like swimming in the pool in the backyard. We used to have two very large dogs. She really did not like dogs at all. She would sit on the couch and I would tease her. The dogs would come up and sit next to her. At the food pantry,

today is actually the day they are distributing the turkeys at the food pantry. We, along with our sons and grandchildren, were there a couple of times to help her. One time the truck was late delivering the turkeys; I think they were always late. She was very frustrated. She was a very loving person, as we all know, but she was also very much in charge. She knew what she wanted and it had to be that way. We always made sure it got done. The truck was late with the turkeys. It arrived and she counted. We were short 100 turkeys. She is in a panic. "I gave tickets out. What are we going to do?" I said, "Don't worry. I'll go to the Jewel down the street and buy 100 turkeys for you." Then, she looks at the boxes and determines there are three turkeys in each box instead of the two that she thought, so they were all there after all. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your friendship and love for my aunt.

Darlene Murphy, Bob's Wife.

I have countless memories of Aunt Cookie. We used to go down to Riverside together to visit Aunt Mary. Aunt Mary's favorite thing to do was go to the casino. We would get on the bus and go to the casino. One time I looked over and Aunt Cookie was at the slot machine. I thought, "Oh, my goodness! Can a nun be at a slot machine?" I went up to her and said, "Aunt Cookie, are you allowed to do this?" She said, "I just can't keep the money." Countless other memories of passing out the turkeys, going to Hawkeyes. She was a woman who was a true example of humanity. She was loving and compassionate. She always cared about our lives as much as we cared about hers. I will never forget coming to Mount Carmel, visiting her, going out to dinner with the sisters, and being part of all of that. The memories we have of her are priceless. We are so lucky that we were able to have her in our lives. Our fondest memories are of her Sunday calls. I really considered her my mentor. We would talk about everything. We would talk about her sisterhood, problems in my family that she would help us through. She was so dear to us. Even though her title was Sister Marion Murphy/Aunt Cookie, to us in our hearts, she was our mother.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I have a letter from Linda Tormey who met Marion five years ago when she started volunteering at the food pantry. Linda regrets not being here today, but today is the day the food pantry is giving out the turkeys.

Linda Tormey, (Read by Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM)

Although you served God in many varied roles, you remain to me a teacher at heart. I learned that making the Gospel real is what motivated you. I learned what commitment to the poor looked like. You were a lamp in the darkness of poverty for our clients. I learned that sacrificing for others was how you lived your life. I am accepting that it is far more important that we honor you today in Chicago by carrying on your legacy of love. What a synchrony that your funeral is on turkey day. Your work and love lives on.

Linda Lavery, Food Pantry Director (Read by Sister Sheila O'Brien, BVM)

I'm glad that Sister Marion is at rest in the arms of the infinite. When Patricia Kerr, BVM called me yesterday, she said, "Marion waited to die on a Thursday, a pantry day. We here in Chicago felt very close to Marion and immediately prayed for her. Unfortunately, her services are Tuesday and we will be distributing Thanksgiving turkeys. I felt so disappointed not being able to attend her memorial service and mass, but then elated when I realized what a better way to honor Marion by making sure our clients are served for Thanksgiving. We will be carrying out her legacy. I just sent Marion a Thanksgiving card thanking her for her influence and presence on my personal journey. One of my current books speaks to my heart about our journey. We've become so identified with our passing personality that we forget that we are much vaster beings. We are infinite essences having the experience of a finite adventure. I'm so grateful to have been part of Marion's finite adventure. I know I will continued to be blessed by her infinite essence.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM

I go back with Marion to 1957 when we lived together in Portland, Ore. During that year, if you can imagine, they were enlarging the convent. They bought the house next door. The lady who had owned the house next door has a hundred rose bushes. I would say that Marion and I were the only people in Portland who prayed for rain on a

Saturday afternoon. The reason we did was that it became our job to weed the roses. Remember in 1957, we still had the hoods. We crawled between the rows of roses making sure all the weeds were pulled. Marion and I could still laugh over that. One other thing. If you notice a picture in the back where it looks like a bunch of nuns are standing on water. That's Spirit Lake before Mount St. Helen erupted.

