SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
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S. JANE MCCONNELL, OSF

May 23, 2022

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

"I thank God for each of you and all the ways you bring the healing touch of compassion and care to all."

While these were the words with which S. Jane McConnell began a "Spirituality in the Workplace" presentation, they could well be what she wishes to say to each of us at this time. Quotes from her prayer that followed give us a snapshot of her life:

> *"With these hands I touch the lives of many. I touch the sick, the wounded, the sad and sorrowful, the fearful and angry. With the gentleness of these hands, I communicate care. I reassure the anxious ones that I am near. I encourage the weak to take a first step. I protect the vulnerable from danger. I give courage. With these hands, I give myself in service to others. My spirit reaches out to another's spirit with a welcoming hand. My generosity of touch is given, and I feel richer for it. My strength stabilizes another in times of frailty and touching frailty replenishes my gratitude for my own strength. My hands are the vessels of my spirit as I help people in need—in need of kindness, of comfort and of respect. With these hands I offer healing."*

Jane McConnell was born to William and Jessie McConnell in Princeton, Indiana on April 3, 1947. Growing up in what Jane referred to as "a nice blend of an Irish/German family", and as the second child but only daughter, Jane wrote: "We grew to be a very closely bonded family, loving and caring for each other."

In her autobiography Jane continued, "The Franciscan Sisters who taught in St. Joseph School had a positive and important influence in my life and development. God used these relationships to make me aware that I was being called to the Franciscan way of life as well. It was their dedicated, joyful, unassuming, humble way of ministering and relating that attracted and influenced my life and journey into religious life as a Franciscan Sister.

My mother gave birth to me on the feast of Holy Thursday. As my life has unfolded, I have found that this feast with its significant moments of Jesus calling us all to 'Do as I have done…' in the washing of feet/servant leadership, sharing the bread and cup of our lives with each other on the journey, the call to be one with all of God's people, and the embracing of the cup of suffering as it has come into my own life…all of these I continue to ponder and reflect upon as central to my own life and ministry."

Indeed, Jane has fully lived this awareness throughout the 57 years of her religious life. Having earned a B.A. in Elementary Education from Marian College (now University) and a Master's degree in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University, she did post-graduate work in Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University, as well as in Theology/Scripture from Notre Dame through Purdue Extension.

Early years of teaching found Jane with first-graders at St. Anthony, Evansville and St. Wendel, Wadesville; with 7th and 8th grade students at St. Gabriel, Indianapolis; and with middle grades at Holy Family, Oldenburg. Broadening her ministry experience, Jane served as Director of Novices before moving into pastoral work at Holy Redeemer, Resurrection, and Nativity parishes in Evansville. In 1998 Jane moved on to St. Mary's Medical Center (now Ascension St. Vincent), first as chaplain and then as Director of Mission Integration since 2007. As Jane defined that role, "It is one of holding in focus our mission, the values of our organization, why we are here. We are a healing ministry, not just a business; the heart of our ministry is to serve the poor and vulnerable. Caring for the caregivers is a critical part of that mission." As evidence of her concern for the caregivers, a former chief of staff explained, "Sister Jane publishes on the hospital e-mail system a daily reflection under the title 'Spirituality in the Workplace'. This e-mail goes out to well over 3000 employees each morning including weekends. They are concise in their message—a message directed toward health care workers."

In her pondering the Holy Thursday message, Jane spoke of "embracing the cup of suffering". Writing in support of Jane's publishing some of her favorite reflections in the book *Daily We Seek You*, Bishop Gettelfinger noted: "Sister Jane has 'been there and done that'. She suffered intensely. She underwent painful rehabilitation after a most serious car accident. She is a walking miracle. Her reflections and prayers flow from the depths of her heart. She is a most compassionate woman of faith and a dedicated Sister of St. Francis of Oldenburg. She epitomizes the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. She cares for the suffering and disenfranchised."

In addition to her role at the hospital, S. Jane has led cancer and bereavement support groups and has made numerous presentations in the Evansville area—on topics including end of life issues, infant loss, and women's spirituality. She was chosen by WIKY radio station as one of the 50 Outstanding Women of the Tri-State.

In typical Franciscan fashion, the fun-loving Jane enjoyed time out in nature, as well as fostering relationships by sharing time with family and friends. She was an avid card-player. She embodied her deeply-held values of community and simple living.

In facing her latest health crisis, Jane told me that she had long ago learned to deal with what IS. Ten years ago she was quoted in a newspaper article, saying, "We all face unexpected things. Prayer has taught me to trust more that God is truly there. Even when I don't understand, I can trust." Living life to the full these last weeks, Jane thoroughly enjoyed her early morning walks through the hall, blessing each person she met; she savored her shower, her breakfast, and her quiet time for prayer. She led her own sacramental Anointing of the Sick, referring again to the message of Holy Thursday and ending by anointing each person present in gratitude for the gift each was for her.

We extend our sympathy, then, especially to Jane's 100-year-old father, for whom Jane was his "gem".

Our hearts go out to Jane's brothers Bill, Pat, Mike, and Joe and to their wives, to her nieces and nephews, to her classmates and special friends, and to all her colleagues at St. Vincent's. We give thanks for the caregivers who ministered to Jane over these weeks.

With the witness of Jane's life before us, may we "share the bread of our lives" and "embrace the cup of suffering" as it comes. May we learn "to trust, even when we don't understand". And may we "give ourselves in service to others", "bringing the healing touch of compassion and care to all".

In the joy of Resurrection,

Sister Christa Franzer
For the General Council

SISTER JANE McCONNELL, OSF – *formerly Sister Jesssica*

Birth: April 3, 1947
Entrance into Religious Life: September 8, 1965
Entrance into Eternal Life: May 23, 2022

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. JANE SERVED:

1968-1969	St. Anthony, Evansville IN	1984-1987	Director of Novices, Oldenburg IN
1969-1975	St. Wendell, Evansville IN	1987-1988	Holy Redeemer Parish, Evansville IN
1975-1976	St. Gabriel, Indianapolis IN	1988-1991	Resurrection Parish, Evansville IN
1976-1983	Holy Family, Oldenburg IN	1991-1999	Nativity Parish, Evansville IN
1983-1984	Student, St. Bonaventure NY	1999-2022	Ascension/St. Vincent Medical Center, Evansville IN *formerly St. Mary Medical Center*

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*