



Eulogy of Sister M. Floria Shannon, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, June 10, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister M. Floria Shannon.

Dorothy Ann Shannon was born on Aug. 8, 1937, in Manly, Iowa, as the sixth child of William and Florence (Reid) Shannon. Her father worked as a machinist to support his family. Sadly, her mother died when Dorothy was only four years old. She missed her mother intensely. It was a sadness that she carried with her all of her life.

Her father subsequently married Lillian Hood and the family enlarged to a total of 16 children. Dorothy joined siblings John, William, James, Mary, and Elizabeth (Betty Jane). She was followed by Lucy, Joseph, Lillian, Sheila, Francis, Robert, Harry, Thomas, Dennis, and Alice. Dorothy loved her family deeply. "Although we have had some sad times," she wrote, "we always have plenty of good times to celebrate with over a hundred nieces and nephews and many anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, baptisms, weddings and just fun [gatherings]."

Dorothy received her elementary and secondary education at Holy Family in Mason City, Iowa. After graduation, she spent a year at home caring for her younger siblings before entering the congregation on Sept. 8, 1956. She received the name Floria upon her reception on March 19, 1957, professed first vows on Feb. 3, 1959, and lived 63 years as a BVM.

Floria ministered as an elementary teacher at St. Agatha and Blessed Sacrament in Chicago; St. Anne in East Moline, Ill., where she also served as vice-principal; and St. Paul the Apostle and Sacred Heart in Davenport, Iowa. She was a very observant, dedicated teacher who instinctively knew when to step in to offer assistance. She would watch and encourage, but jump in only when she thought doing so would actually help. Floria was efficient and organized, getting right to the task at hand and seeing it through to its completion. When a sister mentioned that she didn't have a bookcase in her classroom, Floria went off only to quickly return carrying a bookcase bigger than she was! She may have been small in stature, but she had good physical strength in her day.

As much as she loved the children, Floria also loved the elderly. In 1992, she joined the Motherhouse administrative team and continued in that position for six years. She aimed to be flexible and supportive of the residents and to always serve with generosity and compassion. "I love working with our older sisters," Floria shared. "They are beautiful, holy women and a great inspiration to me."

For seventeen years, Floria served as receptionist in the Caritas and BVM Centers. With a deep desire to simply be of service, she generously assisted the staff by embracing every task asked of her. In 2003, she added hospitality coordinator to her list of duties. Over the next ten years, she responded to hundreds of requests for hospitality, answered countless questions, and welcomed visitors from near and far. She commented that these years were some of her most meaningful and life-giving. She appreciated the opportunity to expand her sense of community by getting to know many more BVMs as well as their family members and friends.

Floria enjoyed reading, puzzles, crocheting, working outside, and telling a good story. She was a good photographer and often made greeting cards from the photos with flowers and Mount Carmel sunrises over the Mississippi River being her favorite subjects. She loved to travel and had plenty of opportunities to do so with

siblings living in Iowa, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. She also visited other areas of the United States as well as Canada, England, France, Ireland, and Yugoslavia.

Although many would never suspect it, Floria was also a little adventurous. She accepted an invitation from Sister Pat (Liberata) Potok, BVM to go on a hot air balloon ride despite being deathly afraid of heights. "The basket hit me about at chest level so I felt safe as I hung on for dear life," Floria commented. "It was an absolutely fun, gorgeous day!"

Floria was a soft-spoken, sensitive woman who at times expressed her feelings better with tears than words. Her quiet chuckle and bright smile were endearing. Being responsible, conscientious, and a strong introvert, Floria quietly went about her business. She was one who carefully followed all the rules and had a personal integrity that allowed her to make changes in her own time rather than being pushed into change or following the crowd.

Floria was a hospitable and gracious woman with a big heart. Anyone who invested the time to get to know her found a loyal and faithful friend for life. She showed tremendous respect and kindness to the older sisters with whom she lived. Her dear friendship with Sister Anita Therese Hayes, BVM was always welcoming and mutually sensitive to the needs of the other. Anita Therese's sudden death just over a year ago was a terrible blow for Floria, especially since she was not with Anita Therese at the time.

Floria loved being a BVM and being a member of the close-knit Set of 1956. Through the years, every community gathering was also time to share personal and family stories and reminisce about the days gone by. While the ability to recall details diminished for many, Floria's clear recall of every time, place and detail was amazing.

Wanting to show her gratitude and heartfelt love, Flo, as she was called by her set, used an accumulation of Olive Garden gift cards from her family to throw a catered party last December for set members in the area. It was typical Flo—generously thinking of others and bringing people together. Although she had recently entered hospice, Flo was able to attend the party to enjoy being together and sharing stories one last time, and to leave her set with memories to cherish.

Floria was in poor health for a very long time. It was a difficult and painful period not only for her, but for all of her family and friends who only desired to bring her comfort and peace. At last, her suffering has ended and she is at peace, reunited with her dear mother, Anita Therese, and all her deceased family, friends, and BVM sisters in the loving presence of God.

St. Paul wrote, "Your kindness should be known to all." (Philippians 4:5). With great gratitude, let us remember Floria for her gentle kindness and loving service as a dedicated religious, sibling, friend, and sister who always gave her best.