

Student and Faculty Reflections- In remembrance of our dear friend and colleague Jan

“Jan's dedication to her students and to their integral formation as ministers was phenomenal. In her own life she modeled that integration in exemplary fashion, and she challenged, cajoled and inspired her colleagues and students to do the same. Her influence on all she touched is lasting, but we already miss her joyful presence, leadership and friendship.” -Timothy Matovina, faculty colleague

“I was so edified by Jan's continual good cheer, despite her long battle with suffering. She has given us an inspiring example of how to face our own death one day.” - Brad Malkovsky, faculty colleague

“Jan, I will always be grateful for our friendship, which began as soon as I arrived at Notre Dame. You and Mark were incredibly welcoming to me, and I always enjoyed our conversations together. I am especially grateful for the help you provided me when you were working in the Graduate School and I had just begun as MA Director, and then as MTS Director. Your help and advice during that time were invaluable, especially when it came to recruiting and funding underrepresented graduate students. You helped to make the MTS a wonderful entryway to the graduate study of theology for students who might otherwise not have had such an opportunity. I always admired your grace, humor, and wisdom, and want you to know how grateful I am for our friendship.” - Randall Zachman, faculty colleague

“Knowing Jan for my first two years in the MDIV was truly a gift from God. She was a model for me on how to suffer as Christ would and how to suffer for the glory of God. Going through health challenges of my own, Jan reminded me that these too can form and shape me. I'm been blessed to have her as a motivator to continue in my ministry work despite my own mental and physical crosses and to do so with dedication, vigor, and joy.” - Cassandra Brouillard, MDiv Student

“One of Jan's greatest strengths was helping her students to find rewarding ministry placements that would unlock our potential. She possessed a unique ability to envision who we could become years down the road. As a first year in the program, I was having trouble finding my ministry placement, and after exhausting my leads, I went back to Jan's office empty handed.

Knowing of my desire to work with the Hispanic community, she pointed me in the direction of Notre Dame's Campus Ministry. There I met Becky Ruvalcaba and had an extraordinary year of experiences accompanying Hispanic and Black students. Becky and I developed a friendship that has since led us to collaborate in faith formation at St. Adalbert Catholic Church in town and again on campus, this time in Interfaith Ministry. If it weren't for Jan, I never would have considered Campus Ministry—it wasn't even on my radar. This placement shaped my ministerial identity much more than I could have anticipated and in ways that are still bearing fruit.” – Colin Whitehead, MDiv Student

“I only had one course with Jan via zoom, but even from this limited time spent with her virtually I could tell that she was one of the kindest people I had ever known. She had a deep passion for serving others and it showed in her teaching. She spoke passionately about sharing the love of Christ with others and she made that love known to her students. I met with Jan to discuss a case study I was writing during my first semester and I was feeling very unsure of myself as a student. Jan went out of her way to affirm my people smarts and let me know that she was impressed with my

participation in class. I don't know if she knew it, but I clung to these words and they were part of my mantra whenever I felt discouraged. She was a wonderful educator, Christian, and human. I know she is home with God and I am grateful to have known her.”- Sophie McDevitt, MDiv Student

“I put Jan through the ringer as she advised me in my synthesis seminar project. “Mindfulness”! Oh, sister. I am grateful for her sticking with me through it. She was able to offer the final say on the matter because she was in charge of grading. I'll always remember Jan and her mom when I pray the Rosary, especially before Mass. This prayer will always be a little bit more enjoyable and efficacious because of them. The same with singing 'Ubi Caritas' and 'Veni Sancti Spiritus'.”-Alex Roth, MDiv Student

