

Rose Marie (St. Carol) Lorentzen, BVM
Eulogy
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Jan. 10, 2025

Good morning. It is good for us to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Rose Marie Lorentzen.

Rose Marie was born June 3, 1935, in Walsh County, N.D., the first child of Carroll and Rose (Rogalla) Lorentzen. Her mother was also born in Walsh County, while her father hailed from Hallock in northern Minnesota. The couple made their home in northern Minnesota where siblings Duane and Leesa, better known as "Lee," completed the family. Rose Marie's father died before she entered the community. Her mother worked as a waitress to support the family.

The family moved to Chicago when Rose Marie was six years old. She attended three elementary schools – St. John Berchmans, Holy Family, and Annunciation – and two high schools – St. Mary and Tuley. After graduation, she worked as a secretary during the day and attended night classes at Wright Junior College. She enrolled at Chicago Teachers College where she earned a bachelor's degree in education with minors in English and history in 1959.

Rose Marie entered the congregation on Aug. 2, 1959, and received the name St. Carol on Feb. 3, 1960. She professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1962, and lived 65 years as a BVM. Her first missions were as a junior high teacher at St. Eugene and Holy Cross in Chicago and St. Martin in Cascade, Iowa.

She was teaching at Holy Cross, an all-Black school, when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April of 1968. She had vivid memories of the National Guard in full battle gear with rifles and gas masks marching eight abreast down the street as she and her students exited Palm Sunday Mass. Little boys in their suits and little girls in their best dresses weaved in and out of the guardsmen, waving their palms, reminiscent of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. That fall Rose Marie was missioned as a secondary teacher at Bertrand HS in Memphis, Tenn. These two events had a significant impact on Rose Marie and confirmed her conviction that people could truly create change when they band together against injustice.

Rose Marie taught theology at Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee before returning to Chicago to serve as a religious education teacher for St. Jerome Parish in Chicago and later at St. Gertrude Parish in Franklin Park, Ill. She completed a Master of Religious Studies degree from Mundelein College, Chicago, in 1972, and shifted her ministry to religious education for adults. These experiences motivated her to formally enter into preparation for ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. With the full support of the BVM congregation, she earned a Master of Divinity degree from the Loyola Jesuit School of Theology in 1980.

Rose Marie served as pastoral minister at St. Joseph Parish in Aurora, Ill. In her first month there, she asked parishioners to boycott grocers who sold produce from growers unwilling to negotiate with migrant workers for just working conditions and wages. With her leadership and persuasiveness, their efforts proved successful in making an impact.

Rose Marie was deeply committed to ecumenical work. She belonged to the Ecumenical Clergy Association and served as the convenor of its Public Issues Committee. The pastor of the New England Congregational Church sang her praises in a letter to the pastor of St. Joseph Parish.

I speak for hundreds of citizens who longed for a channel to express their concerns for world peace and nuclear arms control. . . It was Sister Rose Marie who provided that

channel by organizing the ecumenical peace witness in support of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament. A thousand took part. . . I speak also for the dozens of homeless people who now find emergency overnight shelter at St. Joseph and six other churches in Aurora. . . I could easily cite a dozen other ways in which Sister Rose Marie has inspired and exemplified Christian caring for the least and lowliest among us. Yet, it is her spirit of quiet, persistent Christian caring I would commend the most."

"You have been told, O my people, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8). Reflecting upon these words from the prophet Micah and the meaning of Hebrew word, *hesed*, Rose Marie wrote,

In Hebrew Scriptures, 'hesed' is a richly nuanced concept that most closely describes the way in which God interacts with people. *Hesed* is translated sometimes as 'mercy,' . . . more often as 'steadfast and enduring love.' But all our English translations lack the dimensions of *action* the Hebrew word implies. The Hebrew talks of *doing* hesed with someone; they frequently associated it with another Hebrew word 'mishpat' or our English word, 'justice.'" It implies liberating self and others. As Micah proclaims: What does Yahweh ask of you except to do hesed, i.e., show compassion, mercy, everlasting love, and love mishpat (justice).

There is little doubt that doing hesed was an integral part of Rose Marie's very being.

In 1984, Rose Marie founded and became the executive director of Hesed House and its Public Action to Deliver Shelter program, better known as PADS. She ministered at Hesed House for 20 years. Today, 40 years later, the PADS Overnight Emergency Shelter is the second largest shelter in the State of Illinois serving men, women and children who seek a place to sleep, shower, do laundry, eat a meal, find medical and legal assistance and other life-sustaining services.

Rose Marie was a co-recipient of the National Excellence Award from the Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This is the highest award for use of federal, public, and private funds for community development. The award reads,

In appreciation. . . for exemplary community service in Aurora, Ill. As Chairperson of the Clergy Public Issues Committee, Co-Founder of the Interfaith Food Pantry and Soup Bowl, and Executive Director of P.A.D.S., Inc., [Rose Marie] brought shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and hope to the hopeless through Christian Hospitality.

Rose Marie was also honored in 1995 as the Advocate of the Year by the Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness.

After retiring from her position at Hesed House, Rose Marie worked as a senior advisor for Advocacy for Social Justice, a GED instructor at Waubensee Community College in Aurora, Ill., and volunteered as an ESL instructor at the Dominican Learning Center, also in Aurora. She moved to Mount Carmel in 2021.

In a presentation to the BVM Assembly, Rose Marie shared,

I believe it is God's will for us that we become the most fully human, deeply loving, accepting [persons] that we are created to be. For as we become present to each other, share our lives more deeply, allow ourselves to become vulnerable anew, we increasingly incarnate a loving God [who, in Jesus, was most fully human,] to all those whom we touch.

Throughout her life, Rose Marie did just that. Moreover, she followed in the footsteps of Phoebe and Priscilla, women leaders in the early church who were whole-heartedly committed to Gospel living. Like Lydia, she provided hospitality and care for those in need through her work at Hesed House. And like Anna the prophetess, she embodied hope and recognized God incarnate in others.

Indeed, she was the loving presence of God to countless people. As she passed from this life into the loving embrace of Jesus, surely she was greeted with "Well done [woman of the Gospel]; well done my good and faithful servant."