



**Eulogy of Sister Julia (Lorenzo) Acosta, BVM**  
**Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, July 25, 2025**

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Julia Acosta.

Julia Mary Acosta was born on Aug. 13, 1925, in Valley Junction, Iowa, now part of West Des Moines. She was the fourth of five children and the only daughter of Lawrence and Henrietta (Horcasitas) Acosta. Her parents were born in Spain and lived in Mexico before moving to Iowa. Julia was very proud of her Spanish heritage. Brothers Lawrence, Arthur and William preceded her in death. She is survived by her brother Henry.

By the time Julia was ten, the family had moved to Chicago and joined Notre Dame Parish. Eventually the family moved into St. Agatha Parish where Julia attended the elementary school staffed by BVMs. She graduated from St. Mary High School and then did general office work for a Chicago publishing house and book wholesaler.

Julia entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1943, and received the name Lorenzo at her reception on March 19, 1944. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1946, and lived 81 years as a BVM. She completed a bachelor's degree in history with a minor in Spanish from Clarke College in 1959, and a master's degree in Spanish Literature from University of Wisconsin – Madison in 1969.

Julia was missioned as an elementary teacher at St. Joseph in Rock Island, Ill.; St. Joseph in New Hampton, Iowa; and St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. While at St. Patrick, she also taught Spanish in the high school. She spent thirteen years teaching junior high students at Holy Name Cathedral and St. Thomas of Canterbury in Chicago; Mary Queen of Heaven in Cicero, Ill.; and St. Rose in Wilmington, Ill. Julia was a fun teacher, and it was caught on film. On a warm spring day in Chicago, a newspaper photographer captured Julia, wearing the box headdress, playing marbles with one of her male students on the Holy Name playground.

In 1965, as the Black Power Movement was emerging, Julia was sent to teach Spanish at Fr. Bertrand High School in Memphis, Tenn. The first march in Memphis was in March 1968. School was closed for the day so that the teachers could participate in the march. Most parents kept their children at home for fear of riots breaking out. The police, who said they would not interfere, removed Martin Luther King, Jr from the head of the line and then fired tear gas at the marchers. Women and children were told to take cover in the temple where the march began. Principal Sister Mary Killian Pollard and Julia were together initially. However, Julia fell during the pandemonium, and Killian lost her. One of the students searched for her, found her, and helped her to the temple. Calm started to fall upon those sheltering in the temple as Sister Carmellette Kennedy led the Rosary until the police fired tear gas into the building, igniting a riot.

After Memphis, Julia continued teaching Spanish with missions to Carmel High School in Mundelein, Ill., and St. Benedict High School in Chicago. She was a wonderful Spanish teacher and well-loved by her students. Her ability to engage them in classroom activities created a desire to learn more and to appreciate the Hispanic language and culture. Whenever Julia met her students outside of class, she would interact with them in Spanish to help them practice their speaking skills. While teaching at Carmel HS, she directed the Spanish Club and chaperoned trips to Spain.

Julia was always friendly, supportive and helpful to the students, administrators, and co-workers. She truly was loved by her students. One wrote, "[Sister] Julia made all the difference in my life at a time when I needed her kindness, love and attention. She did the same for many of my other classmates. . . I can't stress how much she was loved. [She] helped so many of us. She taught me to love learning."

Two of Julia's male students who graduated in 1962 renewed their acquaintance with her in 2010. One has been a member of the band The Buckingham's since the 1960s. The other wrote, "It was one of the most rewarding experiences in my life! [I had] the honor of introducing her to [my wife], the privilege of participating in some most enlightening discussions, and the pleasure of attending a musical performance by The Buckingham's [with Sister Julia]." They often would send flowers or candy to Julia on special occasions.

Surely Julia prayed often for her students, perhaps with the words from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. "And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." (Philippians 1:9-10).

Julia lived at Holy Name Convent in Chicago after retiring. As always, she was a pleasant presence in the convent community – quiet but friendly and a delight to live with. She moved to Wright Hall when Holy Name Convent closed in 2006. The closing ended 102 years of BVM presence at Holy Name. At the farewell service, the pastor commented, "Even today, as we say thank you to the BVMs for 102 years, we realize that they have left an indelible and personal mark on Holy Name Cathedral Parish. Always, they will be a part of Holy Name." Julia moved again, this time to Mount Carmel, when Wright Hall closed in 2011.

After Julia moved to Dubuque, one of her former coworkers from Chicago would drive to Dubuque every year and stay at the Hotel Julien. She would invite Julia to eat at some restaurant then spend the night with her during her stay in Dubuque to keep up their friendship. This same friend would treat all the sisters at Mount Carmel who taught at Holy Name Cathedral to a pizza supper.

Julia will always be remembered as a sweet, loving, and gracious woman. She had a beautiful smile and a good sense of humor. She could also be a little stubborn. When she lived at Marian Hall, she was advised to use a cane to help her walk in a straight line. Julia would show up for Mass in the chapel and obediently bring the cane. – hanging on her arm! It brought a smile to many faces and even produced a chuckle or two. But that was Julia – a positive, pleasant, friendly person who was far more interested in the well-being and success of others than in herself. May she rest now in peace and love.