“Jan was one of the most formative professors and, indeed, ministers, I have known. My time in the Notre Dame Echo was fruitful yet, at times, overwhelmingly difficult for me. I felt isolated in an entirely new city and work in my service placement left me in a perpetual state of exhaustion. On top of all of this, my spiritual life was bereft of any real consolation and, in all honesty, any real belief. I spoke with Jan about these experiences during our Theological Reflection class and, later, within the context of spiritual direction. Jan listened patiently to my experiences, and, slowly, taught me how to pray and believe again. She helped me to internalize the truth that God is love, and that no matter my actions, emotions in prayer, or right or wrong belief, God's sole reaction to my existence is that of love. Many of my fellow Echo students had formative experiences like mine with Jan. She spent hours speaking with us about our ministerial experiences over lunch and offering us life-giving words that helped us to see and encounter God, even in the most difficult moments of our lives. She reminded us that even these particular moments are, too, a part of the way our whole lives yearn for God. We will remember this greatest of gifts Jan gave all of us: a revitalized vision of God's love.”
- Madeleine Post, Echo 15

“The line I most associate with Jan comes from a brilliantly memorable talk she gave at an Echo retreat: “I love you, ya dope.”

Those words God has surely spoken to me through Jan, and I will cherish them (and the woman who gave them) forever.”- Alex White, C.S.C, ECHO 13

“Jan was a wonderful mentor and professor, who embodied the traits of Mother Mary. Her compassion and nurturing helped me to get through a tough time my first year of Echo, when she called to check on me multiple times, listening intently when I expressed what I was going through. There was no sign of judgment or criticism in her voice; only love and her intention of truly wanting the best for me. It was Jan's guidance and support that led me on the path I felt was in my highest good. I am truly grateful for Jan's motherly presence in my life.

My heart goes out to her beautiful daughters, the rest of her family, and the Echo community.”

-Stacy Robinette, ECHO 2007

“As others before have shared countless stories, there is one story that I will never forget. During my second year in the Echo program, Jan taught our last class which was the culmination of all of our studies and our experiences in our placements through reflection and specific pastoral readings. One exercise we did as a class was to be paired off with each other, and one person would clench a fist, while the other person would have a few seconds to try their best in any way to unclench their partners fist. Because of the odd number for our class Jan was my partner, and I held my fist clenched,

thinking to myself that I was fairly confident that Jan did not have the strength to open my fist...once the timer began the students around me all tried with sheer force on their partners to open each others hands, and expecting the same thing I tightened mine even more. But Jan simply looked me in my eyes, and cupped both of her hands around my fist as gently as she could, and gave me a smile. As I looked down I no longer saw my clenched fist, but now we were holding each other's hands. She ended up being the only successful one in that activity. There were many lessons from that day about patience, about shifts in perspective, about a comforting heart rather than overpowering will... but all I can think of was how loving Jan was to everyone she encountered. I will always remember how she unclenched my fist, and in many ways my own heart, with just a gentle touch and the smile of Christ inside her.” -Matthew Crew, ECHO 2020

“What I loved most about working with Jan was that it felt like we were all working with someone who was part of an extended family. We were a team in the truest sense of the word. She was very collaborative and collegial. She will be missed by so many.” -Betsy Karnes, colleague

“Jan will always be alive in the hearts of many many students including mine. In the interactions I had with Jan she revealed the love of God to me. Her teachings and her wisdom is something I still ponder in my prayer life. Her willingness to receive and share God's love impacted me and tangibly showed me Christ's face. I am confident that her wisdom will continue to form me throughout my life and I am so grateful to have had met God's beloved daughter, Jan Poorman.” -Diana Salgado Huicochea, ECHO 2022

“Having been Jan's colleague for many years, I write with deep gratitude for her caring friendship and distinctive service regarding the Echo program.

As Echo came to be, I was fortunate to rely on Jan's wisdom and formative guidance as the program came into its own during its first few and succeeding years. Jan was a master at building and sustaining strong formative ministerial underpinnings for Echo. How wonderful it was to see Jan's faithful witness acknowledged so affirmatively and beautifully during Echo's 15th anniversary celebration a few years ago.

One cherished memory is that of Jan's vigorous enthusiasm for young adults, catechesis, and the needs of the church. Jan was a powerful witness to what it is to engage others through faith formed through foundations of love in Christ: aiding, guiding, serving, witnessing. I am deeply honored to have been a part of Jan's journey in faith, especially through her exemplary commitment to ministerial formation. Rest in peace, dear friend and colleague.”

