



## **Sharing of Memories of Joan Redden, BVM (James Irene)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Jan. 25, 2022

### **Anne Barrett, Niece of Sister Catherine Barrett, BVM**

Our family first met Sister Joan in the 1960s. We lived in Glen Ellyn, Ill., when Joan's dear friend, then Sister Mary Grace Patricia (Catherine Barrett) brought her to our home for dinner. That was the start of many treks to the Barrett's' that included flag football games in the front yard. My three older siblings recall rosary beads clacking as the nuns kept up with the kids!

Joan always had a smile and a hug always awaited us. Over the years she was there with my Aunt Catherine as she fought cancer. Joan is a cherished and treasured blessing in our family. We will never forget her. We are grateful we have another angel in heaven to look after us!

### **Connie Blackford, Friend**

I have known Sister Joan for over 25 years. We met during a very trying time in my life when I was coming out of a horrible marriage and ready to begin a new chapter. She was there not only to listen but to give me courage to continue down my new path. It has been difficult the last few years seeing her struggle with her memory. I considered her a good friend and will truly miss her.

### **Sister Helen Gourlay, BVM**

I first met Joan in 2003 at a BVM party in Milwaukee. At the time I was beginning a sabbatical and looking for someone to drive with me to Springbank Retreat Center in South Carolina for a week or two of "Painting Your Prayer" with Mary Southard. Joan said she would drive with me. I got to know her as a fun and interesting person. The next couple of Christmases Joan sent cards to me that she had painted and had printed. She was a good artist! Later, when Joan lived in Dubuque, I visited with her. She shared that she was an all-night volunteer for one of the women's shelters begun by religious sisters in the Dubuque community. I was impressed with her generosity and was happy to have become her friend.

### **Sister Sandra Rodemyer, BVM**

I lived with Joan at Regina High School and convent in Iowa City from 1971-1974. She was the head of the English Department and an excellent English teacher. One year she had two young Asian males in her class. One was from Hong Kong, the other from Taiwan. Both had come to Iowa City to attend the University of Iowa, but they enrolled in Regina High School for a year in order to improve their English skills.

At the end of their year at Regina, they wanted to prepare a dinner for Joan and the sisters as their thank you. We offered to pay for the food, but their parents had told them that they were to pay for the food. And so they did. The boys spent the afternoon cooking our dinner in our kitchen. (I spent the afternoon picking up items with a set of chopsticks so I could use them at dinner.) And what it a meal it was! We were treated to an authentic, delicious Chinese dinner thanks to Joan!

When I was teaching at Regina High School in Iowa City, one of my favorite bits of information was that Joan had taught the principal, John Lepetit when he was in second grade. I tracked John down last week and got this story from him. He was in second grade at Sacred Heart Cathedral grade school in Davenport when their teacher was

SM James Irene. He said that she was young and fun, and that he and his classmates really liked her. She wasn't as strict as the older sisters.

Fast forward to the early 1970s. John was principal at Regina. Sister Joan Redden was on staff. She knew who HE was, but John didn't recognize Joan. Apparently Joan shared that info with John's wife so she and Joan cooked up a little surprise for John. During a school carnival, John was sitting and awaiting the auction, when he looked down at the program and saw that Joan was being auctioned off. He was pretty perplexed until he saw her appear wearing "the box," as he called it. Joan must have manufactured the hood out of a box to simulate the old habit. That was when he recognized his second grade teacher. I'm just sorry that I wasn't at Regina then to see the revelation.

#### **Sister Sue Effinger, BVM**

I taught with Joan at Lake Shore Catholic Academy in Waukegan, Ill., during the late 1980s. LSCA was a merger of three elementary schools for the Chicago Archdiocese. There were five of us BVMs working there then. Joan taught in the junior high department; I worked in the lower grades in a different building so I didn't see much of Joan except at meetings. However, I lived in the same apartment building as did Joan. She lived with her Dominican friend, Mary, and I was with Deb Poturalski. We visited back and forth and often went out to eat together. She loved going out and was a good driver with an adventuresome spirit. She had a fine sense of humor. She was straight forward and deliberate with what she wanted to say. I always enjoyed seeing her whenever I came to Dubuque.

#### **Sister Terese Shinnors, BVM**

Joan was very active in the BVM Lake County, Ill., cluster. She especially loved hosting the cluster and we all loved her warm hospitality. Her warmth, positive attitude, and care for each of us created a strong bond among the members of the cluster.

#### **Sister Monica Seelman, BVM**

I remember Joan Redden as a generous creative person with a great sense of humor. Her generosity and creativity were so evident to me one day years ago. Doris was in the midst of getting out the BVM Newsletter after the summer Senate. She called Joan and asked if she could think of a new twist for the issue. Joan offered to come to Chicago to help. As I remember, Joan was there the very next day, arriving early in the morning and staying late into the afternoon. Her ideas inspired Doris and they worked together with great joy throughout the day. I know we all laughed a lot and had much fun. I will always remember what Joan taught me that day: humor and a light-hearted spirit can transform any task into one of joy and fun. Thank you, Joan, for sharing your life and spirit with all your BVM sisters.

