



**Eulogy of Sister Susan (Michaela) Rink, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 2, 2025**

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Susan Rink.

Mary Suzanne Rink was born on Aug. 8, 1927, in Tulsa, Okla., the only child of Raymond and Helen (McEvoy) Rink. Sue credited her parents for her love of sports and the outdoors since both were very athletic. Her mother was a champion tennis player, a certified Red Cross swimmer, and a beautiful dancer. Her father excelled in sports, particularly track and basketball.

Both of her parents were born in eastern Iowa. When Sue was four years old, the family returned to Dubuque, Iowa, and lived with relatives, eventually moving to Elkader, Iowa. She started kindergarten immediately because her cousin Don, with whom she lived, refused to go to school without her and she didn't want to stay home without him.

When Sue was in seventh grade, her mother contracted tuberculosis and went to Sunnycrest Sanatorium in Dubuque to be treated. Sue moved frequently during those years, sometimes living with her father, sometimes with relatives. As a result, she changed schools eight times, moving among public and parochial schools in Prairie du Chien, and Catholic schools in Elkader and Dubuque. She received her high school diploma from St. Columbkille in Dubuque and earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Clarke College. At the time, she was tempted to go for a master's degree in medical social work, but the call to religious life was too strong.

Sue entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1948, and received the name Michaela upon her reception on March 19, 1949. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1951, and lived 76 years as a BVM.

Sue taught in secondary schools for 15 years with missions at Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee and Xavier High School in St. Louis. While in St. Louis, she took advantage of funding by the National Science Foundation to earn a master's degree in biology. Sue ministered as an assistant professor and chairperson of the Biology Department at Clarke College for three years before leaving to work on master and doctorate degrees in counseling from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

Sue served as director of the Division of Continuing Education, associate professor of education, and academic dean of Mundelein College in Chicago before being named president in 1975. A highlight of her presidential years occurred in 1981 when upon meeting Mother Teresa in New York, Sue offered, and Mother Teresa accepted an invitation to visit Mundelein.

Sue's words from a Mundelein commencement address are still relevant today. "A first strategy on our journey through life is to recognize that some plans will fail . . . Then we must use these 'coals' of disappointment to rekindle, rebuild, and renew . . . I think it is important that you as persons, as women, continue to bring the life-giving, hope-giving, springtime element to whatever you do. I urge you to continue to overturn the soil, continue to plant and continue to improve the quality of life – not just for yourselves, but for others."

Sue left Mundelein in 1983 and, after a sabbatical year, provided youth and substance abuse services for Parkside Medical Services in Park Ridge, Ill. In 1988, Sue began her eight years as Treasurer of the Congregation. She shared, "I was really interested in alternative investments and was happy that I was able to do something for the people who are downtrodden and to be able to use Congregational resources to help the poor."

Sue worked part-time with the AARP job initiative program in Dubuque, Iowa, helping seniors find work to add to their Social Security income. She also volunteered at St. Patrick Parish in Dubuque as a parish visitor bringing the Eucharist to parishioners who were homebound, hospitalized or in nursing homes, and leading wake services. "This was a very great honor for me every day," she shared. St. Patrick's pastor commented, "Her love and devotion to her ministry has been a great witness of God's love for each of us." Sue also served on the board of Opening Doors, a nonprofit organization in Dubuque, who help women and children who are experiencing homelessness. She was very involved at Maria House, which offers transitional housing for women working to become self-sufficient, and Teresa Shelter, which offers emergency and extended stay services for women and children.

Sue enjoyed all that the earth held for her. At this time of year, she would have her tackle box ready to enjoy fishing, a picnic, and good conversation. She loved to garden, read - especially mysteries - and play Bridge. She even taught the basics of Bridge at the Roberta Kuhn Center. Sue admitted, "I could probably be a party girl if I have half a chance!" Party or not, Sue hopes to be remembered as someone who endeavored to be loving and faithful to the end. "I've had a happy, fortunate, wonderful life and I've enjoyed it. I thank God all the time and keep counting my blessings."

Saint Peter entreated, "Let your love for one another be intense. . . Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:8-10). Sue put her gifts to good use in a life of service. She was a strong woman yet there was a gentleness about her. She could state her opinion, speak her mind, and then go with the flow and not fret about the outcome. Her twinkling eyes and warm smile welcomed everyone as a friend.

During a 1992 retreat, Sue wrote "Thoughts About My Death." "God knows the moment, the day, the month and the year of my death. That special holy day for me is already circled in some 'calendar' somewhere. I'm not afraid of death. . . I'm excited about the thought of moving to a new and better place to see God and be with God forever. At the moment I take my last breath, I will move from life to Life, from ups and downs, from joys mixed with anxiety and sorrow to eternal delight, joy, happiness, and love."

Rest in God's love, dear Sue.