-Jerry Baumbach, Professor Emeritus; Director Emeritus, Echo

“When I think of Jan, Dan Berrigan's words about Dorothy Day come to mind: "She lived as if the truth were true." What struck me most about studying with Jan was that she loved and was not intimidated by the Big-M Mystery. As she told us in class, Mystery isn't a puzzle to be solved but something we might always go deeper and deeper into. She made a powerful Christian witness and her memory is already a blessing.” -Mike Jordan Laskey, Echo 2010

“Jan was and is one of the embodiments of pastoral theology. As a member of the echo program, I was able to learn from Jan on several occasions. The talks she would give on our echo retreats were foundational for forming me as a theology teacher. The one that remains in my heart always and is the words she shared on our “wounded healer” retreat in 2014. She reminded us how Christ walks with us in our sufferings and we are called to walk with one another. She beautifully articulated what Jesus' empathy for us looked like and our call to walk with one another. As a teacher, I pray everyday to

have a similar patience and faith that Jan had. I am thankful to have met and learned from her.”
-Francesca Garcia Ybarra, Echo 2014

“I never had the pleasure of having Jan as a professor, but had the great privilege of hearing her speak on retreats through the Echo program. Jan was an incredible speaker with such captivating wisdom and insight. She possessed such grace and humility. Her talks helped to inspire a renewed hope in me during a challenging time in my life. The tenderness she extended to the suffering will always be remembered and her teaching has inspired me to better pastorally care for others.” -Angela De Ciantis, ECHO

“First and foremost, I could not begin to express the gift that Jan was to me and how immeasurably grateful I will forever be for her deep care, witness, and love. For her family and dearest friends, please know that you are deeply in my prayers and heart - I am so, so sorry for your loss.

I didn't have the chance to meet Dr. Poorman until I began my journey with the Echo program three years ago. During my first year, before I had her class, I heard nothing but love for her from the second year students. She was so dear to them - a mentor, a friend, a guide, a witness of life truly lived in Christ, and a beacon of God's love. During my second year, she was all of that and more to my classmates and I. In a period when I was struggling immensely with personal trials and depression, she accompanied me and was able to see in me what I hadn't been able to see in myself. Much of my capstone, reflection, and growth throughout the second year of Echo, and continuing on into my marriage and life after Echo with my husband and our daughter, was grounded in Christ's accompaniment I experienced through Jan's deep care, concern, and guidance.

I know I could not begin to fathom the immeasurable treasure Jan is to me and to countless people. I will be forever grateful to God for her life, witness, and love.” -Katie Ennis, ECHO 2020

“I will be forever grateful for Jan teaching me how to find God in my story. Whenever I think of theological reflection, I will remember Jan's joy and awe in finding God. After a tough year at my placement, Jan helped me to hold the tension of what I was feeling and what God was teaching me through my experiences. On the surface, she was walking me through a case study. In reality, she was the face of Christ meeting me and loving me right where I was at. Working as a Christ-centered marriage and family therapist I have embraced narrative therapy partly because of Jan's wisdom and guidance exploring my personal story. I hope to honor her throughout my career by helping my clients find God in their stories.” -Annie Harton, ECHO 2013

“There aren't enough words to express my gratitude and love for Jan. Her pastoral care and influence went beyond what was required to what was truly needed. At the heart of my experiences with her was always a feeling of safety and peace, knowing that anything I shared with her was being listened to. She had the utmost love and care for us, her students, and wanted only that we go out into the Church and the world authentically, with the same gusto and zeal that she brought to her formation of us. Although our last retreats and classes with her were over Zoom, the Spirit moved through her in inexplicable ways to pierce our hearts and convict us. I'll never forget my last Integrative Theology lecture over Zoom, just after she became sick again for the last time. We all sat on the Zoom call and cried as each student individually thanked her for how much she had done for us, sensing that she may not be present to see us graduate. Knowing Jan was truly a gift, and I'll always treasure her wisdom... She told us, "what if the darkness that surrounds us is actually the shade from the hand of God, which covers and consoles us?" And those prophetic words have carried me through these times in the pandemic. We love you, Jan, and we miss you.” -Laurie Medina, ECHO 2021

“I have such fond memories of Jan Poorman during Echo and even before. I remember my senior year at ND taking a theology and education course during which I decided to do Echo. Rebecca Carlson was in the class and she introduced us. Thus the beginning of a lifelong friendship! Thanks for the introduction Jan!

