



Eulogy of Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 14, 2021

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Mary Angela Buser.

Clarice Ann Buser was born on Oct. 10, 1926, the eighth child of Daniel and Ida (Winterscheidt) Buser of Halstead, Kan. She joined seven sisters—Angela, Cecilia, Veronica, Helen, Edith, and Isabelle – and a brother Celestine Daniel, a.k.a. Bus.

Her parents planned to name their youngest daughter Patricia Ann, but her oldest sister objected due to the popularity of the name at that time. However, when Clarice was two, the physician who delivered her referred to her as Patsy. Afterwards Clarice, who had never spoken her name, announced, “Me Patsy!” and the name stuck. She later chose Patricia for her Confirmation name.

The Busers were one of six Catholic families in the small town of Halstead. Pat shared, “One of my mother’s greatest sorrows and concerns was that her children did not have the opportunity to attend a Catholic school, but she and my father provided the example and instruction that built a strong faith in each member of our family.”

It was through summer vacation school that Pat first met BVMs Sister Mary St. Jane Gatens and Sister Mary St. Albert Glass.

Pat was profoundly influenced by her three sisters who entered religious communities. On the same day in 1935, Helen (SM Ann Davida) entered the BVM congregation (she withdrew in 1954) and Edith (Sister Margaret Ann) joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. Then in 1942, Catherine (SM Danetta) entered the BVM congregation. Pat confessed, “Only after [Danetta] left home did I recognize the depth of our friendship.”

During World War II, the Buser family moved temporarily to Wichita when Pat’s father was hired as a guard for an airplane manufacturer. There Pat attended Cathedral High School for one semester. A summer visit by her sister Helen and her BVM companion led to a visit with Sister Helen (Consolatrice) Wright, who offered Pat a scholarship to attend Mount Carmel Academy.

Pat shared, “That was one of the happiest years of my life and enabled me to understand that God was calling me also, even though I was a very ordinary person and very unlike my sisters.”

However, her entrance was delayed while her mother battled a serious illness and her sisters Cecilia and Veronica served in the Army Corps on foreign soil. Instead, she attended Sacred Heart Junior College until the war ended and her sisters returned.

Pat entered the BVM congregation on Feb. 2, 1946, and received the name Mary Angela upon her reception on Aug. 15, 1946. She professed first vows on Aug. 15, 1948, and celebrated 75 years as a BVM in February.

Recalling her first mission at St. Callistus in Chicago, Mary Angela wrote, “Sixty-six eager first graders challenged me as my short student teaching experience had been with seventh and eighth grade . . . The first days were

especially trying as the desks had not arrived for the new classroom . . . With the help of other primary teachers, as well as trial and error, I learned many basic techniques.”

Mary Angela’s mission to St. Patrick’s in Lead, S.D., resulted in a number of interesting stories to tell. Snow usually covered the ground from October through May, but regardless of the weather the very hardy student body went outside for recess twice daily! There was only one snow day during her six years there when recess was held indoors—it only took a mere 60 inches of snow!

Each spring the school presented two operettas. Mary Angela and Sister Vivian Wilson eventually mastered the art of creating scenery, directing shows, and managing about 100 students backstage.

The community of eight young and enthusiastic sisters lived in a small remodeled house with four bedrooms and an enclosed front porch that served as an extra bedroom for a displaced sister when a visitor stayed the night. Mary Angela recalled, “On her first visit, our Provincial, Sister Thomassia Newton, was quite startled when, as she entered the room, I disappeared through the front window [onto the porch].”

Occasionally, the sisters spent time at a parishioner’s cabin to simply enjoy the beauty of the Black Hills. During the summers they taught vacation school, which Mary Angela considered “a special joy” as it recalled her experience of meeting the BVMs.

After Lead, Mary Angela taught fifth and six grades at St. Thomas the Apostle in West Hempstead, N.Y., and served nine years as principal. She was an excellent principal—well-organized and conscientious, supportive of her faculty, and open to innovative ideas in education.

After completing a specialist degree in elementary school administration, she became principal at St. Francis Xavier in Kansas City, Mo., where she embraced many challenges including integration.

Mary Angela realized her dream to be a “teacher of teachers” in 1979 when she joined the education department at Clarke University. She later served as department chair and coordinator of teacher certification and teacher placement. She retired after 13 years of service.

During her sabbatical, Mary Angela discerned a call to work with the poor. She moved to Holy Family Convent in Chicago to volunteer as a tutor at the Westside Employment and Education Center (WEEC). She remained there for 16 years. A tribute to her ministry reads: “Sister Mary Angela has truly given a lifetime of service . . . [Her] teaching and administrative experience, her stamina, dedication, and kindness have made her a resource and an invaluable asset to this program. [Her] love of teaching has built bridges stretching to the most difficult students to reach . . . She cares in so many ways it would be impossible to count.”

Mary Angela moved to Mount Carmel in 2009. Despite deteriorating eyesight, she kept a positive outlook and remained engaged.

Her relationship with God and others meant everything. She served as a companion and visitor for sisters in need, participated in activities, and treasured her role as a Eucharistic minister. But, above all, Mary Angela was a person of prayer.

St. Paul counseled, “Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God’s own peace . . . will stand guard over your hearts and minds” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Mary Angela led and participated in a number of prayer and faith sharing groups. She believed that we need to be less concerned about doing and simply be. She had a special fondness for lectio divina and centering prayer and a

beautiful manner of leading others in these prayer forms. When she could no longer read to lead the prayers, she simply listened and discovered that she listened even better and called that a blessing!

Mary Angela was so gentle, peaceful, understanding and loving. As one friend put it, "She had an awesome aura!" She leaves us with these words: "As a loving, grateful, joy-filled member of a wonderful family . . . and a grateful member of our BVM community, I have enjoyed and give thanks for all who have enriched my life, for my varied teaching experiences, the beauty of nature, music, and art. Yes, for all of God's gifts."

Mary Angela, thank you for being God's gift to us. Rest in peace.