



Sharing of Memories of Jacquelyn Rice, BVM (Vianney)
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Jan. 12, 2022

Linda Tormey Lavery, Former BVM, Tinley Park, IL

Dear Jackie,

I am writing this reflection to you as a letter as I so wanted to be with you at Mount Carmel as you passed. I wanted to give you one final hug and tell you how lucky I was to have you as part of my journey, to be touched by your goodness, and to tell you one more time, that for me, like for so many, you made God real.

I wanted time to reminisce with you. Thomas Merton says, "Every moment and every event of a person's life on earth plants something in our soul." We were planted together, you and I, in that house on Grenshaw Street in Chicago in the summer of 1967, in one of the community's very first experiments known as "small living communities." You taught at Holy Trinity and I taught at St. Mary's High School. Yes, do you remember all that we experienced there together – "at home" Masses, modified habits, learning how to curl our hair again, the tragic loss of Martin Luther King, a more inclusive world, lots of theological sharing including accepting doubt as part of the faith journey, and lots of laughter with your signature chuckle? The community was going through the changes brought about by Vatican II and for many it was a time of division, confusion, and challenge. Yes, lots of things were changing in the community and the church, but in the midst of it all, you always seemed to know who you were – a woman whose life was rooted and grounded in God. You lived faith, hope, and a tangible love.

Although we only lived together for one year before I left the community I wanted to tell you once again how your influence never left me as we remained friends over the years and moved through the different stages of our lives.

A core belief for you was that God was a very real presence found in our everyday living and that is where you looked for and found him. You reminded us by your quiet confidence that although you knew that life was full of mess and mystery, unspeakable sorrow and profound joy, grief and grace that it was into all of that realness that you found God and God found us. That is where and how you lived your life – in the extraordinary ordinary. You found God together with us as we lived our lives filled with change, questions, searching, and always longing.

We are, Jackie, I believe, infinite spirits having a finite adventure. I am so glad my finite adventure and yours connected. But your infinite spirit belongs to God and how awaited you are! It is fitting that you should go home in this liturgical season which reminds us, as you did, of Emmanuel, God with us, that light overcomes darkness, and that we live with a wild hope. As Frederick Buechner states, "We have this high and holy hope: that what he has done, he will continue to do, that what he has begun in us and our world, he will in unimaginable ways bring to fullness and fruition." Yes, your life was a gift and grace through which God was made so real. Meister Eckhart says, "if the only prayer you say in life is 'thank you,' it is enough." So that is my prayer. Thank you for all the wonderful and outspoken ways you touched our earth and forever planted something in my soul. May the Angels lead you into paradise.

Love, Linda

Lori Ritz, Director, Office of BVM Life and Mission & BVM Associate

Shortly after Jackie came to Mount Carmel I approached her, as I do many of the BVM sisters and associates, about sharing her story of her vocation, her life and ministry. The project was the Real World Communications Class at Wahlert High School in Dubuque.

At first Jackie told me “no” as she, in her words, is really an introvert. Not knowing Jackie very well I told her, “Don’t worry. That is OK. No problem.” Later that day I received a phone call from Jackie saying that she felt bad she had turned me down and that yes, she would be interested in sharing with a student. She just needed more information.

On the day of the gathering with about 15 other sisters and 15 students in the Caritas Conference Room I remember Jackie and a young man, about a sophomore or junior, sitting at a table in the middle of the group. There was much conversation and laughing going on. As I eased dropped one thing I remember is he told her how his family came from Mexico to the United States.

Following the time together the students had to go back to school and come up with a project on how to share what they learned about their sister, sharing her life and mission and whatever else was of interest. Some students wrote and illustrated children’s books, some did power point presentations, some made posters and so on. Well Jackie’s young man wrote a rap song about her, about what he learned from and about Jackie. We arranged for him to share his rap song with her on the telephone. It is difficult to understand a rap song on the phone by the way.

Following the song he sent her the words on a piece of paper with his name at the bottom.

I visited Jackie in her room one day while she was still in the Motherhouse. On the shelf was the piece of paper on which was written the rap song with the student’s name card below it. She read the song to me with tears coming down her cheeks. The last line of the song was “And she told me it’s OK to be an immigrant.” Jackie said “I pray for him every day.”

We never know how we touch someone else in our lives—but Jackie touched his---and I would say she touched mine as well. Thank you, Jackie.

Marnie Luning Stalford, Cousin

My cousin Jackie was a beautiful person who cared about other people. Jackie reached out to our mother, Margaret, as she grew more frail by providing support in so many ways. Our family is forever grateful.

