

We of Nojoshing

Nojoshing – Indian word for the area where our pioneer members settled in 1849; it means "piece of land stretching into the water." The name was changed later to St. Francis, Wisconsin.



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SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Elizabeth Anne Herrmann April 6, 1928 – August 30, 2022

Sister Beth Anne was born to William and Loretta Herrmann on April 6, 1928, in Ozone Park, N.Y. She was the third of six children (three boys and three girls). Nine days after her birth, she was baptized at St. Mary Gate of Heaven Church and given the name Elizabeth Anne.

Beth Anne attended the parish grade school and loved being a student from day one of first grade. As an eighth grader, her high score in the diocesan placement test earned her admission to Bishop McDonnell High School for girls. It was there that Beth Anne got involved in dramatics. She loved it so much that, at one point, she was in a play at the high school, at her local parish, as well as the neighboring parish, all at the same time. Somehow, she was able to remember what lines went with what play.

After high school, Beth Anne wondered what she should do. Her parents would not let her pursue an acting career. Her brother, Joe, was a seminarian and during the summers he worked at Friendship House in Harlem, N.Y., providing food and clothing to those who were poor. It was from Joe that she learned about prejudice. In her heart, she knew she wanted to do her part in eliminating prejudice in society. Little did she know then, that her many years of teaching would include African American elementary and high school students in Catholic schools in Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Many of her classmates entered religious life after high school. One thing was clear to Beth Anne! She didn't want to be a nun. However, in reading the *Sacred Heart Messenger*, she came upon an ad that said, "Are there any souls courageous enough to come to the beautiful southland of our country to work among God's neglected ones, the Negroes?" This was for her.

She responded to the ad, and a few days later she received a booklet and an application in the mail. Thinking it was a job application, she filled it out and sent it back. Shortly after, she received a letter of acceptance and a list of the clothing, books, and medical records she would need to bring with her. She thought they really must need the help badly since they were hiring her without having an interview. Later, though, she admitted that God tricked her in getting her to the convent where God desired her to be.

On September 8, 1946, the whole family drove her to Maryland, where she entered the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore (who in 2001 merged with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in Saint Francis, Wis.). A younger sister, Sister Mary Louise, who was also inspired by their brother, entered the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore in 1951.

Upon her entrance into the novitiate on April 7, 1947, Beth Anne received the name Sister Mary Peter. Two years later, on April 19, she made first profession of vows and began her teaching ministry. Of all the grades she taught, second grade was her love. She loved the students' enthusiasm for learning and enjoyed preparing them for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion.

It was during her final years of teaching that she became acquainted with the New York Archdiocesan Mission Team and they invited her to join them. This was the perfect ministry for her to use her drama skills. As part of the parish mission retreats, Sister Beth Anne transformed herself into a clown named Morning Glory. Along with other clown team members, she brought the Gospel stories alive for the children in the various parishes they visited. Through the use of puppets, they would show how a follower of Jesus is to love others. In the evenings, the Mission Team gave reflections to the adults on God's love and one's response to this love. Opportunities to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick were provided. These gatherings always involved music and song and Sister Beth Anne shared her talents by playing the string bass and singing her favorite song, *The Woman at the Well*. For 14 years, she traveled with the Mission Team bringing Gospel joy to the parishes they visited.

At age 74, Sister Beth Anne responded to an invitation by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. They were inviting retired Sisters to join them in Tulsa, Okla., to work in pastoral care at St. John the Evangelist Medical Center. In no time at all, she was on her way to Tulsa. Having no formal training in pastoral care, she was mentored by the other chaplains at the hospital. She prayed with the patients with words and song. And, of course, her signature song, *The Woman at the Well*, was often sung. Sister Beth Anne's joyful presence brought much comfort to all those she visited and with whom she worked. What was to be a six-month ministry lasted 11 years.

In 2013, Sister Beth Anne moved back to Clare Court Convent in Baltimore and in 2019, she, and several other Sisters living in Clare Court Convent, moved to St. Francis Convent in Saint Francis, Wis. Her retirement was filled with a variety of volunteer ministries.

Celebrating 75 years as a Franciscan Sister in 2021 was a highlight for Sister Beth Anne. She reflected: "Ever since God 'tricked' me into the convent in 1946, it's been a great ride! As soon as I was released from one assignment, another automatically opened up, many of which I had no experience. It was as if they were thrown into my lap by God, but every one of them was memorable because God's help was there to see me through (as He said 75 years ago, "You have not chosen me, I have chosen you"). No argument in that!"

After suffering a series of strokes on August 21, Sister Beth Anne received care and comfort in hospice at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wis. Sisters began sitting with her on August 25 when she began hospice. Sister Rose Sevenich and Ashley, a nurse, had finished praying the Hail Mary when Sister Beth Anne died peacefully on August 30, 2022.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

~ Sister Mary Kemen, OSF, and Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF