



## **Sharing of Memories of Mary Jo Keane, BVM (Martin Mary)**

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 5, 2023

### **Catherine "Kay" Wendell, Sister**

Dear Mary, my sister. I have known you more than anyone else since my birth. In November I sent you a letter letting you know some of the supportive and necessary events you helped me with.

Being an older sister, you also told me things to take care of such as what to wear, how to get my hair cut, how to take care of the pimples and blackheads on my face. When you started working you always dressed very classy. You took me to Sears when I was a freshman and had me pick out some clothes to fit into. I was very pleased with the choices.

George Jr. really looked forward to going to lunch with you in Chicago. I guess he felt older going to an Irish Pub!

Mary, my oldest daughter, was named after you. She always liked the name. You two were good friends. She wrote, "There was a special place in her heart for her students, Chicago, travel, new foods, history, and family updates. She will be missed, but her crazy driving will not. Rest in peace, Aunt Mary."

Katy said, "I remember Aunt Mary always had great stories to tell of her trips around the world. She ignited in me my love of travel and wanting to see so many countries. She was very opinionated, and I loved her. I will miss her."

You introduced Betsy to a new you when she went to Ireland with you.

Molly wrote, "Oh, the places you'll go! Aunt Mary was such an inspiration with all her worldly travels!! God only knows what she's doing now that she's reached her ultimate destination. Much love!"

Mom always needed you to take Pat and me somewhere. Thanks for all you did for me and for my children. We looked forward to your visits and found out later in life that you didn't enjoy playing cards. You never complained about it. I always felt proud that you were my older sister and would point you out to my friends. With love from your sister, Kay.

### **Maja Bosen, Niece**

I feel honored to be in this wonderful space with you. It has been wonderful meeting and re-meeting so many familiar faces that I've seen in pictures or heard stories, so the names resonate. Thank you for coming. She would be so pleased to see all of you and hear all your stories. The eulogy was amazing.

We have always been very close over the years and even more so in recent years. She was such a wonderful influence on my life. She was smart, she was sassy, she was fiercely determined, and so inspiring in everything she did. Her love of history, her quest for knowledge, the fact that she got bored easily, really reminds us of how much is out there to keep us from being bored. In terms of inspiration, the one thing that really changed our relationship happened when I was in high school. She brought me to my first political rally for women's rights. That was eye opening. It changed my perceptions of my abilities and how important it was to be part of the political landscape as well as to really understand that we are here to move forward in this world. We have to rely on strong values and, most importantly, put them into action. Stay informed, stay active, and do what we need to do to support the people around us. I was quite moved and attended a number of political rallies. It really informed and deeply cut what my mission is in this world.

It was wonderful that she was in such service and brought me along. We would serve the Hmong community when they came to the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s. We helped them assimilate to the community in the uptown area to make them feel a part of Chicago and find a safe space for themselves as they had to leave their land. We were there to learn aspects of their culture. We got some lessons in dance, but we were mostly there to help them assimilate and teach English to them. It was very moving and a very profound experience.

Later in life, it was good just knowing that she was there. We spent so many times in deep political discourse. She loved talking with my husband Brian because he too had very strong opinions and a deep knowledge of history. It was great to have the conversations around the dinner table and in the backyard as we barbecued. She will definitely be missed. We attended a lot of art openings and musicals. We would go to the theater and the opera together. It was great spending time with her and sharing tiny conversations.

Over the last six months, she wasn't really thrilled about coming to Mount Carmel Bluffs at first, partly because of her very independent spirit. But over the course of time, she totally warmed up to it and she was very excited to be with all the friends she had known from the very beginning. She talked about California and St. Louis and the different people she would be seeing. When she did get here, we would FaceTime all the time. I kept asking her when we could come and visit. She said, "No, no, no, you got to wait until the grass is planted here." She shared the view from her place. For relatives who are not here right now, I will send you a video. It looks great. She really moved in, and it looked like she was quite at home. Unfortunately, she left a little too soon for my taste. But she did her work here in so many ways and touched so many lives - the students at Immaculata with whom she was always in contact, Sacred Heart students, social workers as well as Misericordia. That's just the tip of the iceberg. She was quite the social butterfly and was happy to be so.