I was in high school when Jackie first came to Saint Dorothy’s in Chicago to teach at the parish school. Our home was always open to Jackie and the sisters. Mom loved having the sisters visit and prepared wonderful meals for the special guests. Dad loved talking with Jackie about church matters and often spirited discussions would end with good-natured differences of opinion expressed. Jackie’s passion when speaking about social justice issues opened my teenage mind to the world outside. Her lifelong work to help others made a huge difference in the lives of those she touched.

Jackie’s unselfishness and loving kindness made the world a better place and helped me and my family in so many ways over the years. Rest in peace, Jackie.

Gerald Bruce, Nephew

I will never forget the day I first met my Aunt Jackie as an adult. I was headed out to Chicago for a conference and knew I would have a long layover on the last day before my flight home. So I called out to Jackie and asked her to meet me at the airport.

Neither of us prepared properly for that visit. We didn't send pictures so we didn't know what each other looked like. Our only visual point of reference was my parents. I ended up sitting in a hallway somewhere at O'Hare. When Jackie came down that hallway we both knew we had found each other. I guess the family resemblances were strong enough.

Jackie wondered what in the world we would do for the next four hours. Well, I asked her to drive me into downtown and show me "her world." We started talking right away and never stopped the whole time. As you all know, she was a delightful person and I loved her right away.

From that time on we stayed in touch. She would stop by San Jose on her occasional trips out to California. We brought our first two children to Chicago one winter between Christmas and New Year's. That is where our two oldest children saw their first snow. We ended that trip with a visit to the Chicago Museum of Science and Technology and flew home on New Year's Eve

Years later, I scheduled a stopover in Chicago on a business trip. I remember touring Navy Pier with Jackie. As the years went by and her ability to travel waned, Jackie faithfully remembered our birthdays, our kids' birthdays, and our anniversary. She treasured any pictures we sent her and we treasured our occasional phone calls with her. We were especially blessed knowing how often she prayed for us.

We miss you Aunt Jackie, but we look forward to reuniting with you in Heaven where you must have a pretty close seat to the throne. Love, Jerry, Mary Jane, Joshua, Shannon (with Scottie Jane and JR) and David.

I've attached a photo taken at Lake Tahoe where Jackie joined us for a big multi-family vacation in 1998. The photo is actually mounted in a snow globe courtesy of Aunt Jackie.

Father Thomas Nangle, Retired Chaplain, Chicago Police Department

I first met Sister Jackie Rice in the late 1970s when she and I were both at Saint Clement Parish in Chicago. I was impressed by her pastoral heart, her honesty, her courageous thinking, the fact she stayed so up-to-date in her reading, and her peaceful way of stating her opinions without any chronic fury or righteous anger heating up the room. We stayed in touch as our lives moved on. Here we are 40 some years later and I'm so glad we did.

I envied her pleasant attitude and her willingness to chuckle at the mysteries and craziness of life. There is plenty to be disappointed about in our church these days, but disappointment and frustration were never the flags Jackie sailed under; if I had to pick two flags for her, they'd be peacefulness and acceptance. We used to have our long discussions on the phone and we never wasted time with small talk and chatter, but rather started to swap opinions and theology and the mysteries of life itself, along with trying to understand what's going on in the church. The latter topic made us both feel like we were midwives and hospice workers simultaneously – not a pleasant condition. And we both realized deeply that every institution is an enemy of the human spirit.

I fool myself when think that I am comfortable with mystery, but she was light years ahead of me. Her easy chuckle revealed that! It is said that for those who feel, life is a tragedy; and for those who think, life is a comedy. Jackie was a thinker. She realized that God and the universe are under no obligation to make sense to us. And God and the universe know that even better than we do.

We used to kick around the ideas of human soul/spirit, eternal life, and resurrection. The older we got, the more interesting and important those topics got. If I might overlay my belief and hope on to her now, may Jackie see the face of God. May she know perfect creation. May she delight in the company of those who have gone before her. May she know completely how she enriched the earth, simply by being Jackie Rice, a long life lived well.

Father Thomas Nangle, Retired Chaplain, Chicago Police Department (2nd submission)

It's more sobering to see a cremains vessel than a full size casket; it still shakes us to think we can be reduced to that little container. But we know a human life can't be contained in a cremains vessel. The breadth and depth of Jackie's life instead continues to live and grow in the people she shared her life and faith, hope and love with, cremains vessel be damned!

