



**Eulogy of Sister Joan (James Irene) Redden, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Jan. 25, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Joan Redden.

Joan Amanda Redden was born on Oct. 20, 1929, in Chicago, the only child of James and Irene (Karaffa) Redden. Joan started her education in the Chicago public school system but transferred to St. Frances ES for sixth grade and later graduated from St. Mary's High School.

Joan first realized a desire to become a religious in sixth grade and, due to the influence of her BVM teachers, the Sisters of Charity was her first choice. Yet, she tried to push the idea out of her mind for fear she could not afford the dowry. She even applied to another order, but as soon as she mailed the letter, she knew without a doubt that she was called to be a BVM. Joan entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1947, and received the name James Irene in honor of her parents upon her reception on March 19, 1948. She professed first vows on March 19, 1950, and lived 74 years as a BVM. Joan completed a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in education from Seattle University, Seattle, and a master's degree in English with a journalism minor from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.

Joan spent nineteen years teaching in elementary schools. She was missioned at Sacred Heart in Davenport, Iowa; Holy Name in Chicago; St. John, Christ the King, and St. George in Seattle; St. Pius X in Mountlake Terrace, Wash.; Mary, Queen of Heaven in Cicero, Ill.; and St. Mary in Clinton, Iowa. Joan commented, "I have many fond memories of the children I was privileged to teach, and for the skills and life values I was empowered to share with them."

For the next eleven years she served as a secondary teacher at two missions. First, she taught journalism and English at Regina High in Iowa City, Iowa. In her role as chair of the English department, she designed and introduced courses in mass media and individualized reading. Regina High's proximity to the University of Iowa allowed some of her students to critique books for the university's Young Adult Reading Program, while others learned filmmaking and editing skills in a pilot film study program. Joan also served as a master teacher in the teacher training program at the University of Iowa.

Next Joan taught English at Montini Catholic High, a Christian Brothers school in Lombard, Ill. Besides teaching, she was involved in spiritual direction, religious education and the liturgy committee which inspired her to create multimedia presentations to enhance liturgies. She also served as the AV coordinator and created a filmmaking course. She was very impressed with and deeply appreciated the professionalism and camaraderie of the Montini faculty and staff. Upon her departure, the principal commented. "Sister Joan [is] a very friendly and concerned person. She has made a positive contribution to our school life because of her high personal standard, her interest in the students, her wealth of experience, and her ability to work with others."

Joan had an excellent rapport with her students through her gentle manner, genuine concern and emphasis on inclusion. A spirit of solidarity existed in her classroom; they truly respected and supported one another. She appropriately challenged her students and at the same time gently guided those who struggled in the right

direction. She enjoyed combining subject knowledge with current events and real life situations and showing how important concepts continued throughout history.

In 1980, Joan became the director of religious education at Ascension Parish in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill. Here her time and energy were focused on the development of quality programs to nurture the faith of children, youth, and adults. Her eight years there were among the most challenging and the most rewarding years in ministry.

Joan returned to the classroom, first at Lake Shore Catholic Academy, a consolidation of three parochial schools in the Waukegan/North Chicago area, and then at St. Mary's in Lake Forest, Ill. In 1994, she transitioned into the role of teaching assistant. The move allowed her to explore new and enjoyable volunteer work. She taught English as a second language, served on the parish council, and was a member of the Church Relations Committee for Habitat for Humanity.

Joan moved to Dubuque in 2003 and quickly slipped into the role of an active volunteer at Mount Carmel and was pleased to serve as a devoted sacristan in the Motherhouse Chapel. She also volunteered in the Dubuque community, most notably at Maria House, a transition shelter for women and children. Twice a month Joan worked the night shift at the shelter. "My task [was] to be a helpful presence and companion and caregiver as needed to maintain a pleasant and secure environment." Opening Doors, the community service organization which runs Maria House and Teresa Shelter, recognized Joan in 2011 for her amazing contribution of over 570 volunteer hours. In dollars, this generous gift of time and talent saved the organization over \$6000.

Joan was a pleasant person, easy to live with, ready to be of service, and a devoted friend. She enjoyed a good time and a good joke. She was an avid reader, an engaging conversationalist; and fine writer who shared her journalistic skills by writing for BVM publications. Joan also enjoyed painting watercolors of nature that often included quotes by famous writers or the Scripture quotes. One painting included this uncredited quote: "Each of us is a spark of Divinity revealing an essence of God uniquely ours."

At the time of her golden jubilee, Joan wrote, "It is fifty years since [this] journey began with a one-way ticket from Chicago to Dubuque . . . I am deeply indebted to the BVM community for whatever personal, professional and spiritual growth I have realized as an eager student and dedicated educator . . . Many gifts were shared during [this] journey, the most treasured being the relationships formed and the friendships sustained. Perhaps the Jesuit philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin, said it best" "Nothing is precious except that part of you which is in other people, and the part of others which is in you. Up there, on high, everything is one."

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me . . ." (Isaiah 61: 1). The Spirit nurtured Joan's desire to be a BVM. She responded and was "anointed" to teach not only skills, but life values and the knowledge that we are beloved children of God. This part of Joan remains with us, in us, even as her Divine spark is reunited with God. Rest in oneness, Joan!