



Eulogy of Sister Marie C. (Jane Frances) Fitzpatrick, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 10, 2021

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

Marie Catherine Fitzpatrick entered this world on Dec. 27, 1925, in Chicago. She was the eldest child of John Joseph and Anne (McHugh) Fitzpatrick. Her brother John Michael, who died in 1998, completed the family.

Marie's parents were Irish immigrants who lived near each other in the old country. Her mother Anne left Ireland first. She settled in Chicago and worked as a maid. Her father became an "illegal" immigrant when he followed Anne to Chicago even though the Irish quota was already met. When Marie was 2, her father returned to Canada to work for his uncle, after which he reentered the United States legally.

The Fitzpatricks were members of the St. Charles Borromeo Parish. Marie attended the parish school along with many first-generation Americans of Irish, Polish, Italian, and German descent.

"The neighborhood was a great leveler," recalled Marie. "No one had much! . . . During the Great Depression and later during World War II, we all learned to do without, to be happy with a walk in the park, an ice cream cone, or a 10-cent movie. Life was happy with whatever we had, as everyone was in the same boat."

John and Anne taught their children the values they brought with them to this country: hard work, necessity of a good education, deep faith in God, prayer, and church, the ability to survive during difficult times, and the importance of humor and play in life. Marie commented, "These beliefs were daily lived out in our home and I gradually integrated them to make them my own!"

Marie first entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1943, shortly after her graduation from St. Mary High School in Chicago. Five months later, she was advised by a doctor to return home to have thyroid surgery. The surgery was successful and a year later she was released from the doctor's care.

She reentered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1945, and received the name Jane Frances upon her reception on Aug. 15, 1945. She professed her first vows on Aug. 15, 1947, and lived 76 years as a BVM.

Marie earned a bachelor's degree in history from Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa, and master's degrees in education from DePaul University and in religious education from Mundelein College, both in Chicago.

Marie ministered as an elementary teacher at Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y.; St. Thomas the Apostle in West Hempstead, N.Y.; Holy Name in Marcus, Iowa; and Our Lady of Victory in Waterloo, Iowa. Marie served as principal at St. Charles Borromeo in Chicago, and as teacher and principal at Sacred Heart in Manly, Iowa, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City, S.D.

As a principal, Marie was always more gracious and charitable than anxious or annoyed. By embracing openness and acceptance, she created good, supportive learning *and* teaching environments during the turbulent 1960s.

Marie also served in parish ministry as director of religious education at Blessed Sacrament parish in Denver, Colo., and as coordinator of sacramental preparation at St. Michael Parish in Aurora, Colo. After completing a master's degree in counseling psychology from Lesley College in Boston, professional counseling was added to her responsibilities at St. Michael.

Marie was attentive, welcoming, gracious and an excellent listener—important qualities for a counselor. She had a genuine interest in the lives of others and knew how to respond in a direct, but caring, manner.

Marie was a vibrant and delightful participant in her Colorado cluster. Her social side emerged as she arranged dinner outings to new and interesting restaurants in Denver. At the cluster's annual R&R weekend in Estes Park, Colo., Marie enjoyed swimming in the lodge's pool and playing charades. And while she enjoyed car rides through the beautiful Rocky Mountains, she was less enthusiastic about hiking them.

Marie held strong opinions and enthusiastically shared them with her cluster. However, after her lively pronouncements, she would open the door to opposing views by saying dismissively, "But what do I know?"

Marie was a classy person—well-dressed, calm and collected, with a nice sense of humor. She took pride in her work and always aimed to do her best. She was a good conversationalist and was known for her directness and honesty.

For many years, she daily conversed with her good friend Sister Mary Donahey while sharing meals together at Wright Hall and Mount Carmel. Since both had a keen interest in current and world events, politics was often the topic of conversation.

While Marie grew up in a small family, her brother had seven children—six girls and one boy. Marie had great love and pride for each one of them. She enjoyed spending holidays and special family occasions with them and their families and even traveled with some to Venice, Italy.

Marie retired in 1999, moved to Wright Hall in 2000, and made Mount Carmel her final home in February 2011 when Wright Hall closed. "Because of this event," Marie wrote, "my wonderful family decided to celebrate my Dec. 27 birthday early! Their plan was to have a party in [the Wright Hall] dining room, with family and sisters mixed in at every table. My first response to the plan was 'There could be trouble!'"

However, Marie accepted their plans including her one assignment—to draw up a "seating chart" using her years of experience placing students in the most effective arrangements. "Needless to say," she commented, "it was a tremendous success that I [heard] about every day! How wonderful to have such dear relatives and BVM sisters partying together!"

At the time of her diamond jubilee, Marie shared, "I am grateful for my loving home, family, and the neighborhood in which I grew up. I am also grateful for our wonderful BVM sisters who continue that love in our daily life. . . I am always living out of my passions and feelings. A loving God and supportive sisters who share life together with me make it easy to hope in our future, whatever that may be."

When Lazarus died, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; those who believe in me, though they die, yet shall they live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." While no one knows what our earthly years may hold, as followers of Jesus, our hope is eternal life with God.

We rejoice that for Marie, her hope has been realized. Rest in peace and joy, Marie!