



**Eulogy of Sister Therese (Jeremy) Mackin, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, June 21, 2021

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

Therese Ann Mackin was born on May 4, 1928, in St. Anthony, Iowa, the youngest child of John and Josephine (Welch) Mackin. She joined seven siblings: John, Mary, Thomas, James, Joseph, Gerard, and William, who adored their baby sister.

Her father was a grain elevator operator and grain and livestock dealer while her mother focused on raising the children. "Watching Mother raise us children, [we saw] her enthusiasm for us to get a good education," commented Therese. "She worked to make sure we grew up to be good people."

After graduating from the public elementary school, Therese hitched a ride in the back of a milk truck to attend St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines, Iowa.

During her senior year she decided to enter religious life, to which her father replied, "Like fun you are!" Therese felt a genuine sense of relief and decided to attend Clarke College, now Clarke University, where she was known by her initials, Tam. She completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in sociology and a minor in English in 1950. Her senior profile read: "Tam – prefect of the Clarke Sodality, Senior class May Queen, and possessor of the most easily sprained appendages in the college. A trophy girl in the Women's Athletic Association, she is one of the sports enthusiasts in her class. Red-headed Tam feels justified in venting her rage on girls who don't keep the Zone in order."

Once again thoughts of a religious vocation came to the foreground. "[After] much serious thought and considerable prayer, I chose the religious life because, for me, it was the single best way to use my talents and abilities to become the best Christian I could become," shared Therese. She entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1950, and received the name Jeremy upon her reception on March 19, 1951. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1953, and lived 70 years as a BVM.

For her first six years as a BVM, Therese taught elementary students at St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs, Iowa; Sacred Heart in Boulder, Colo.; St. Bridget in Omaha, Neb.; and St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa. She always wanted to be a teacher and spoke enthusiastically about her teaching experience and the interchange that takes place between parents, students, and faculty.

In 1959, after completing a master's degree in theatre, Therese was missioned to Clarke. She became a constant presence on the Clarke campus and in the lives of the faculty, staff, students, and alumni for the next 50 years.

As a speech and drama instructor, she taught many BVM novices. One sister shared, "[I] took her Oral Interpretation class. I treasured her wisdom and knowledge. My love of reading out loud, cherishing and caressing words, I attributed to her." Another former student recalled Therese's direct and honest communication style which, if one looked deeply, contained underlying life messages. Therese stated, "I encouraged students to learn and practice how to love one another. Camaraderie, a willingness to give, and knowledge of how and when to

lead and how and when to follow are crucial aspects to a student's development, to *all* development. Life is about caring."

In addition to teaching, Therese was involved in all aspects of theatrical productions from costume maker to director. She participated in two USO overseas tours. During the summer of 1964, Therese and Sister Xavier Coens traveled to Germany with the Clarke Coffee House Theater. The following summer, Therese and, at the time, Sister Meneve Dunham and the musical variety troupe 13 X 13 toured Newfoundland, Labrador, Greenland, and Iceland performing for the branches of the United States Armed Forces.

Therese became the Dean of Students at Clarke in 1968, a position she held for 13 years. In 1982, she was named the Director of Planned Giving and then Coordinator of Development four years later. She also served as the Vice President of Institutional Advancement, the Assistant to the President, Executive Vice President, Director of Development, and a member of the Major Gifts team.

Therese was highly organized and driven, loaded with tons of energy, and gifted with an incredible ability to "work the room." She had a great sense of humor and a quick Irish wit. She was known as the chief grammarian at both Clarke and Mount Carmel, while her thriftiness and constant search for a bargain earned her the title of coupon queen from her roommates.

Therese loved to travel, especially with her sister Mary. She celebrated her silver jubilee in 1975 with a trip to Ireland and returned to the Emerald Isle in 2007 after her retirement. She took advantage of her newly found free time to travel across the country to visit family and to participate in more congregational activities.

Therese also enjoyed downhill skiing. She and Sister Helen Thompson, an expert skier, established what some would call a baby ski hill in Dubuque perfect for learning how to ski. Therese and Helen, along with Sister Sheila O'Brien, went on ski trips that included visits to the big mountains of California. It didn't matter that Therese only learned how to snow plow; it was all about taking a break from work, getting outdoors, and having fun.

"My life has been spent working for goals," Therese said. "The time after the [1984] fire was probably the most challenging at Clarke, but people generously responded with their time, talents, and financial resources to the disaster. It's typical of what I call Clarke's spirit."

At her retirement the Clarke Board of Trustees honored her with the words: "Therese has wholly dedicated her life to furthering the mission and values of the college. Her support of Clarke has been steadfast and her love unwavering . . . Therese has been and continues to be an inspiration to many."

Therese had a big Irish heart willing to do absolutely anything for anyone, always putting the other first. Even more than a generous spirit, she had a grateful nature and a wonderful gift for expressing gratitude. Perhaps the words of St. Paul that Therese chose for her funeral are her words to us today.

I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you,  
praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you,  
because of your partnership for the gospel . . .  
I am confident of this,  
that the one who began a good work in you  
will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.  
It is right that I should think this way about all of you,  
because I hold you in my heart . . . (Philippians 1:3-7a)

Therese, with deep gratitude and love, we hold you in our hearts as well. We look forward to our reunion with you when we will share the joy you know surrounded by your dearly departed family, BVM sisters, and friends in the loving presence of our God.