



**Eulogy of Sister Dorothy (Irene Patricia) Gaffney, BVM**  
Caritas Studio, Dec. 1, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Dorothy Gaffney.

Dorothy Ann Gaffney entered this world on Jan. 10, 1927, joining her sister Patricia as the second of two children born to Patrick and Irene (Calt) Gaffney of Chicago. Her father worked for his hometown as the chief engineer at a Chicago pumping station. Her mother, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., cared of the children and the residence.

In her early years, Dorothy developed a love of movies, drama, and dancing. The pastor of St. Vincent parish asked Dorothy and one of her good friends to teach the high school boys in the parish how to dance, which they did by giving lessons every Saturday for a month. Dorothy attended St. Clement Grammar School and The Immaculata. She loved high school and spending time with the sisters. In fact, her mother was upset at times because Dorothy would often stay after school and be late for supper.

After attending Mundelein College for two years, Dorothy entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1946. She received the name Irene Patricia upon her reception on March 29, 1947, and professed her first vows on March 19, 1949.

Dorothy ministered as an elementary educator for 16 years. She was missioned at St. Bridget in Omaha, Neb.; St. Ambrose in Des Moines, Iowa; St. Joseph in Butte, Mont.; St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa; Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago; and Sacred Heart in Boulder, Colo. She also taught at St. Paul High School in San Francisco and served as principal at St. John in Des Moines, Iowa.

Dorothy withdrew from the congregation and went home to Chicago in early December 1970. Her sister Patricia, a widow who lived with and cared for her parents, had complained about headaches for weeks. She died from a brain aneurism on Dec. 31. While the entire family—Dorothy, her parents, and Patricia's two children Patrick and Dottie—were devastated, Dorothy assumed the role of caregiver.

Over the next 15 years, Dorothy worked on the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospitals and served as a secretary to its board of directors and to the director of nursing at St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago.

Dorothy reentered the congregation on Sept. 23, 1985, and professed first vows on July 26, 1986, and final vows on July 9, 1988. However, Dorothy always considered herself as a member of the Set of 1946 and celebrated jubilees with them. She lived 74 years with a BVM heart.

After reentering, Dorothy worked as a teacher, administrative assistant, and secretary at Cathedral High School in Chicago until 1990. She moved to Dubuque to serve as the associate administrator of Mount Carmel and later as an administrative assistant in Marian Hall. A BVM grant in 1995 brought Dorothy back to Chicago to work part-time in the office at Visitation Parish. After retiring, she volunteered at Rainbow Hospice until moving to Mount Carmel in 2012.

Through multiple news media during the 2016 World Series, many discovered, if they did not know before, that Dorothy was a huge Chicago Cubs fan. While living and teaching in Chicago, she and Kate Keating purchased season tickets. On game day, as soon as school was out, they headed to nearby Wrigley Field. After decades of disappointment, Nov. 3, 2016, became a red-letter day when the Cubs defeated the Cleveland Indians in Game 7.

Dorothy was also an avid reader and a dog lover. She had an Irish wit that blended well with her love of Irish celebrations and dance. She enjoyed playing card games, especially poker. Her desire to be a continuous learner never wavered. She was taking a cosmology class via Zoom through the Roberta Kuhn Center when she became ill.

Dorothy was a kind, gentle, loving woman who held a great concern for all people. Her calming and reassuring presence made her very approachable. She was so welcoming that once she met you, not only were you no longer a stranger, but it was like she had known you all of her life.

Dorothy was always there to listen and offer support. She was sensible, efficient, and hardworking. No task was too much. One of Dorothy's friends described her as "cute as a button, fun, and funny, [she] touched many hearts," but then added, "She was a pint-sized force to be reckoned with."

Dorothy was considered an extrovert by many. However, sometimes she preferred to quietly remain in the background. But at all times, her big smile revealed an internal cheerfulness and positive attitude toward life.

Dorothy dearly loved her family. She was diligent about sending birthday cards to all, including the great-nieces and the great-great nieces. It was so very difficult for Dorothy and the family when, due to the pandemic, she could not attend her nephew Patrick's funeral in March.

St. Paul wrote, "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest." (Galatians 6:9) Dorothy spent her life doing good for others. She loved her BVM Community and served it well, doing whatever was asked of her. She loved the children entrusted to her care as a teacher and principal and worked diligently to provide them with an excellent education. She loved her family immensely and was there for them during their darkest days. Today we rejoice both for and with Dorothy, knowing that she has reaped a harvest of eternal life.