



**Eulogy of Sister Norma (Adelaide) Evans, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Feb. 27, 2024

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Norma Evans.

Norma Lea Evans was born Jan. 20, 1931, the first child of John and Lillian (Jones) Evans of Penalosa, Kansas. She was later joined by siblings Mary Ann, John, and Donna. Their father was born in Mason County, Ill. Their mother, a native of Penalosa, was Pennsylvania Dutch and converted to Catholicism when she married their father.

The family lived on a farm about 50 miles west of Wichita. Norma recounted that "when I was a small child, I used to help my dad. I would sit with him on the tractor as he worked the fields. He would also let me help him milk the cows. . . Until I was in fourth grade many people thought I was a boy since I had short hair and worked in the fields."

The Evans children started their education in a one room country school just across their wheat field. Norma commented, "I ran to school so many times before I was old enough [to attend] that the teacher said I could start in first grade." Norma's favorite subjects were geography, history, and reading; she also claimed a love of spelling, especially when she could practice writing the words on the blackboard. When it was time to receive the Sacraments, the children would stay with their grandparents in town to attend religious instruction.

The country school closed when the state set a minimum enrollment requirement. The Evans children began attending the Catholic school in Kingman, Kansas. Norma's mother was instrumental in obtaining transportation since the school bus passed the Catholic school on the way to the public school.

Norma and another girl from Kingman paid board to live in town and attend the public high school for her freshman year. During the following summer, a hailstorm devastated the wheat crop leaving the family with no money for her to continue her schooling. Sister Mary Adelaide Screen, who grew up in Kingman and was a very good friend of Norma's mother, intervened so Norma could complete her secondary education at Mount Carmel Academy in Wichita. She worked all three years to pay the tuition.

Norma shared, "A love for teaching children, leading others to God, and dedicating myself to Him drew me to religious life. [Moreover,} love for Mary, the prayer life, and [my] BVM teachers drew me to the BVMs." Norma entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1948, and was a member of the set commonly known as the "Carefree Little Birds." She was received on March 19, 1949, and given the name Adelaide in honor of Sister Mary Adelaide, who had died three months earlier. Norma's sister, Mary Ann, entered

the congregation in 1950, and received the name Adolina upon her reception on March 19, 1951, the same day that Norma professed her first vows. Norma lived 75 years as a BVM.

After four months of classes at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, and student teaching at St. Patrick, Norma was eager to have her own classroom. She was missioned as an elementary teacher at St. Francis Xavier and Annunciation in Kansas City, Mo.; St. Mary in Waucoma, Iowa; and St. John the Baptist in Peosta, Iowa, where she taught first, second and third grades all in *one* room. She also worked as a secretary and a bookkeeper at St. Paul Elementary School in San Francisco. Her other teaching missions include St. Bernard in Los Angeles and St. Joseph in Wichita, Kans. Norma ministered 26 years at St. Joseph as a teacher, librarian, director of the learning center, and tutor, which also included 11 years working with the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program. Being at St. Joseph had the benefit of allowing Norma to visit her elderly mother on the weekends to clean and prepare meals for the coming week. Eventually, her mother moved to a nursing home in Wichita where Norma would visit her every night to feed her. Reflecting on her missions, Norma shared, "I enjoyed living in little places. I was never more happy than when I was in Waucoma or Peosta." Decades later, she still received letters from students she taught in those "little places."

Norma was a strong proponent of using phonics to teach reading; after all, it was how she had learned to read. In 1983, after commenting at a meeting that, "You can't learn to read without knowing phonics," Norma was asked to join the writing and editing teams for a phonics-based reading series to be published by the Merrill Publishing Co. She was very proud that her name appeared on the title page of all ten books in the Reading Skilltext Series.

Norma retired in Wichita in 1997 and moved to Mount Carmel in 2000 where her sister Mary Ann was already residing. "We enjoyed being together," Norma remarked. "We would meet every night before we went to bed and talk." Sadly, Mary Ann died in 2006.

Norma was a quiet and reflective person, who pondered ideas before offering her opinion. She graciously recognized people she encountered and always asked how they were doing. She was not a talker, except when the subject was her family's farm. She was very proud of the farm, her hard-working parents, and the crops they produced. She was a farm girl at heart.

Even though Norma's sight was failing in her later years, she did not remain idle. She enjoyed listening to country music and audiobooks and, with a little help, playing games, especially Bingo. She participated in Cut Ups, rolled yarn into balls for ease of use, made diapers that were sent to foreign countries, and similar activities that served others.

For her funeral Mass, Norma chose a reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans that reflects her love for all people as children of God. "And as members of one body, we belong to each other. . . Your love must be sincere. Hate what is evil and cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of sisters and brothers. Try to outdo one another in showing respect. Don't grow slack, but be fervent in spirit: the One you serve is Christ." (Romans 12:5, 9-11).

At the time of her golden jubilee, Norma commented, "I have stayed in religious life because my life has been richly blessed and I have been happy. As I look back . . . I rejoice and marvel at the growth experiences, the blessings, and the ways the Lord and His Blessed Mother have been the designers through it all. It has been a time to give praise and thanks."

Now it is our time to give praise and thanks for the blessing of Norma in our lives and to celebrate her reunion with her parents, siblings, friends, and BVM sisters in the presence of our loving God.