**

**Eulogy of Sister Vivian C. Wilson, BVM (Lauren)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Juen 28, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Vivian C. Wilson.

Vivian Clair Wilson was born on April 20, 1928, to Marvin and Laura (Sheridan) Wilson of Lusk, Wyoming. Vivian was the fifth of eight children. She joined siblings Marvin, Myrl, Howard, and Lois and was followed by William, Rose, and Nancy. Sadly, Myrl died of polio in 1925. Both her maternal and paternal grandparents established homesteads in Wyoming when the 1914 Homestead Act was passed. Vivian often accompanied her grandmother to her ranch where Vivian learned to clean bridles, bits, and horse combs. Except for the time her horse bucked and she landed in a cactus patch, she absolutely loved her time on the ranch.

The family moved to Caspar, Wyoming, when Vivian was ten because her mother felt it was important for her children to receive a Catholic education. Vivian completed her elementary education at St. Anthony’s where she was introduced to the BVMs. Vivian entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1948, and received the name Lauren upon her reception on Aug. 15, 1948. She professed first vows on Aug. 15, 1950, and lived 74 years as a BVM.

Vivian taught in the primary grades at St. Callistus in Chicago; St. Patrick in Lead, South Dakota; and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City, South Dakota. During her first evening in Lead, Vivian was told that she would oversee the operetta put on by kindergarten through second graders. “I didn’t question if I could do it or not,” commented Vivian. “I just plunged in and did it!” She clearly did a good job because the next year the superior informed her that the third and fourth graders were to be added to the program.

In Rapid City, Vivian was missioned with SM Alician Carroll who taught English at the high school and was a self-proclaimed grammar cop. Eventually, through Alician’s constant correction, Vivian rid herself of all bad grammar habits but one – “between you and I.” Determined to correct this, Vivian, while completing her duty of cleaning the basement, loudly recited a litany of her very large family, her BVMs sisters and even students saying, “between Mom and me, between Dad and me, etc.” One hour later, she was cured! “It is to Alician that I truly owe my love for teaching grammar,” commented Vivian. “Her dogged determination did it . . . I love her for never giving up on me.”

Vivian ministered fourteen years in Fort Dodge, Iowa, first teaching intermediate grades at Sacred Heart and then teaching English at the consolidated Sacred Heart/Corpus Christi school. While in Fort Dodge, she was asked by a pastor to “do something about the lack of the kind of liturgical music that would bring the high school and college students back.” Vivian responded by learning how to play the guitar from some of her students and then teaching other students how to play. Within one year, she was responsible for two weekend liturgies with high school students serving as lectors and musicians. Soon she was asked to reduce her regular teaching load to teach guitar accompanied hymns instead. By the time Vivian left Fort Dodge, she had established guitar groups in three parishes.

In 1977, Vivian enrolled at Mundelein College to pursue a master’s degree to improve her teaching of religion. However, a year later Mundelein invited her to become an admissions counselor for the Weekend College Program designed for non-traditional students, usually adult women returning to complete a college degree. It was a fascinating job that she truly loved. She felt a personal thrill whenever someone completed a degree or received a promotion. Vivian later served as the assistant director of the Administration Office and co-directed the Bank Women’s Program at Mundelein sponsored by the National Association of Bank Women (NABW). In 1986, Vivian received the NABW Woman of the Year award. A Mundelein coworker wrote, “Her energy, drive and enthusiasm were loved and appreciated both by our students and colleagues in the higher education community.”

During this time, Vivian envisioned and spearheaded an organization called REACH (**R**esources for **E**ducation of **A**dults in the **Ch**icago Area). This consortium of colleges, universities, and lending institutions provided information about education opportunities and available financial packages. It is still active today, 35 years later.

Vivian did complete a master’s degree in Scripture in 1980. Ten years later, Vivian followed an inner yearning and took a position as director of religious education at St. Kieran Church in Chicago Heights. “That experience was particularly rewarding as it put me into an inter-generational setting using my passion for catechesis.” Vivian also served on the Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education Committee creating guidelines for the certification of catechists and DREs. In 1996, Vivian received the Archdiocese of Chicago Catechetical Recognition Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Ministry of Catechesis.

Although Vivian retired to Wright Hall in 1996, she desired “to keep my finger somehow in catechesis.” She became a field advocate for the Marriage Tribunal and volunteered in the Office of Religious Education at the Jegen Center. In addition, she gave workshops, retreats, catechetical training, and days of reflection whenever possible. In 2000, Vivian became the project director of the Special Task Force on Catechesis for the Archdiocese of Chicago. Its purpose was “to study the state of catechesis for adults, youth, and children . . . and to make recommendations . . . for its continued improvement.” Vivian commented, “The idea of becoming a big part of this project dispelled the whole idea of being retired; I gladly took the plunge!” Vivian did eventually retire. She moved to Mount Carmel in 2011.

Vivian was a gifted artist. As a child, she had learned sewing, embroidery, and needlepoint from her mother, but only discovered her talent for painting in 1977 while taking an art class from Sister Blanche Marie Gallagher at Mundelein College. Vivian also took classes from Sister Eustella Fau at Wright Hall.

When asked how she wanted to be remembered, Vivian replied, “I dearly loved every member of my large family and I absolutely loved my BVM community, especially for their friendship, support, and love. I have been able to stretch, achieve, earn, and use my talents and gifts because of my BVM community’s affirmation, support, and friendship.”

A few days before her death, Vivian was asked about scripture for her funeral. She quoted the words of Jesus to the Apostles in the Gospel of John. “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and **you are in me and I in you**.” (John 14:20). On the day Jesus called her home, Vivian realized the fullness of these words, the fullness of the presence of God. Rest in God’s love, Vivian.