She was always so willing to chuckle at the mysteries of church and life. She was always so eager to get beyond useless chatter and get into soul deep conversation. She was always so able to keep her head on straight when others were losing theirs. She was always a truth-teller, willing to share her take on reality. She never let chronic anger be the music in her soul, though there's plenty to be angry about. And she had no need for sclerotic terminal clarity; instead she settled in comfortably with the mystery of it all. She was a quiet bright spot.

I'll miss her. Glad I knew her. My abiding hope is to be reunited with her and all who have gone before me, and who beckon to me from God's presence, when my journey across this earth closes out. Thank you, God.

Helen Gabel, BVM Associate

Jackie was a woman ahead of her time. Upon the death of Sister Kathryn "Kit" McDonald, who had been my introduction to the BVMs and my guide on the Associate journey, I expressed my fear to Jackie that I would lose my connection to the BVMs. Her response: "I will never let that happen." She kept her promise!

Terri Mierswa, Friend

There are no words to express how meaningful your friendship has been to me since we first met at St. Clement's when you were the religious education coordinator. You were the encouragement that led Tom and me to teach and to facilitate the teen retreats with Joan Callaghan. What a blessing that was when we formed the teen ministry group! Despite our small numbers we helped our little band of teens through their years with service, fun and faith development.

We were so excited when you were able to baptize our first son, Michael, with John Fahey. It was important to us that you had an active role in welcoming him into the family of believers. And I know you have kept both Michael and Peter in your prayers throughout the years after Tom died and they made their way through their teens and early adulthood. The seed of faith, although like most of their generation lies dormant, is ready to sprout when the time is right.

I have enjoyed visiting with you every pre-COVID and pre-retirement visit back to Chicago. Somehow it seems like we picked up where we left off as if we saw each other all the time. I miss those visits and seeing you in person to reminisce and to continue to learn from you about life, love of God and God's creatures.

I know that you are in difficult times and it is my turn to pray with others that you find strength and courage to answer your next call to rest in God's embrace. God is calling you because she loves you and wants you near. You have been such a gift to me and to so many others. We praise God by letting go of God's gift of you during this Christmas season and cherishing all that God has blessed us with through you. Christmas blessings and love,

Nancy Louise, Friend

Sister Jackie was my friend and mentor for over 40 years. We got off to a rocky beginning. Sister was the DRE at St. Clement's when I approached her about enrolling my four year old son, Sean, who had just been diagnosed as autistic, in the pre-school "Sunday" school. She was initially apprehensive but finally agreed to give it a go. All went well—and we came to trust each other. This would lead to her asking me to serve on the Family Liturgy team for eight years. Sean attended St. Clement's and was chosen twice to play St. Joseph in our Christmas Eve kid's liturgy! He and Jackie had a wonderful friendship!

Sister Jackie also headed up the divorce ministry at Clement's. When I went through the annulment process I handed over the required paperwork to her – thirty plus handwritten pages of intrusive and painful reflections on my marriage. Jackie shook her head sadly and told me that the archdiocese required that the pages be typewritten. I began to sob and said I couldn't bear to even re-read the pages much less type them! She took them from my hands and said simply "I'll do it." And she did.

In 2002 Jackie recommended me for the job as administrator of Wright Hall—the most difficult and rewarding job of my career! I came to know and LOVE the most amazing accomplished women who still inspire me today. Thank you Jackie!

I was blessed with several meaningful visits with Jackie after her move to the Motherhouse. COVID ended that. Several of my visits were at Christmas and Jackie would have out her most unique crèche. Somehow that crèche captures for me who Jackie was: a woman who held the exhausted.

Janet Curry, Friend

I loved Sister Jackie. She was a great friend to me during my time at St. Clement's. Her intelligence, calm demeanor, and love of laughter are things I will always remember about her. She was a person I could talk to about anything and feel peaceful around. I will continue to remember her and I know there will be moments when I will feel her presence.

Ray Belstner

I was a member of the St. Clement's congregation for many years which is where I met Sister Jackie. Everyone knows that the sisters are the heart of every parish; Sister Jackie was the best possible example of that fact. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to know her. Having known her still effects my life in many ways and all to the good.

Sister Nancy McCarthy, BVM

My first memories of getting to know Jackie are mostly from the hospitality room gatherings at BVM assemblies and senates. It was only when she became our Great Lakes regional representative along with Peggy Nolan that I got to know her pretty well. Peggy and I were living together during those years. I grew to appreciate the way they worked together and shared their gifts with all of us. One project Jackie initiated was to have small gatherings of BVMs in different areas of the region so that we'd get to know each other better.

