



Sharing of Memories of Virginia Crilly, BVM (Therese Mary)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, April 26, 2022

Kathy Gartner, Niece

Aunt Ginny was more like a sister to me than an aunt. She was only nine years older than me, so we used to play together as kids. As we all got older, we went our separate ways with our friends. Then Ginny entered the convent, so I did not see her for many years. She was assigned a teaching job in Arizona for 25 years. I was able to fly out and see her when I graduated from high school. My grandma sent me out to Tempe to visit my other grandparents therefore I was able to spend a little time with Ginny. We did spend time together when Ginny would come back to Illinois to visit the family.

I was able to spend more time with Aunt Ginny, after I retired. I would drive up for the weekend and visit. I was able to have breakfast with her at times. We would go into town and walk around. I even made her go on the Dubuque cable car with me as I remember going on that as a kid when I would come up with my grandparents to visit my great Aunt Rose. Ginny would not get out when we got to the top as it was very difficult to move in the cable car. We just laughed and enjoyed. Sometimes we would drive into Galena also and just spend the day. I genuinely enjoyed our time.

As time went on it was harder for Aunt Ginny to get around so we would just spend the time at her place. My friend Lance would drive up with me. They would kid around with each other and just have a good time. For the longest time Aunt Ginny thought his name was "The Man" as my mother would always refer to him that way after playing a game when she asked if "The Man" was cheating. He referred to my mother as "The Lady". All the birthday cards were always signed "The Man". My other friends started driving up with me to visit with Aunt Ginny and we always had nice visits.

I will miss you Aunt Ginny, but I know God welcomed you into Heaven with open arms. I love you and please watch over us.

Mary and Alice Crilly, Nieces

We would like to share a story about how Aunt Ginny wasn't exactly all work and no play. When Aunt Ginny was working with five different churches at the same time, we went to visit one Saturday. Before we could go out for the evening, Aunt Ginny needed to go to one of the evening masses to do the readings. The priest saying the mass announced that Sister Virginia would be leaving service early to go out with her nieces. He then asked us to stand up so the congregation could see who we were and said, "Sister is going out wherever nieces take their aunts." But it wasn't us taking Aunt Ginny out, it was she taking us out. First out to dinner and then out to Diamond Jo's gambling boat to play slots and have a couple of beers. Aunt Ginny was always fun to be with and she will be missed greatly.

Sister Mary Nolan, BVM

When Diane Rapozo, BVM and I were beginning our South Central regional ministry, we asked Virginia, who lived in La Motte, Iowa about 20 minutes from Dubuque, if we might meet in the quiet of her home to plan our BVM visits. Virginia was so pleased to welcome us, especially being from her set, and was such an encouraging presence! She served coffee and snacks and then left us to do her ministry of presence and prayer in five neighboring parishes while her pastor was away working in Iraq.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM, Set Member

Gentle, faithful Ginny. Our set of 1958 was a small set of only 75 wedged between sets of over 100 each. Bonds remained close with those “in” and “out” of the community thanks to gatherings over the years and technology. With sadness we recently said goodbye (or rather, “see you later”) to Cora Keegan, Kathy Redpath Beale, and now Ginny. We treasure the unique qualities which each set member has gifted to us.

Ginny was never one to seek the limelight, but was quietly attending to the organization of gatherings, cluster meetings, set lunches, etc. No task was too much for her. She was a great audience for the more conversant participants, and being such a good listener, treasured the stories and memories of every person present.

In 1963, Ginny and I were partners in the then new practice for student teaching at the Scholasticate. For our final semester, we went out to schools in the Chicago area for student teaching on Monday morning, via the El, and returned on Fridays after school, getting a taste of “Life on the Missions!” Ginny and I were assigned to Mary, Queen of Heaven in Cicero. We had to figure out how to get there on the CTA. Now, getting on the El in Chicago early on a Monday morning with a long habit, a suitcase, school supplies, handling real money for the transport, and knowing where to go, when and how to get through the entry turnstile, for me was one of the scariest things I have ever done in my entire life! Having grown up on a remote farm, and having a very poor sense of direction, even getting around Dubuque was an enormous fear! At the entrance to the subway, unsure of whether to go over, or under the confusing, unyielding arm of the turnstile had me near panic. But Ginny, a Chicago area native, helped me with her calming, practical, reassuring presence! For cooperating teachers, she had Nic Catrambone and I had Joan Opatts, both amazingly helpful teachers not only in the classroom, but in living our first experience of BVM mission life!

Ginny’s sense of humor was delightful! Her stories about her time as “pastor” of five parishes had me guffawing in laughter. One-on-one, there was no one more engaging and enjoyable. We now celebrate the gentle, faithful Ginny who took everything in stride with composure and acceptance. So as we say “Goodbye” we really know it is only “See you later”. Godspeed, Ginny.

Sister Helen Gourlay, BVM, Set Member

I stayed out in the country with Ginny once. She shared the walking path that went around a corn field. It was very unique, and it was fun being out there. I also stayed with her several times here in Dubuque when I would come in for a meeting. She was a delight. What I remember most about Ginny was her sense of humor – she had a unique sense of humor – as well as her gracious hospitality and fun-loving life.

Sister Teri Hadro, BVM

I didn’t know Ginny before she was living here at Mount Carmel Bluffs. I didn’t really have a chance to hear much of her story. But she always had that absolutely, magical smile. Even if she was having a bad day, you could coax her into sharing that smile with you. It was a winner! Ginny never stopped caring. Even though Parkinson’s limited her mobility, she was the recipient of a doll. She wove a story around it. It shows that she never stopped caring even in her diminishment. In her story, she was taking care of children whose families couldn’t take care of them. She was quite happy to see to the baby’s needs. I sat there in absolute amazement as she was spinning out this story. I think it demonstrates that her caring heart never stopped until the end. That caring was reciprocated by her loving family, her nieces. When I was talking to Alice, she said, “There are about 35 people to whom I have to

give the update.” An amazing number! Also, by the staff. The nursing staff on second floor of Gables couldn’t have been kinder to Ginny. And their reward was her magnificent smile!

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

In 1997 I moved out to California from St. Louis. I didn’t have an apartment, but I had a lot of furniture. I asked the sisters at St. Clare, one of which was Ginny, if I could stay with them until I found my own apartment, which took about a year-and-a half. They were very, very generous, and very, very gracious to me. I will always be grateful to all of them for that.

Sister Anne Cronin, BVM

I have two very brief food stories. You all know that I am related to food very closely, thanks to candy. The first time that Ginny, Ann Marie Dress and I went to Lake Tahoe, we went to a restaurant for dinner. Ginny and I both ordered a tostada – a tortilla topped off with lettuce, stuff. When the tostadas came, they were as big as this ambo! They were humongous! They could have fed three people and we each had one. I think Annie got a quesadilla, something normal! We laughed like idiots at that.

The other thing I remember about Ginny in terms of food was when I was visiting Dubuque. Ginny and I went out to dinner in what is now the Barrel House. At that point, it was an Italian restaurant. After we placed our order, the server came and said, “Do you want some giardiniera?” We said, “Sure.” He said, “It’s a little bit hot.” Well, it was enough to blow your brains out! Those were the two fun memories I have of being with Ginny in restaurants.