



Eulogy of Sister Concetta Naba, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Oct. 11, 2021

Good morning. It is good for us to gather to celebrate the life of our Sister Concetta Naba.

Dorothy Marie Naba was born on May 23, 1921, in Des Moines, Iowa, the youngest child of Jesse and Mary Ellen (Angelo) Naba. She joined siblings Venita Ruth and Rifa Mae. Both sisters preceded her in death—Rifa as a teenager in 1931 and Ruth at age 79 in 1995. Dorothy's mother was born into an Italian family in Tracy, Iowa, 50 miles southeast of Des Moines. Her father was born in Guanajuato in central Mexico and immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s to work as a laborer.

Dorothy's father helped to build the Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel, a mission of Visitation Parish located in southeast Des Moines. The Chapel provided a worship space for the Mexican-America community that was closer to their homes and in more familiar ethnic surroundings. Mr. Naba felt honored to serve as the pro bono custodian of the Chapel for many years.

Dorothy was proud to be a 1940 graduate of St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines. She also was proud of her hometown and maintained a lifelong interest in the news of the Des Moines area. As her parents aged, she cared for them in their home just a couple blocks from the Chapel, where she too was a devoted and frequent visitor.

Dorothy entered the BVM congregation on Feb. 2, 1941, and received the name Concetta upon her reception on Aug. 15, 1941. She professed her first vows on Aug. 15, 1943, and lived 80 years as a BVM. "It's a wonderful vocation to be a Sister," she declared.

For the first four years after her profession, Concetta worked as a nurse assistant at the BVM Motherhouse in Dubuque, Iowa. After observing in the classroom at Holy Name in Wilmot, Wis., for a year, Concetta spent the next 27 years teaching in the primary grades. She was missioned in Iowa at Sacred Heart in Manly, St. Raphael in Dubuque, St. Joseph in Sioux City, Holy Name in Marcus, and St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids. In Illinois, Concetta taught at St. Ferdinand and St. Jerome in Chicago, St. Gilbert in Grayslake, and St. Eulalia in Maywood. In addition, she taught fifth grade and religious education at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tempe, Ariz. Like so many, she attended summer school and completed a bachelor's degree in education from Clarke University in Dubuque.

In 1975, Concetta transitioned to working with the elderly as a nurse aide at the Bishop Drumm Care center. While she was living in Des Moines, she frequently attended BVM gatherings. She always was thrilled to take some extra goodies home to share with those in her neighborhood who needed a little extra help putting food on their tables.

Concetta moved to Mount Carmel in 1996 and became a faithful member of Cut-Ups, a group of sisters who make themed candy cups to decorate dinner tables for birthday and feast day celebrations. She was known for the good quality and speed of her work. Of course, she brought considerable experience after many years working on crafts with Genevieve Kordick, BVM who ministered as the activities director at an adult care center in Des Moines. At the end of each Cut-Ups session, Concetta always made sure that the space was in perfect order for the next group to use.

Concetta loved music. Although her repertoire was limited, she enjoyed playing the piano and she could be caught dancing down the corridor when she heard a lively tune. When she was not dancing, she walked wherever she could, refusing to accept a ride. For a tiny frame, Concetta had a great appetite and especially enjoyed breakfast. After eating, she cleaned the plates and piled the dishes for the servers who appreciated her helpfulness. She usually managed to take a few morsels back to her room for a mid-morning or afternoon snack.

Concetta loved to stay connected with people. She enjoyed good conversations and, with great enthusiasm would share the news she read in the daily newspaper. Perhaps Concetta is best known for her handmade greeting cards. These cards were cleverly and artistically crafted from scraps of construction paper, magazine clippings, ribbon, comic strips, and anything else she would find as she wandered the corridors of Mount Carmel. Inside the recipient might find a personal note written in beautiful penmanship, a prayer card, a candy treat, or perhaps a few coins to spend on a soda.

Concetta was a gentle soul with a deep faith who lived a long life of devoted ministry to God's people—a ministry of generosity. She was welcoming and greeted everyone with her contagious smile. She did not care about things, but was genuinely interested in people and concerned about being kind, compassionate, and loving to all. She would do anything for anyone. She didn't have to be asked; she simply saw a need and acted on it. She was the perpetual optimist and never complained about anything or anyone. She had a great inner strength and determination that, in her unique manner, helped her "strengthen hands that are feeble, make firm knees that are weak [and] say to the fearful of heart: Be strong, do not fear!" (Isaiah 35:3–4).

Concetta was a little bundle of energy filled with enthusiasm for anything and everything. She called every BVM "Mary," which only endeared her all the more to her BVM sisters. During the Apostolic Visitation, she so greatly charmed the visitors with her positive energy that one team member wanted to take her home! But Concetta's eyes were fixed on only one home—the dwelling place that Jesus had prepared for her. She has received one last 100th birthday gift. The most precious and desired of all. Rest in peace, joy and love, dear Concetta!