

Sister Janita Curoe, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 13, 2017

Janice Curoe, Sister-in-law

We have so many good memories. She loved her nieces and nephews; she loved having people come visit her. This service is special. We'll miss her. She was great.

Mary Ann Nida, Niece

I came to visit her in September and brought her a bunch of clothes. She said she was going to use them for the Mall in the Hall. We had a nice visit over a couple of hours. She was very open for company no matter who it was. She got her walker and we strolled through the building. She showed me what she did at various places and where she ate lunch. She took me to the place where she sorts the clothes. She said they keep them out for about two weeks and then donate them. She said that she has been here for eight years and has never bought clothes. She was the sweetest lady ever.

Sister LaVerne Dolphin, BVM (Thereselle)

Janita was a good friend. She was an excellent teacher and principal. Saturday at the committal service we heard from scripture, "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right." That reminds me of Janita. She devoted her life to education and justice, doing what was right, primarily in the South. Janita was gifted in teaching children to read. Probably many today are successful because of her passion for education.

She was so nice to live with. I lived with her at three different times in three different places, and never tired of it. It was always a joy to see her again. She and I used to go to lunch at Village Inn on Wednesdays for their free pie. Janita loved raspberry pie. Janita, you are a wonderful BVM and I will miss you. I hope there is raspberry pie in heaven.

Dave Pfab, Nephew

I would like to read a poem called "The Dash" by Linda Ellis.

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
from the beginning to the end.
He noted that first came her date of birth
and spoke the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.
For that dash represents all the time
that she spent alive on earth
and now only those who loved her
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
the cars . . . the house . . . the cash;
what matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.
So think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
that can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real,
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.
And be less quick to anger,
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect,
and more often wear a smile
remembering that this special dash
might only last a little while.
So, when your eulogy's being read
with your life's actions to rehash,
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spent your dash?

Kevin Curoe, Nephew

I'm the son of Robert, Sister's brother. I farm near Bernard, Iowa, so I have had special opportunities to visit with Sister. She was always ready for an adventure, but I'll only share three.

One time we went to the Minnesota State Fair. She ordered deep fried apple pie with ice cream. She really enjoyed the day.

Then there was the opportunity a couple of years ago to invite her out for Easter. We had an Easter egg hunt. My wife organized it so we would have two members to a team. I teamed up with Sister. I learned this was her first Easter egg hunt. Each team was to hunt for a special color of eggs. The younger ones had a different color that were less hidden. However, it's important to note that some eggs had chocolate and some did not. Sister made it very clear early on that she would take all the chocolate eggs. I believe I come by my sweet tooth naturally.

Another time, she was out to the farm and rode in the second seat of the combine. It was a large piece of machinery that took six or seven steps to climb into. We don't normally stop all the equipment during harvest, but we stopped all the equipment, parked it, and ordered

burgers from town. Sister grew up on a farm, so I thought she probably had hamburgers, but she said this was the best hamburger she ever had. I don't know if that was because it was her first hamburger or that we got it from the bar in town. She was always a trooper. We had a lot of fun and we will miss her.

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM (John Laurian)

This is a story that Janita told when she was tutoring a prisoner in Parchman, Miss. She said she was trying to teach him to read and kept encouraging him by saying, "If you learn to read, then when you get out of prison, you will be able to get a job and make a good living." He said, "Oh, come on, Sister. You know I'm never going to be able to read. The only way I can ever survive is by stealing." Janita said, "You know, he was right."

Sister Therese Jacobs, BVM (Therese Carmelle)

I lived with Janita twice in religious life, but we also went to school in the same city. She was at Our Lady of Angels Academy, a girl's school in Clinton, Iowa. I was at St. Mary, the parish school. I had a lot of brothers and they knew Janita; she was a beautiful girl.

I only knew her by name, but I met her in the novitiate. A wonderful woman. I loved living with her at St. Paul in Davenport, Iowa, and we lived together again in Mississippi. Over the 18 years I was in Mississippi, we spent a lot of time together. Every holiday when we didn't come North, we spent it on the coast. She knew my brothers and sisters and their children. She was a very special woman.

