



Eulogy of Sister Margaret “Peggy”, BVM (Williamette)
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 7, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be here to celebrate the life of our Sister Margaret Devereux.

Margaret Ann Devereux was the first child of William and Margaret (McCormick) Devereux of Chicago. She was born on Nov. 3, 1928, and was later joined by siblings Clarke, Joseph, and Marilyn. Despite growing up during the Depression, Peggy was a happy child. She recalled, “We prayed every night for my dad’s job that he would get a raise. Sometimes he worked three jobs.” Her parents were very religious. Her dad attended daily Mass his entire life while her mother would fix breakfast for her children and then go into another room, kneel down and say her morning prayers.

Peggy attended Resurrection ES in Chicago and Our Lady of the Angels Academy in Clinton, Iowa, where her cousin, SM Vera Clarke, BVM, taught. “She was a great teacher and a favorite of all my friends,” she commented. “She was a happy person and would do so much to help her students. She even got us a tennis instructor.”

Peggy entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1946, and received the name Williamette upon her reception on March 19, 1947. She professed first vows on March 19, 1949, and lived 75 years as a BVM.

Peggy taught in the primary grades at Presentation, Holy Cross, St. Agatha, and Holy Name in Chicago; St. Rose in Wilmington, Ill.; St. Mary in Clinton, Iowa; and St. Monica in San Francisco. Her favorite mission was Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) in Chattanooga, Tenn., where she served as superior, principal, and teacher for 20 years. “The faculty was great! Everyone had an interest in making it the best possible school. I loved that school.” In addition to her ministry at OLPH in Chattanooga, Peggy traveled 30 miles to St. Joseph parish in Dalton, Ga., every Sunday for fifteen years to teach First Communion classes.

Teaching was Peggy’s greatest passion so much so that she decided against majoring in biology for fear it would take her away from elementary students. She loved the children, especially the first graders because they were so eager to learn.

Peggy ministered as the Director of Religious Education at St. Therese of Lisieux parish in Cleveland, Tenn., before serving as elementary principal at Christ the King in Nashville, Tenn. The latter was her most challenging mission. She was asked to resign as principal after she came to the defense of a black student. Refusing an offer of an alternative position in the school, she returned to Chicago to teach.

From 1991 to 1994, Peggy became the administrator of Wright Hall in Chicago. Several major renovations were completed during her three years there. She readily jumped in to help; no task was beneath her. Her priority was to create a pleasant and engaging environment for our retired sisters while promoting good employee relationships.

After enjoying a sabbatical year, Peggy moved to San Francisco to teach at St. Monica ES. In a letter to her set, she shared, “I loved teaching the lowest reading groups of first, second, third and fourth grades and religion in sixth, seventh and eighth grades.”

Peggy returned to Wright Hall in 2002 as a resident. "I knew I would love being retired here – and I really do," she commented. Peggy kept busy serving on the house council and activity and party committees, as well as volunteering. She still had plenty of time to spend with family as they celebrated birthdays, First Communions, plays, graduations and other special occasions.

When Wright Hall closed in 2011, Peggy moved to Oak Park where she volunteered as a tutor for Catholic Charities until deciding to move to Mount Carmel in 2014. This decision was an issue of concern for one family member. Peggy had helped one grandniece with her reading. The announcement of the pending move prompted a younger grandniece to ask, "Aunt Peggy, who is going to teach me to read?"

Family always meant so much to Peggy as it did to her mother who once said, "My treasures are here – my family." Peggy was exhilarated to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee with three generations of the Devereux family including all three of her siblings and two grandnieces from Ethiopia.

St. Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all." (Philippians 4:4-5). Peggy's welcoming smile, easygoing manner and good sense of humor drew people to her, and she was admired and loved for her kindness and compassion. She freely offered a listening ear and an open mind, and readily encouraged and supported others on their path.

St. Paul continued, "Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9). Peggy treasured her Catholic faith and her BVM heritage. They were a source of stability and strength, a guiding light as she navigated the challenges of life. Indeed, "the God of peace" was with her on her journey and welcomed her home where she now dwells and rejoices in the Lord forever.