



Eulogy of Sister Carol Frances Jegen, BVM Caritas Studio, July 15, 2020

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life for our Sister Carol Frances Jegen.

Julianna Jegen was born on Oct. 11, 1925, to Julian and Evelyn (Bostelmann) Jegen of Chicago. As the eldest of five children, she was joined by sisters Mary, Carol, and Evelyn, and a brother, Richard. Julianna's father ran Jegen's Florist for over 50 years and eventually passed the business on to Richard. Her mother, a graduate of the American Conservatory of Music, was a concert pianist and singer. Influenced by her parents, Julianna took great joy in the beauty of both the natural world and music, whether enjoying the simplicity of a flower or playing the cello in her youth.

After graduating from St. Robert Bellarmine Elementary School and Immaculata High School, Julianna completed one year at Mundelein College before pursuing her religious vocation. Attracted by the joy she saw in her BVM teachers, she entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1944, and received the name Carol Frances at her reception on March 19, 1945. She professed first vows on March 19, 1947, and lived 75 years as a BVM. Two of her sisters also joined religious orders: Mary Evelyn, the Sisters of Notre Dame, and Evelyn, a Religious of the Cenacle.

Carol Frances ministered as an elementary teacher at Holy Family in Mason City, Iowa, and St. Frances Xavier in St. Louis; and as a theology teacher at Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee. After completing her doctoral studies in theology at Marquette University in 1968, she joined the theology department at Mundelein College in Chicago. While there, Carol Frances founded and directed the graduate program in religious studies, established the Hispanic Institute, and served as chairperson of the Peace Studies Committee. Through her vision, the Mundelein Center for Religious Education (MCRE) came into existence, making religious education central to the offerings at Mundelein. The MCRE was unique and ahead of its time. No other Catholic college or university offered such a service.

Carol Frances moved to Loyola University Chicago as a professor of pastoral studies when Mundelein joined Loyola in 1991. She also served as visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Clergy Education and at Creighton University in the area of Christian spirituality.

With a passion for teaching, Carol Frances gently encouraged her students to stretch toward a holistic understanding of the church and the world. Her classes were like retreats—prayerful, contemplative, and always connecting theology and liturgy to human experience and justice-making.

Carol Frances' doctorate in religious studies made her one of only a few women in the country with this achievement since, at that time, many theological doctoral programs would not admit women. She was also one of the first women appointed to the United States Catholic Bishops Advisory Council and was a United States Catholic Conference delegate to the First International Catechetical Congress in Rome in 1971.

Carol Frances was one of the first Catholic sisters to become actively involved in civil disobedience. Her unflinching support of the United Farm Workers movement led to a two-week incarceration, thus beginning her work in prison ministry. From the detention center she wrote, "This experience is one of the most beautiful and meaningful in my life. How active Our Lord is through the courage and love and self-sacrifice of these people in

this struggle . . . Never before have I realized in quite the same way I do now what power we have as Sisters. We must find more and more ways to use this power now, especially to help those people anywhere in the world who are victims of unjust oppression.”

Carol Frances devoted tremendous time and energy to Hispanic ministries. The Hispanic Institute started as a cooperative multi-departmental program at Mundelein and served two distinct groups. Non-Hispanic clergy from two dioceses were taught cultural, language, and pastoral skills beneficial for their work in Hispanic and bilingual communities, while Hispanic attendees were provided with catechetical, leadership, and pastoral training. In recognition of her work, Carol Frances was honored with the Association of Chicago Priests Award and the Loyola University of Chicago Civic Award. However, she was most deeply touched by the *Sor Juana Inés* Award from the Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Ethnic Ministries for her years of dedication and service to the Hispanic community, particularly in the area of lay ministry formation.

Although Carol Frances was raised Catholic, she was aware of the divisions among Christians even as a child since her father was Catholic while her mother was raised in the Lutheran Church. Her family background motivated her work in ecumenism. “In meeting with other Christians,” she wrote, “we [become] more aware of our common concerns, working together for a more habitable world for people in the areas of peace, justice, and then ecological efforts.”

In May 1997, Carol Frances was presented with the Chicago Medallion, the highest award conferred by the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Religious Education. The ceremony included the announcement that the Center for Religious Education she started at Mundelein, now under Archdiocesan auspices, had been renamed the Jegen Center for Catechetical Media and Research.

Carol Frances retired in 1994 and lived at Wright Hall until it closed in 2011. “Returning to Mount Carmel was a very special homecoming,” she commented. “The quiet atmosphere, the hills, and the peaceful river provide an environment conducive to prayer. One of the greatest blessings here is our BVM family, many of whom I have not seen for a very long time. Often we recall past experiences which strengthen our gratitude for our vocation as Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

Carol Frances was a woman of faith, substance, and unfailing loyalty to her family, BVM community, Mundelein and the Church. She had a contemplative spirit in her approach to life and an uncanny ability to connect with people, expand their worlds, and develop their untapped gifts.

Carol Frances wrote, “As I reflected on my [years] of BVM life, I see ever more clearly and gratefully how God moved me into a variety of situations calling out for compassionate, understanding love. Although the situations were quite different, the basic need was really the same—a genuine expression of compassionate, caring love.”

On July 7, having faithfully completed the work prescribed for her, Carol Frances answered yet one more call from the God she loved: “Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come!” (Song of Songs 2:10).

Rest in peace, Carol Frances, beloved sister; good and faithful servant.