



Sharing of Memories of Geraldine Moorman, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 1, 2022

Maryann Prezzano, Niece

Sister Geraldine was one of my father's older sisters. Bob and Adele were three years apart. My father was very proud of his sister. Our Aunt Adele visited us in Miami many times over the years. I remember her visits fondly as we would make trips to Ft. Lauderdale beach and hang out. During my college years I would see Aunt A at Thanksgiving. My friend Carolyn and I spent a night at the Chicago convent on our way to a wedding in Joliet. She attended my wedding. Over the years I saw less and less as my family grew and we were far away. But I always kept in touch by phone. Aunt Adele is an inspiration to me. She lived a life of service to others. She loved her family composed of so many nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews. (Twenty-seven just from Bob Moorman family). We will miss her.

Laura Robison, Niece

I was the second youngest of Adele's nieces and nephews. Adele had been long gone from St. Louis before I was born, but I always remember being so excited when she would come to St. Louis for a visit. It was always fun for me when Adele, Diane and Gracie were coming for a visit. I remember one Christmas in particular. I was probably 8 or 9 years old. She spent most of the day talking to me and my new stuffed monkey. She made me feel so special that I named the stuffed animal Fugsy Mugsy Adele Moorman. I still have that stuffed animal today.

As I got older, she was always a voice of reason, an inspiration and just a very special soul. After my mom, her youngest sister, passed away she made sure she called more and made an effort even at 97 years old to touch base and make sure my sister and I were doing OK. This really helped me, and I felt my mom's presence through her. I know how truly wonderful she was and that I missed out on so much not living close to her but am blessed for having her as my special aunt.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "The purpose of life is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." Great job on a life well lived Aunt Adele, you will be missed.

Ann Gilbert, Niece

My mother, Jane, was Adele's younger sister. I am Jane's oldest daughter, Ann. My parents adopted me when I was almost 6 weeks old. Adele has told me several times, the story of how she received the announcement of my adoption. A telegram was read to her over the phone. I guess the message did not quite make sense to the operator because it was not a "typical" birth announcement. The operator asked Adele if the message made sense. She responded with "perfect sense!" I always loved that story because she also told how happy everyone was that I had finally arrived.

Adele had a way of making me feel special my whole life. She was encouraging, positive, honest, and so kind. I have a lifetime of wonderful memories of my Aunt Adele that I will always cherish. I will miss our phone calls and the yearly visits to Dubuque with my sister, Laura and cousins, Patti and Linda. We used to make those visits with our mothers, Jane and Aunt Stephanie, who we lost in 2019. I know they were waiting in heaven to greet Adele.

Robert B. Moorman, Nephew

I need to thank Sister Geraldine for having all the sisters pray for her two brothers [Bud and Bob] during WW11, while they were fighting. Their prayers were the reason that both brothers came home and led productive lives and raised big healthy families! God Bless the BVM's.

Sister Virginia Stone, BVM, Friend

In the early 1960's, I was assigned to St. Gregory the Great Grade School in Bellerose, New York. Geraldine was the superior/principal. Three years later, she was invited to be the Director of Novices in Dubuque, Iowa. Our time together from then on was at home visits or on vacation. Those opportunities were precious. I grew to know her as a deeply spiritual woman and a person with fierce integrity. I will continue to be blessed and supported by cherished memories.

Sister Diane O'Donnell, BVM

When Geraldine died, I went home and wrote three pages of reflections of her effect on me and other people. One term that stayed in my mind was a lady of gracious living. Her outreach to people all her life, as you have heard, was magnificent. The characteristic that stands out for me was her kindness. She taught me in eighth grade. In that class, there were 63 rambunctious teenagers. In those days, there were no such things in Catholic schools as teacher aides or as magic board or as a laptop. She did it and believe me, we learned.

This was a woman who was interested in everybody and wanted everybody to become the person they were called to be. She was friendly, supportive, thoughtful, always present and in the parishes and the work that she did in the community. It was done from the heart. She listened, she supported and made everyone feel wonderful. What more could we ask? She was a prayer woman, quite independent all her life. Her independence gave her the gifts to reach out to other people. In the parishes she was in, in the schools she was in, in her Novitiate years, she was so supportive in wanting everybody to be the very best they could possibly be. I am looking now at some of her novices and some of her Associates who are here. I believe their lives, and mine especially, have been enriched by Geraldine.

Sister Peggy Geraghty, BVM

I was lucky enough to know Geraldine for 46 years. She was in the community before I was born. It was an amazing life she lived for those years. I was just so fortunate to have been part of those 99 years. I was friends with her at St. Bartholomew and when she lived down the street for a while and then here at Mount Carmel, where she was always so gracious, welcoming, and loving. One term that characterized Geraldine would be her unconditional love. She accepted everybody no matter what. She reached out to them in love, and they responded. She knew that. I just feel to blessed to have been part of her life.

