



Eulogy of Sister Clarenita Froehlich, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, April 17, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Clarenita Froehlich.

Claire Marie was born on July 18, 1934, in Chicago as the only child of Fred and Myrtle Quade Froehlich. Her father was born in Austria, her mother in Dubuque, Iowa. Most of her elementary education was with the Resurrection Sisters at St. Thecla Elementary School. Claire had fond memories of the sisters and the girls going to the nearby St. Adalbert's cemetery recalling, "The sisters would pray and visit and we girls would run around the stones and monuments playing hide-and-seek."

Because of her mother's arthritis, the family moved to Glendale, Calif., before Claire started eighth grade. She attended and graduated from Holy Family schools in Glendale, where she became acquainted with the BVMs. "I always wanted to be a teacher," she commented. "The sisters were excellent teachers and wonderful, caring people. I wanted to be part of them."

Claire Marie entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1952, from Holy Redeemer parish in Montrose, Calif. She received the name Clarenita upon her reception on March 19, 1953, professed first vows on March 19, 1955, and lived 67 years as a BVM.

St. Paul wrote, "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to each of us . . . If you are a teacher, use your gift of teaching." (Romans 12:6,7). Clarenita was graced with the gift of teaching and she blessed countless others with that gift during her 60 years in education. She was missioned as a junior high teacher at St. Brendan in Los Angeles; Holy Redeemer in Montrose, Calif.; St. Vincent de Paul in Chicago; St. John in Des Moines; and Sacred Heart in Boone, Iowa, where she also served as principal. In addition, she ministered as principal at St. Bridget in Omaha, Neb.; St. John–St. Andrew in Melrose Minn.; and St. Michael in Sioux City, Iowa, the latter two being her favorite missions.

Clarenita and Sister Rosemunda Besch ministered together for 50 years, mostly in large urban areas. Their move to rural Minnesota placed them in a school of fewer than 100 students divided between two buildings in two towns two miles apart. The adjustment was not as difficult as one might think. "It was nice to meet the friendliness of the people," recalled Clarenita. "When you greet someone on the street, they greet you back." Yes, the friendliness helped, but so did the extraordinary dedication by parents, faculty and pastors to keep their school open. Clarenita commented, "It reminds me of the early church when all believers worked together for the good of all and shared what they had."

Twelve years later, in response to their decision to leave St. John–St. Andrew, the St. John Pastoral Council wrote, "[We] wish to express our thanks and gratitude for 'a job well done' . . . When the Sisters arrived, our [schools] were in crisis. The Sisters turned the whole school situation around. This is brought to our attention every year by the number of [our] students who excel in academic and extracurricular activities at the Melrose Public Schools."

After leaving Minnesota, Clarenita and Rosemunda moved to Sioux City, Iowa, to be closer Rosemunda's family. Through the years, with no immediate family of her own, Clarenita joined Rosemunda and her family for special

celebrations. Clarenita easily won the hearts of the Besch family, who considered her one of their own. One of Rosemunda's nieces even introduced Clarenita to her friends as her aunt. Clarenita always expressed great interest in the lives of the Besch family and loved them dearly. She was never judgmental and always supportive—a gentle woman and a true loyal friend.

Clarenita retired in 2001 but maintained a presence in the elementary schools by volunteering. One teacher, who happened to be a former student, commented, "I have never known anyone so patient and kind. It has been such a gift to have [her] in my classroom." Driving individuals to appointments, visiting and praying for the sick, and consoling the grieving were other ways she continued to minister to her local Sioux City community. When not volunteering, Clarenita enjoyed reading, keeping up with the latest events, baking, growing flowers, sewing, embroidery, and Sudoku.

After 28 years in Sioux City, the decision by Clarenita and Rosemunda to return to the Motherhouse in 2018 was a difficult one. "I will miss the care, concern, thoughtfulness and kindness of the people of [the parish, the school] and the surrounding area," lamented Clarenita. Their departure ended a 137-year BVM presence in Sioux City itself and a 157-year presence in that diocese.

At the time of her 60th jubilee, Clarenita shared, "Religious life has given me the opportunity to be a part of the BVM congregation and to work with prayerful, dedicated, supportive, and loving women who are striving to bring God's message and love to all. It has also given me the opportunity of serving in various areas of our country with many diverse groups of children and adults who have greatly enriched my life." During an interview for the Year of the Consecrated Life, Clarenita commented, "My greatest joy in my vocation has been being able to spread God's word, love, and joy to his people."

With deep gratitude for the gift that Clarenita has been in lives of so many, we rejoice that she now dwells at peace in our Creator's house.