



Sharing of Memories of Julia (Lorenzo) Acosta, BVM

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 25, 2025

Barbara Acosta Riley, Niece, New York

I am Sister Julia's niece. My father, Arthur, was one of Julia's brothers. Sister grew up in Chicago with her parents and four brothers. She was a city girl. I remember Julia as being kind, friendly, humble and she had a good sense of humor. Julia was also feisty. On one occasion at a Mexican restaurant, the waiter was unable to answer her questions about the mole sauce being served. I'm sure the waiter will not forget that conversation. I was very proud to tell people I had an aunt who was a nun. Julia will spend her 100th birthday in heaven! May God bless her.

Joe Tortorich, Former Student

I gave Sister Julia a pictorial memoir following a visit in 2010. I feel that my sentiments and the feelings expressed at that time remain unchanged. I feel that Pope Leo would have held a special place in his heart for her if he would have known her.

As a teacher, Sister Julia was *the best!* She was one of the most committed teachers I ever had and that included graduate school. Although I wasn't one of her most gifted students, her intensity of commitment eventually pushed me to take seriously the importance of education and the need to attempt to excel in any subject I was exposed to.

As a person, Sister Julia was kind, patient, respectful and saw the best in everybody. She had a calming presence that words can't describe.

Carl Giammarese, Former Student

My friend and grammar school classmate Joe Tortorich and I were able to reconnect with Sister Julia (back then sister was Sister Mary Lorenzo). I met Joe as he attended one of The Buckingham's concert performances back in 2010. We talked about our time at St. Thomas of Canterbury in Chicago when sister was our 7th and 8th grade teacher. Sister was a wonderful teacher and because of her I was fully prepared for high school at Lane Tech. Joe researched and found how to connect. I didn't know what to expect, but we found sister to be so warm and friendly and as sharp as ever. We had a wonderful visit and conversation. Sister divulged that she had followed my career as a guitarist with The Buckingham's. Visiting sister gave me a peaceful feeling that is still with me today. We stayed connected and unfortunately lost touch when sister transferred residence to Dubuque, Iowa. I will always have fond memories of Sister Julia, and what a wonderful teacher and genuine person she was.

William "Bill" Acosta, Jr, Nephew

When I think of Sister Julia, there are two different Julias. When we were young, she was a very dominant person. Teaching us the right way, how to be decent, how to live by obedience. As we grew older, her influence was such a strong anchor point. She was determined to keep the love between her brothers alive. I think she tried so hard, put so much effort and heart into making her father and mother proud of her. To her, faith that grows inside was everything. She just needed to make sure everybody felt loved. As we grew older, I began to feel the proud side of her and the love coming out of her. She was very appreciative, very friendly, and open. She liked to see you laugh and smile, something that would make her father very, very proud of her. She was a sweet and loving daughter. From the beginning, she was always there to influence and give encouragement.

She would never let you down. Being young, I didn't understand where she got the strength. But she was my aunt, and I would listen to her. A little seed took root, and I am proud to say that it stuck. It made a big difference. I know that she would be proud of me for saying that.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

Everything we heard today was Julia. She was so consistent and so beautiful and always the same. One thing I loved about her was her laugh. She was always ready to enjoy whatever you had to say. She would laugh quietly and softly. That was Julia. She was loved by everybody who met her. She was charming in the real sense of the word. She was the essence of what I would like to be. Thank you, Julia.

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM

I was able to meet Julia in the corridor last week. She was sitting quietly in a wheelchair. I went up and told her who I was and then bent over and hugged her. She looked at me and said, "You're upside down!"

Sister Patricia Kerz, BVM

Julia and I lived together at Holy Name Cathedral. We didn't have a cook. We would go out for dinner on the weekends. Our favorite place was Panda Express. We both liked it. When I left Holy Name to go to a ministry site, and was working with Hispanic people, Julia gave me all her materials from her Spanish club – little Spanish dancing outfits, big sombreros. The Hispanics were glad to get all those things. Thank you, Julia.

Sister Roberta White, BVM

I met Julia when I came to Mount Carmel. We lived on the third floor of the Motherhouse. It is so true that she was always a teacher and loved teaching. She was so proud of her Spanish heritage. She was helping me keep up my Spanish. Up to a couple of weeks ago, she was teaching Spanish to one of our aides in Gables. Julia helped her practice her Spanish. She was always a teacher even to the last weeks of her life.

