



**Eulogy of Sister Dolores Becker, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Oct. 26, 2022

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

Joan Marie Becker was born Aug. 30, 1939, in San Francisco, the eldest child of George and Dolores (Banker) Becker. She was born with health complications and there was concern that she might not survive. However, with loving care, she progressed to good health. Soon a brother William and a sister Nancy joined the family.

The Becker family lived in an upstairs flat four blocks from Most Holy Redeemer. Her bed was close to the windows, and when it rained, she loved to sit in the window to get the best view of the streams of water gushing down towards the town. "Rain has always been a favorite of mine," she shared. "I was seventeen before I ever saw snow."

The flat included a formal dining room where Joan would stand at the head of the table teaching the dolls she placed on the chairs as her imaginary students. "I always knew I wanted to be a teacher," Dolores commented. "We covered a variety of topics [in my imaginary school] . . . I was destined for a self-contained classroom."

Religion was Joan's favorite subject in school. "It seemed as though I never could get enough information to quench my thirst," she shared. Sometimes she would come home from school with a deep question for her mother, one her mother couldn't answer. She was told to "Go sit in a chair until you can figure out." Her favorite question was "If Jesus was a Jew and we're supposed to follow Jesus, then why are we not Jews?" Joan received a firm foundation in the Catholic faith from her parents, but also expressed gratitude for her Catholic surroundings and to her grandfathers who, although not Catholic, lived exemplary Christian lives.

Joan entered the congregation on Aug. 2, 1957, received the name Dolores at her reception on Feb. 2, 1958, and made first vows on Feb. 3, 1960. She lived 65 years as a BVM. After profession, she was sent to the BVM Scholasticate in Chicago to complete a bachelor's degree in sociology and elementary education from Mundelein College. Dolores was missioned as an elementary teacher at St. John and St. George in Seattle, Wash.; St. Anthony in Tigard, Ore.; St. Tarcissus in Chicago; and St. Clare in Portland, Ore.

Dolores worked at the Religious Education Center in Butte, Mont., for five years before returning to Dubuque to earn a master's degree in theology and pastoral administration from Aquinas Institute of Theology. She moved to California to serve in parish ministry and religious education at Sacred Heart in San Jose, and later as the director of adult religious education at St. Anne in Lodi. At the time, Dolores wrote, "My favorite ministry [is] with the adult catechumenate. I've gently guided 75 persons into the Church. They are all so special and keep me questioning and searching so that I give them the most penetrating of answers. If you've never met a catechumen, you have not lived . . . They have the most beautiful eyes of anyone in the world. There is a sparkle in their eyes that matches the innocence of a young child."

Dolores ministered as pastoral associate at Divine Savior in Norridge, Ill.; Immaculate Conception in Hampton, Va; and St. Anthony of Padua in Fresno, Calif. She was co-director of the Christian Life Center in Manchester, N.H., where she taught numerous religious enrichment courses.

While in Virginia, Dolores served on the Women Listening Commission for the Diocese of Richmond that was formed to identify and reflect upon the concerns of women in the Church and society. While serving in New Hampshire, Dolores was a member of Church Women United, a national ecumenical Christian women's movement that celebrates unity in diversity and works for a world of peace and justice, specifically for women and children. She coordinated their annual World Day of Prayer in the Manchester area for several years.

A pivotal event in Dolores's life was the death of her friend Sister Romana Marie Ryan, BVM from AIDS after receiving a blood transfusion from an infected donor. Dolores and the other directors at the Christian Life Center became certified AIDS educators and brought their program to the parishes. As time passed, her commitment to this ministry only intensified. She worked as a supervisor at the AIDS I.N.N. in West Hempstead, N.Y. After completing nurse training at Nassau Tech in Westbury, N.Y., she ministered as an LPN and care companion at Christa House, an AIDS hospice in New Babylon, N.Y. She also served as an LPN at the Dominican Infirmary in Amityville, N.Y.

During the National Catholic AIDS Network conference in 2005, Dolores was invited to San Antonio to attend an ACTS retreat for people living with HIV and their loved ones. The ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology and Service) ministry sponsors retreat opportunities that provide a safe haven for sharing, acceptance, and hope. Inspired by the retreat, Dolores moved to San Antonio where she remained a vibrant part of the ministry as a member of retreat teams and faith sharing groups until moving to Mount Carmel in 2015.

St. Paul wrote, "We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed; full of doubts, we never despair. We are persecuted but never abandoned; struck down but never destroyed. Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed." (2 Cor 4:8-11). "Gospel-inspired work has always been my lifework," shared Dolores. "I believe my ministry is the mission of Jesus; I'm freeing patients to meet their Lover and Judge. I try hard to work in union with Christ and let Christ redeem my patients through gentleness and humor."

Dolores was an honest, generous, caring, loving woman of deep faith. Her greatest gift was relating and reaching out to people. She assumed great responsibility for her work, preparing for every mission with tremendous passion and attention to detail. She was persistent, industrious, and, as to her personal motivation, one of her mentors said, "If it were any higher, she would need an oxygen mask."

"Dolores was responsive to the spirit speaking in the events of her life." (*Salt*, Fall 2011). To borrow from last Sunday's letter of St. Paul to Timothy, Dolores has competed well, finished the race, and kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7). May she rest now in the loving arms of Jesus.