



## **Eulogy of Sister Genevieve M. Freund, BVM (Leonine)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Oct. 6, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Genevieve Freund.

Genevieve Marie Freund was born March 18, 1934, in Davenport, Iowa, the first child of Leo and Marie (Meyer) Freund. Her sister, Mary, who died in 2010, completed the family.

Gen's mother was a beautiful person who lovingly cared for her family. Marie was very involved in parish groups and served as an officer for the Daughters of Isabella, a spiritual, social, and charitable organization. For the last nine years of her life, Gen's mother lived in a nursing home due to a debilitating illness. Marie's siblings, Sister Mary Beatrice Meyer and Father Bernard Meyer, were Maryknoll missionaries who served in China for 27 and 32 years, respectively. Father Bernard was a Japanese prisoner of war during World War II. Marie also had a BVM aunt, Sister Mary Ermentrude Huschke.

Gen's father was a World War I veteran who worked as a lineman for the telephone company. Leo was a deeply religious man devoted to daily Mass, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and praying the Rosary. His love for and dedication to his wife were evident as he sat daily with her in the nursing home for all those years. Gen often brought her father to the St. Paul convent where they enjoyed playing cards. Many of the BVMs at St. Paul convent considered him a father figure. Leo also had a relative who joined the BVMs, his niece Sister Jean Freund.

Gen grew up enjoying sports, reading, and music, including eight years of piano lessons. She attended St. Mary Grade School and graduated from Immaculate Conception Academy in Davenport, Iowa. When she was in eighth grade at St. Mary's, she would walk up to Immaculate Conception Academy to take organ lessons from Sister Marilyn Thomas, BVM. Gen was Marilyn's first organ student.

Surrounded by the spiritual influence of her family and her BVM teachers, especially Sister Marilyn, Gen's religious vocation came as no surprise. She entered the BVM congregation on September 8, 1952, from St. Mary Parish in Davenport, Iowa, and received the name Leonine at her reception on March 19, 1953. She professed first vows on March 19, 1955, and celebrated her diamond jubilee (70 years as a BVM) last month.

Gen completed her post-secondary education at Clarke College, earning a bachelor's degree in music-piano in 1964 and a master's degree in administration and supervision in 1970. She taught for 36 years, serving as both an elementary grade teacher and a music teacher. She was missioned at St. Patrick in Cedar Falls, Iowa; Our Lady of Angels Academy in Clinton, Iowa; Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Blessed Sacrament in Chicago; and St. Paul in Davenport, Iowa. Gen ministered at St. Paul for 45 years moving from teaching grades to teaching music, followed by serving as vice principal, then liturgical coordinator for the parish, which led to additional parish ministry.

Gen's regional representative wrote, "Wherever [Gen] has been, she has been loved by students, parents, administrators, and fellow teachers. Her gentle, quiet, clever wit and good humor are a delight. . . She is deeply religious, very sensitive to [other's] needs, desirous of a broader vision of Church and ministry and her place in God's plan."

Gen frequently visited her mother in the nursing home and encountered many who had no one to visit them. At the same time, she was a faithful companion and caregiver for her father, who had a serious heart condition, as she continued to teach full time. Her mother's death in December 1976 was followed by her father's death less than five months later in April 1977. These experiences surely influenced her expanding parish ministry.

In her role as pastoral associate, Sister Gigi, as she was lovingly called by the parishioners, ministered to the homebound, permanent residents in care facilities, and the hospitalized in and around the parish boundaries. On Gen's golden jubilee, the St. Paul pastor commented, "We've all really appreciated her ministry. She's a great person to have on our staff and the whole parish appreciates what she does."

In 1983, Gen began volunteering with Hospice of Davenport. She first heard about Hospice from a pastor she met while distributing Communion at a hospital. "I feel privileged to volunteer in this program," she commented. "It helps me to be a better person. It has forced me to come to grips with a lot of things I've read, but never verbalized, on questions about death."

For forty years, Gen and Mary Stasia Stafford lived and ministered together at St. Paul. Their shared love of dogs gave Gen another reason to take daily walks. Her joy of walking continued after she moved to Mount Carmel. She had great appreciation of nature and always strived to protect it. She enjoyed gardening and even watered the Arbor garden at Mount Carmel Bluffs. Naturally, she participated in music classes at the Roberta Kuhn Center. Like her father, Gen liked card games – 500, King's Corners, and Rummy were her favorites – as well as art projects.

As an introvert, Gen was a quiet, pleasant presence, a faithful attendee at cluster meetings. As a happy, fun-loving person, she loved to tease others – staff and residents alike. As a gentle, loving soul, she was caring and loyal to her family and friends.

"I have tried to love and have compassion and concern for others," Gen shared. "I pray that there will be at least one person that will say on my behalf that if I had not lived, [his or her] life would have been poorer."

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land!" (Mt 5:5). In her meekness, Gen accepted God's will for her life. She recognized her spiritual poverty, her need for God. Her prayer life strengthened her to mourn with those who mourned, to show mercy to those in need of mercy, to be clean of heart in caring more about the needs of others than her own.

Gen, there is no doubting that because you lived many, many lives were enriched and blessed. May you know peace and joy in the land of your heavenly inheritance.