



Eulogy of Sister Elizabeth(Elizabeth Mary) Huber, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Sept. 9, 2025

Good morning. It is good for us to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Elizabeth Huber.

Rita Marie Huber was born May 15, 1934, in Sioux City, Iowa. She was the third child and only daughter of Max and Elizabeth (Beaulieu) Huber. Her father was born in South Dakota and worked as a railway postal clerk. He died at age 63, before Rita graduated from high school. Her mother was born in Merrill, Iowa, and lived to the age of 87. Rita joined two brothers, Robert and Leo. Robert married Barbara and resided first in Tennessee and eventually in California. Leo became a priest in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul & Minneapolis. They died in 2010 and 2008, respectively.

Rita completed her elementary education at Epiphany ES in Sioux City, Iowa. In 1949, after Rita's freshman year at Epiphany HS, this high school for girls merged with Trinity HS for boys to form Heelan HS. Rita was actively involved with the school newspaper and the yearbook, and a member of the Newman Club at Heelan. After graduating, she attended Briar Cliff College in Sioux City for one year before transferring to Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Rita entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1955, after her junior year of college. She received the name Elizabeth Mary on March 19, 1956. She professed first vows on Feb. 3, 1958, and would have celebrated 70 years as a BVM with the remaining members of her set last Sunday.

After profession, Elizabeth completed a bachelor's degree in mathematics with minors in general science and education at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa. Her first teaching mission was to Our Lady of Peace in Saint Paul, Minn., where she remained for ten years. During her time at OLP, she earned a master's degree in mathematics from St. Louis University.

Elizabeth's second mission brought her home to Sioux City to teach math at her alma mater. After two years, she left to teach at Ryan HS in Omaha, Nebr., but returned to Heelan two years later. While teaching at Heelan, she also taught Adult Basic Education (ABE) at Western Iowa Tech Community College in Sioux City. When she started teaching ABE, she felt that she didn't understand adult reading problems adequately. She attended a summer workshop on the subject and then put on a workshop for Western teachers to share the information that she had gleaned. It was very well received.

In 1980, Elizabeth was hired by Western Iowa Tech as a data processor. During this time, she lived with and cared for her aging mother. After her mother's death, she returned to teaching as an instructor first at Briar Cliff College and then at Clarke College.

In 1984, Rita was hired as a mathematics and computer science teacher at the Guadalupe Area Project (GAP) in West Saint Paul, Minn. GAP School provided a holistic approach to working with students at-risk of dropping out by addressing barriers to their academic success. The initial focus was on Hispanic students, but this expanded to include other minority groups. The students referred to "Sister Elizabeth" as the "warm, soft-spoken, understanding person who also demanded discipline and a mastery of the basics in math." Elizabeth

ministered with GAP for ten years. During this same period, she also provided GED tutoring at the women's detention center.

Elizabeth acquired an interest in eastern art when she moved into a new apartment and her brother, Father Leo, gave her his copies of eastern art which is often found in Eastern Orthodox Churches. She decided to take some classes, including a carpentry class, to learn how to prepare the flat pieces of wood for the art. She also learned how to decoupage, varnish, and wax the prints to protect them and maintain their old-world look. Elizabeth became so fond of her more than 200 prints that she could not bear to sell them. She also contributed to the creation of the Mary Frances Clarke plaques that many BVMs and Associates still possess.

Elizabeth desired to share the spiritual mystery, the peace and serenity of this ancient art form with others. She arranged exhibits for groups of religious women and had her collection displayed at a Presbyterian church. The images even helped Elizabeth recover from cancer surgery, a year of chemotherapy, followed by more surgery. During a 1994 sabbatical, she studied under Russian iconographer Vladislav Andrejev and began painting her own icons according to ancient Russian techniques.

Eventually, Elizabeth's collection of icons was gifted to the Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Ill. The executive director wrote, "It is with great humility and awe that I begin to thank you for sharing your beautiful, extraordinary collection of art and books . . . Words simply do not come near to expressing our gratitude. . . We are stunned by your collection – so many amazing pieces in so many shapes, forms, materials and sizes. . . Our retreatants are really in for a unique gift when they encounter and pray with your pieces."

In 1995, Elizabeth joined the faculty at St. Paul's City Academy, which opened in 1992 as our nation's first charter school. Their students, who typically experienced challenges in traditional academic settings, experienced unique learning environments and opportunities to prepare for post-secondary institutions or to begin employment. Elizabeth was thrilled when President Bill Clinton, a strong supporter of charter schools, visited City Academy in 2000. She even had a photo taken with the President.

Elizabeth lived at the Monastery of the Visitation in Mendota Heights, Minn., for 23 years, calling it "a great gift for me to live with that contemplative community." She moved to Mount Carmel Bluffs in 2021.

St. Paul wrote, "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them. . . if one is a teacher, in teaching . . ." (Romans 12: 6-7). Elizabeth was an outstanding teacher who had a gift for teaching adults and teenagers who had difficult experiences in school, especially in learning math. She found ways to make math interesting, relevant and possible.

Elizabeth was quiet, but determined, caring and committed, dependable, and always strove to learn and improve. She enjoyed nature and took hundreds of beautiful photos of flowering plants in full bloom and vibrant fall foliage.

St. Paul also wrote, "Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer." (Romans 12:12). Elizabeth's time of affliction is over. What remains is the realization of her hope to be reunited with her departed family and friends and, together, rejoicing forever in the loving presence of God.