



**Eulogy of Sister Jeanne Mary Miller, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Nov. 8, 2023

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Jeanne Mary Miller.

Diane Marie Miller was born in Seattle on Nov. 22, 1936, the first child of John and Helen (Grummett) Miller. Siblings Nancy and Mike joined the family. Diane attended St. Margaret and St. Charles grade schools in Seattle. She was about to enter high school when her father, who worked for RCA, was transferred to the Los Angeles division. The family moved to North Hollywood, Calif., where Mark, the youngest in the family, was born.

Diane graduated from Corvallis High School in Studio City, Calif., in 1954. After completing one year at Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles, she answered the call to religious life. She entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1955, and received the name Jeanne Mary on March 19, 1956. She professed first vows on Feb. 3, 1958, and lived 68 years as a BVM.

After profession, Jeanne Mary was sent to the Scholasticate in Chicago where she completed a bachelor's degree from Mundelein College with a major in English and a minor in history. Her first mission was teaching first grade at St. Odilo in Berwyn, Ill., followed by second, third and fourth grades at Holy Name in Chicago. Jeanne Mary noted in her autobiography that she had 58 students her first year at Holy Name but only 54 desks.

Following her final profession on July 16, 1963, she was missioned to Holy Cross in Kalaheo, Kauai, Hawaii, where she taught fourth and fifth grades. While there, she earned a master's degree from the University of Hawaii-Honolulu in elementary education with a minor in curriculum and instruction.

Jeanne Mary returned to the mainland after Holy Cross school closed and taught social studies in fifth and sixth grades at Iowa City Catholic in Iowa City, Iowa. It was there she taught one of her more famous students – Jim Harbaugh, a well-known American football coach and former quarterback. She has a handwritten, signed note from him which reads "To Jeanne Mary. Thanks for letting me play with the 'Big Kids.' God bless you!"

Jeanne Mary's last fulltime mission was teaching seventh and eighth grades at Our Lady of Lourdes in Tujunga, Calif., where she ministered for 31 years as an elementary teacher and director of ministries. Jeanne Mary liked to point out that during her teaching career, she taught all grades from one through eight in order.

Jeanne Mary celebrated her golden jubilee in 2005 while missioned at Our Lady of Lourdes. The celebration planned by the parish and the school was "the most memorable event of the past year" and she "was overwhelmed by the generosity and love shown." The parish and school truly went all out. Teachers, their spouses, and the pastor painted every room in her house and purchased new carpeting and drapes a month before the jubilee celebration.

On the day of the celebration, family from Virginia to Hawaii were present as well as high school friends and a large group of BVMs. Two bishops and a former pastor concelebrated with the new pastor while the children's choir led the singing. After Mass, approximately 300 alumni gathered on the church steps for a reunion photo.

The party continued with food and entertainment for almost 800 guests. Jeanne Mary was ecstatic and commented, "It truly was a day to remember. I will never forget it."

Jeanne Mary retired in 2007. She dedicated time for spiritual renewal, enrolled in classes to update her computer skills, organized her vast and valuable stamp collection, and returned to Hawaii to visit family during a well-deserved sabbatical. She finally settled in Iowa City, Iowa, where she volunteered at the Regina Education Center. Many of her students were the grandchildren of her Iowa City Catholic students. A photo of Jeanne Mary posted by a former student on Facebook in 2018 created a flood of comments calling Jeanne Mary "an amazing teacher," "a wonderful person," "a generous soul," and "one of the most patient, positive, and dedicated people I know."

The memories and tributes were many and speak to how Jeanne Mary loved, inspired, and impacted her students:

"Sister Jeanne Mary loved her students! She shared a date book with me that she had kept for many years. It had all her former students' birthdays recorded in it."

"I just love her and her love of baseball. She's a lifelong Dodgers fan, and loved to share her early memories of going to the games. She also has great stories from when she lived and taught in California and Hawaii."

"Sister Jeanne Mary taught me so many things . . . the value of hard work, the joy of learning, and how to play the ukulele. She did project learning way before it was in vogue. She was energetic, passionate, and a fantastic role model. She made us work hard *and* like it! She is the reason I wanted to be a teacher."

"My vivid memory of Sister Jeanne Mary was when I tried to give a speech in front of class. She stood in the back, and every time I uttered an 'um,' she put up a finger. Once she had five fingers up, I had to stop speaking and sit down. To this day, I cannot watch public speakers without counting the number of times they utter an 'um.' I definitely learned my lesson in her class. . . along with playing "Tiny Bubbles" on the Uke."

St. Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord, always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all." (Philippians 4:4-5). Jeanne Mary spent her life serving God's little ones and her kindness deeply touched countless lives. Yes, her 50<sup>th</sup> jubilee celebration was magnificent, yet it certainly cannot compare to her grand heavenly homecoming. Enjoy the celebration, Jeanne Mary!