



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

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S. JOAN LUERMAN, OSF

November 5, 2021

Dear Sisters and Associates, Co-Workers, Family, and Friends,

**“Spreading the Word of God,” “Walking in the Footsteps of St. Francis,”
“Years Spent Helping Others,” “Love and Hope to Handicapped” ---**

These are but a few of the headlines printed on news clippings highlighting the life and ministry of our Sister Joan Luerman.

Margaret Ellen was born in Richmond, Indiana, the third of five daughters to bless the Anthony and Hilda Maurer Luerman family. She relates in her autobiography: “We were a closely knit family; being all girls gave us a sense of pride and togetherness. We were church-going people. Since my father was choir director at St. Andrew’s, the Luermans were always present for Vespers and Benediction on Sundays. We were permitted to go to a children’s movie on Sunday afternoons, the only stipulation being that we be on time for services!” Worshiping with her church family, Margaret claimed, was always an important part of her life, and singing with her Grandpa was a treat—like praying twice.

As a youngster, Margaret thought that, if her prayers were to be answered, she had to get as close to God as she could. Therefore, she went out on the second-story porch and climbed up on the arm of the glider to ask God to help her find a dime she’d lost while jumping in a pile of leaves. That dime was found a year later, teaching Margaret that our prayers are ALWAYS answered, even if we have to wait awhile!

Margaret went on to share the first of her many experiences attributed to angels: “When I was five years old, one of my special friends came to take me for a ride in his wagon. I was asleep when he came, so mother did not awaken me. Upon returning to his home, he was struck by a truck and killed instantly. I remember clearly my mother’s words: ‘Your guardian angel was taking care of you.’ I often thought of these words and wondered what the good Lord wanted me to do.”

The answer to that question Margaret credited to her 8th grade teacher and principal Sister Georgine Bocklage and to her aunt Sister Frances Romaine. Following them, she entered the Oldenburg Franciscan Community in 1953, taking the name Joan for St. Joan of Arc and for her little sister Joan who was killed in a playground accident shortly before Joan entered the convent. Joan claims that her biggest challenges of her early days in the Community were learning not to run up the steps, tripping on her long skirt and to stop responding to the Sisters by saying: “Okey dokey, S’ter.”

Sister Joan continued her education at Marian College and pursued a Master’s degree from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, and later another in Ministry and Spirituality from Seattle University. As a teacher, she was an asset to Catholic schools in Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Missouri. Joan considered being one of four “pioneer Sisters” who opened a mission in New Buffalo, Michigan, to be a “most precious experience.” She was later to return there as principal. Someone who wrote a letter of support when Joan was given a “*Celebrating Catholic School Values Career Achievement Award*” noted that “Joan loves children and has always enabled them to use their potential. She instilled more than academic learning in her pupils. She taught them values to last their life time. Her creativity and high energy kept every school day full of fun, prayer, and support.”

St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford, Indiana, where Joan ministered as teacher and pastoral minister for a total of 34 years, had to have captured her heart. There she served on the Family Life and Social Concerns Commission as well as the Bedford Ministerial Association. She was instrumental in developing “Ruthie’s Place,” a shelter for women and children. She worked at the St. Vincent de Paul Society to help the poor and

homeless in the area. While the latter group ministered to those outside the parish, Joan also assisted with CARE-ing—(Care in the Name of God) to build ramps, do yard work, fix leaks, provide transportation, and buy Christmas gifts for those in special need within the parish. Her love of children found expression as Joan visited the pediatrics unit of Hospitality House, a residential facility for those with physical and mental disabilities. “Yes, Jesus loves you” she would sing as she left a kiss on each one’s forehead. For many of those children Joan was their only human contact outside of the nurses and aides who cared for them daily. Parents lived too far away to visit often.

Joan was instrumental in forming a group of Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis who share in the Franciscan spirit and prayer in the Bedford area. She met with the group and inspired them to live their Franciscan vocation in their families and everyday places of work.

Several who have spoken of Joan have noted: “Sister Joan has served as a counselor to women and as a much-needed compassionate assistant to the terminally ill and dying.” “She is a prayerful presence to all who know her. She is spirit-filled and full of grace! Joan will go the extra mile for anyone.” She was honored with a standing ovation in 2009 when she was awarded the medal for *Excellence in Religion* in the community of Lawrence County in south-central Indiana.

Asked about her favorite pastimes, Joan replied, “I really enjoy working crossword and jigsaw puzzles, playing the piano, and just stretching out for a leisurely nap. I also enjoy just sitting, talking, listening, and being me! I love to meet new people and help them feel at home and I really find it a neat challenge making tired, cross cashiers and salespeople and passersby smile! Why? Franciscan joy is for everyone!”

While we rejoice in Joan’s new-found eternal joy, we offer our sympathy to her three sisters Romaine, Jean, and Mary Anita, as well as to the rest of her family, classmates, former parishioners, and friends. Our gratitude extends to our nursing and pastoral care staff in St. Clare Hall.

May we each catch the contagious love and joy that Joan exuded throughout her life!

In thanksgiving for the gift of Joan’s life,



Sister Christa Franzer
For the General Council

SISTER JOAN (Margaret) LUERMAN

Born: August 18, 1935

Entrance into Religious Life: September 7, 1953

Entrance into Eternal Life: November 4, 2021

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. JOAN SERVED:

1955-1956	Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis IN	1976-1978	St. Christopher, Indianapolis, IN
1956-1958	St. Clement, St. Bernard OH	1978-1981	St. Mary of the Lake, New Buffalo MI
1958-1964	St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford OH	1981-2009	St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford IN
1964-1967	St. Mary of the Lake, New Buffalo MI	2009-2014	Motherhouse Ministry, Oldenburg IN
1967-1970	St. Catherine, St. Louis MO	2014-2021	St. Clare Hall, Oldenburg IN
1970-1976	St. Catherine, Westwood, Cincinnati OH		

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister’s online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister’s memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org