### **Seán Kane, Cousin**

Mary Jo was a cousin of my grandfather John Kane. I saw her last in December when I stopped in Chicago on my way home from a semester in New York. She was moving a bit slower, but otherwise was her usual self. I write a weekly blog called "Wednesday Blog." She was my most frequent reader and was always leaving comments for me. Rather than sending me a text or an email, she would put them in the public comment box every time, usually saying, "I don't know how to reach you."

In 2019, she and Sister Mary Fran McLaughlin took the Southwest Chief down to Kansas City where I live and spent a week seeing the sites, in particular the Truman Presidential Library. Sister Mary Jo also

scheduled the trip so they could attend a talk I was giving about traveling to Ireland. It remains one of the best received talks that I have given. It helped that I had a cousin in the back row who roared with laughter at all the right moments.

Sister Mary Jo had a lot of opinions about things. As I got older and began visiting her every so often in Chicago, she would ask about my life, whether I was considering the priesthood or marriage. We talked about politics, but less so than with Maja. She wasn't fond of moving to Dubuque and giving up her lakefront condo on Sheridan Road. I know she wanted to spend her time here writing the history of our family. I'm sorry that we won't get to read it because she knew more about all the Kanes and Keanes than the rest of us combined. She connected me with our cousins Rita and Doreen in London and with Annie and Mary Pauline back in Mayo County. Rosemary Keane Hickey said to me on Saturday, that Mary Jo was "the glue that held us all together." With that I agree. All that I know about our family's history back in Ireland I know from her. She was the last one who knew my great-grandfather who came over; the last who really knew that generation and saw Ireland realize its "Aisling Gheal," its bright dream of independence. I'm happy for Mary Jo that she gets to see all those people again.

### **Rosemary Keane Hickey, Cousin**

Mary Jo was one of a kind. She was so independent, so influential. She was a brilliant woman. I used to be on the Catholic Charities Board and was invited to the Cardinal's residence for a big dinner. Mary Jo said to me, "I want to go." I said, "It's by invitation only." "It's alright, I'm going." So, I picked her up. She and Sister Katie Heffernan both came. We had such a good time. It was just a marvelous evening. She was just such a delight. We did a lot of things together. I'm going to miss her. The last time I was with her, we were at a funeral in the city for Sister Sheila McGuire. Mary Jo and I went for coffee after the funeral. She wanted to drive. We all know she was a *wonderful* driver. I prayed all the way! This was the last time I saw her. As I was getting out of the car, she said to me, "And I am a good driver!" I said, "Mary Jo, you're a damn good driver." She laughed.

Mary Jo was a wonderful, adventurous, intelligent woman and a lifelong learner. She enjoyed being a teacher and touched the lives of her students. Many of her students became lifelong friends. What she did at Misericordia with those young people! She was such a gift. She opened their hearts. She brought smiles to their faces when no one else could. She was wonderful. We would go shopping for books together, big story books with pictures that she could read to them. It was just wonderful. She was a gift to the world.

Mary Jo was "the glue" that kept the Keane and Kane families together. I will dearly miss my cousin. May her memory be a blessing.

### **Sister Joellen McCarthy, BVM**

I experienced Mary Jo as living with a deep sense of gratitude throughout the time I knew her. I miss her already. I think missing Mary Jo meant that she was such good company. Even as her physical limitations prevented her from getting around as much, she never lost a spirit of adventure. That was her approach to life. "Let's see what can come from this." She conveyed that to her students. It wasn't just learning out of a book; it was an adventure with Mary Jo. The eulogy mentioned that she took her students to cemeteries. It seemed to be a prime source of knowledge for her students.

BVMs and Associates in Chicago used to gather for holiday meals. Mary Jo wasn't into cooking. Everyone brought something to the meal. We asked Mary Jo to bring salad; you can't go wrong with salad. Well, Mary Jo found a way to be creative and adventuresome with salad. We never quite knew what she would bring. It's that spirit of adventure. I think she is on her final venture and is enjoying it to the fullest.

### **Sister Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM**

Mary Jo Keane is a very good friend of mine. If there were a few words to describe her, I would say fun. I knew Mary Jo at Xavier High School in St Louis in the late 1960s. As all of us know, we were changing habits. Mary Jo would take those of us who were trying to get dressed properly to Good Will. We had a huge Good Will near our high school. She would tell us if the blouse we picked would go with the skirt we picked. She wanted us to be looking spiffy in school. She was always very aware of what she was wearing and very well-dressed. A good model.

