



## **Eulogy of Sister Geraldine Moorman, BVM (St. Geraldine)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 1, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Geraldine Moorman.

Adele Catherine Moorman was born on December 28, 1922, the third of the nine children of John Joseph and Adele (Toenjes) Moorman of St. Louis. Her parents and grandparents were of German descent and would speak in German whenever they didn't want the children to know what they were talking about. Both of her parents were self-educated. As a young man, her father worked for a laundry business and made deliveries to a "large estate" that later became Xavier High School.

Adele attended Our Lady of Sorrows Grade School, run by the Notre Dame Sisters, and then Xavier High School. As a senior, she began to think seriously about entering religious life. When she mentioned this to her father, he said, "That's fine as long as you are a BVM."

Despite feeling drawn to religious life, she changed her mind about entering in the fall after graduation. She went to work for a publishing company since it was too late to register for college. Later that fall she received a call from Sister Mary Florian Fenelon, the principal of St. Francis Xavier Grade School, who asked Adele to be a long-term substitute for the third-grade teacher. Encouraged by the principal's confidence in her ability handle the job, Adele accepted. She later wrote, "It didn't dawn on me at that time that my BVM friends had another reason for keeping in touch . . . besides helping with these little third graders." And it worked.

Adele entered the congregation on February 2, 1941. She received the name St. Geraldine upon her reception on August 15, 1941. She later discovered that her father had requested that name in honor of his sister who had joined an Ursuline order. "I loved my Novitiate but I was just as excited to set out into the teaching world," shared Geraldine. She professed her first vows on August 15, 1943, and lived 81 years as a BVM.

Geraldine's first mission was as an elementary teacher at St. Vincent in Chicago where she was the youngest sister. Her next mission was to Our Lady of the Angels in Chicago. "Although we had the minimum of conveniences and lived in dormitories that made the Novitiate look like a palace suite, I loved [Our Lady of Angels] partly because there were a great number of younger sisters . . . and we had one of the best superiors in the community – Sister Mary St. William [Welsh]."

Two years later, Geraldine thought her heart would break when she was sent to teach eighth grade at Annunciation in Chicago, but it didn't take long for her to adjust. She remained there for 12 years.

In 1959, she was sent to St. Gregory the Great in Bellerose, N.Y., to serve as superior/principal and eighth grade teacher. Since this move included a change of province, she didn't know *any* of the sisters. She recalled, "They all came to meet me and introduce themselves. As each told me her name and the grade she taught, one sister said in one breath, 'I am Sister Mary Luella and I teach second grade. I have 99 children in my classroom and I'm not going to take another one.'" Geraldine spent most of her four years at St. Gregory convincing the pastor that it was time to build a new addition to the school.

At the request of Mother Consolatrice (Sister Mary Helen Wright), Geraldine served as the Motherhouse novice mistress from 1964 to 1968. She wrote. "When Vatican II . . . opened its doors to change in the Catholic Church, religious life especially was targeted . . . To contemplate, to examine, to rethink our traditional training for novices in the light of the 'new church' was an exhausting, but invigorating, demand for those involved in formation . . . We faced [these challenges] with the knowledge that with faith and trust in God and Mary Frances Clarke, what we had to give at this time was all that was asked of us. Indeed, Mary Frances Clarke became more alive and encouraging to me."

After completing her service as novice mistress, Geraldine ministered as principal at St. Gilbert in Grayslake, Illinois, for eight years followed by twelve years as principal at St. Bartholomew in Chicago where she lived with Kentucky Dominican Sisters. When she resigned as principal in 1988, the pastor of St. Bartholomew named some of Geraldine's favorable qualities in the parish bulletin including: gentle, loyal, wise, persevering, sensitive to needs and situations, educational and religious leader, principal [with] principle, loyal, and dear friend to many.

After taking a year of renewal, Geraldine returned to St. Bartholomew as parish secretary and pastoral associate. In 2005, the pastor wrote, "I have found Sister Geraldine to be a true gift to our parish and to those with whom she ministers. She has a gentle and loving smile for everyone and a comprehensive knowledge of our parish families. Her wisdom, love, and pastoral care [are gifts] to us here at St. Bartholomew." Geraldine received the Heart of St. Bartholomew Award for her contributions to the parish and school.

Geraldine moved to Mount Carmel in 2006 because of back and leg pain that required surgery. After recovering, her love of singing drew her to join the Schola. She served many sisters by sewing and mending clothes and printing daily community e-mails for those without a computer. Geraldine was an avid reader and loved Wii bowling. She played her last game just a few weeks before her death. She enjoyed many Roberta Kuhn classes and even more parties through the years. Geraldine was deeply interested in people and a community builder. She served on the House Council. Her support and encouragement freed others to use their gifts and brought out their creativity.

"Psalm 63: My Soul Thirsts" by Dan Schutte proclaims, "Your love, O Lord, means more to me than all the days of life . . . It is your face I long for; you alone are life to me." As a deeply spiritual person secure in God's love, Geraldine was gracious, welcoming, accepting of what is and, even amid chaos, had a smile on her face. Surely, her smile was never more radiant than the moment she met Jesus face-to-face.