After Peggy was elected vice president, Jackie finished out their term. That's when I really got to know her well. One of the topics that had come up at a senate during open space discussion time was a desire that sisters could give the eulogy at a friend's funeral, partly to save work for the leadership who seemed to be doing all of them at that time. I was part of that group. Jackie remembered that when my good friend Mary (Hortense) Kelly died in Chicago. She called me at school and asked if I'd be willing to do the reflection since the funeral would be in Chicago. At first I was reluctant to agree, but she reminded me that I'd shown interest in doing this and told me it was time to "put my mouth where my heart was." I had only a couple of days to prepare, but she offered great help and encouragement all the way. Somehow that one experience gave me the courage to stand up and speak in front of groups, especially BVMs, for the rest of my life. I am truly grateful, Jackie. Thank you!

Sister Jane O'Donnell, RSM

I am a Sister of Mercy from Dallas, Penn. I met Jacquelyn 42 years ago when she began her sabbatical at Weston School of Theology. We became friends almost immediately and we kept in touch all these years. A few times we were able to personally visit with each other. I have many fond memories of her and her kindness to me. During our years in Cambridge we shared the joy of shopping, experiencing different restaurants, and attending special liturgies and lectures. I treasure these memories. I will always remember her infectious smile, her quick wit and sense of humor and her faithful friendship. She will always be part of my heart. I'm grateful to Marie Greaney for

informing me of Jacquelyn's illness and peaceful death. Jacquelyn, thank you for your friendship. May you now be held in the palm of God's hand. Rest in peace, my dear friend.

Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM

I feel blessed to have overlapped some years in leadership with Jackie. Through the interactions that took place at Community Board and Community Council, I came to appreciate Jackie's keen understanding of our core value of freedom. Long before we named freedom as one of our core values, I believe freedom shaped her life. I observed Jackie forming relationships and making decisions that respected the choices of an individual while also creating the context of the loving support of community membership. Jackie had learned the art of balancing those two dimensions. And, for this reason and many more, I am grateful that I had the opportunity to know, work with and come to love Jackie.

Tom Luning

Jackie was close to my family from early on in her life when her family and mine lived in St. Louis. My parents were her godparents in days when godparents had a real role in their godchild's life. I was about nine years old when she entered the BVMs. She stopped at our house in Chicago, where my family had moved, on her way to Dubuque. When she returned to Chicago for her first assignment as a teacher at St. Dorothy's school on Chicago's south side, my parents, sisters and I visited her frequently at the convent under the watchful eyes of the BVMs in residence. She also occasionally visited our home, accompanied by another nun as was required by the rules at the time. I recall that the visits were filled with conversation and laughter. Jackie had a fine sense of humor.

Over the years, the restrictions under which BVMs lived eased and their opportunities for employment other than teaching expanded. Jackie dove into those opportunities with gusto. I recall that she particularly relished her role at St. Clement and the relationships with the clergy and staff there. She welcomed freedom from the requirement that she wear the extravagant BVM habit and enjoyed the ability to live in apartments with other nuns or by herself. She was truly independent, and relished driving a car. She had a wide range of interests and was an enthusiastic participant in conversations on many subjects. We were always happy to have Jackie join us.

Sister Dee Peppard, BVM

I met Jackie in the early 1980s at one of many BVM Region 10 meetings. We were energized, affirmed and challenged by these gatherings. At that time, Jackie was a staff member at St. Clement's Parish in Chicago. It was a progressive, Vatican II parish with a large group of young adults as parishioners. Jackie took seriously both the responsibilities and the opportunities of being a member of the parish staff. She was a good team person and dealt with challenges in an honest, respectful dialogue. A variety of people always felt comfortable with Jackie.

Jackie always kept up with her professional reading. Her theology was grounded in the best of our tradition. She and I sometimes participated in the Summer Scripture Seminars held at the seminary in Mundelein, Ill. In those years, the speakers included world-class scripture scholars. Jackie and I also belonged to a discussion group that included Carolyn Farrell, Lois Dolphin and Anne Carr. We met at Carolyn's apartment and she was a most gracious host. "Cheers!" as Carolyn would say!

One of the things I learned from Jackie is to get as much of the data as possible when making a judgment or decision. She was always aware of different perspectives. She greeted life with a heart and mind open to learning and open to change. She had the ability to laugh at the craziness of life! Jackie had a strong conviction that the people are the Church. Her attitude toward life was grounded in God's abundant love and in her sense of mission.

After leaving St. Clements, Jackie worked in the legal office of the Archdiocese of Chicago. John O'Malley, her boss, was also new to the position, and they turned out to be a good team together. One of their first challenges was to create, update and organize the files! That was a project for which Jackie was particularly gifted.

