



Eulogy of Sister Deanna Marie Carr, BVM (Bernita)
Marian Hall Chapel, Jan. 8, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Deanna Marie Carr.

Deanna Marie Carr was born on May 20, 1940, in Portland, Ore., the first child of William and Lillian Messner Carr. Her sisters Bernadette, Colleen, and Judith completed the family. The Carr family moved to Seattle where Deanna attended Christ the King ES and Blanchet HS. “I love to read widely and to write just about anything from term papers to letters,” wrote a teenage Deanna. An English teacher’s dream! Her high school extra-curricular activities included managing editor and co-editor of Blanchet’s student newspaper, student chairperson for the Pacific Slope Press Conference, and school representative to the public relations committee of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. After graduating, she worked for *The Seattle Times*, writing drama and television reviews while attending Seattle University.

Deanna entered the congregation on Aug. 2, 1959, received the name Bernita at her reception on Feb. 3, 1960, and professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1962. In her welcome for her set’s golden jubilee, she shared, “We arrived in the aftermath of the Congregation’s 125th anniversary and went on to celebrate the 150th and 175th. We missed out on wearing the ‘old habit’ but made first vows in the ‘new habit’ and we made final vows in some semblance of ‘contemporary dress.’ We were young and adventuresome, but not in our wildest dreams could we have known how the world would change much less how the church would change—and not change—in our years as BVMs. The ‘exigencies of the times’ would dictate that the community, too, would change in ways that would be at once surprising, life-giving and challenging.”

After profession, Deanna earned her bachelor’s degree in English and journalism from Mundelein College in Chicago. She taught at Our Lady of Peace in Saint Paul, Minn., for several years before pursuing a master’s degree in theology from Manhattanville College in Purchase, N.Y. She completed her spirituality study at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1975.

From 1975 to 1979, Deanna served as the associate director and, later, as director of the National Sisters Vocation Conference (NSVC). The president of the NSVC board wrote, “Deanna is one of those behind the scenes master-minds who keeps all facets of NSVC on target and operating, not only in harmony with each other, but most especially with other national organizations in the Church. Her unassuming effectiveness, her priceless sense of humor, and her personal presence to people all merge into a giftedness that touches the lives of many.”

In the first reading of the funeral liturgy, the Lord says to the prophet Habakkuk, “Write down the vision . . . If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come . . .” Following serious back surgery and a long recovery, Deanna decided it was time to follow her heart, time for her vision. Combining her affinity for rural areas experiencing economic hardship and her growing desire for parish ministry in areas where sisters and priests are scarce, she landed in the Pacific Northwest with its large unchurched population and struggling mining, timber, and fishing industries.

Deanna was one of the first women pastoral administrators in Montana, serving Sts. Cyril & Methodius Parish in Stockett, including its two mission churches and a religious education center in nearby towns. She quickly gained the respect of those to whom she ministered, not only because of her skills and energy, but also by the manner

with which she handled their apprehensions. One year later, facing the closure of the parish and its missions, she guided the area Catholic community to an overwhelming commitment of time, talent, and treasure that led to the establishment of Holy Trinity Parish with one church in Centerville, where Deanna continued as pastoral administrator.

Six years later, Deanna accepted an appointment by the bishop as the coordinator of pastoral outreach for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. In this role, she worked to unify the diocesan offices of lay ministry, liturgy, religious education, and the media center to address the changing and expanding needs of parishes. In 1995, Deanna became a regional pastoral life director for the Archdiocese of Seattle. With a team of three priests, she oversaw the spiritual and material needs at six parishes in the economically distressed timber and seashore towns of Grays Harbor County.

Deanna ministered as the lay ecclesial pastoral coordinator at St. Gabriel parish in Gig Harbor, Wash, from 2002 to 2009. In 2010, to recognize her leadership in ministry and in an extensive capital campaign, the church's 60-foot bell tower was renamed the "Sister Deanna Marie Carr, BVM Bell Tower." The plaque reads, "Dedicated with loving gratitude to recognize Sister Deanna Carr . . . whose inspirational leadership fostered a dramatic renewal of faith among parishioners and brought about significant improvements to parish structure and worship spaces."

Deanna's service to the BVM congregation spans her 60 years as a BVM. She served on the preparation of new members subcommittee as the director of associates, and on the BVM Constitutions Committee for more than a decade. She ministered as the secretary to President, Mary Frances Shafer, and, in recent years, archivist and assistant archivist.

Deanna was an introvert with a critical mind and a rational, intellectual approach to every situation. She tackled challenges with grace, thoughtfulness, and more than a little humor. She was a wordsmith—creative, yet deliberately attentive to selecting the exact word.

Liturgy was at the center of Deanna's spirituality; it was her source of strength and the key to her communion with God. She was traditional yet very attentive to early liturgical reforms. She was a woman of courage with the power to speak *her* truth regardless of the prevailing opinion. Yet, the litmus test for all her decisions was simple: Is this pastoral? She worked tirelessly to serve the church and its people. The lifeblood of her ministry flowed through her counseling, her home visitations, her work with abused spouses and children, and with the chemically dependent.

"People are an enormous joy," commented Deanna. "I dearly love my family, friends and community. I am enormously grateful for the people in my life and I pray that God bless them abundantly, grant them peace, confident hope, and joy in our shared faith."

Deanna, your prayer for us is our prayer for you. May you be blessed with abundant peace and joy in the arms of your loving God.