Sister Donard Collins, BVM

I lived with Marion at Blessed Sacrament from 1969 to 1975. One of the things that most impressed me about Marion was her deep respect and love for our elderly sisters. We've heard much about how she practice social justice, but her sense of humor is something I would like to share with you. At Blessed Sacrament, the ceiling tiles were falling down in the community room. She mentioned to the pastor that something had to be done about the ceiling tiles. Nothing was done for a while. He was a good man, but nothing was done about those ceiling tiles. One night, Marion had me lie down on the sofa. We took tiles that had fallen and I was covered with tiles. She called the pastor and told him that he really had to come over to check out this ceiling problem. Father came over, checked the ceiling, checked me and then we had to admit that this was just a put-up act. However, he had the tiles and the tiling done in no time at all. She knew how to get things done.

Tram (Also speaking for Tuyen, Liem and Diem)

On behalf of my sisters Sister Tuyen, Sister Diem, Sister Liem and I am Sister Tram, we are the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters. All the students in my school calls us BVM sisters. Today, we would like to share something about Marion. We would like to thank God and the BVM congregation who gave us the opportunity to live with Sister Marion for almost two years from 2016 until now. We really had happy times with her. She inspired us a lot to serve and to live. She was so brave and generous to share the last two years of her life to help us. We appreciate the many wonderful things that she has done for us. When she lived with us, she also sacrificed so much to live our culture, our language, challenges, and many difficulties. We know that it was not easy, but we never saw her complain about anything. She always spoke beautiful words like "You are so good," "This is wonderful," and "You can do that." The words motivated us so much. She really set a great example about the love of God for us. She stayed with us until we finished our homework. Sometimes it was really late until ten or eleven. She asked us, "Do you need help, Tram or Tuyen, or Liem or Diem?" "Yes, Ba (Grandmother) Marion." In the early morning, she waited to say good-bye to us before we went to school. In the afternoon, Ba Marion welcomed us home with her brilliant smile. All this made us very happy and we had more energy every day. We prayed many times that we wanted to live with her all the time we are here until we go back to Viet Nam because we love her so much. We believe that God loves her too and God knows heaven is the best place for her now. Thanks, Ba Marion, for your companionship, your love and your support for the last two years. You are in our minds, our hearts, and our prayers forever.

Jim Murphy, Nephew

I have so many good memories of Aunt Cookie. When we were growing up in Rolling Meadows, Ill., she would always come out to visit. I always loved when she'd come out and looked forward to that. I remember that she pulled me around on the toboggan through the deep snow across the front yards. I had six older siblings, but it was always Aunt Cookie out there pulling me. I would say, "Faster, faster, faster." I moved to Arizona in 1988. I am married and have four children. Whenever she would visit and whenever we would talk, that seemed to be a great memory for her too because she would always bring that up. I think she's told that story to all of my kids about how I always asked her to go faster pulling me threw that snow. When she came out to visit us in Arizona, as Bob mentioned, she didn't like to fly and she wouldn't fly, so she would take the bus. I really didn't understand that at first. Sometimes the bus would be terribly delayed or break down. I went to pick her up at the Phoenix station one time. It ended up being the middle of the night because it had broken down. She was just as cheerful as can be when I picked her up. She didn't look at it as a bad thing. She told me how she talked to the people on the bus with her. She just made the most of everything. She was a good example of how we should live and how we should treat people. We need get to know people and look on the bright side of things. When she visited us, we didn't have an extra bedroom for her so she'd sleep on the couch. She seemed happy to do that. As Bob mentioned, she wasn't crazy about dogs. We always had a bunch of them. I know that in the middle of the night,

they were jumping up on that couch and probably lying right on top of her. She always came back and said that she would be happy to sleep on the couch. We saw her in June. We are really happy we go to see her then. I will always remember the great example she set for my family and me and for all of us.

Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM

I am very grateful for my 14 years working with Marion and with Otilie Sana at the Westside Center. I remember like yesterday calling her up because we had been approved as a ministry site. However, we needed some livelier blood there, people with more energy. Mary Remi Caldwell, Francilla Kirby and myself decided that we would call Marion and Otilie and ask if they would come and join us. Fortunately, they all said yes. I particularly remember my call to Marion. I was so happy that she was open to the idea as she was planning to leave Sante Maria del Popolo after her sixth year there. We worked together in the Westside Center. The day the bishop and Father Nevans came over to talk to us about one of us serving as pastoral coordinator, we all looked to Marion. Fortunately, once again, Marion said yes. She served wonderfully at a very difficult time in that parish. I am very grateful for those many, many years and the time here at Mount Carmel living with her and being with her in her last days. Thank you, God. Thank you, Marion.