Sister Kate Hendel, BVM

In 1964, the set of 1963 was divided, half going to Guadalupe in California and the other half remaining here at Mount Carmel. Those were exciting years in the congregation as it experimented with the changes of Vatican II. At the same time, they were difficult years. When doing something new, after years of maintaining uniformity, challenged BVMs both young and old.

Fast forward to 1988, when my set whether from Guadalupe or Mount Carmel gathered to celebrate 25 of BVM years. Both Ann Marie Dolan and Geraldine, the two novice mistresses, joined us. During those days, we were graced by these two women, who for the first time, shared the different challenges they experienced in two vastly different environments. I believe from that time on, each of our set fondly claim both women as important figures in their lives. There were lessons to be learned in those early days and these two women navigated the muddle waters of renewal and sometimes without a paddle. It was difficult to teach new members how to row a boat when the paddle was cracked or absent. But, like, Anne Marie, Geraldine kept us afloat. She was faithful and like Mary Frances Clarke, placed her trust in God, and we are better for it. Geraldine, I'm grateful for your example, your faithfulness and your affection.

Sister Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

I had two special experiences with Geraldine. I was a St. Vincent girl, but she didn't teach me. She came after I had graduated, but we had many a good chat about her experiences at St. Vincent's. The majority of the nuns were very elderly. She had to do a lot of interesting relationships to keep in touch and be special to them. We had lots of fun chats and laughs at that. Then, when I became a principal at Round Lake, not knowing anything about being a principal. She was there to help be. She was at Grayslake, Ill., Many times I had to call her or she called me to check in to see what was going on and if I knew what I was supposed to be doing. I have very warm memories of Geraldine. I think of her in terms of a lot of fun. We had some very deep, good chats.

Sister Bertha Fox, BVM

One of the times I was missioned here at Mount Carmel, Geraldine was the novice directress, and I was doing music and liturgy. One of the fondest memories is the time we spent in the little kitchenette eating Rice Krispies with ice cream.

Sister Catherine "Kitty" Ornellas, BVM

What I remember most about Geraldine is her beautiful smile. She was always smiling. When she took my hand, there was such warmth in her hand that it permeated my whole being. I just loved when she took my hand, looked at me, and smiled.

Cathy Zahina, Mount Carmel Bluffs Housekeeper

I remember how she loved for me to push her back to her room after meals. She would start going down the hall but stop when she would see me. "Oh, I knew you'd come along." It just made my day every day, as well as seeing all of you other sisters. Just so you know how much you mean to all of us employees.

Sister Suzanne Effinger, BVM

I summered at Annunciation with Elaine Wojcik when Geraldine lived there. I was leading prayers one night. She gave me the little sign to make the examen short. So, I made the examen short. We came out of the chapel and St. William Welsch is standing there. "Who told you to make the examen short?" I just stood there; I didn't want to be telling on anybody. Geraldine stepped up. St. William knew Geraldine and knew it was all in fun.

Sister Kate Keating, BVM

When Dorothy Gaffney wanted to return to the community, she had to live with a community of BVMs. She chose St. Bartholomew where Geraldine was. I remember that Geraldine loved dogs. They had a dog there that took her for a walk. The dog pulled her down and she really damaged her teeth. Dorothy and I had a dog too. I had visiting rights with Dorothy when she left to live at St. Bart's. I would bring the dog over there. One time our dog got really sick at home. I didn't want to take the dog to the vet by myself, so I called the convent at 11:30 p.m. Geraldine answered the phone. I said, "Geraldine, I need to Dorothy to come. The dog is sick and I'm not going to take her to the vet by myself." Geraldine said, "Sure, come on over." I got there about midnight. Afterwards, she called to see how everything went. Geraldine was a real dog lover.

Sister Joann Lucid, BVM

I followed Geraldine as the Novice Directress. Geraldine encouraged me, left everything in perfect order, and most importantly prayed for me. As Geraldine grew older and more frail, she generously offered her gifts of organization, sewing, supportive conversations and total love for the congregation.

Don Gregory and Bob Zych, Annunciation GS, Class of 1954

My classmate Bob Zych and I have the fondest memories of Sister Geraldine and of course, all the sisters that gave us such a wonderful head start in life. The sisters took our class on a field trip to what we think now was a retreat house property in the country where they let us rough house and have fun. I think that the sisters had fun just watching us at play. I shared photos of that day with Sister Geraldine a few years ago. It sure brought a smile to

her face. Ha, but she smiled a lot! The photos were not of the best quality so, the best she could tell she was probably the tall nun in the photo. We loved her and now cherish the memories of our years with the Sisters of Charity. May she now rest in peace after a wonderful life of love and service.

Sister Alice Caulfield, BVM

Geraldine was my superior/principal early in my religious life. We have stayed friends all these years. That is a good sign. She loved "freedom and freeing others." She was a leader who didn't act like a superior. Many of us were young so it was a great time to observe leadership. I never would have thought I would spend most of my life in leadership. Never saw it in myself, but she saw it in me and developed that gift.

Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM

I, too, lived with Geraldine when she was the superior/principal at St. Gregory's in Bellerose, NY. Geraldine saw to it that we got to a play in New York, that we saw the sites, that we experienced all the riches that were there. Then, of course, she told us, "Don't tell anybody." She lived freedom in the best way. Thanks, Geraldine.

Sister Mary Anne Hoope, BVM

Sister Geraldine was my novice director and I treasure my novitiate experience. We have stayed in touch since the novitiate, and I am grateful for her friendship through the years. I looked forward to seeing her again this summer.

There is one thing that she said to us a few days before the end of our novitiate that has stayed with me and that I have shared with numerous others, especially the young religious I have directed in Africa. She said that we were to be women of prayer and women of love. I am deeply grateful for the woman of prayer and the woman of love that she was. That certainly sums up our vocation for me.

Sister Kathleen Antol, BVM

Geraldine was truly the most deeply spiritual person I have ever met, and it was both privilege and gift to have known her over the years. To say the least, I will greatly miss her. The one thing that everyone should know about her is something she once wrote to me in a letter: That she kept a list of all the Novices for whom she had been responsible and that she prayed for each and every one, every day!

Jane McAllister, Former Novice

I knew Sister Geraldine while I was a novice at Mount Carmel in 1966 and 1967. I stayed in contact with her periodically over the intervening years and was fortunate to have a lovely visit with her last October. She was a refreshing influence on me in a time of great change and turbulence in our society and religious life. I will always treasure my memories of her. May she rest in peace.

Mary Hardiman Desmond, Former BVM

I was a member of the set of 1965, one of many Geraldine had in the novitiate at a time when the world, the Church, and the Community were all changing. This was not an easy time to be in charge but Geraldine, with Sister Mary McElmeel at her side, worked with dignity and grace and helped us to be our better selves. I was often in need of a little "extra guidance" as following the rules was not my forte.

A memory I have was the set of '65 was the first set to be professed wearing black suits. People were busy measuring, cutting patterns, sewing, and getting ready for the big day. Geraldine called me into her office and asked how my suit was coming. I said it wasn't because I didn't have any material and I didn't know how to sew. She told me to wait in her office and when she returned, she was carrying a bolt of black serge. Geraldine had been given the serge on her 25th anniversary to make a new habit; the habit was never made, and the serge was mine. Ginnie Spiegel and others quickly got to work and made me a beautiful suit. So, I was professed in Geraldine's anniversary serge.

Another memory took place several years ago when I was visiting with Sister Catherina Walsh in Caritas dining room and Geraldine joined us. Catherina told Geraldine that she taught Pat Keane and me in second grade at St. Dorothy's; then she kiddingly added, they were "double trouble"! Geraldine didn't miss a beat and said, "Big deal! You had them in second grade; I had them in the Novitiate!!" Catherina said to Geraldine, "You win!! Our set has gotten together every five years since our 25th anniversary and we were often joined by Geraldine, Mary McElmeel, Grace Ann Callen, and Bertha Fox. Lots of stories were told and much laughter was shared. She always seemed so happy to be with us. Our 50th was a tremendous reunion and the infamous "blue coat" story was retold. That one was hers alone to share. I have such fond memories of this kind and gentle woman; I have a real appreciation for how much she touched my life. Rest in peace, my friend.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

My first memory of meeting Geraldine was in 1964 when she was the new novice mistress and I was among the many newly professed sisters living at Mount Carmel. Somehow Geraldine knew that, like herself, I was from St. Louis and a graduate from Xavier High School, though obviously not in the same graduating class. In 1964 the St. Louis Arch was in the final stages of construction and Geraldine would periodically share her copy of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat newspaper which had wonderful articles about the Arch.

Many years later, I returned to Mount Carmel to minister to our retired sisters. Geraldine and I visited frequently, shared St. Louis memories and much more. After she moved to skilled care, I frequently took her to the Motherhouse Chapel for Sunday Mass. She so enjoyed being with the larger community and seeing so many of her BVM friends. Usually, some of her former novices would gather around Geraldine after Mass. The affection Geraldine had for them, and they had for her was obvious. Being with the larger community on Sunday was a highlight in the week for Geraldine.

When Geraldine was not feeling well enough to come to the chapel, we would remind each other that we would still be praying together, just from different locations. Now I like to think that Geraldine shares prayer and life with a much larger BVM Community in heaven. And certainly, she holds all of us in her loving heart and in her prayer. Thank you, Geraldine. Rest in God's loving embrace.

Monsignor Tom Toale

She was such a sweet lady. She made curtains for our room at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, and they still hang proud.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

I, too, was one of the novices in the Novitiate during Geraldine's time. I appreciate all the things that have been said. In more recent years, Geraldine was one of my very few partners for a three-hour lunch. I would depart for lunch and tell my office partner, "I'll see you at 3 o'clock."