



**Eulogy of Sister Joyce M. Cox, BVM (Petrine)**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Oct. 28, 2022

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Joyce M. Cox.

Emily Joyce Cox was born July 6, 1931, in Butte, Mont. “More than any other memory, the closest and most meaningful is the friendliness of people in my hometown,” wrote Joyce. “The people of Butte . . . held hands and shared the hurts in many hearts. We were a family together in the good times and in the bad.”

Her parents, Frederick Peter and Clara (Logan) Cox, and two older brothers, Fred Bernard and Gordon, whom Joyce called “close friends,” completed the family. The Cox home was a happy and loving one. Joyce shared, “This was a Mormon family in which the only daughter from her earliest years had a mysterious desire to become a Catholic.” She was intrigued by the statues, vigil lights, and incense and even went with a childhood Catholic friend to Saturday afternoon confession. She eventually wrote a letter to the priest expressing her desire to be a Catholic. When the priest contacted her father, the response was swift, “No one in this family will ever be Catholic!” She remained undiscouraged, and when she saw six BVMs walking in the snow, she said to herself, “One day I will be one of them.”

Joyce was in eighth grade when her mother died of breast cancer. With her brothers serving in the armed forces during World War II, she was sent to Salt Lake City to live with Mormon aunts and attend the public high school. After six months of deep loneliness, she pleaded with her father to allow her to come home *and* attend Girls’ Central, a Catholic high school. Her father would grant the first request, but not the second. Realizing her disappointment, Joyce’s aunts offered to pay the tuition. This caused her father to become indignant and firmly state that *he* would pay the tuition. Joyce got her wish.

Joyce’s father dated and eventually married her eighth-grade teacher, Florence Tierney, who was a Catholic and a Clarke graduate. Joyce was received into the Catholic Church after her first year of high school. She joined the Sodality at her parish, sang in the choir, and spent many afterschool hours with the BVMs. While her father never became a Catholic, he frequently attended Mass and prayed the Rosary with his wife. “He was always lovingly supportive of me in my life as a BVM,” commented Joyce. “Such is the miracle of God’s love in the initial call which came [to] a fourth-grade child.”

Joyce entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1949, and received the name Petrine at her reception on March 19, 1950. She professed first vows on March 19, 1952, and lived 73 years as a BVM. She studied at the University of San Francisco where she earned a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s degree in educational administration and counseling psychology. She later completed a master’s degree in applied theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkely, Calif.

Joyce taught elementary students in Iowa at St. Patrick in Dubuque and St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs; in California at Most Holy Redeemer in San Francisco and All Hallows in Sacramento; and in Illinois at St. Bridget in Chicago. She also ministered as the superior, principal and eighth-grade teacher at St. Thomas More in San Francisco.

Joyce served the congregation on the Elementary Education and the Higher Education Commissions, as well as four committees, two boards and a task force. In 1976 after two years as the Dean of Students at Mundelein College, she assumed the role of Vice President for Student Relations at Bellarmine High School in Tacoma, Wash., and later served as academic vice principal and as the first woman principal of this Jesuit school. Under her inspirational leadership, Bellarmine was selected as one of sixty exemplary private schools in the nation in 1984.

Living most of her life in the Northwest, Joyce had a great love for creation, especially the mountains and the sea. In her younger years she was a downhill skier and enjoyed the thrill of slalom. She renewed her love of skiing when she moved to Washington. "I find the sting of the wind and ice on my face a refreshing invitation to face new experiences with courage and determination." She also shared, ". . . the sea has always been a challenge to me and a stimulation toward deeper insights into my life and my personality – the ebb and flow." Joyce also was an avid reader, cyclist, and photographer; she enjoyed the symphony and playing bridge on her computer.

Joyce worked briefly as a pastoral associate at St. Symphorosa parish in Chicago before being named the first woman Vice-Chancellor in the Archdiocese of Seattle. She brought to the table excellent problem-solving skills, creative ideas, and vision. She stepped down after four years but continued to serve the Archdiocese for the next 24 years in various roles including Assistant to the Archbishop, Vicar for Religious, Delegate for Catholic Schools, Director of Spirituality, Director for Religious, and Director for Ecumenism.

Joyce was deeply passionate about ecumenical issues and involved in numerous coalitions. She always emphasized "what we share in common." A month before the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Joyce co-founded the Children of Abraham, a dialogue group of Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders to further knowledge and understanding among the three faiths. She also administered the Archdiocesan Multifaith Coalition to Address Human Trafficking that connected with congregations, temples, and mosques to raise awareness, educate, and advocate for victims. After moving to Mount Carmel Bluffs, she joined the Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking and Slavery.

On a lighter note, Joyce had the unique and profound opportunity to co-host a call-in radio talk show with a rabbi as they welcomed guests from various religious traditions. The number of calls directed to her as a Catholic nun was always a surprise. Joyce was honored for her ecumenical work in 2011 when she became the first woman and the first Roman Catholic to receive the "Hero of Faith Award" from Temple B'nai Torah in Seattle.

Joyce genuinely loved the connections she made with local religious communities, parishes, chancery staff and the four Seattle archbishops for whom she worked. To every endeavor, she contributed her talents, skills, dedication, sensitivity, and her boundless, selfless energy. Within every experience, Joyce witnessed "the presence of God with us and Gospel good news." She reflected: "It's [been] a wonderful life with its demands, its blessings, and its struggles. It's human life." Joyce was a woman of contemplative prayer with great devotion to the Holy Spirit and a deep love for the Virgin Mary. Surely Joyce prayed the words of Mary's Magnificat as her own. "The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is God's name."