



**Eulogy of Sister Carl Loras Pilmaier, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Jan. 3, 2025**

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Carl Loras Pilmaier.

Adeline "Ada" Louise Pilmaier was born June 20, 1927, in Dubuque, Iowa, to Carl and Laura (Schmitt) Pilmaier. She was the second youngest of six children and joined Carl, Jr., John, Mary Anne and Therese with Tom completing the family.

The Pilmaier dwelling was a happy and loving home. Their mother Laura was a talented artist who was outgoing and loved to have fun. She had entered the BVM congregation in 1918 but left two months later. Their father was a quiet man who worked as a CPA. When he lost his job during the Depression, the family temporarily moved in with relatives until he found work in Des Moines, Iowa.

At the age of three, Ada developed a skin disease that worsened as she grew older. Local doctors could not cure it. At age 6, her parents took her to the Mayo Clinic. She was inconsolable when her doctor declared the disease was incurable, and that sun exposure would make the disease worse and could lead to blindness. After they returned home, her mother took the crucifix down from the wall and handed it to Ada who recalled, "[Mom] talked about how much our Lord suffered for love of us and, for some reason, she ended by saying, 'That's why many young girls leave everything and become sisters.' It was then that I told Jesus I would like to be a sister when I grow up, and . . . that desire never left."

However, there was one major obstacle preventing Ada from becoming a sister. "When I received my First Communion, I asked God to cure me. I didn't care when, just so I could be a Sister!" Meanwhile, Ada's mother had asked the family to pray to Bishop Matthias Loras for a cure. Ada was ten when the family moved to Des Moines. To her mother's horror, Ada decided to go against her doctor's orders by playing out in the sun and giving up her restrictive diet. She told her mother, "A miracle is a miracle, and Bishop Loras is getting no more help from me." From that day on, her skin disease began to disappear and never returned.

Ada graduated from St. Joseph Academy in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1945. Honoring her parent's request to wait one year before entering the BVM congregation, she went to work as a telephone operator at the Warner Brothers Pictures Distribution Corporation in Des Moines. On Sept. 8, 1946, she entered the BVM congregation. Upon her reception on March 19, 1947, she received the name Carl Loras in honor of her brother Carl, who died at the age of 21 in 1943 from diabetic complications and pneumonia, and in honor of Bishop Loras. She professed first vows on March 19, 1949, and lived 78 years as a BVM.

Carl Loras ministered in elementary education her entire professional life. She taught at Sacred Heart in Davenport, Iowa; Blessed Sacrament in Chicago; St. Augustine in Memphis, Tenn.; St. Rose in Wilmington, Ill.; St. John in Seattle; St. Jude in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Gesu in Milwaukee where she was also the principal. In addition, Carl Loras served as principal at four schools in Nebraska: St. John in Lincoln, St. Patrick in McCook; St. John the Baptist in Plattsmouth, and St. Michael in Fairbury. Her regional commented, "Her love of education and teaching children how to be their best selves gave her the greatest pleasure."

Carl Loras worked as a librarian and taught library skills to children in first through fifth grades at St. Pius X in Urbandale, Iowa, for twenty-two years. One of her students won first place in a vocational awareness essay contest sponsored by the Diocese of Des Moines. The student wrote, "Sister Carl Loras is kind of like Jesus. She is very loving and gentle. She always comes to all the school Masses. She has us pray in the library. Sister helps with Mission Awareness Day each month . . . She shows us how to act more like Jesus . . . Sister Carl Loras is a very generous Sister. She is my favorite Sister, and I love her."

In the 2015 campaign to "Thank a Nun," a former student shared, "I am what I am today thanks to the wonderful BVMs I had at Blessed Sacrament in Chicago. Even at an early age, I knew the sisters loved what they were doing and loved us. I think the seed to be a teacher was planted early and here I am now in my 50th year of teaching as a De La Salle Christian Brother."

When Carl Loras retired in 2007, the pastor of St. Pius X wrote, "Sister Carl Loras . . . is a very devoted and faith-filled religious. It is clear that her prayer life really identifies who she is. Besides participating in the Eucharist most days of the week, she also prays the Office, the Liturgies of the Hours, as well as praying the Rosary every day. . . Sister is a very faith-filled servant of God. She has gone about her work with dedication and love." Carl Loras remained in Urbandale and volunteered as a resident advocate at the Bishop Drumm Care Center until she moved to Mount Carmel in 2009.

Carl Loras loved to volunteer with the candy cart because it was "a chance to see the sisters in the infirmary." She volunteered with the Mall in the Hall and shared, "I never buy any clothes myself. The Mall in the Hall is too good a source." She also assisted her BVM sisters as a reader and a letter writer. Carl Loras celebrated life and delighted in leisurely activities with others, including Bingo, cards games, and going to the casino. She was very much a people person and happiest when she was helping others. She hoped to be remembered as "thoughtful, kind and considerate, peaceful and loving" and as one who "spread joy." At the time of her 60th Jubilee, Carl Loras wrote to her set, "Only time will tell how much longer each one of us has. All I know is, it's been a wonderful life filled with many blessings!"

Jesus said to the disciples, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." (John 14:2-3). Carl Loras received an early Christmas present when four days before Jesus quietly and lovingly escorted her to her eternal home. Be at peace, Carl Loras.