



Eulogy of Sister Jane (Janette) Haslwanter, BVM Caritas Studio, Oct. 16, 2020

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Jane Haslwanter.

Adeline Janette Haslwanter was born on Jan. 8, 1933, the third child of John and Stephanie (Lingg) Haslwanter of Chicago. She was their youngest child following sisters Marie and Janette. Adeline's parents immigrated to the United States from Austria at the age of 18. They met and married in Chicago and soon added daughters Marie and Janette. Tragically, Janette died in an accident as a toddler. Adeline's father worked as a gardener while her mother managed the home, took meals to sick neighbors, and attended daily Mass. The Haslwanter family life focused on Church, especially the Sacraments, which greatly influenced Adeline's work later in life.

After completing her elementary education at St. Benedict, her parish school, Adeline attended The Immaculata High School where she "met, admired, and fell in love with the BVMs." She wrote, "[They] were excellent teachers, but I saw the human side of them. They were kind, thoughtful, and caring. They treated each of us as special persons . . . [They] taught us to think for ourselves . . . We learned so much more than [what] was found in a textbook." In particular, she fondly remembers Sister Eileen Curran, who she called "an inspiration."

Adeline knew she wanted to be a BVM in freshman year and planned to enter after graduation. However, due to a lack of parental support, she delayed her call to religious life and found employment as an office worker for an adding machine company. One year later, on Sept. 8, 1951, she entered the BVM congregation. On March 19, 1952, she received the name Janette upon her reception. She professed her first vows on March 19, 1954, and lived 69 years as a BVM.

Jane was missioned at St. Callistus and St. Ferdinand in Chicago; St. Athanasius in Jesup, Iowa; Holy Name in Wilmot, Wis.; St. Patrick and St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa; and St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "Each mission I lived in helped to shape and mold me. Each situation was so different," she commented.

During her five years at St. Anthony, she frequently worked with student teachers from Clarke University, an experience she called enriching. She taught primary grades and took great joy in preparing her students for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation. She frequently taught religious education to children who attended public school as well. It's not surprising that Jane chose to pursue a master's degree in religious studies with the desire to train other religious education teachers.

After completing her master's degree, Jane joined the religious studies department at Mundelein College, where she taught undergraduate courses. She wrote, "Carol Frances Jegen has influenced my life more than any other living person today . . . It was through her vision as an educator that religious education became central in the development of Mundelein College. Carol established the Mundelein Center for Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Chicago. MCRE was unique. No other Catholic college or university offered such a service." Jane was the director of the Center for seven years.

In 1984, Jane transitioned into parish ministry. It was the perfect means to combine her love of children, her desire to be part of a parish, and her need to pass on the Catholic faith. She served as the Director of Religious Education at four parishes in Illinois—St. Marcelline in Schaumburg, St. Mary in Mokena, St. Michael in Orland

Park, and St. Walter in Roselle. "I [had] missed working with families in preparing their children for the Sacraments," she shared. "These [were] such special times, teachable moments. One of my greatest joys was to see the joyful expression on the face of the child who has just met Jesus." She was greatly loved by the people of these parishes. A farewell message from St. Marcelline Parish reads: "Sister Jane has served so faithfully and generously . . . We will miss her. [She] has made so many friendships in our midst. Her friendly smile and special care for the little children were her trademarks. Even in initiating the Rainbows program for children who experienced separation or divorce in their homes, she showed that unique compassion that we valued so highly." Jane also worked briefly as the assistant administrator of Lake View Living Center, a facility for developmentally challenged adults in Schaumburg.

Jane valued her Austrian heritage. She appreciated the arts, especially music, and considered herself an opera buff. She also enjoyed reading, going to movies, and watching the winter Olympic Games, particularly figure skating. Jane had an eye for beauty and loved lots of color. She was an accomplished cook and baker and, being born and raised on the north side of Chicago, a lifelong, diehard Cubs fan. Jane was a kind person and a hugger by nature. She had an affection for animals, dogs in particular, and even befriended the Irish Setter at the Guttenberg Care Center.

One of Jane's greatest joys was celebrating her Golden Jubilee. She was radiant during a beautiful Eucharistic celebration and reception at St. Walter Church in Roselle, Ill. A trip to Europe to visit Portugal, Spain, and France, including both Fatima and Lourdes, topped off her jubilee celebration.

In the reflection "To Believe in God," the author writes, "To believe in Jesus is to celebrate life. Not a piece of life, but all of it—the good, the bad, the happy, the sad. Because Jesus the Christ, through his death and resurrection, gave it all, we live when we receive, love and use it all." There were many joys in Jane's life—educating student teachers, preparing children to receive the sacraments, and jubilees. There were also many challenges—loss, illness, pain, and loneliness. She lived it all and upon reflection, wrote, "Life was not always pleasant or easy, but the grace of God helped me through the hard times . . . While my world turned upside down and inside out, I [felt] God's presence with me at all times."

During a conversation with a friend the week before she died, Jane shared that she was at peace. While earthly peace may be fleeting, Jane now knows the joy of eternal peace in the presence of her loving God.