



Eulogy of Sister Mary Ann Ruhde, BVM (Adoratrice)
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 7, 2020

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Mary Ann Ruhde.

Mary Ann Ruhde entered this world on Aug. 31, 1937, in Davenport, Iowa, the first child of William and Ruth Mary Willits Ruhde. She was later joined by two sisters, Janet and Patricia. Her father worked for a bank while her mother cared for the children. "We had a sheltered life of love and care," Mary Ann recalled. "Our mother taught us generosity while Dad always showed prayerful acceptance for [all] people." Their family vacations consisted of traveling the family triangle of Des Moines, Iowa; Madison, Wis.; and Davenport to visit relatives.

After attending public primary school, Mary Ann's Catholic education started at St. Paul the Apostle ES as a fourth grader with Sister Mary Adoratrice Belanger, her first BVM teacher. Mary Ann's eighth grade teacher, Sister Mary Madelon Smith, had a deep spiritual influence on her that continued until Madelon's death. Mary Ann's high school years at Immaculate Conception Academy found her both assuming household chores due to her mother's serious health problems and discerning a call to religious life strongly encouraged by her BVM teachers.

Mary Ann entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1955, and received the name Adoratrice upon her reception on March 19, 1956. Reflecting upon those days, she wrote, "I found life a challenge. Homesickness hit hard. My dad said, 'If you want to come home, just take the Mississippi River swim and I'll get you in Davenport.' Alas, I couldn't swim!" Consequently, Mary Ann persevered to profess her first vows on Feb. 3, 1958.

Mary Ann was part of the second group to attend the Scholasticate in Chicago, where she earned a bachelor's degree from Mundelein College in 1960. Even though she majored in history, she usually was assigned to teach English on her missions. She later completed a master's degree in elementary administration at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa.

Mary Ann ministered in elementary education for 28 years. Her first mission was St. John in Butte, Mont. "It was a grace-filled time of serving God's people," Mary Ann wrote. "As the train pulled into the station in Butte, I saw a whole group of BVM sisters waving . . . It was a great comfort given from God to know I would be working with so many of our BVMs, now my family."

Subsequent missions followed at St. Bridget in Omaha, Neb.; St. Vincent in Petaluma, Calif.; Sacred Heart in Boulder, Colo.; Sacred Heart in Maquoketa, Iowa; and Jordan Catholic in Rock Island, Ill. She also served as principal at St. Anne in East Moline, Ill., and at Sacred Heart in Maquoketa. Mary Ann especially loved her missions out west where "wonderful people and the countrysides of God's beautiful presence kept me nourished in his love."

Mary Ann became a certified nurse aide in 1988 in order to provide the best companion care for her parents that she could give. She lived in an apartment near their home and worked briefly for a home health care provider until her parents' need for assistance increased. After her mother's death in 1991, Mary Ann was hired as a cook at Assumption HS in Davenport, and became the cafeteria manager one year later. She continued to provide

companion care for her father, who had multiple sclerosis, until his death in 1998, and later cared for her sister, Janet.

Mary Ann and her good friend Louise Levandowski, BVM first became acquainted during their formation years at Mount Carmel and at the Scholasticate in Chicago. Later, they lived together in three different cities. Together they often enjoyed summer vacations, usually tour trips. Mary Ann's favorite trips were the scenic ones that included a little history along with the natural beauty. It was during their 26 years in Davenport that Mary Ann ministered as a family caregiver. In her autobiography, expressed her gratitude to Louise who "graciously joined me for BVM presence and support through many sorrowful times."

Following retirement, Mary Ann increased her volunteering as a lector, a Eucharist minister, and a prayer person in her parish. A decade later, the spiritual gifts from these ministries opened her eyes to see God was calling her to Mount Carmel. "In June 2013, Louise and I came to Dubuque where a larger wonderful family of BVMs and many beloved lay health care workers have given me a share of God's hundredfold," wrote Mary Ann. "The prayerful atmosphere grows my interior life and allows me to await God's last call to a satisfied, unbelievable, eternal life with Him."

Mary Ann found great joy in helping others. She believed people should be treated justly and spoke up when she perceived an injustice. She taught by example how to be observant and attentive to the needs of others and how to generously respond in a kind, caring, and loving manner. She knew that the simplest kindness could mean so much. When working in the Assumption cafeteria, she would often send off students with "Have a good day." One time she forgot to say it. The student simply stood there. When asked what was wrong, he replied, "You didn't say 'Have a good day.'" She never forgot again. Here at Mount Carmel, she read to the sisters on third floor every day with a clear enunciation that was appreciated. Surely they will miss this kindness.

Mary Ann had a remarkable resilience and an upbeat attitude that could not be extinguished. Acceptance and tolerance were her trademarks. While realistic about her health issues, she nevertheless tried to see the positive side. She remained disciplined through the many years she endured diabetes. When she learned she would never walk again, she didn't hide her disappointment, but she did accept it all with amazing grace.

In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul wrote, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Mary Ann's reflection upon her life reveals that throughout her 69 years as a BVM, she sought and found God in every mission, every circumstance, and every person she encountered. She will be remembered as she wanted to be remembered: "[As] a person of prayer and faithfulness, loving God and others in the BVM way of life."