

## REFLECTION – SISTER JOANN BOYLE

June 28, 1934 – September 7, 2022

*Funeral Liturgy, Saturday, September 10, 2022*



Where does one begin to speak on the life of a friend, someone next to me as a member of the Postulant group entering the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill on September 8, 1953. How does one share the agreements/disagreements, the happy times and the sad. . .the hopes, the fears Even though our paths diverged over the past 69 years, there is a deeper connection, based not on time together but on novitiate experiences and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We started anew on the same day and marked special spiritual milestones together; if not alluded to, we made significant memories and created familiar bonds uniting us in our vowed commitment forever. That's what makes a reflection on a member of my group special and my willingness to present.

Grateful for this vocation may have been on Joann's mind in choosing the first reading from Zephaniah: "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart," She testifies to her satisfaction and joy with having entered the Sisters of Charity and lived out the call. As I consider what I know of Joann and her many attributes I think about how her names, baptismal and religious, are symbolic. Born, the fifth child of Joseph and Alice Sheehan Boyle on June 28, 1934, she was baptized in St. Bartholomew Catholic Church in Crabtree, PA and named, Joann Berenice. Her patron, Joanna, wife of Chuza, risked reputation to accompany the two women who went to anoint the Body of Jesus Who was risen. Joanna, obviously, was a doer, a worker who didn't hold back when there was a job to be done. Joann developed her personality and talents within her family and her schooling at St. Kieran's and Elizabeth Seton High School. She readily admitted she had a good time while learning. Sister Joann Boyle exhibited a determination to join her sister Betty (Sister Raymond Marie) at Seton Hill which was delayed for a year after graduation. Her intentions were strong and she prevailed, coming from St. Kieran Parish with good recommendations.

Full of Irish wit and good humor, Joann could instigate laughter and an eagerness to join her in the variety of chores novices are assigned. She teased in harmless ways and enjoyed jokes aimed at her own foibles and not at the expense of others. Sister Mary Christopher was her sponsor and taught her how to tie the bows attached to our caps. . .not too many had that knack and she had a steady stream of requests. Her real claim to fame—which she shared with Sisters Nancy Gerken and Carol Daugherty was home repairs. A handy set of a wrench, screw driver, and miscellaneous tools fit neatly in a pouch under her apron to be used whenever she or the others spotted something. to the chagrin of Sister Miriam Fidelis. Sister took a dim view of their willingness to fix the leak or tighten the pipe. Joann was a doer, too, always ready to scrub, clean up or down...doing the task happily and finding the “recollected spirit” a strain. Like her namesake, she looked for jobs to be done and rolled up her sleeves to do them.

Starting as a primary teacher in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at St. Anselm School, Sister Joann taught 1<sup>st</sup> grade in parish schools in Pittsburgh, Greensburg, and Arizona for 25 years. Her Principals commended her enthusiasm and excellent teaching skills. She moved to teach 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades, specializing in reading instruction and used this training in the Exchange Program in Louisiana. With her mother’s declining health and the need for nursing care at home, Sister Joann received permission to substitute her nursing skills for the teaching and assist the family. For 7 years she provided her mother with the loving care she needed and spent her summer vacation, by her own request at Assumption Hall, endearing herself to the residents. Receiving the CNA, Joann performed nursing duties, and gave professional haircuts, nail care and her usual “jollyng” the sisters with silly stories and jokes.

From 1954 to 1977 when we had the option to return to our baptismal names, Sister Mary Jonathan, aka Sister Joann Boyle, continued that infectious spirit of teasing, but, above all, respecting those she served. It’s the name of Jonathan that, I believe, appropriately defines her gift of friendship and loving kindness. Jonathan became the close and intimate friend of David, whom he loved “as if his life depended on him.” Sister Joann had the wonderful gift to cherish and maintain deep friendships. Beyond her familial relationships which were strong and lasting, evident in the nursing care she gave to most of them, the sacrifice of herself to make them comfortable, there was her connections with the Sisters of the Holy Family, particularly Sister Carmel Rose Saizan. Carmel and Joann became close friends while participating in the Exchange Program and the bond grew stronger as they aged and Carmel joined the team assembled under VISTE (Volunteers in Service to the Elderly) in Lakeland, FL.

Sister Joann Boyle fused the major characteristics embedded in her names, Joann and Jonathan as she and her co-workers, Betty, Loretta, their sister, Carmel Rose ministered to the care of the elderly

and needy in their own homes, just outside Lakeland. Their patients came to them through word of mouth, various organizations and hospice programs. On call twenty-four hours a day, they offered complete care, as well as cleaning of a neglected home, shopping for food and preparing meals. Joann never forgot how to do a bit of plumbing, carpentering and electrical work. They would take mobile patients out to movies or a restaurant, and readily accompany the dying, comforting and praying with them. . . dear friends. Joann's file contains grateful letters for the love and care given generously. Alice O'Reilly, Executive Director of VISTE, summed up the impact Sisters Joann and company had: ". . .the Sisters are a lifeline for many of our elderly clients. Their dedication to serving others is immeasurable, and all with VISTE are beyond thankful for their amazing spirit and benevolence. . ."

Synonymous with a life well lived, Joann gives me the answer to my opening question in Psalm 100: "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; worship the Lord with cries of gladness; come before Him with joyful song. . .Enter the temple gates with praise, .. Give thanks to God, bless His name. . .forever.

*Reflection, Funeral Liturgy*

*Saturday, September 10, 2022*

*Sister Jean Augustine*