Sister Dolores "Dee" Myers, BVM

I know Julia by osmosis. Julia entered the community in September 1943. My sister, who has since left the community, entered in February 1943, a set of five. I was six years old when my sister Esther entered, so I didn't really know her other than as a BVM. If Julia was around when I visited, she always introduced me to Julia and said she went through the novitiate with her. Through the years, whenever I met Julia at various places – Wright Hall, Mount Carmel, Holy Name – I always felt so close to her probably because she knew my sister better than I did. I often think now how I didn't know her when I was a little kid. She went away to this mysterious convent. I always loved Julia for that connection.

Sister Kathleen Mullin, BVM

When I went to the Quad Cities 37 years ago, there were still people who talked about Sister Lorenzo, Julia, who taught at St Joseph's in Rock Island, Ill., as I had done. Then in 1991, the pastor at St. Joseph Parish wanted to dedicate the dining room in the rectory to Mary Frances Clarke. The BVMs had taught in that parish for a very long time. It was a meal site for many neighbors. Many BVMs had helped cook and serve meals so he wanted to dedicate it to our foundress. He invited and, in some cases, paid for any sister who had taught there or at Alleman High School. Julia was there. What was precious to watch were the people coming up to her at the Mass and the party. They had such great memories of her as we are hearing right now. When people who had had Julia in elementary school learned that I was a BVM, they would say, "Oh, you're one of Sister Lorenzo's crowd." Her memory and her legacy in all the places where she served and made her presence special will continue, maybe another 100 years!

Lila Jean (Steele) Keltner

Sister Julia was my third-grade teacher in 1948 at St. Joseph's School in Rock Island, Ill. When we returned after Christmas break there was a new teacher, Sister Marcella. She told us that Sister Lorenzo (now Sister Julia) did not know that she was going to be transferred and did not have the chance to say goodbye. Then she asked us to take out a piece of paper and write her a farewell note. We have kept in touch ever since.

Over the years, we found her one summer while she was studying at Marycrest College in Davenport, Iowa. When we were at Alleman High School, the National Honor Society took a train trip to Chicago, and we found our way to Holy Name Cathedral to visit her. She even came to my daughter's wedding at Holy Name Cathedral in 1991. When she returned to Dubuque, we visited her several times and were planning to visit her for her 100th Birthday in August. I feel so blessed to have had this 77-year friendship with Sister Julia. May she rest in peace.

Sister Mary Martens, BVM

I got to know Julia very well through periodic visits to her room in Gables here at Mount Carmel Bluffs. We developed a friendship these last few years. Both of us shared a mutual friend who was mentioned in the eulogy. She was from Chicago and came either once or twice a year specifically to visit Julia. She had known her from their time at Holy Name Cathedral. Joann had a dog, Barney, that was a constant companion. To the best of my knowledge, I don't think Barney ever came with her to Dubuque because Julia and Joann would stay at Hotel Julien for the several nights Joann was here. Barney was well known to Julia from the stories Joann told about him. He was a black Labrador.

I knew Joann from St. Patrick High School on the north side of Chicago. Joann was a math teacher and good with computers. Any time she would send a greeting card to Julie for a special event, Barney would be included. Both of us would laugh about Barney. In the spring and summer, he would be standing in the flowers. In the winter, it would be a Thanksgiving or a snow scene. It gave us something to talk about during my visits to Julia. She enjoyed seeing and hearing about him.

Sister Thea O'Meara, BVM

I want to follow up on the Lila Jean story. Julia was my third-grade teacher. Lila Jean and I were in that third-grade class together. Whenever I saw Julia at Mount Carmel, I always called her "Teach." Lila organized a group of us - six of us girls from that third-grade class - who came to the Motherhouse to celebrate Julia's 90th birthday together. Lila made all of us scarves in purple and gold, the St. Joseph's colors. For me, it was amazing that there were six of us still living with good companions that we were able to celebrate with her.

Sister Kate Keating, BVM

I was a kid in high school when Julia was at Holy Name Cathedral. The high school kids could go down and work as aides for the teachers in the grade school. That's when I got to know her. Later when I was missioned in high school, she was very helpful with translating. I was the disciplinarian in the high school. I didn't know how to talk about the problems with the kids. I would have my lecture after school, and she would give me all the words I was supposed to say. I said, "You've got to be kidding" because I couldn't say any of them. So when the parents came, she did my talking for me. She was a great person to work with and for. She was a good woman.

Jean Donahue

Julia was one of the loveliest people I have ever known. She was warm, affectionate and caring! I am grateful that she was a part of my life!

Rita Rodriguez

Rest in peace Sister Julia. I never had you as a teacher at [Holy Name] Cathedral, [Chicago,] but we would always have a good conversation at the convent when I would be working there.

Darlene (Tady) Breuwet

Dearly loved her and treasured her all of my life!

Cathy Cederlind, Niece

My Aunt Julia was a warm, witty and loving person. I will miss her a great deal. Rest in peace Aunt Julia.