



Joanne Pantuso, S.D.S.

<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>March 10, 1950</i>
<i>Date of Commitment</i>	<i>May 6, 1973</i>
<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>May 22, 2002</i>

It is March 10, 2011 and this writing is long overdue. Today would have been the 61st birthday of one of the most loving and giving Lay Salvatorians. Joanne Pantuso was among the first Salvatorian Associates and lived her life with a Salvatorian spirit that was noticeable to all.

She was born Joanne Elizabeth America in Washington DC, the 3rd of 14 children of Minnie and Joe America. She grew up in Lanham Maryland and attended St Mary's Catholic Grammar School in Landover Hills where she met the SDS Sisters. She attended Goddard Jr High and graduated from Duval Senior High in 1968. She fell in love and married John Pantuso in December 1968. She was loving mother to Bob and Joe and grandmother to Emily. Her family was always her joy and she was anxiously awaiting the birth of her next 2 grandchildren in the spring of 2002.

One day Joanne remarked that she wanted to be a Salvatorian. Then Brother Ed Krause told her that she could become a Salvatorian sister. She said, "No," she didn't want to be a sister and besides they taught school and she didn't want to be a teacher. She went on to become a Salvatorian -- not a sister -- and, ironically, a kindergarten teacher.

Joanne made her commitment to the Salvatorians with her husband John on May 6, 1973 in Maryland. They moved to Milwaukee in June 1977, where they raised their sons and stayed very much involved in the day to day workings of the Salvatorians. Joanne did much to share the Salvatorian message. Her ministries were many but she was never one to take credit or honor... much of her work was empowering others to get involved.

In May, 1984 Joanne graduated cum laude with a BS degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. Her first full time teaching position was at St. Casimir School in Milwaukee. She then took the K5 teaching job at St. Sebastian School where she served until 1995. She loved the students and went to great efforts to set up her classroom to make them feel welcome and want to learn. Reading and books were another of her passions.

In October 1996, she and her husband moved to Tucson, Arizona. At St. Rita in the Desert parish she established a pre-school religious education program, Sunday morning childcare, an Outreach Ministry, a Sewing Club that made clothing for Casa Misericordia in Nogales, Sonora, and an annual "Undie Sunday" collection of new underwear and socks for poor children. She served on the Tucson Diocesan Peace and Justice Commission. She was a member of the ad hoc committee that developed the Jordan Ministry Team and it was Joanne who proposed naming it after Francis Jordan. She was editor of the Regional newsletter, The Coyote Call. Through her work on the Peace and Justice Commission, she became a supporter and promoter of the Tucson-based Borderlinks Ministry and took part in the initial meetings of the group that to this day maintains water stations in the desert for migrants. In her home in Tucson she had a stuffed bear collection which she often shared with her many nieces and nephews, and a Chesapeake Room, showing her love for Maryland and the place she was raised. Her small mice figurines decorated the selves. She was an excellent seamstress and often sewed on her grandmothers pedal sewing machine.

In May of 2002 Joanne died from a pulmonary embolism caused by a blood condition unknowingly inherited from her mother. Several of her brothers and sisters were subsequently found to have the same blood factor and are now on anti-clotting medication. Joanne always said there are no coincidences... things happen for a reason.

In her journal entry she speaks of a fondness for Francis Jordan and continues I have taken to wearing my medallion every day, just to have his image next to my heart and to remind myself that I am part of something very special that is so much larger than myself. She wore her Medal always ...up till her death. May her Salvatorian Charism and spirituality live on in those who were touched by her life.

Prepared with love by Mickey Drake, S.D.S. with help from John Pantuso, S.D.S.