



Wake Stories of Jeanne F Fielding, BVM (Chabanel)

Marian Hall Chapel, Aug. 28, 2019

Joan (Hubbert) Miller, Ottawa, Canada, Cousin

Dear Cousin Jeanne, I have decided to write a letter to you, as letters, (and some phone calls) are how we communicated. My earliest memory of you is when you came to Toronto in the mid-1950s. I was about 8 years old. As my branch of the family is not Roman Catholic I was thrilled to have two nuns visiting my house in their habits. I must confess that your clothing was my only memory of that visit so long ago.

We have to fast-forward about 40 years for our next encounter, though it was not in person. I had taken an interest in genealogy and was trying to find all of the descendants of our great-grandparents, Richard Fielding and Elizabeth Anna Nuttall. My grandfather is James Fielding and your grandfather is his brother Charles Fielding, making us second cousins. Through much searching, I discovered that you were living in Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, and so I phoned you. That was the beginning of years of correspondence mostly by mail, with one or two annual phone conversations. You shared with me your life story, and many Fielding family stories including your memories of my grandparents, my mom, and some of my aunts and uncles. You shared your interests and concerns, and read about my family, my husband, my daughters, and their families.

Last year you called to say that you were going to celebrate your 70th Jubilee and that I would be receiving an invitation in the mail. After minimal consultation, our cousin Barb (Fielding) Temme, who lives in Florida, and I decided to help you celebrate your big day. It was a big day for us as well! (This would only be the second time we had met in person). You had often told me how beautiful Mount Carmel is and I have to agree with you. The ceremony was wonderful, and I truly enjoyed it.

As I say 'goodbye for now', I reflect on your wisdom, your knowledge, your dedication and your interest in the family. Thank you for being my Cousin and my Friend. Love, Cousin Joan.

Larry Keller, Eureka, Mo., Former Student

I was taught by Sister Jeanne at St. Ferdinand's in Chicago in 1951, when I was in first grade. We remained in contact until her death this past Saturday, August 24. When I was in the upper grades at St. Ferdinand, I would help her set up her classroom. I attended high school across the street from St. Ferdinand's and would stop by and visit Sister Jeanne. She really cared about us as students. She often referred to us as "honey" and "sweetie" and did not make any difference how old we were she still referred to us as "honey" and "sweetie." She was gentle but firm. She taught us the love of Jesus and Mary. She was deeply proud of being a BVM. In later years, I would visit her at Wright Hall and eventually at Dubuque. I was honored to attend her 70th Jubilee last September at Mt Carmel. We never argued but she would shower me with all of her writings and I know she thought that I was a bit too liberal but she always respected me and always had unconditionally care for me. She called me regularly. I have wonderful memories of Sister Mary Chabanel, as we knew her at St. Ferdinand's. Sister knew my mother well and recruited my mom as a driver for the Sisters at St. Ferdinand's. I am so pleased that we remained friends over all these years. I am a better man because she shared her love of the Church and our Catholic faith with me. God bless you, Sister Jeanne Fielding, BVM. I know you were delighted to meet Jesus and Mary face to face and to be reunited with your parents on August 24. Rest in peace!

Sister Judith Callahan, BVM

I would like to share two stories that share two characteristics that were part of her eulogy – her strong convictions and her prayerfulness. The first refers back to 2008 shortly after Barack Obama was elected. At that time, I was pushing wheelchairs and she was one of my customers from Marian Hall to the Wellness Center. Every week, she had something pretty nasty to say about Barack Obama. After about five weeks of the same thing, one day when we passed through the dining room, I stopped the chair, stood in front of her, put my face in front of her face, and said, “Jeanne, we are not going to move one inch until you say something positive about Barack Obama.” It totally threw her a curve and she remained silent. Finally, she dug into her brilliant mind and came up with this. “I think he’s a very good family man.” I said, “Good enough. Let’s go.” The second refers to a more recent concern of hers. It’s about our future planning and our identification with the Presbyterians. She was very concerned about it. She asked me, “Does this mean we all have to become Presbyterians?” I said, “No, Jeanne, it doesn’t. It means we are all going to enjoy a variety of faith expressions and we will all grow from them. By the way, Jeanne, they don’t have to become Catholic either.” Her strong convictions. She was surrounded by many people who held very different convictions. However, she was faithful to her spirituality and to her prayerfulness. Even though many people would disagree with her, she still held her convictions. I think many of those convictions came out of a deep prayer life. I wonder if I have the courage to be a woman of my own convictions in thought, in word and in action as she certainly was. She had a salty personality. I loved her and I will miss her.

