



**Eulogy of Sister Joan (Magdaletta) Stritesky, BVM**  
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 27, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be here to celebrate the life of our Sister Joan Stritesky.

Joan Marie was born on May 6, 1928, in Chicago, the daughter of Frank and Gertrude Hagerty Stritesky. She joined four older siblings, Muriel, June, Robert, and John (Jackie), with her sister, Shirley, arriving later. The Stritesky family made their home in Cicero, Ill., the town made famous by Al Capone. Gertrude often warned young Joan to stay away from business establishments run by Capone.

Joan was greatly influenced by the BVMs who taught her at Mary Queen of Heaven ES in Cicero and St. Mary HS in Chicago. Immediately after graduation, Joan answered the call to religious life. She entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1946, and received the name Magdaletta upon her reception on March 19, 1947. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1949, and lived 73 years as a BVM.

Joan was missioned as an elementary teacher at St. Joseph in Rock Island, Ill.; St. Augustine in Memphis, Tenn.; and St. Paul in San Francisco. She served as principal and elementary teacher at Visitation in Des Moines, and St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs; and as principal at Sacred Heart elementary in Boulder, Colo.

Throughout the years, Joan held several diocesan positions. She worked as a consultant in the education office of the Diocese of Memphis and as the director of elementary schools in Metro Denver for the Archdiocese of Denver. As a counselor for the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Des Moines, Joan coordinated support groups to bring healing to those experiencing separation, divorce, or death of a spouse. She remarked, "This is one of most nourishing ministries I have ever been in. In this work, I can really feel the presence of Christ."

As an administrator, Joan was ahead of her times. She was a wise, competent, innovative, and effective leader who had the ability to foster team cooperation with collaboration and shared decision-making that were her trademark. She was stimulated and energized, far more than frustrated, by numerous demands, and able to respond quickly to challenges, judging fairly and acting prudently.

Joan approached her ministry with commitment and a full heart. The pastor of St. Celestine in Elmwood Park, Ill., where Joan served as director of religious education and sacramental preparation for nine years, paid tribute to her, writing "Sister Joan brought a great ability to help people experience a sense of togetherness and belonging that is community. Most of us will never know exactly how many hours Sister Joan spent listening to people tell their stories and share their sorrows. She could always be counted on to lend an ear." And in a personal note to Joan, he shared, "You have a special gift for contributing to the spirit of the group. And your outlandish actions, hats, and celebrations pay tribute to that spirit. You've made us laugh at our own seriousness on many occasions—and have been willing to be the goat when the occasion demanded it. I really do appreciate the special warmth and humanity that is so much you."

In 1993, Joan was named as the first full-time coordinator of the BVM Affiliate Program, the precursor of today's Associate Program. She approached her position with great enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment. In an effort to expand the program, she held social gatherings with informational meetings in BVM regions around the

country. While relationships existed among local affiliates, Joan worked to foster the formation of an affiliate community and launched an educational effort to inform the congregation of the nature, purpose, and importance of affiliation. She also created the commitment ritual to celebrate and honor this significant moment in the life of an affiliate. In 1995, Joan requested that the Affiliate Program become the Associate Relationship to emphasize and affirm their spiritual relationships with each other and the BVM community in the areas of prayer, service, and outreach. During Joan's six years as associate coordinator, BVM associate membership increased by 230 percent.

Joan, with her easygoing manner, was a joy to be around. She loved to tell stories—long, divergent stories with tons of unrelated details. And she could laugh at the end of the story just as much as those who heard it for the first time. Her delightful sense of humor was life-giving; no matter how bad the situation, she could find the humor in it.

Joan had the ability to see and appreciate the beauty of people. She is known for accumulating an excessive amount of apparently trivial items, but Joan saw the relationship behind each item. Giving up the item felt like giving up the relationship, and Joan would never do that. She was incredibly grateful for everyone who impacted her life.

Relationships truly were Joan's treasure. Included in that treasure was her friendship with Therese Frelø, BVM. They first lived together at St. Thomas Convent in Memphis, Tenn., in 1973. When the two of them were together, mild shenanigans and lots of laughter were sure to follow. Joan endeared herself to the Frelø family, who were deeply grateful for the loyalty, devotion, and love Joan showed Therese during her declining years, calling Joan "a truly divine constant in Therese's life."

In Joan's room was a slip of paper with one simple, yet powerful, sentence: "I will not die an unlived life." Joan was blessed with a strong faith born from confidence in God's love for her. Her chosen reading from Ephesians reflects the exuberance with which she shared this love, knowing that "the One whose power, working in [her], [could] do infinitely more than [she] could ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3: 20). We celebrate today knowing that Joan is now home, "knowing the love of Christ . . . and filled with the utter fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19).