Then during Echo: The zeal with which she lead retreats and taught her class was efficacious. I still remember one class where we were assigned to do skits. One group came up with the idea of a "Janny Springer" talk show. Jan Poorman hopped right in and assumed character as the talk show host in true Jerry Springer fashion. The whole class was rolling with laughter. It is such a great memory and also shows how she fully devoted herself to her teaching and class. She wasn't afraid to let her hair down and act a little crazy for us. She truly loved us and it showed.

We love you Jan and are praying for you, your daughters, and whole family. You will be missed dearly here on earth.” - Erin Sheehy (Vranish), ECHO 2007

“Jan Poorman not only taught Pastoral Theology - but embodied it - for us in the Echo community and beyond. Her smile and joking nature created a space for community - and her comfortability even in the heart of God's silence and darkness offered a sense of rest. From other's stories and testimonies, it's not hard to see that Jan carried the same Light into her relationships with family, colleagues, students, and all around her. I hope to carry her lessons into my own interactions with patients, students, and any other.

May Jan experience the same loving embrace that she shared with us - now eternally with Christ.”

-Michael Mookie C. Manalili, ECHO 2017

“Jan's Theological Integration class played a crucial role in my formation and experience in the Echo Program. She modeled how to respond to the joys and challenges of ministry in a way that was thoughtful, gentle, and attentive to God at work and empowered us to do the same through our theological reflection in our case studies. I approach the joys and challenges of ministry in a new and more open way thanks to her mentorship, and I'm sure that the lessons my classmates and I learned in her class will continue to impact us many years from now.” -Mackenzie Kraker, ECHO 2021

“Jan Poorman was an incredible gift to the world and to my life. I want to take a moment to thank God for the incredible gift she was to me, and to all the Echo students. I remember working with her on my theological integration case study, and the tenderness with which she helped me process my case study was truly remarkable. She always talked about the importance of "no shame, no blame," in ministry, and she really embodied that as she helped me navigate a painful memory. Her witness helped me understand, in a concrete way, that there really is nothing too "messy" to bring before our Lord.” -Colleen Halpin, ECHO 2020

“It was a joy and honor to know and learn from Jan, from when she trained me for NDVision to when she taught me a directed readings course to all the times she helped me grow and learn in Echo. Her teaching about God was always full of hope and love, often using her own daughters as an example of what God's love looks like. She taught me so much about being a woman in ministry and prioritizing formation for myself and others, and I am forever grateful for the work she has done at Notre Dame to make a ministry career possible for me and for so many others.” -Beth Franzosa, ECHO 2005

“Dr. Jan Poorman was the epitome of a scholar and an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ, so it is no surprise that she was also a truly exceptional formator and mentor to those preparing for ministry in Christ's Church. One could not ask for a more generous, more welcoming, or more supportive person in your ministerial, professional, and personal life than Jan. She encouraged me to apply for the Echo program when I was a newly-minted campus minister at Notre Dame, and she reassured and frequently provided sage advice to me as I navigated the challenging balancing act between my full-time work and my academic commitments. In more recent times, Jan had taken on the role of a trusted colleague and friend whom I would more frequently see for check-in meetings with the current M.Div. students that I mentor. After each such encounter, we would always make just a bit of time to catch up on life, talk about how the girls were doing or the latest developments in Campus Ministry, enjoy a laugh about some memory from our Echo days, and reminisce about our roots in our common homeland of central Illinois. I always looked forward to those visits, and I will miss them dearly. If one's impact on this world can be measured by the legacy one leaves behind, then Jan's impact is vast and wide, being well represented by the hundreds of disciples that she has prepared for service in the Vineyard of the Lord. Having been sent forth by Jan, those disciples have gone out to places around the world to build up the Kingdom of God and to bring in a rich harvest, just as she formed us to do. I am blessed and honored to be a part of her legacy, and I will be forever indebted to Jan for her beautiful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May she rest in peace, and may her memory be eternal!”- Brett Perkins, '01, '11, MA THEO