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

I lived with Jeanne Fielding in the late 1960s at Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y. This was at the time when Jeanne stopped her ministry of education and went into sales and secretarial work in Hempstead. She also, at the time, was pursuing her master’s degree at Hofstra University. All of us know Jeanne pretty well. I was so amazed this morning that when I sat down to pray and reflect upon the regular readings for this day that the psalm response was “You have searched me and you know me.” When I think of Jeanne, I think of her as a seeker. She was constantly seeking truth, love, affirmation, clarity. Our God has searched Jeanne, knows her and loves her. All of us have had a feeling within our hearts that when after a lecture or presentation and someone asked, “Are there any questions or comments?” Jeanne’s hand would go up and many of us would gulp and think, “Oh my, what is she going to ask?” But it was always authentic and true to Jeanne. She was constantly seeking the truth. For all of that, we can be grateful. We know Jeanne has been searched out by God and is known and loved forever.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

Jeanne was a very loving person. We both like to discuss. However, both of us were on our own path. One day, while discussing some religion or dogma, we were going at it pretty well. When the meal was over, I stood up and said good night to her. She said, “Are we still friends?” I said, “Always.”

Sister Eileen Fuchs, BVM

One of Jeanne’s very strong convictions was her devotion to the Right to Life. She was very proud of the fact that she talked a young woman out of having an abortion. To have memories of Jeanne and not to speak of the Right to Life movement would do her an injustice because it was one of her very strong convictions.

Mary Kreinbring, Chicago, Friend

I met Jeanne in 1985 when she was working at the Northwestern Dental School. She was already there when I started working there. Eventually, I became the director of the library. I worked with her until she retired; we kept in touch afterwards. She was always pleasant to work with; she always had a positive outlook on life. She enjoyed her work and working with people. She enjoyed the parties at Northwestern. She got along with everybody. She always had a smile on her face. One could tell that she loved being of service.

I actually had three connections with BVMs other than being taught by them in grade school. My aunt, Sister Ann Geraldine Manemann, was a BVM, as well as her good friend, Sister Gertrude Garry, and then Jeanne. One by one, they retired to Wright Hall in Chicago, and one by one, they retired here to Mount Carmel. I would visit them first

at Wright Hall and then at Mount Carmel. My aunt passed away and then Sister Gertrude passed away. Jeanne has been here for about another fifteen years. She was the last of the Triumvirate. My boyfriend, Blaise, and I have been together for 20 some years. He has known her almost as long as I have. I am from Clinton, Iowa, so I would come to Iowa often. If we were nearby, we would always stop to see Jeanne. We don't have relatives here anymore, but we would come back to the state and see her once or twice a year, usually around her birthday in September and around Christmas. We would stay an hour or so and always bring her a little something. She was always so very glad to see us. She always had a smile on her face and a positive attitude. We could tell her health was failing over the last few years, but she never complained about it. We would talk for an hour, but I would try to avoid politics; I knew we didn't agree. It was so much fun to see her and talk with her again. Even if we discussed the same subjects over and over again on every visit, it didn't matter. It was just good to be with her.

Even though she had challenges in her early years, you could tell she really enjoyed being a BVM. She enjoyed the teaching and working at Northwestern. She enjoyed her life and the community. She enjoyed her relationship with God. One could see she had a real joy of life. We didn't see her last Christmas; we went to Kansas City where I have other family. I did send her a Christmas card. I was in Paris in May and sent her a postcard; I hope she got it. We got the phone call on Saturday morning that she passed away. We thought she would live to 100 she got pretty close to it. After we got the call, we left for an event in the suburbs north of Chicago, quite far from where we live. On a road that we rarely travel, we went by a very nice housing development with big gates outside. You could tell it was a very nice place to live. We happened to notice that the name was Fielding Place. I think that Jeanne is trying to tell us that she is in a very good place. We are going to miss her very much.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM, Support Services

