



Eulogy of Sister Mary Adele Henneberry, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov 12, 2019

Good morning. It is good for us to be here for the celebration of life of our Sister Mary Adele Henneberry.

Lucile Henneberry was born Aug. 21, 1927, in Chicago, the second child of John and Catherine Duffy Henneberry. An older brother Patrick, a World War II Air Force veteran who died in a 1962 automobile accident, a younger brother John, who died in 2011, and a sister Virginia completed the family.

Lucile's father, a World War I veteran, met her mother in Chicago, but decided to settle in his home state of Kansas. He was away on business frequently, leaving Catherine lonely in an unfamiliar town. "That all changed when Dad bought a piano," Lucille reminisced, "They both played well. Sometimes they played duets and I giggled over it. No wonder I was a happy child." Eventually, the family moved to Chicago where her father opened a garage and her mother kept the books.

It was Lucile's mother who directed her to the BVMs. Lucile was a senior at Immaculata HS and, as she recalled, "Nothing in my life seemed to be going right. Everything seemed to be topsy-turvy! One morning Mom wakened me as she often did by sitting on the side of my bed and asking about all that was going on in my life. When I told her my woes she said, 'Honey, I think you're trying to make up your mind to be a BVM!' And she was right, as mothers very often are! [On] the day I was at the train ready to go to Mount Carmel, Dad's parting words were, 'Remember, Smooch, the first holy card we get, I'm coming to get you!' Talk about love and understanding!"

Lucile entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1945, joining her aunt, Helena (Emilita) Henneberry, a much loved music teacher. "I entered happily knowing that my background would probably make me a music teacher." Lucile received the name Mary Adele upon her reception on March 19, 1946, and professed her first vows on March 19, 1948.

St. Paul prayed for the Ephesians, "May you be given the power through the Holy Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 4:16-17). Adele relied heavily on the Holy Spirit during her 74 years as a BVM. After profession, she was sent to St. Callistus in Chicago, about which she wrote, "Sister Helen (Reginata) O'Keefe said to me, 'Remember, the Holy Ghost mostly takes over for you during your first year of teaching – but pay attention because after that you're pretty much on your own!' Luckily, the Holy Spirit stuck with me! – and in fact, has been around pretty much ever since!"

Adele taught music, along with a few elementary grades, for 19 years. Besides St. Callistus, she was missioned at Sacred Heart in Boone, Iowa; Corpus Christi in Fort Dodge, Iowa; St. Gilbert in Grayslake, Ill.; Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y.; and Immaculata HS in Chicago. Each mission gifted her with special memories. She arrived at St. Gilbert several years after World War II where many soldiers returning home from the war decided to settle. Consequently she was greeted by large classes with as many as 75 kindergarteners, the first baby boomers. Of course, she loved it. Later at Our Lady of Loretto, she recalled that she was blessed with students who loved to sing and whose parents were very supportive. Of course, an extra bonus was the mission's close proximity to New York City allowing for big city adventures from time to time. "One of the greatest joys of my life has been the

opportunity I have had to teach music to children and to share it with others,” Adele wrote. “I pray that music will continue to brighten their lives and our own lives and will bring us all closer to God as it surely has done for me!”

Adele’s non-teaching ministries included serving as the executive director of Interfaith Program for the Elderly in Milwaukee, where she oversaw a dozen specialized services. She commented, “My horizons were broadened, my understanding deepened,” and “My friendships widened to include Baptists, Jews, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and sometimes even Catholics! I am sincerely grateful for that opportunity.” She also was the assistant manager of Vigil Light Apartments in Santa Rosa, Calif.

In 1967, under the new BVM governance model, Adele was elected as second vice president for the new Council, joining President Roberta Kuhn and first Vice President Joan Keleher Doyle. Adele was the last living member of that team.

Roberta’s address to the 1972 Senate speaks of that time: “We have completed an administrative service to the community in an epoch of tumultuous change . . . From the comparatively high ground and relative peace we look back to the swirling vortex and find some clues to our direction. Who are we? What is our charism? Our particular genius? Our weakness? Our strength? Exploring these, we find ourselves to be a practical people who lay no claim to great brilliance of style or message. We evidence a fairly pragmatic American temperament, concerned as we are with the most effective ways and means of reaching an ideal. We demonstrate a feet-on-the-ground idealism which achieves as well as theorizes. Struck by the urgency of the Christ revelation, we seek practical ways of rolling back the stone.” (*Senate Address, 1972, Sisters Roberta Kuhn, Joan Doyle, Adele Henneberry*).

As vice president, Adele traveled to visit BVMs in Hawaii, Europe, Central and South America. She represented the congregation at the official opening of the new Working Boys’ Center in Quito, Ecuador, and traveled to the Vatican to discuss the revision of our BVM *Constitutions* and to meet with leaders of other religious congregations. Later Adele served six years as Motherhouse administrator and, in her final official ministry, eleven years as Director of Liturgical Music at Mount Carmel.

Adele was a kind, sweet woman with a beautiful smile and a great sense of humor. She was gifted with intelligence, perceptivity, enthusiasm, and creativity that she used well to serve others. She knew how to free people to become their best by encouraging them with unfailing support and loving honesty. It was always a joy to be in her presence.

As she contemplated the end of her earthly life, Adele wrote, “What does my death mean to me? I hope to have deep trust in you, O God, deep enough to rely on your goodness and care. I’ve been such a spoiled child of yours all my life that I expect to be cared for and loved, but I want to return your goodness to me by dying with complete reliance on your goodness.”

We are confident, Adele, that “knowing the love of Christ, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19). Enjoy singing in the heavenly choir!