



Eulogy of Sister Anita Therese Hayes, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, April 17, 2019

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Anita Therese Hayes.

Mary Hayes was born on Nov. 12, 1922, in Cascade, Iowa. She was the second child and first daughter of Cyril and Viola (Stanton) Hayes. She joined her brother Joseph and was followed by siblings Rita, Kathleen, James, Therese and Mary Monica. Mary attended St. Martin School and worked for a year after graduation at the St. Joseph Sanitarium at Clarke College.

Discerning a call to the religious life, she applied to the BVM congregation writing, "Nothing could make me happier than to be doing God's work and fulfilling His reason for my creation." She entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1941, and received the name Anita Therese at her reception on March 19, 1942. She professed first vows on March 19, 1944, and lived 77 years as a BVM.

Anita Therese was missioned as a primary teacher at Blessed Sacrament in Chicago, St. Patrick in Tama, Iowa; St. Anthony in Davenport and Dubuque, Iowa. Realizing her leadership and administrative abilities, she was later missioned as the superior and a teacher at St. Patrick in Lead, S.D. and St. Paul in Burlington, Iowa.

From 1976 to 1982, Anita Therese served as the Motherhouse administrator. "They were six beautiful years," shared Anita Therese. "There were many celebrations, jubilees, birthdays, receptions and vow day celebrations. Each was special . . . We had many laughs and a few tears. I cherish all of them." She next served the congregation for two years at Guadalupe College in Los Gatos, Calif., followed by six years as regional representative. "Those were all special years and I am grateful for the experience and friendships that were formed during that time," she wrote. During this time, she honed her skill in knowing just the right thing to support the sick and comfort those with memory loss.

In 1991, Anita Therese returned to Dubuque to become the BVM Archivist, a position she held for 13 years. During her tenure, she oversaw the microfilming of documents from the earliest days of the congregation and updated the policy book for handling materials. She also organized the Iowa Conference of Catholic Institutions to promote sharing of information. In 2015, on the 25th anniversary of the Archivists of Congregations of Women Religious (ACWR), she was honored as one of its nine founding members. One of the charter members described her as the "rock" of the Iowa Conference of Archivist of Catholic Institutions/Consortium of Religious Archives. She went on to comment, "For such a little lady, she's a very big rock."

Even after retiring, Anita continued to volunteer in the Archives as a researcher until the day she died. About her work in the Archives she wrote, "Each day is different and I enjoy the work. It is a joy to help people who are doing genealogical research, searching for former BVM teachers, helping with school or parish reunions, or assisting someone who just wants to get in touch with a favorite teacher. . . . I face each day with passion. It is a gift to be able to work in the 'treasury' of the BVM Congregation, to touch priceless manuscripts and photos of our loved BVMs." In a recent nomination by Deanna Carr, BVM for the Sister M. Claude Lane, OP Memorial Award for significant contributions in the field of religious archives, Anita was celebrated for having "kept the value and necessity of Congregational archives very much on the front burner." The nomination also noted she was

“humble enough to admit some momentary forgetfulness and confident enough to suggest further resources for a scholar’s research project.”

In 2009, Anita Therese was recognized by the Operation New View Community Action Agency for her nine years of service as a board delegate for the Dubuque Area Congregations United (DACU). Even after this recognition, Anita continued serving as a BVM representative to DACU and until just a few years ago, walked in the annual CROP Hunger Walk in Dubuque.

Anita’s cheerful disposition and her inclination to help, and then help some more, are well known by all. Many also knew of her baking skills and delighted in her delicious cakes and other treats. A lesser-known fact is her love to clean; some have remarked she should have won prizes for housekeeping!

Anita enjoyed life, every drop of it. Whether tapping her toes while watching Irish dancers, singing in the schola, talking with donors as part of the Sisters Development Network, or offering greetings as she walked down the hall, Anita left sunshine and happiness in her wake.

On her diamond jubilee, Anita Therese reflected, “Looking back over the past, I am filled with gratitude. I was born . . . to a loving and caring family and received an excellent education from the [BVMs] . . . The novitiate years were exciting and challenging [and I] developed lasting friendships. . . I have been truly blessed and thank God every day for all my grace-filled years. I do look forward to the future with the greatest hope. After the example of Mary Frances Clarke, I believe that as we all work together; all will be well. Truly all will be well.”

Borrowing the words of St. Paul, “we give thanks to our God at every remembrance of you, Anita, praying always with joy in our every prayer for you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now.” There is probably no more fitting way to sum up Anita Therese than the way she described every sister she spoke about: “She was a darling.”

“Glory be to God!”