



**Eulogy of Sister Mary Therese (Joselyn) Pfeifer, BVM**  
Caritas Studio, Sept. 15, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Therese Pfeifer.

Mary Theresa Pfeifer and her twin brother Joseph were born on Jan. 3, 1927, in Kansas City, Mo., the tenth and ninth children, respectively, of Joseph Adam and Elizabeth Vonfeldt Pfeifer. They joined six sisters—Clare, Genevieve, Fermina, Helen, Alice, and Louise and two brothers—Edward and Michael. Mary and Joseph graduated from Holy Name Elementary School in 1941 and attended Central Junior High, where they were one of six sets of twins in the freshman class. Joseph died on June 21, 1945, while serving in the Navy during World War II.

Mary knew she wanted to become a religious sister by the time she was in fifth grade. After graduating from St. Aloysius Academy in Kansas City, she entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1945. She received the name Joselyn upon her reception on March 19, 1946, professed her first vows on March 19, 1948, and lived 75 years as a BVM.

With a strong work ethic and complete dedication, Therese ministered in elementary education for 57 years. She taught at St. Vincent and Presentation in Chicago, and at St. Vincent and St. (John Francis) Regis in Kansas City, Mo. She also served as principal in Kansas City for 21 years with five years at St. Therese Little Flower and 16 years at Christ the King.

While at St. Therese, Therese served as convent superior as well as school principal. In her role as superior, she was kind, nurturing, and loyal to her sisters. She even kept in touch with the family of deceased sisters. Those who lived with Therese continued to view her as their leader, almost a mother figure, after the role of the superior was discontinued. They depended upon her guidance and assistance in ordinary daily matters as well as in times of crisis.

Therese loved her family dearly. Being missioned in her hometown was a blessing. It allowed her to stay very involved in their lives and care for family members in times of serious illness. She outlived all of her siblings, with the last five dying within two years from 2004 to 2006.

When Therese decided to leave full-time teaching in 1997, she didn't retire. "We're recycled," said Therese, referring to herself and Sister Marie Neff. "When you get it in your blood, you want to be a help to the schools always." Both worked as substitute teachers at St. Regis for many years.

Together they spent the summer of 2007 organizing the newly remodeled kindergarten room because, as veteran teachers, they knew the value of kindergarten. "It's the foundation," commented Therese. "It's so wonderful to see their faces when they learn something new, or master something they were having a hard time with. Once you are in education and it becomes part of your life, you never want to give it up."

At age 84, Therese, along with Marie, decided it was time to move to Mount Carmel. She had ministered for 27 years at St. Regis. A montage of comments written by parents and former student express their gratitude to Therese. These stated: "You are such a good example to all who know you . . . It was such a privilege to have you

teach our children. We are grateful for the influence you had on our children's lives as well as our own . . . Thank you so much for your dedication to our school and parish . . . the wonderful education and learning environment you provided for all of our children . . . your years of teaching, inspiring and shaping the minds of all of us . . . You have truly touched many lives."

Two special notes convey both the lightheartedness and the depth of Therese's relationship with her students. One former student wrote, "Sister Therese, I don't know how you always retained such composure and kindness with all of those kids causing trouble! I'll always remember your sweet smile and hugs. You are a true angel." Another shared, "You are a loved one to me! I thank you for providing help, support, shelter, and love! You are family!"

Therese had a great affection for Marie Neff. They became good friends during the 25 plus years of living and teaching together at St. Regis. Therese remained faithful as Marie journeyed through years of dementia and took care of her in so many ways, such as calling her daily until Marie passed away last November. Therese often remarked, "I prayed to God to take Marie first."

In Colossians 3, St. Paul wrote, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another." (Colossians 3:12-13). These are all wonderful attributes that Therese embodied: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. She truly was a very happy woman with a big heart, so loving with and proud of the children she taught. Therese was a good listener, but also loved to talk and tell stories. She never spoke a bad word about anyone and shared only positive memories of the people she had known. In these last years, she seemed to accept her diminishment with grace.

As we bid farewell to Therese, we envision the joyous celebration in heaven when she reunited with her dear friend Marie, her parents, her twin Joseph, and all her siblings. Therese, thank you for your 75 years of faithful service. May you find peace and rest in the loving arms of Jesus.