The eulogy told so much about her, especially her teaching style, which probably infuriated the administrators at our school because she was always doing field trips. Since I have gotten to live a long and rich life, I've been able to go to class reunions of girls who we taught at Xavier and Immaculata. She had quite a group of people who kept in contact with her, who went to her for sound advice. She had a great alumnae support at those schools where she taught.

Mary Jo loved her family. She always talked about them. I knew Kay and Pat's children when we were at Xavier because they just were little tots. They looked like the Campbell kids; they were beautiful. They were very polite, and they loved Aunt Mary. She loved her nephews and her nieces. She always wanted to keep connected. She has cousins in Great Britain who sent her presents and they talked on the phone. She was the matriarch of the family. Maja, she loved you! Maja was her tech assistant who tried to keep her abreast of what was happening on her iPhone. Maybe a C+ you get for that. Maja and Brian gave her an open invitation every Sunday. Even though she maybe didn't go every Sunday, most of the time she did, and she loved it. She loved being with them. I'm sure she gave them a run for their money at the dinner.

After Mary Jo retired, we did more things together. I wanted to be in a book club, but I didn't want to go through the stress of inviting six or seven people, so Mary Jo and I were a book club. We took the book that PBS offered every month and then we would go out to lunch to discuss it. It was fun and a way that we could be together.

Mary Jo really spent a lot of time every week preparing for her class at Misericordia. Misericordia was a very special place for her. I, too, spent time with her in bookstores selecting the right book. Did it have pictures? Would it get the residents involve? She loved Misericordia which is a fantastic place. She often attended the Sunday brunch at Misericordia that her former Immaculata students arranged.

I am so grateful for the friendship that I had with her. It's one of many blessings in my life. I hope, Mary Jo, that you are now able to breathe and to celebrate the homecoming our loving God as planned for you.

### **Sister Karen Conover, BVM**

I am part of the BVM Community Life Services (BCLS) staff. I have two short things to share. The Sunday prior to Mary Jo's death, I met her after Mass with all her documents because she wanted her Iowa

driver's license. I did not give my usual speech, "Have you talked to your council contact about that?" I just said, "What kind of documents do you need?" Well, she found that she did not have a certified birth certificate. We did all the documentation, the check, and off it went in the mail the Monday before she passed. I said, "It's going to take twelve weeks." "That's OK," she said. I thought, Well, isn't this fascinating. Her birth certificate will come and will go in her file.

Secondly, in our partnership with Presbyterian Homes & Services staff, I want to lift up Laura Nissen, the resident director, who was the person who came just moments after Mary Jo collapsed in the hall. She was on her way out the door to meet her husband. I was coming down that hallway and there was Laura on her knees gently talking with Mary Jo and rubbing her back, saying, "It's OK. They're coming. There's help coming. Just wait." I am so grateful, on behalf of the BVMs, for Laura's gentle, kind, prayerful presence with Mary Jo in those last moments of her life.

### **Sister Monica Seelman, BVM**

Mary Jo has been a close friend for many years. She was loyal, loved her Irish heritage, had a dry sense of humor and was always at least ten minutes early for lunch dates.

We did many things together. For years we took the CTA downtown to The Lyric where we found looking at the other attendees as interesting as the opera itself. Then we changed to having a subscription to the plays at the Lookingglass Theater, easily reached by bus, door to door from her Sheridan Road apartment.

We also had a regular Tuesday luncheon date at Misericordia's Greenhouse Restaurant. This was her favorite place to eat. The volunteer staff all knew her and would stop at the table to chat. Her Immaculata friends also gathered here for frequent reunions.

However, the main reason they all knew her is because one morning a week Mary Jo volunteered in their activity room. Her group were severely handicapped residents who were all non-verbal and in wheelchairs. She read them stories, played music, and entertained them with her puppet bird. However, she told me that their faces lit up when she blew bubbles. Their smiles just delighted her!

Mary Jo often expressed her gratitude for anything you did with and for her. She would call, write an email, or send a note of thanks the very next day. I know she is sending a message today saying "My dear family and sisters, thanks for the wonderful celebration today and for all the days I lived with you in community. God bless."

Good-bye, dear Mary Jo, till we meet again.