I work in Support Services at Mount Carmel and know Jeanne from the last four years through my service here. I get to know a sister's likes and dislikes. Jeanne liked Crest toothpaste and it could not be made in any place except the U.S. She would not accept any China-made products or even ones from Mexico; it was really against what she liked. At one point, I was having a conversation with her. She always said, "Come in. Sit down. Let's have a chat." I don't know how my request for her religious name came about, but when she said Chabanel, I clearly had no connection. She said, "You know that that is the last name of one of the Jesuit martyrs in the 1600s when upstate New York and Canada boundaries were quite fluid." I said, "Well, Jeanne, I was born not too far from the Shine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y., which is near Amsterdam where both of the parents were born and raised and I was born in nearby Schenectady." We had a wonderful chat about that period in history and how she was given that name because she went to live with family in Canada. Periodically, we would refer to our common history.

Sister Martha Ryder, BVM

Jeanne and I were in the same set. We were the ones who broke-in SM Leo Hogan as both postulant and novice mistress. I remember one thing I taught Jeanne. She didn't know anything about baseball. I'm from St. Louis, so I explained everything to her. One time, she was up at bat and had a good hit. She ran straight to third base.

Mount Carmel Staff Member *(Read by Katie Pfiffner, Pastoral Services Minister)*

Before one particular evening, I had regarded Sister Jeanne as a no-nonsense woman who held scrupulous, conservative values. The night before we had had a friendly conversation centered around a controversial transgression. Unknown to her was the fact that someone close to me was struggling with this burden. Needless to say, I ended up in tears. She quickly told me that everything would be OK and wheeled herself away. The next evening, the same hour, the same place, here she wheeled again. Her timeliness was always admirable. That particular evening, she was looking only for me. Sister Jeanne told me, in no uncertain terms, that she had been wrong the night before, offering up an almost believable explanation that I'm sure compromised her 90-year-old belief system. No longer scrupulous and somewhat angelic bestowing peace and guidance. That was eight years ago and we have had many conversations since – talks about toothpaste, politics, weddings, religion, family and weather – and agree or disagree, we were always just two people, very different, but friends growing and learning

together. I will miss making you laugh and the way your eyes smiled too. Thank you for your kindness and all the thoughts you shared, but most of all, just for being you. Shared with respect, admiration and love.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM

I thing about Jeanne I will always remember is the number of Rosaries she said. If you did anything for Jeanne, she promised you a Rosary. Although many of us don't enjoy or participate in that form of prayer very often anymore, just the thought that you are always being remembered in prayer will always be a part of how I remember Jeanne.

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM

I am also a member of Jeanne's set. Whenever we would push Jeanne in her wheelchair, she would usually thank us by saying, "I will pray for your intention." Jeanne expected us to have *big* prayer intentions. She had a poster on her bedroom door that said, "Pray for the conversion of China."

Sister Carol Cook, BVM

I didn't know Jeanne well, but last summer, a year ago, I was sitting outside Marian Hall enjoying the weather. Jeanne was there in a wheelchair offering anyone who walked in a copy of her book "Little Meditations on the Mysteries of the Rosary." Most people thanked her and walked on into the building. This man walked up, stopped, and listened so intently. He was so pleased and felt so honored that he had been offered the book. I have the memory of the two of them and it is a great memory. He also promised that his wife would be coming to talk with Jeanne. Knowing that I often was not so appreciative of her book, it thrilled me to see somebody who really did appreciate the book, the offer, and being seen as somebody special. Thank you, Jeanne.

Sister Georgeann Quinlan, BVM

I have only been here a little over a year and didn't know Jeanne very well. When I was in Colorado, I did a program called "Angels Everywhere." I have been doing it here in Dubuque. Jeanne was very excited about coming to one of the programs I gave in the Studio. I wish I could remember what she shared. The program is about angels, but also about miracles – the things that happen to us that are very unusual. What I do remember about what she shared that day, it that she had a vision. I believe that; I believe all the stories I hear in the angel program. One personal thing is how similar Jeanne was to my mother who was very religious too and said at least three Rosaries a day, the more the better, go to three Masses a day, and supported the pro-life movement. I grew up with that and I identify with that. I don't agree with it, but I have a respect for it.