As regional representative, Jackie had to set-up an office in Wright Hall. She did so with her characteristic “know how” and ability to laugh. She bought a computer, file cabinet and anything necessary to make a smooth running office! It was work, but it was fun work! When Jackie would drive back to Chicago from Dubuque, I’d meet her at Old Orchard for dinner. Our meeting place was the shoe department at Nordstrom’s, and I still think of Jackie whenever I walk through that department!

Jackie lived with Kit McDonald in a couple of different places. The last place they lived was Our Lady of Loretto convent in Hometown, Ill. The convent had no chapel because the convent was connected to the church. There was even a closet in the convent with a window that looked down directly into the church assembly! When Jackie left that convent, a group of women religious moved in and requested a chapel. Later the pastor of the parish told me that when Cardinal George heard that the BVMs had no chapel, he was shocked. But then he said it was probably a good thing, because the BVMs would want to preside at Mass! Jackie and I laughed, and took that as a compliment!

Jackie lived in a couple of different apartments, and in each case, the women from whom she rented really loved her! Georgia, a woman from Greece, used to bring Jackie fantastic Greek dinners – but with no Ouzo! Another landlady, Jean, became a friend to Jackie. A man in the building, Rich, would do anything that Jackie needed. Both Jean and Rich kept in contact with Jackie after she moved to Dubuque. They appreciated Jackie, and it was mutual.

In 2004 Jackie, Kit McDonald, Marie Greaney and I went to Hawaii. As planned, we met with Marcelia Maglente while we were there. Marcelia honored us with beautiful, handmade leis – made especially for us! She introduced us to her friendly neighbors and to the most amazing flowers in the gardens. And all the while Jackie tended to Kit’s health challenges. And as always, Jackie did that with “know how” and compassion.

I’m most grateful for the gift of Jackie in my life. Jackie’s gifts were many, and she always used them in ways that were life-giving for others. Now Jackie experiences fully the incredible, awesome love of our God that is more expansive and gracious than we can even imagine.

Sister Katie Heffernan, BVM

Jackie’s death is a great sorrow for me! Watching Jackie become more and more fragile was very painful because it was totally opposite from the Jackie Rice who had been my lively, loving, energetic friend for so many years. We shared many life experiences! I decided to focus on just one of our many fun times together. That would be the years we went skiing. Neither Jackie nor I enjoyed our long, cold Chicago winters so we found a way to change our attitudes about the COLD. We got into cross country skiing.

For good cross country skiing the weather must remain below 32 degrees. If the weather gets warmer than that, the snow starts to melt and it becomes too slippery. Chicago was not ideal for skiing because too often snow would melt or the city would put down salt to melt the snow, keeping conditions unreliable for skiing. So Jackie and I put our own energy and interest in a new focus away from Chicago and decided to join a ski club. Let the club do the research for weekend snow conditions! We looked into many ski clubs and decided to join American Youth Hostels (AYH). On Friday evenings, after work, we would take our skis, poles, etc. and go over to the AYH Center’s bus, which took us to our skiing destination for the weekend – usually some place in Michigan or Wisconsin. It was GREAT. We both loved it. It made winters just fly by. Often Joyce Rohlik joined us. Jackie probably still has a few medals from our racing experiences. And during the hot summer days in Chicago, while lying on the Lake Michigan beach, we would make our plans for snow conditions when the temperature would drop below freezing again.

Jackie, I realize that Heaven is always depicted as a warm, bright, sunny place. But I’m certain you can scout around up there and find some places for us where the temperature will be perfect for cross country skiing. Maybe you can ask St. Nicholas and his reindeer, who enjoy living up North, and they’ll probably save a place until both of us come along. In the meantime, we’ll be missing you down here at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

Marie Burton, former BVM

Jackie is a wonderful friend of mine. We supported each other through tough and trying times. We celebrated our best times. Jackie always remembered the anniversary of my husband's death. I will miss her, but I rejoice that she is home.

Catherine May Katauskas

Sister Jackie always had a big, bright smile. Her gentle kindness and warmth could light up the world. I will always remember her as a truly good person with the ability to spread kindness, love, patience, and understanding. I know she will be at peace and be able to touch others from heaven! Smile on, Jackie!

Jean Beardsley, Former Landlady

Jackie is very dear to me.

We met many years ago
and became fast friends.

If I told her I needed her help and prayers

She never failed me.

She is definitely a class act.

I miss being with my good friend

I know she is one of God's favorites.