



**Eulogy of Sister Mary L. (Charlotte) Stokes, BVM**  
Marian Hall Chapel, May 6, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Mary L. Stokes.

Mary L. Stokes was born on Dec. 26, 1921, the first child of Daniel and Margaret Moloney Stokes of Chicago. Siblings Catherine, Geraldine, and Daniel followed. Mary's mother was born in Ireland while her father was born in Pennsylvania and was employed as a sergeant with the Chicago Police Department.

After Mary graduated from St. Brendan Elementary School and Visitation High School, she attended Mundelein College majoring in French and minoring in English and history. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1944. Considering a religious vocation throughout most of her adolescence, she finally requested permission to enter the BVM community writing, "I wish to become a Sister so that I can love and serve God solely, entirely, and as perfectly as possible." Mary entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1944, and received the name Charlotte upon her reception on March 19, 1945. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1947, and lived 75 years as a BVM.

After profession, Mary taught eighth grade at St. Ambrose in Des Moines, Iowa, until September when she was sent to teach secondary classes at St. Paul in San Francisco, Calif. Missions at St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines, Iowa; St. Mary Cathedral in Lincoln, Neb.; Mount St. Gertrude Academy in Boulder, Colo.; and Our Lady of Peace in Saint Paul, Minn., followed. She also ministered as a foreign language instructor at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa. Deeply dedicated to her avocation, she was an excellent French teacher who could quickly engage a class in a manner that made learning fun while still demanding excellence. She was well-loved by her students, kept in contact with many of them through the years, and enjoyed talking about them to her friends.

Although she also knew Latin and Spanish, Mary was passionate about the French language and culture. She received a Fulbright grant to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. She also studied in Tours, France, through the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), and at the Catholic University of Fribourg in Switzerland. She was an eloquent writer. As a French scholar, she translated a book for adaptation into a film documentary. In more recent years, she was called upon when a translation of a French document was needed. Obviously, Mary was very intelligent and remained mentally sharp long after retirement. Yet she was always very unassuming about her gifts.

In 1974, Mary was hired as an admissions interviewer at St. Joseph Hospital in Saint Paul. She later worked as a word processor for The St. Paul Companies, Inc., and as a data entry operator for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. She retired in Saint Paul in 1995 and moved to Wright Hall in Chicago in 2002.

Mary was kind, caring, loving and faithful in her relationships. For many years while living at Wright Hall, she would travel to the Southside of Chicago to help her sister Gerry care for their brother Daniel. Soon after his death, Gerry was the one in need of assistance. Mary would stay with her for weeks at a time, only returning to Wright Hall to check her mail. It was a difficult and exhausting period in her life. Eventually, Gerry moved to a care facility where she could receive the care she needed. Mary continued to visit her sister on a regular basis until Wright Hall closed, necessitating her moved to Mount Carmel.

Even though she was a very private person, Mary was a fun-loving soul with a number of great sayings and a wonderfully clever sense of humor. She enjoyed movies and reading, contributed well to intellectual conversations, and loved to take walks—perhaps contributing to her long life. In her *Five Wishes*, she wrote, “Know that I am grateful that I found my way to the [BVM] community. My deep gratitude to all who generously befriended or helped me along the way.”

Mary graciously accepted her life circumstances. Over the last few years, she experienced a number of health declines and rebounds. The words of hope that Jesus spoke to his disciples must have been a comfort as she patiently waited. “Don’t let your heart be troubled . . . Have faith in me . . . I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I will come back to take you with me.” (John 14:1, 3) How great her joy when Jesus carried her to her eternal home. Our love, prayers, and gratitude are with you, Mary. Until we meet again, be at peace.