In her later years, Janita did tutoring at the jail just outside of Canton, Miss. Two people whom she knew quite well ended up in a big trial and were not well-represented by the lawyers. A lawyer might be assigned to a death penalty case without even knowing the client. Well, they ended up on death row. One was from South Africa. He had only been in the country a couple of years, but got in trouble by knowing the guy who had stolen a car and killed a woman. He was considered an accomplice. Ultimately, the man was pardoned by the governor. But the other one, Justin Underwood, is still there. Janita was in touch with him regularly.

Janita celebrated her diamond jubilee this past September. Well, Justin is an artist and made her a card. He was a great devotee of Janita; she's helped him so much. In fact, Janita was in touch with his mother too. She was greatly loved by anyone who ever encountered her. She taught them so much, not just about reading, but also about life. I'll miss Janita a lot.

Sister Angele Lutgen, BVM

I could repeat everything LaVerne said about Janita and her wonderful dedication to education and the quality of teaching she brought to every student. I want to speak about one other part of her life—how much she enjoyed relaxing.

Those of us who were in the South for a long time would get together. At one time, I was in Alabama, the only BVM in the state; Janita and Therese were in Jackson, Miss.; and LaVerne was in Shreveport, Miss. We would meet and have a good relaxing time together. She loved

being by the water at a lake or at the gulf. She was just a fun person to be with as well as a wonderful teacher. God bless you, Janita. We will miss you.

Sister Kathleen Spurlin, BVM (Bernardone)

Janita and I lived together when she was my principal in Clarksdale, Miss. When she lived in Canton, Miss., I would stop and spend the night with her whenever I drove north from Leakesville, Miss., where I was a prison chaplain. Janita had a ritual in the morning—two glasses of water and reading the paper from beginning to end. She was always up on all the news. Janita and I spent many weekends doing things together. I certainly will miss her. I know she prays for us in heaven. Thank you, Janita, for being a gift to us.

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM (Magdaletta)

Janita and I were very friendly, open to each other about things that were going on when she was in Davenport, Iowa, and I was in Rock Island, Ill. One day she got a letter from our provincial that said she was going to be moved. She asked, "Is Magdaletta moving?" Magdaletta was my religious name. We were both going to be at our respective missions for 11 years. The provincial said, "No, Sister." She said, "Don't change me now because Magdaletta is still over there." Later, she asked me, "Why was I moved when you were not?" I said, "It has nothing to do with the place. It has everything to do with how excellent of a teacher you are."

Sister Therese Frelo, BVM (Ann Carmelle)

I had the opportunity to live with Janita twice. First, in 1965 I went to Davenport, Iowa. She was the principal and I was the eighth grade teacher. She was an example of a beautiful, educational leader. After I left Davenport, I went to Memphis. Later, when I became principal, I invited her to come to Memphis. Together we started a new educational program of a non-graded primary. She and Mary Beth Noonan were the star teachers. It was wonderful to have her on the faculty again. So I see her as an educational leader and an educator. Above all, I would say that she was a gentle, kind, sensitive, thoughtful, passionate and loving friend.

Sister Marion Hurley, BVM (William Marie)

I haven't been at Mount Carmel too long, but Janita and I were in the same set. I never lived with her because I never lived in the South. I had no idea what she did in the South. We had an empty place at our table in the dining room. I said, "Wouldn't you like to come and sit with us?" I didn't know the rules about where you sat. She said, "I would love to. It's quieter here anyway." I said, "You are very welcome."

I really wanted to know about her and what she had been doing all these years. She started telling me about teaching. I've been a teacher all of my life and loved it. She told me what she had to do and then I would share what I did and didn't have to do. It was fun. The empty place at the table became very important because other people wanted to come and sit with us. They didn't know about Janita's life and they wanted to know also. We had a table that had extra chairs and extra places. It was neat.

Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM

Janita was very devoted to her set. We meet for breakfast on the first Saturday of every month. I was visiting with her on Feb. 3, the Friday before she died, and offered her a ride in a wheelchair over to our breakfast. She said, "No, I think I can walk if they let me." I said, "Well, think about it. Maybe you can get an aide to bring you and I'll take you back." Well, I arrived at breakfast the next morning and there was Janita, who had walked over. I don't know if she was thinking it, but to me, that was her good-bye to her set.