

*Summer 2019: Tribute to Valparaiso University Law School (1879-2019)*

## Thanksgiving for the Student Spaces, Part II

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## THANKSGIVING FOR STUDENT SPACES, PART II

**Rev. Jane E. Kunzie-Brunner – VU Law School Class of 2020**

As we begin to thank God for the student spaces, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our fabulous custodial staff. Your diligence and hard work have made this building gleam and shine. Your dedication has made it possible to enjoy fellowship and hospitality in our beloved Wesemann Hall. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Please join me in thanking our custodial staff.

I have a confession. Not the kind that one makes in an interrogation room, but rather as in “the seal of the confessional.” As a parish pastor, I love worship. I love the hymns, vibrant singing and praise, learning the Scripture, communion, and, as Dean Probst says, “a good meaty sermon.” But, and here is the mea culpa, I can’t wait for worship to be over, so we can get to the good stuff on the other side of the sanctuary door. For me, the good stuff is the fellowship in the narthex or gathering place. Fellowship is as sacred as anything in worship. That is why I lose it when worship runs long. I want to get my coffee and get to my people. I could linger there forever. It is like a slice of heaven. My daughters, ten and sixteen, have a dance and a song if my time in sacred fellowship goes long. And again, I will confess, I am usually the last one in blessed conversation. They will discretely sing, “People stay, just a little bit longer. Please, please, stay. Say you will.” That is my clue that it is time to go.

The same thing holds true for my experience in law school. I love the classes, lectures, research, and time in the library, the whole experience. I have had a pretty good time, in each of these situations. Shoot, I have a pretty good time in all situations. But, I will further confess, that I start to lose it when class runs over because I want to get to the good stuff, just beyond the classroom door, in the student spaces. Sacred spaces such as the cafeteria, the circulation-desk lobby, and the Atrium. In these sacred spaces of good stuff, Zoe taught me how to turn on my computer. We celebrated my sixtieth birthday party. I have a very dignified picture of Dean Cleveland blowing bubbles to herald in my sixth decade. I have fabulous memories of Kelly Anthony and Hunter riding my daughters’ scooters as we were playing “Valparaiso 500” in the Atrium. I delight in the memory of slightly obsessed jigsaw puzzle players, fiendishly trying to find that missing piece. This is where my friend, Professor Mike Bushbaum, saved my backside by patiently teaching me to operate Word. A skill I should have had in hand before I came here. He took the time, to walk me through it, week after week. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I will always howl with laughter at the memory of our dear Dean Howard, identifying chocolates at the Bon-Bon Identification Bowl, by poking a

finger through the backside of the candy. You know you did! And Dean Probst valiantly, and somewhat defiantly, ringing in on the buzzer system, even when he knew he had no answer. Of course, Professor Denslaw outdid them all, with her expert knowledge of coconut cremes and caramels. As we thank God for these spaces, I invite you to pause a moment and add your own blessed memories to my own.

“People stay, just a little bit longer. Please, please, stay. Say you will. Say you will.” Of course, at the end of the song, everyone knows it is time to go, and the show must come to a close.

In my congregation, there are gobs of lawyers. They have been supportive and encouraging and a very present help in time of trouble. Over these three years, the comment that keeps coming from them is this, “Jane, you seem to be having a really good time in law school.” They are mystified when I tell them, “Yes. Not in the bars, or in study groups in student apartments, or deli’s, or burger joints, but here in these sacred student places, I am having the most wonderful time.” I really do not want it to end. The fellowship of the student spaces is the reason I stayed in law school.

“People stay, just a little bit longer. Come on and stay. Say you will. Say you will.”

Many of you are old enough to remember the goodbye scene in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Some of you will have to look it up. It is by far, the best goodbye scene in television history. The show is set in a television newsroom in Minneapolis. Without notice or forewarning, the entire crew is notified that the network is going a different direction, the show is being cancelled, and they are all losing their jobs. The fellowship is being broken up. The good stuff, on the other side of the camera, will be gone at the close of the newscast. The whole crew is stunned, desperately sad, yet blessedly thankful for the sacred time they have shared together. They end up in a massive group hug. When they need tissues, they shuffle, en masse, to the desk, take the tissues, and shuffle back to the place of the great hug, without ever losing the integrity of the group hug. Mr. Grant, the gruff, no-nonsense producer takes charge of the hug and boldly proclaims, “I cherish you people.” And the show comes to an end.

I cherish you people and the spaces where we gathered, and I encourage you to continue to thank God for the good stuff that happened here.