



**Eulogy of Mary Ellen (Davidette) Meckley, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, March 32, 2026**

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

Margaret Ellen Meckley was born in Waterloo, New York, on February 19, 1936. She was the first child of David and Margaret (Guido) Meckley. Thirty years later, her parents adopted another daughter, Mary Joyce.

Margaret and her parents moved to Phoenix before she started school. She attended three public schools through fifth grade and then completed her elementary education at St. Matthew Elementary School and graduated from Xavier High School in 1953.

Margaret entered the BVM congregation on Sept. 8, 1953, and received the name Davidette at her reception on March 19, 1954. She later changed her name to Mary Ellen. She professed first vows on March 19, 1956, and lived 72 years as a BVM.

As a senior novice, Mary Ellen experienced two noteworthy events. First, on the night of July 28, 1955, Mary Ellen awoke in her Motherhouse dorm to see sisters running over the bridge to the infirmary. She recalled, "I joined them and helped to evacuate patients from the flaming infirmary. . . The bedridden had to be carried down or taken in wheelchairs. . . When I, and a few other novices [who had helped] joined the novices on the west side of the Motherhouse, we were told we should not have gone over the bridge because we were not yet professed." Mary Ellen did not regret her decision.

The second event occurred at Clarke College during a session for senior novices to discuss various acceptable majors. She commented, "It was then that I learned, having joined a teaching community, the option of becoming a social worker was not open to me. I was quite dismayed." Yet, perhaps Mary Ellen was encouraged by God's words to the Prophet Jeremiah, "For I know the plans that I have for you, . . . plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11).

Mary Ellen was missioned as an elementary teacher at St. Bernard in Los Angeles, St. Charles Borromeo in North Hollywood, California, St. Therese and St. Aloysius in Kansas City, Missouri, All Saints in Tucson, Arizona, and Presentation in Chicago. While in Chicago, Mary Ellen completed a bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in philosophy from Mundelein College in 1968.

After fourteen years of teaching, Mary Ellen happily welcomed the implementation of TOPA (Totally Open Personnel Application) in 1970, allowing a sister to pursue her ministry of choice. For the next 5 years, she served at Mundelein College as a family liaison for Upward Bound, a federally funded educational program that provided fundamental support to help participants prepare for college.

After completing a master's degree in social work from Loyola University in 1975, Mary Ellen ministered as a social worker at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute in Chicago for five years. She worked briefly as a social worker at Oak Park Hospital in Oak Park, Ill., and then for the Home Health Care Department at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago. Mary Ellen counseled patients as they left the hospital, helping them make plans for their care at home.

She loved her work and strove to alleviate patients' anxiety and depression. She shared, "Most of the patients I see are poor and lonely. They range in age from newborns to people in their nineties. . . I try to bring care and concern. So many of them have been ignored for so long. It means a lot to them that someone cares. . . It has been a privilege and an enriching experience to [interact with] . . . a wide spectrum of people of different cultures. Because they feel at ease with me, they share with me their feelings and concerns, which is humbling."

Jesus taught, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6). Mary Ellen had a passion for social justice, an intense desire for moral integrity, and ardently sought to live according to God's will while pursuing justice. She wrote, "Helping people gave me joy! Through my religious vows I made a covenant with God to be of service to others. Part of this covenant is a commitment to social justice. I feel that through my ministry as a social worker I [served] people and [worked] to achieve social justice." She remained at Mount Sinai for 29 years and then worked 11 years as a part-time home health social worker for DK Healthcare Services, Inc., in Evergreen Park, Ill.

Mary Ellen saw two basic elements of religious life - prayer and action. "I feel strongly that to attain our goals we must pray like all depends on God and work as if all depends on us." It is not surprising that she remained incredibly active during her retirement. She volunteered with the Jane Addams Senior Caucus, a multiracial grassroots organization united to create a world where all seniors can age with dignity and safety, free of ageism, racism, and other forms of oppression, and with the Chicago Religious Leadership Network whose members worked to build sustainable economies, just relationships and human dignity. She also belonged to the Community Renewal Society which unites people of faith to communities, coalitions, interfaith organizations and civic leaders, to intentionally and decisively transform society toward greater social justice at the intersection of racism and poverty.

And that's not all! Mary Ellen also collected food and second-hand clothes for the St. Agatha Emergency Center. She represented the home care coalition at an open hearing with national and state legislators on the effects of budget cuts on people in the Chicago area. She was involved with Sarah's Circle, a Chicago nonprofit organization serving women who are homeless or in need of a safe space and participated in their annual Winter Walk fundraiser.

Mary Ellen moved to Mount Carmel Bluffs in 2023. Her work for justice continued. She joined the Dubuque NAACP and faithfully attended meetings and recently joined its committee to address local housing concerns. She also volunteered for the Dubuque Food Pantry and St. Luke's Food for the Soul Meal.

Mary Ellen was a woman of integrity. Her actions were driven by love and a sincere, single-minded devotion to God. In the Gospel she chose for today's Mass, Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8). We rejoice with Mary Ellen as she now beholds that most magnificent vision.