#### **Sister Mary McCauley, BVM**

Although I did not know Joan during her years as an educator, I did get to know her during her retirement days at Mount Carmel. I was very aware of her generosity of spirit, desire to serve others and her sincere concern for the poor. Joan witnessed to this concern when she served as a volunteer at Maria House, a shelter in Dubuque for homeless women and children. Joan graciously volunteered to be one of the overnight supervisors. Her ease with conversation, affirming presence, warm smile, spontaneous laughter and gracious hospitality were noted and appreciated by staff and residents. I do believe that the residents and staff who were integral to Maria House during Joan's years of volunteer service are today offering to Joan a special prayer of gratitude.

#### **Sister Mary Martens, BVM**

When I had an office in the old BVM Center from 2007-2012, Joan took a turn for the desk receptionist during lunchtime. We would have a brief chat about what was going on. I think at some point she had previously volunteered time at Theresa Shelter overnight. She was simply a welcoming presence for the women in residence. Joan also loved to walk, as I did. We always exchanged a few words at those times, too. I remember her smile, wherever and whenever we met.

### **Nancy McCarthy, BVM**

I first met Joan when we were both on a regional election committee in Chicago many years ago. We met monthly at the Leland apartment where Diane O'Donnell and Peggy Geraghty still live. Peggy was chairperson of the committee and felt that was a central location for all of us. So, I took a long bus ride there after school. It was hard work, but Joan always made it fun. Pizza for supper in the middle of the meeting helped too. Best of all, Joan always gave me a ride home, since we worked rather late and she lived in a suburb on my end of town. So I got to know her pretty well during that time.

After we finished on that committee, we didn't see each other much until Joan moved to Dubuque and I came in summers to volunteer. At that time she was living in an apartment down by the barn with her dog, which was another good reason to visit her. Both Joan and Dog were delightful. Later, when she moved into Mount Carmel building, she had a large cardboard dog in the hall outside her door to make it easier to find her room. She said, "Doors all look the same here." She maintained her sense of humor and always had something funny to say when it was most needed. I don't think I ever saw her without that smile on her face. I'm happy to have had so many chances to visit while she still remembered me. She taught me the value of seeing the lighter side of life when I needed it.

### **Sister Joanne Lucid, BVM**

I loved to see Joan wheeling Sister Ann Regina Dobel from the Marian Hall dining room after dinner. Joan found much happiness in looking after others. Many times Joan asked me where she was or where she was supposed to go with Ann Regina. I remember Ann Regina smiling and patient as she was on a trip with Joan. Again, Joan wanted to do what she could to make others happy.

### **Sister Kate Keating, BVM**

When I was in Chicago I needed a car for personal reasons. Up until that time, Dorothy Gaffney and I shared a car. It was Joan who was asked by the congregation if I could have her car. I had it for six months. I remember calling her to thank her. She said, "I am glad to help another BVM. That is what BVMs do – help one another." I remember when I sent it back and another BVM got to use it through the kindness of Joan.

### **Sister Judy Callahan, BVM**

When Joan's health failed her and she moved to Mount Carmel, she had to give up her beloved little dog. It was hard for her, but she left the dog with Sister Jean Meyer who was famous for pet ministry with other dogs that people in illness had to give up. Jean gave Joan a sense of peace knowing that her blind, wobbly little dog was in good hands with a loving caretaker, Jean Meyer.

### **Sister Karen Conover, BVM**

I did not know Joan Redden until I came to work at Mount Carmel in Support Services in late 2015. At that time, she resided in Marian Hall and was beginning to have memory issues. I recall that she was always cheerful and pleasant as she asked repeated questions. As she held her empty coffee cup, she would query, "Where can I get some hot coffee?" and went off satisfied when I or another would point to the kitchenette at the end of the hall. She needed repeated assistance knowing which room was hers, but she never appeared frustrated, just a "seeker of information" along her daily routine. I remember her smile and her expressions of gratitude for those "simple" things.

At one point, she showed me a series of reproductions of various art pieces she had done some years before. I think the original medium was watercolor or colored pencil. They were lovely scenes, and she was obviously proud of them and pleased to have another BVM exclaim over her work. It was always wonderful for me to discover what had been part of a sister's life when she was fully capable. I am trusting that her smile and twinkly eyes are now shining with delight in God's embrace, free from the diminishment that stole them from her and us.

**Sister Donna Beensee, BVM**

Joan was a serious person. She was raised and influenced by her grandmother who was very strict with Joan. But, I also remember Joan as a gifted artist. She envisioned what she wanted to paint as something that came out as unusual. She had some of those paintings on the wall in the Caritas dining room.