



Eulogy of Sister Jeanne F. Fielding, BVM (Chabanel)

Marian Hall Chapel, Aug. 28, 2019

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Jeanne Fielding.

Jeanne Sheeran was born on Sept. 5, 1921, in Milwaukee, the only child of Frank and Estelle Fielding Sheeran. Her mother was a successful dramatist and her father a mechanic. When Jeanne was just ten months old, her parents separated. Not long after their divorce, her mother, sadly, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Jeanne's maternal grandparents, Charles and Catherine Fielding, were entrusted with her care. They adopted her and changed her last name to Fielding. With the sudden death of her grandfather followed by the death of her mother, Jeanne and her grandmother moved to Toronto to live with her grandmother's unmarried brother. When Jeanne was thirteen, her grandmother died and she went to live with her grandaunt Rose. In her autobiography, Jeanne wrote, "It was a very hard time for me but ... Aunt Rose brought me through this traumatic period . . . I finished by growing up in a very loving environment."

Jeanne attended Catholic schools and after graduation took a job at an insurance company, where she worked for eight years. In the evenings, she would go to the Jesuit Seminary to volunteer with their Sacred Heart radio program. "During that time I had a very happy social life," she wrote, "[yet] this idea I should be a nun never left me. Then came the question, 'What community? Father Dan Lord, who was a Jesuit and had a special interest in guiding the young, came to Toronto on a lecture tour. . . . We discussed my vocation and finally decided on the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This was the community which had educated my mother [at Gesu and Holy Angels in Milwaukee]."

Jeanne entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1948, and received the name Chabanel upon her reception on March 19, 1949. She professed her first vows on August 15, 1951, and lived 70 years as a BVM.

Jeanne taught in the primary grades for seventeen years with missions at St. Ferdinand, St. Callistus and St. Jerome in Chicago; St. Eulalia in Maywood, Ill.; St. Ellen in Emmetsburg, Iowa; and Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y. While in Hempstead, Jeanne also worked as a sales clerk at a department store and an office clerk in an insurance agency in order to finance the completion of her master's degree in secondary education in 1973.

Jeanne moved to Wright Hall in Chicago and found work as a secretary for the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology and later for the Department of Survey Research at the University of Illinois. "It was a good job," she wrote, "but I did not have a strong relationship with education and this I missed." Continuing her job search, she accepted a secretarial position with the Dental Library at Northwestern University where she remained for fifteen years. "It was a great job and I enjoyed every minute."

Jeanne retired in 1991 and temporarily moved to Mount Carmel in 2000 to recover from a broken ankle. While here, she discovered that she had cancer and decided to make the move permanent, commenting, "This is a wonderful place. I receive wonderful care."

Jeanne had a flair for dressing professionally. A friendly person, she enjoyed talking with others and was always pleasant and gracious in her interactions. She appreciated the beauty of nature and artistic expression, especially the works of BVM artists displayed in our hallways.

Being an orphan, for all practical purposes, Jeanne turned to her heavenly parents. "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are" (1 John 3:1). As an infant, Jeanne was consecrated to Mary. With the loss of her mother, she developed a great devotion to our Blessed Mother, often praying all twenty mysteries of the Rosary daily. An articulate woman, she wrote extensively about her spiritual life, including a booklet titled *Little Meditations on the Mysteries of the Rosary*, sending the proceeds to assist Sister Ann Credidio, BVM in her ministry to people with Hansen's disease in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Despite the many difficulties Jeanne faced in her young life, she became a spiritual seeker in her adult years. She sought knowledge, truth and justice for "in keeping [God's] commandments, statutes and ordinances . . . the Lord, your God, will bless you" (Deuteronomy 30: 16). She was strong in her convictions, perspectives and beliefs.

"I was thinking of happiness and feeling slightly sorry for myself [as] I was looking at my early losses," Jeanne wrote. "I thought of the life of our Divine Lord . . . Real happiness comes from love [and] love is a virtue [that] gives us a share in the life of God. So each time we bring happiness into another person's life, we give them a share in the life of God." This is what Jeanne strived to do in her own unique manner.

After receiving her acceptance letter from the BVM community, Jeanne wrote, "It brought such unspeakable joy that I am sure Heaven must be like this." Jeanne now shares the promised peace of Christ. May her heavenly joy far surpass her greatest hope.