

Sister Jean Anne Zappa, 50 years

BY KATHY WILLIAMS

Much like a team that has just won the Super Bowl, when asked what she wants to do if she ever retires, Sister Jean Anne Zappa answers, “Go to Disney World!” In fact, when she turned 65 in 2015, she participated in the Disney Princess 10k at the Magic Kingdom. “Some folks get depressed about age; I want to celebrate it,” says Sister Jean Anne. She appreciates the Disney mindset. “I went there for a leadership workshop about six years ago,” she recalled. “Their mission is simple—keep people happy and safe.”

year. She is a self-described “Italian extrovert” who freely gives hugs and has a warm smile for everyone she meets, bestowing on each person the gift of feeling loved and appreciated.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Sister Jean Anne grew up in a large Catholic Italian family with five children. She lived only eight blocks from Ursuline Academy, from which she graduated in 1967. She credits the Ursuline Sisters there with her decision to join the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. She said they inspired her not so much by what

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When you spend a little time with Sister Jean Anne, you begin to understand why this makes perfect sense for this Ursuline Sister who is celebrating her 50th Jubilee this

they did, but how they did it. She also gives a lot of credit to her family who nurtured her call to religious life. She says her family lived hospitality, generosity and service through their actions. Her first call came from God, through them, from their example of love.

When asked what she is passionate about, Sister Jean Anne answers, “Life! Relationships and people.” Her ministry through the years has been evidence of this, as well as her enthusiasm, joy and energy. She entered the Ursuline community in 1967, during a period of great change in the Catholic Church and in the Ursuline community as a result of Vatican II. Religious communities were told to renew themselves, to go deep into their charism.

Sr. Jean Anne reflects:

Her understanding of religious life:

“Before Vatican II, we emphasized hierarchy more: first priests, then Sisters and lay people. I believe in a circle. We are all in this together. We are all called by our baptism to serve and to see how we can best use our gifts to build up the Kingdom of God.”



On vocation and ministry:

“This life is special, but so is married life. To see parents raising children, if that’s not special, then I don’t know what is! Lay ministry is a special call as well. It’s what we bring to our call, and how we live it out in relationship with Christ and others.”

On Saint Angela and sisterhood:

“Saint Angela said ministry ought not to be a burden, so it is not about what we do, it is about enthusiasm for life and relationships. One of the gifts of religious life is community. It’s a sisterhood, that deep abiding love for each other and support for one another. And we may disagree, but we do come together. We may have different Christologies, we may not all see God the same way, but there is a bond there that is unbreakable, and is hard to describe. This bond is very deep. Even when things get tense, we still are committed to each other.”

One of Sister Jean Anne’s favorite quotes of Saint Angela is: “Be united in one heart and one will.” Saint Angela didn’t say, “Be of one mind,” because as Sister Jean Anne says, “We are all different, she meant be of one heart.”

Sr. Jean Anne Q&A



If you did not become a Sister, what would you have become?
A politician

U of L or U of K?
Steelers!

Hobbies:

Watching football and political shows, walking, outdoor work, woodworking

Favorite Movie:

Les Misérables-because it’s a movie about conversion and reconciliation

OUR JUBILARIANS



Sister Jean Anne after finishing the Disney Princess 10k in 2015.

Sister Jean Anne recalls, “It was an exciting time—there was a buzz around the community.” As a novice, she was asked to step in to be the chair of the vow committee when the chairperson got sick, and that was so exciting to her. Sister said that is a perfect example of how her ministry changed over the years; always by invitation from others. The Ursuline Sisters did this by drawing out her gifts, and she states that, “I have been blessed and have received many graces as an Ursuline Sister. I have experienced God’s fidelity, wonderful relationships, and have had spiritual opportunities that have touched and shaped my life tremendously.”

With a bachelor’s from Bellarmine and a master’s from St. Meinrad School of Theology, Sister Jean Anne taught for twenty years, starting at Angela Merici High School in 1972 and then Sacred Heart Academy in 1978, both in Louisville, and she was also religion department chair at SHA. In 1990, Sister was asked to be the first Director of Mission Effectiveness of the newly incorporated Ursuline Campus Schools. In 1996, she served as a Pastoral Associate at St. Athanasius Parish in Louisville

and at the same time was elected to the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville Leadership Team as a Councilor, and then in 2002 was elected President. After her leadership term ended, her interest in politics became a reality when she interned at Network in Washington, DC and worked on domestic policy.

Sister Jean Anne has been with Shively Area Ministries (SAM) as Mission Advancement Coordinator since 2009. SAM responds to persons in poverty and crisis in the 40216 zip code in Louisville. It provides food, financial assistance, education and counseling to over 20,000 persons each year. In fact, it is the second largest food pantry in Kentucky.

During her tenure, Sister Jean Anne has played a key role in the success of SAM. She proposed, oversaw and completed a successful three-year capital campaign for SAM, exceeding the \$600,000 goal, as well as raising an additional \$23,000 to build a Habitat for Humanity house.

She also started a Partner in Ministry program, which began with 40 donors who contribute monthly, but is now up to 200 donors. Sister Jean Anne says, “I love the people we work with, and I love working with the donors, staff and volunteers.”

Gary Copeland, the Executive Director of Shively Area Ministries, says, “Sister Jean Anne is well known to be an effective fundraiser because it comes from the heart. She has a passion and a commitment to our clients—what it takes to serve is what she does.”

Sister Jean Anne has also been a successful fundraiser for her own community, having most recently served as Chapel Preservation

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— Gary Copeland,
Executive Director of
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Coordinator for a 3.5 million dollar capital campaign that ensures the the 100 year-old Motherhouse Chapel will be preserved into perpetuity.

Sister Jean Anne believes that Angela’s charism is a very strong



Father Fintin, Angela Lincoln, Sr. Jean Anne and Father Simeon: St. Meinrad’s UnStable Pub employees, summer of 1984

charism— to have survived since 1535. She sees the future of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville as evolving into something closer to the way Saint Angela and her original companions lived: freely among the people they serve, to be leaven to all.

Sister believes that the point of religious life is to share the charism with others, spread the gospel and serve the marginalized. Through her many and varied ministries over the years, Sister Jean Anne has definitely done just that.