



Eulogy of Sister Mary Jeroma Day, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, March 28, 2019

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Mary Jeroma Day.

Veronica Mary Day was born in St. Paul on Oct. 12, 1938, to John and Veronica Kennelly Day who farmed near Lake Elmo, Minn. She was the fifth of seven children and joined brothers John, Jerome, Robert and Bernard. Siblings Margaret and Richard completed the family.

Veronica attended public school through sixth grade. She travelled the seven miles to Stillwater every Wednesday for catechism with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ), her maternal aunt's congregation.

Veronica finish her elementary education at St. Michael in Stillwater. She first heard the call to religious life in the seventh grade. She started working in a bakery doing dishes and later moved to salesperson to save enough money to attend the CSJ Catholic boarding high school in St. Paul. Unfortunately, when Veronica was in eighth grade, the Day family house burned down so she started her secondary education at the public school in Stillwater

However, Veronica's dream of attending a Catholic high school remained alive. One day during her freshman year, she spotted a small ad in the Catholic diocesan newspaper for Our Lady of Peace in St. Paul, Minn. SM Adorinus McGuire, superior at OLP, registered Veronica for her sophomore year. She once recalled that Veronica was not only her baptismal and her mother's name, but also the name of the first BVM she met in person – SM Veronica Reilly, a music teacher at OLP.

Veronica's call to religious life only strengthened during her years at OLP, as did the decision to enter the BVM congregation. Being rather shy and concerned about the response, Veronica sought the assistance of SM Joan Frances Crowley to help break the news to her mother.

Veronica entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1956, received the name Mary Jeroma upon her reception on March 19, 1957. She professed her first vows on Feb. 2, 1959, but never forgot the advice of novice mistress Sister Mary (Leo) Hogan. "Don't take your vocation for granted. Pray every day until you die for perseverance." Her advice beautifully ties into St. Paul's words: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (Timothy 4:5b-8).

After profession, Jeroma studied at Mundelein College in Chicago where she earned a bachelor's degree in biology. Her first mission was to St. Agnes in Phoenix. "My training in elementary education was for middle grades," she wrote. "What a shock to be assigned to first grade! I was very fortunate to inherit a classroom fully equipped . . . and an experienced 'buddy' teacher [SM Malcolm Barnes], who walked me through each day's agenda." The most exciting event of her first year was companioning the principal, SM Joseph Dunphy, on a plane ride with her priest-pilot friend. "We flew low enough to see clearly, not only the buildings of St. Agnes, but the lines full of clothes I had hung out that morning!"

Jeroma also taught elementary students at Incarnation in Glendale, Calif., and religious education at St. Anthony in Casper, Wyo., and St. James in Douglas, Wyo. While at Incarnation, she completed her master's degree in

Library Science from Simmons College in Boston. She served as media center coordinator at Our Lady of Angels in Chicago and at the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, S.D., as librarian and resource assistant at Clarke College in Dubuque, and was part of the resource staff at St. Vincent in Petaluma, Calif.

Jeroma earned a master's degree in pastoral ministry from St. Mary's College in Winona, Minn., in 1993. She was a pastoral minister in Iowa at St. Mary in Guttenberg, Mother Cabrini in Richland, St. Joseph in Pleasant Plain and South Center Catholic Common in Chariton. She also ministered at St. Leo in Hibbing, Minn.; Freelance Ministry, Inc., in Winona, Minn.; St. Patrick in Elroy, Wis.; Carroll County Catholic Mission in Huntingdon, Tenn.; and Sacred Heart and Delta Dominican Ministries in Rosedale, Miss.

Jeroma returned to the Dubuque area in 2009, living in a rental property at Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey. She volunteered with the Trappistine Sisters making candy and staffing their bookstore. She also joined the BVM Heritage Society and served first as its secretary for eight years and then as chair for two years. She stepped down as chair when her health deteriorated but remained involved as long as she was physically able.

Jeroma was very conscious of the plight of people who lived in poverty. She dressed simply and didn't like to spend money. She enjoyed simple things like cooking and baking and being out in nature. She was particular; she knew what she wanted and, with her twinkling Irish eyes and a quick flash of her broad smile, she often got her wish. Letter writing was very important to her; she never forget to acknowledge the people she knew on the special occasions in their lives.

Jeroma shared her vocational calling during Catholic Sisters Week celebrations in 2017. She became very emotional when she talked about "coming back home" to Mount Carmel in 2015. She loved living in the Motherhouse and being pastorally present to the residents. Her exuberance for ministering to the elderly, homebound, sick and dying is undeniable.

In 2014, at the urging of a Trappistine sister, Jeroma spent three amazing months immersed in monastic life at the Tautra Mariakloster Monastery in Norway. "There is so much beauty surrounding us," she wrote. "I am continually in awe." Nonetheless, joining the sisters for the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist remained the highlight of every day.

The words Jeroma shared with us before leaving for Norway are apt today as we celebrate her entrance into eternal life. "As I embark on this 'once in a lifetime' experience, I travel with a heart full of gratitude for the loving, prayerful support I am receiving from the BVMs and the Trappistines! Please pray for me, as I, too, will pray God's Spirit of energy and love be with each of you."

Rest in peace, Jeroma.