



Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi

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Since 1849

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Dear Friend,

Do you know someone who exudes joy? When I met Sister Beth Anne Herrmann, her joyful spirit filled the room. Maya Angelou once said that “A joyful spirit is evidence of a grateful heart.” This statement definitely describes Sister Beth Anne.

Sister Beth Anne was born to William and Loretta Herrmann on April 6, 1928 in Ozone Park, New York. 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.

As a young child, she loved following her older brother, Joe and her older sister, Helen. She shared how Joe and Helen would think of mischievous things for the three of them to do. Somehow, Beth Anne always got the blame for it.

They loved going to the movies together. In one of the movies, a man walked past a display of apples at the market. He reached over and pulled out an apple from the bottom. The whole pile of apples ended up on the floor. On the way out of the theater, Beth Anne wondered if that would happen in real life.

It just so happened that they passed a fruit stand on their way home. Curiosity got the best of her! She stopped and pulled out an apple from the bottom of the pile as her brother and sister ran ahead of her. Sure enough! All of apples fell to the ground. The funny thing was that the police ran after Joe and Helen, and Beth Anne was left holding the apple.



Sister Mary Peter
(Beth Anne) at
St. Joseph School in
Richmond, Virginia
and Beth Anne
on her First
Communion Day.





Back row: Helen, Mom,
Dad, Joe.
Front row: Beth Anne,
Mary Louise,
Johnny, Leo.

Another time an advertisement for coal came in the mail. Beth Anne decided to fill out the request for coal using the neighbor's name and address. She ordered two tons of coal. A couple of days later, a coal truck pulled up at the neighbor's house. It didn't take long for everyone to figure out what happened.

Not long after this incident, the Herrmann family celebrated Christmas. On Christmas morning the children couldn't wait to see what they received in their stock-

ing. All of her siblings received fruit, candy, and nuts. I bet you can guess what Beth Anne found in her stocking...coal!

Not only did her older siblings teach her to be mischievous, they also taught her how to read. She loved sitting with them as they did their homework. She couldn't wait to start school with them. Finally, the day she was waiting for came. She was so happy as she entered her first-grade classroom at St. Mary Gate of Heaven School. Much to her surprise, many of her classmates were crying. She was puzzled by this. Going to school was exciting, not something to be crying about.

In the play, *Second Hand Rose*,
Beth Anne had the
lead role.

One day the Mother Superior of the Daughters of Wisdom came to visit their first-grade classroom. Her teacher asked Beth Anne to come to the front of the room to read for their visitor. Beth Anne's eloquent reading impressed the Mother Superior. She praised the teacher for her excellent skills in teaching reading. Little did Mother Superior know that Beth Anne came to school already being able to read.



When she was in eighth grade, it was the custom for the students to take a diocesan placement test. Those who had the three highest scores were able to go to Bishop McDonnell High School for girls. It was there that Beth Anne got involved in dramatics. She loved it so much that she was in a play at the high school, at her local parish, as well as the neighboring parish, at the same time. Somehow, she was able to remember what lines went with what play.

When asked what she would like to do after high school, Beth Anne told the school counselor she wanted to be an actress. She was given information of a drama school in New York City. With excitement she ran home to tell her parents. Upon

hearing the news, her mother emphatically said, “Absolutely not! There will be no actress in our family.”

Knowing her dreams of being an actress were not meant to be, she wondered what she should do. Her brother Joe had entered the Josephite seminary in Newburgh, N.Y. During the summer 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 our society. Little did she know then, that she would spend 30 years of her life teaching African American elementary and high school students in Catholic schools in Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Sixty of her classmates entered religious congregations after high school. One thing was clear to her! She didn’t want to be a nun. Upon 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. With a chuckle, she now admits 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 St. Francis, Wis.). Five years later, the family made the trip again when her younger sister, Mary Louise, entered the convent.

Upon her entrance into the novitiate on April 7, 1947, she was given the name Sister Mary Peter. Two years later on April 19, she was professed and began her teaching ministry. Of all the grades she taught, second grade was her love. She loved their 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 was invited to join them. It was here that she was able to use her drama skills. In giving the parish mission retreats, Sister Beth Anne transformed herself into a clown



Sister Beth Anne (L) on her Final Profession day with her sister, Sister Mary Louise.



Morning Glory, alias Sister Beth Anne, all ready to share a Gospel story.

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 evening the Mission Team would give 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. 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 bringing Gospel joy to the parishes they visited.

At age 74, Sister Beth Anne responded to an invitation from 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 and sang songs with them. And of course, her signature song, *The Woman at the Well*, was one of them. Her joyful presence brought much comfort to all those she visited. What was to be a six-month ministry turned out to be 11 years.



Sister Beth Anne brings the Eucharist to a patient at St. John the Evangelist Medical Center.

As Sister Beth Anne reflects back on her life, she is amazed at all the opportunities she has had and all the people who have been a part of her life. She feels so blessed!



Sisters Timothy, Christopher, Rosalia, Marianne, Margaret Ann and Beth Anne having fun at a congregational meeting.

Sister Beth Anne, along with other Sisters help me in tearing off the prayer requests from the returned donor slips. Often, the Sisters mention how fortunate we are to have such wonderful donors. It is through the generosity of our donors that we are able to provide for the retirement needs of our Sisters. Whatever gift you can give is welcomed and appreciated. In the name of all of our retired Sisters, I wish to express our gratitude in advance and assure you of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Kemen, OSF

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