



Eulogy of Sister Virginia Crilly, BVM (Therese Mary)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, April 26, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Virginia Crilly.

Virginia Lee “Ginny” Crilly was born on Feb. 28, 1940, in Elmhurst, Ill., to Joseph and Therese Nash Crilly. She joined Richard, Margaret Mary, Philip, and James as the youngest member of the family. ,

Ginny was raised in Oak Park, Ill., where she attended Ascension grade school. The family returned to Elmhurst in time for her to attend Immaculate Conception high school. While she never attended a BVM school, her parents graduated from Presentation elementary school in Chicago and her siblings attended St. Eulalia in Maywood, Ill. She was acquainted with the BVMs through her aunt Sister Rose (Eusebia) Nash and her grandaunt Sister Mary Carlotta Hughes.

Ginny entered the congregation on Aug. 2, 1958, and received the name Therese Mary upon her reception on Feb. 3, 1959. She professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1961, and lived 63 years as a BVM. After her profession, she was sent to the Scholasticate in Chicago to complete a bachelor’s degree in sociology and educational administration from Mundelein College.

Ginny’s first mission was as an elementary teacher at St. Francis Xavier in Phoenix where she taught social studies and reading in 7th and 8th grades. After one semester, she was changed to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tempe, Ariz. “I began teaching 7th grade in the morning and 4th grade in the afternoon. I was at Mount Carmel [for 22 years] and taught every grade except first, as well as being vice-principal. My favorite grades were seventh and eighth where I taught social studies and science.”

After completing a Master of Education in supervision from Arizona State University, Ginny served ten years as elementary principal at St. Clare in Santa Clara, Calif. She was an excellent principal and very supportive of the faculty and the school families. She was a good listener and open to the needs of others. Ginny also ministered in the parish. She had always enjoyed singing and shared her talent as song leader at the Saturday evening Mass.

In July 1999, Ginny began a sabbatical year during which she studied at Santa Clara University in preparation to minister as a liturgist or a pastoral associate. She also attended a three-month renewal program for men and women from all over the world held in Manchester, England. It was a delightful experience that consisted of classes and travel in England, Ireland, and Scotland.

During her time in England, Ginny interviewed for her next job via the phone and was hired. She returned to Iowa to minister first as pastoral associate and then as pastoral administrator for the Penta Parishes in Jackson County, namely Holy Rosary and St. Theresa in LaMotte; St. John in Andrew; St. Lawrence in Otter Creek; and Assumption in Sylvia Switch. A few years later, Ginny commented, “I’ve always been in big cities. When I told my family where I was going, they thought I was nuts! Now that they’ve been here, they understand why I love being here. My first year, I broke my ankle, and the parishioners did everything for me. I felt like part of their family.” Her joy and enthusiasm for her rural ministry was evident whenever she talked about the parishes.

After three of the five parishes closed, Ginny served as a pastoral care minister at Mount Carmel. Her focus during her nine years at Mount Carmel was to establish healthy, trusting relationships. "I enjoy working with the sisters," shared Ginny. "[I] learn so much from each one of them by visiting and interacting with them each day . . . I listen to them with respect and compassion realizing that for some it is difficult to move to Mount Carmel and accept their diminishment."

After retiring, Ginny continued to volunteer at Mount Carmel as she had done for several summers during her teaching years. Recalling those days, she commented, "One summer I spent a month in the Marian Hall kitchen taking the place of various workers when they went on vacation. Sister Kathleen McGrath was in charge . . . and I learned a great deal from her . . . I also came back to help as a driver, letter writer and spent much time visiting the sisters. This helped me years later in my ministry as a pastoral care minister."

Ginny was faithful to all to whom she ministered as she was faithful to her set, her cluster, her friends, and her family. She had a large family that was described as a "small village" when they gathered. Ginny's love for her family was obvious and mutual. She was close to all her siblings and exceptionally close to her brother, Father Jim, and her sister, Margaret.

Ginny was quiet and unassuming, yet always ready for an adventure. She enjoyed taking in every experience completely. She was gentle, respectful, compassionate, and not only appreciated the gifts of others but depended upon them. She readily volunteered to do the jobs that no one else wanted to do – jobs that were very necessary but received little recognition. She loved to shop and often would go out just to browse. She enjoyed reading with mysteries being her favorite genre and James Patterson her favorite author.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9). Her deep trust in God's love freed Ginny to live her life as a positive person who could find humor in everything, even trying situations, and often responded with her very distinctive laugh . . . and maybe a snort!

Thank you, Ginny, for being a gift to us. May your reunion with your deceased family members, BVM sisters, and friends be glorious. May you know the fullness of love, peace, and joy in the presence of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!