### **Roseann Maloney Hughes, Former Student**

I loved Sister Jo Keane. She taught me at Xavier High School, 1967-1971, in St. Louis. She was also the Girls' Athletic Association moderator. Sister Jo was smart, fun, sweet, enthusiastic, and endearing to all. She will be missed. May God bless her and may she rest in peace.

### **Peggy Cody Faul, Former Student**

I was so lucky to have had the privilege of being taught and guided as a young woman at Xavier High School, St Louis, Class of 1971, by Sister Jo Keane. The BVM sisters were an example of intelligent

female leaders encouraging us to be who we needed to be and go in the direction we would choose. God's blessings on the BVM sisters.

### **Maureen Dorle Cosgriff, Former BVM**

Mary Jo taught me to type when we were postulants. I arrived at Mount Carmel as a high school graduate who had no typing skills. She taught me the basics. Mary Jo also had a great sense of humor, and she shared this gift with our Set of 1959. May she rest in peace.

### **Kathy Young Flowers, Former BVM**

Mary and I travelled to Europe with a BVM Fine Arts Tour in the mid-1960s. Our adventures and misadventures on that trip were something to remember! At the airport she sat in the driver's seat (American side) of our rented car and the man with his wonderful brogue, said terrified, "Oh, my God, Sister, do you know how to drive?" We visited her twin uncles, one in the heart of London, and the other in a thatched roof cottage in Ireland and many more situations on that trip. We knew each other when we taught at Xavier in St Louis! Sister was a delight and had a wonderful sense of humor! She could see the irony in any situation and made it seem better. She is dearly missed.

### **Sister Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ, The Immaculata Class of 1952**

News of Mary Jo's death just reached me from an Immaculata classmate. It hit me hard. First, we attended high school together. But later, we met monthly for classmates' reunion lunches at Misericordia. In addition, we were both members of St. Gertrude parish.

Although I cannot claim that she and I were close friends, we shared many bonds (e.g., I, too, am a religious) and interests. She was very supportive of any parish activity I initiated that concerned care of creation. She was one of those treasured "solid citizens."

I include a photo taken after a St. Gertrude event. In addition to Mary Jo, it includes (l to r) three other graduates from 1952: me (Terri), Eileen Quinlan, and Inez Holmberg.

I never knew Mary Jo's family, and just wanted to tell someone in the BVM community how much I shall miss her.

### **Kathleen & Jim Lynch**

Sweet Mary Jo, thank you for all the wonderful laughs, family get-togethers and the joy you brought us all with your sense of humor! May God guide your journey into eternal peace and salvation! Rest in peace. You will be missed.

### **Linda McBride**

My first encounter with Sister Mary Jo was at Xavier High School in St. Louis in the early seventies. Over the years, I have had occasions to see her at Chicago donor events and as a fellow alum at Immaculata luncheons. I am sorry she got to enjoy her new home for such a short time. Rest in peace, Sister.

### **Seán Kane, Cousin**

Sister Mary Jo was one of the great teachers and storytellers in our family. I was honored to get to know her and to read her responses to my own writings on a weekly basis. She helped keep us Keanes and Kanes connected across the Atlantic and firmly rooted to our origins in Newport, Co. Mayo. I am glad I got to visit her one last time in December after only emailing and talking over the phone

through the pandemic years. She will be missed by all of us. Her memory will certainly live on in our stories.

**Martin James Keane**

My name is Martin James Keane. My father, Patrick, named me after Mary Jo's father. My wife Ellen and I have spent countless hours with Mary Jo sharing thoughts and experiences, always learning from Mary Jo's insight.

**Mickey McGuire, Former Classmate**

Mary Jo was a classmate from Immaculata HS. Several of us were getting together at Misericordia for lunch before COVID and always had many laughs and memories that we shared from the "old days." She was always a hoot to be with! With her volunteering at Misericordia so much, we always got special treatment! Preparing to move to Mount Carmel Bluffs was a big decision for her. She was happy for the new arrangements, but was certainly going to miss her many friends, excursions, and extra-curricular activities in Chicago. Rest in peace, dear friend, You will be missed.

**Tom Carlson, Nephew.**

I totally agree with Maja regarding the effect she had on people. As for me, I was never very comfortable driving with her in Chicago, but she always had a way of making me think about things differently and more clearly. She was a wonderful influence on me, and I loved her.