



Eulogy of Sister Kathleen Marie Carr, BVM

Caritas Studio June 22, 2020

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

Kathleen Marie Carr was born Feb. 19, 1947, in Seattle to James and Genevieve Kuhry Carr. She was the oldest of five children with siblings Bill, Patrick, Mary Ann, and Michael, who died in 2012, completing the family. Kathy spent many hours of her teenage years babysitting and watching out for her siblings.

Kathy attended Christ the King Elementary School and Blanchet High School, both in Seattle. She was active in school musicals and choir, served as editor of the school newspaper, and graduated as valedictorian of her class. She also thought that her BVM teachers were the best. "The BVMs I came to know were down-to-earth women who were excellent teachers and showed great compassion, as well as a sense of humor. They [were] very real people who could laugh and have fun as well be good at what they do."

Kathy entered the congregation on July 31, 1965, from Christ the King parish in Seattle, following in the footsteps of her cousin Sister Deanna Marie (Bernita) Carr, BVM, and was received on Feb. 4, 1966. Kathy was in the last group to receive their formation at Guadalupe College in Los Gatos, Calif. A change in the approach to formation during this time allowed postulants to "grow into" the need for silence rather than imposing it from the beginning. "Alas, our group was quite extroverted," Kathy reminisced, "and eventually we had to be given more direct guidance on this matter!"

"One event weighed heavily upon me during my novitiate. My parents got divorced. Being the oldest of five children, I was very worried not only about my mother, but also about my sister and three brothers. Anne Marie Dolan, BVM, [novice mistress,] helped me greatly at this time by giving my mother phone access to me in the evenings on Anne Marie's office phone. This enabled me to support my mom and still remain in the novitiate, for which I have always been extremely grateful."

The core value of justice became deeply engrained in Kathy during her formation years as she learned about the BVM commitment to social justice and listened to stories about how BVMs marched with Cesar Chavez and the farm workers in California. A burning desire for justice remained with her for the rest of her life.

Kathy professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1968, and lived 55 years as a BVM. After profession, she was sent to the Scholasticate in Chicago to study at Mundelein College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in history with a minor in theology. She completed a master's degree in religious education from Seattle University in 1979.

Kathy ministered as a social studies teacher at Mount Carmel Academy in Wichita, Kan., and Alleman High School in Rock Island, Ill., where she served as director of Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) retreats. She had also worked as a program administrative assistant at the Career Development Center at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

After earning a master's degree in pastoral studies from Loyola University Chicago in 1988, Kathy accepted the position of director of campus ministry at Clarke University here in Dubuque, where she was drawn by "the spirit of the college, the friendliness of the people, and the quality of education Clarke offers to the students." At Clarke, Kathy offered spiritual guidance and counseling, organized retreats, and worked to bring the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt to campus. Yet, of all the activities she planned, the yearly Appalachian service trip to Harlan County, Kentucky, during Holy Week had the greatest impact. "We were constantly bombarded by the 'crosses' the people bear . . . poverty of astronomical proportions. Yet a spirit of hope, a spirit of resurrection lived on . . . in their deep faith and commitment to family, in their love of music and in the majesty of the mountains, in their simple living and sharing what little they have, in their dreams for a better life for their children."

Clarke students loved and praised Kathy. "She is fun to be with and always knows what to say. It seems like she is in a million places at once because she is always around." Another student added, "Sister Kathy is willing to share herself completely with anyone she meets." Still another, "She has a wonderful sense of humor. Her common joke is that she thought the vows were 'party and celebrate,' not poverty and celibate." Kathy acquired many nicknames while at Clarke: Holy Roller, The Nun, Mom, Chaps, and Chapel Lady.

Kathy later served as social ministries director at St. Mary Catholic Church in Corvallis, Ore., where she promoted concern for the environment, worked to protect the unborn, and fought for dignity for the downtrodden. Due to her efforts, St. Mary Catholic Church was presented with Oregon's 2005 Green Congregation Award for its efforts to promote community food security and sustainable agriculture. A journalist for the Corvallis *Gazette-Times* wrote, "Sister Kathy Carr is one of those people whose heart really is as big as the whole outdoors."

In 2007, Kathy, along with Lou Anglin, BVM accepted the position of Initial Membership Coordinator. In this role, she sought to help people find the freedom to be their true self, to find their passion and path in life. As a dedicated member of the Dubuque Area Vocation Association (DAVA), Kathy played a significant role in promoting the Year of Consecrated Life. Kathy also became known for her Busy Person Retreats that were offered to students and faculty at Clarke and to lay employees at Mount Carmel. After retiring in 2016 she pursued a certificate program in spiritual direction through the Franciscan Spirituality Center in LaCrosse, Wis.

One of Kathy's Guadalupe College companions commented, "I was always impressed by her love for those she served. She maintained deep friendships with colleagues and former students. She was solid, prayerful, joyful, and realistic."

Another member of the Guadalupe group recounted that "Kathy bragged a lot, but in a good way! It started with her nieces and nephews, and then when they grew up she touted all the accomplishments of her grand-nieces and nephews. In the early days, we got the verbal reports; with the next generation and technology we were frequented with emails, photos, and videos. It was clear that she loved people, good times, good food, and was quick to share her infectious laugh!"

Kathy collaborated well with others, bringing to the table organizational and problem solving skills, the ability to listen, an openness to differing points of view, and an enormously compassionate heart. She was passionate and energetic as she spoke. And yet, Kathy knew the importance of taking time out from a busy schedule. She enjoyed swimming and walking in the mountains and by the ocean when she had the opportunity. In 1997, her brother Pat generously shared a kidney with her. Another friend reflected, "Her outreach always touched my heart and she seemed able to do that no matter what was happening to her. If one did not know her story or her struggle, you would never guess that she suffered or had challenges."

Kathy recounted, "I made my novitiate in Los Gatos, Calif., and entered on the day that 'Problems That Unite Us' began in Chicago. This meeting, along with the Second Vatican Council, initiated an era of great change and transition in the church and in religious life. It has been an exciting, fulfilling, and challenging time to be a woman religious, a BVM. I feel abundantly blessed to be part of this community."

Today we give thanks for the blessing of Kathy's presence among us. We celebrate the great things she did for so many, and we remember the many ways she filled us with laughter and music. She loved well and remained faithful to her God; surely her joy is now complete.