



Eulogy of Sister Georgeann Quinlan, BVM (Immaculate)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Nov. 15, 2022

Good morning and welcome! It is good to be here to celebrate the life of our Sister Georgeann Quinlan, BVM.

Georgeann Mary Quinlan was born on Easter morning, April 17, 1938, in Duluth, Minn., to George and Mary (Plaster) Quinlan. Siblings Gerard and Marlyn preceded her; Richard and Jean completed the family. Georgeann and her siblings cherished their parents. She remembered her mother as a “strongly religious woman with a deep faith” who had her hands full with rearing five children born within eight years. Her father worked for the Milwaukee Railroad for fifty years, providing the “bread and butter” for the family. Georgeann describes him as having a great “sense of humor, diplomacy, and interested in a wide variety of things and people.” Like her mother, her dad did not finish high school; but he took courses all his life and finally received his GED in his sixties.

The Quinlan children were taught the value of money and were encouraged to get jobs to pay for Catholic schooling. Georgeann attended Catholic elementary school and high school. She was a class officer for all four years of high school and her penchant for organizing was realized. She remembered that she always reached out to the so-called “underdogs—the classmate with disabilities, the epileptic, the plain and friendless ones, the girls in other cliques.” No one would be left out of Georgeann’s circle. She had a steady boyfriend in high school who was disappointed when she followed the call to religious life that had been part of her dream since third grade.

Georgeann followed her sister Marlyn and entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1956, and received the name Immaculate upon her reception on March 19, 1957. She professed her first vows on Feb. 3, 1959, and lived 66 years as a BVM.

Georgeann taught in elementary schools at St. Leo in San Jose, Calif.; Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago; and Visitation in Des Moines, Iowa. She moved to her beloved Colorado in 1968 where she joined the faculty at Mt. St. Gertrude Academy in Boulder for one year. For the next fifteen years, Georgeann served in religious education and youth ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Boulder, Colo., and Holy Apostles Parish in Colorado Springs, Colo. She saw the needs of young people and began youth prayer groups and retreats which she claims were “the most powerful thing I did in youth ministry. I began to see the difference between faith and religious expression, the kids were indeed touched by the Spirit.”

During this time, Georgeann completed a master’s in religious education from the University of Detroit and was introduced to the Charismatic Movement. She reflected, “It was then that I realized in a new way that Jesus was my personal friend, scripture took on a new wonderful meaning, . . .and my world grew from nuns, to lay people, to other parishes, to ecumenical groups, and those with no formal religion.”

Her ministry in the parish gradually expanded to hospital visits, crisis counseling, grief ministry, police chaplaincy, divorce ministry, gay ministry, spiritual direction, marriage encounter and other parish programs. Perhaps most importantly, Georgeann began to reach out to the elderly, the sick and troubled. Her experience motivated her to complete the Clinical Pastoral Education Program at Bethesda Mental Hospital in Denver in 1984. Over the next thirty-plus years, Georgeann ministered to the elderly.

She began her ministry to seniors as Executive Director at L.I.F.E. (Life, Independence, Freedom, for the Elderly), a non-profit organization dedicated to meeting the needs of the elderly living in Northwest Denver, an older suburban neighborhood where many seniors lived on fixed incomes in the small homes that they had purchased in their youth. The majority had lost a spouse and were living alone.

In this ministry, Georgeann revitalized the organization by increasing the number of clients served from fifty to two hundred and expanded the staff from six to twenty-two and volunteers from ten to fifty. Ten foundations provided grants for this unique agency that became a model for others in the greater Denver area. Her success emphasizes Georgeann's many gifts in networking, community building, and project management; all done skillfully as she brought a warm human touch to her colleagues and clients alike.

Perhaps Georgeann's creative, organizational skills and pastoral sensitivity are most apparent in her "Let George Do It" initiative. In this self-employed venture, Georgeann reached out to a wide variety of organizations and groups providing conferences, seminars, special events, prayer services, and activities. As we all know, her "Angels Everywhere" program continued to motivate Georgeann and inspire so many until the day she died. Through storytelling, she created a safe and comfortable atmosphere for participants to share about how angels are present in their lives, helping them all the time. She presented over five hundred sessions with groups as large as fifty participants—each time she inspired others as they inspired her. She commented that "the Angel programs fed my spiritual life which AA and BVMs have nourished."

AA was a great joy in Georgeann's life. She treasured her time in weekly AA meetings and the strength it provided her. Among her requests for her funeral was that her AA medallion be placed in her hands.

Georgeann regularly submitted her yearly annals to the congregation in the form of her Christmas letter. In these letters, she frequently selected a single word to capture the impact that the events of the given year had on her. Among her choice words were: "multi-tasking, birthing, diversity, pastoral care, balance, transitions, adjustment, and new beginnings. The breadth of these descriptors provides a glimpse into Georgeann's amazing journey of continued personal growth and dedication to mission.

Georgeann once said, "The Lord is the Center of my life in all I am and all I do." Her joy and happiness were contagious as she tended to the gentle souls in every walk of life. She provided for their basic human needs and like Jesus, sat down with them to share their stories. Georgeann, may the songs of the angels that have guided you along your way on earth, lead you home to where you will come face to face with the Center of your life forever.