



FRANCISCAN Prints



Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception • *"A Caring, Praying Presence"* • West Peoria, Illinois

Immaculate Conception Convent: 309-674-6168 / Development Office: 309-674-2005

AUGUST 2024

Reflections By Sister Subha Clare Ramesh



Ah, summer! What a great time of the year. I enjoy waking up early with the sun and listening to the birds outside my window. Summer is a great time of the year. Students are out of school, families are planning vacations, and the pace of everyday life is a little more relaxed during the summer. It seems as if summer is a time

we all catch our breath and enjoy nature and each other with picnics, cookouts, and gatherings.

In the Church's liturgical calendar, the summer months are part of Ordinary Time (ordinary meaning "ordinal" or "counted" time). In fact, Ordinary Time accounts for about thirty-three weeks of the liturgical year. During the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we are focused on the incarnation and birth of our Savior, while during the seasons of Lent and Easter, we are focused on the trials and passion of Jesus. These four seasons are intense periods of prayer and meditation of the birth of Christ and the Paschal mystery. During the summer, we are given an

opportunity to focus and contemplate on the day-to-day life of Jesus. We can experience the awe of the many miracles of Jesus during Ordinary Time. We can meditate on the day-to-day interactions between Jesus and others. We can reflect on the lessons of Jesus, such as his teachings on the beatitudes. Ordinary Time allows us to examine and order our lives based on the way Jesus lived his daily life. During Ordinary Time, we are not feasting as we are in Christmas and Easter, or in penance as we are in Advent and Lent. Instead, it is during Ordinary Time that we can witness to how Jesus walked this earth – with compassion.

The word "compassion" comes from the Latin word "compassio" which means to suffer with. Compassion is defined as "the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering." Jesus' ministry that we are blessed to witness during Ordinary Time is a ministry of compassion. Jesus allowed himself to be aware of the suffering of others and sought to relieve that suffering. As Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception, we strive to be God's compassionate presence in our world. Summer is a wonderful time for us to live in greater awareness of our mission and to meditate on the life, ministry, and mission of Jesus.

Meditation

By Sister Irene Marie Fritch

As a former teacher, August has always prompted me to think that summer is over. Fall is approaching, and a new school year is soon to begin. Even though I haven't taught in many years, I still think I am beginning a new year!

This cycle of beginning again is a real blessing to me, both in my daily life and in my spiritual life. God gifts me with a new day each morning, and a new season four times a year. As my day and my year unfold, I can begin again, no matter how imperfectly I may have spent the prior day or months. With God's grace, I am empowered to reflect upon what I may have failed to do or not done well with the gifts and talents I have been given to develop and to share with others. I get a second chance to make known God's compassionate presence!

I recently heard a closing prayer at Mass that touched me so I asked the celebrant for the exact wording. I believe it expresses a healthy, spiritual view of time: "Lord, I commend the past to your mercy and the future to your providence. Help me to live in the present moment in the joy of your love."





Ministry Spotlight



Sister Barbara Ladd

As vowed members of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception, our sisters pledge to bring God’s compassionate presence to all we meet, with every aspect of our being. Sister Barbara Ladd, a member of our community for 51 years, is privileged to bring God’s compassionate presence to all with whom she works and serves through the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the greater Peoria and Bloomington areas.

In 2014, after serving in elementary schools in the diocese for about 37 years, she began her ministry with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, where she serves as Call Center Coordinator. In her role, she answers the St. Vincent de Paul Society Help Line and sends requests for assistance, primarily food and financial, to one of the eight parish conferences in the area. If someone calls outside the area, she tries to help them find other resources. While connecting “friends in need” (those who call the Help Line) is a major part of her ministry, she also serves as a listening ear to those who are in need. “It is difficult not to be able to help these friends

with their material needs. I offer to pray for them and with them, if they are willing. Much of the time, friends in need desire a listening ear and a compassionate heart, which I try to bring,” says Sister Barbara.

Sister Barbara partners with four volunteers to manage the Help Line calls. Because each call and each friend in need is unique, there is a feeling of “not quite knowing what to do” which leads to collaboration and partnering with others, including the parish conferences and other resources.

Sister Barbara loves her ministry with St. Vincent de Paul Society and finds it quite life-giving. “This is an awesome and rewarding ministry! I enjoy interacting with those who call for assistance. It is a positive experience even if the situation being shared is very difficult to hear. I am able to hold these friends in need in my heart and prayers. I am able to bring God’s compassionate presence to each friend in need by being gentle and patient while listening and responding to their request.”

West Peoria Fourth of July Parade



Sister Kathleen Ann offering prayer after West Peoria Parade.



Sister Anna Marie Flanigan braving the rain prior to the West Peoria 4th of July parade.

Thank you to all our friends and benefactors who supported our Annual Appeal in 2023. Thanks to your generosity and kindness, we were able to replace two vehicles and repair many of our existing vehicles.

THANK YOU!



Focus on the Sisters

There are many opportunities to bring God's compassionate presence to others. For four sisters, Sister Mary Dries, Sister Mary Patricia Masterson, Sister Mary Ann Mehuys, and Sisters Mary Anita Pauwels, their opportunity is to share God's love at Lutheran Hillside Village, where they each have resided for over a year.

These sisters bring God's compassionate presence by seeing each person they encounter, respecting each person, and offering a listening ear. Sister Mary Ann said, "I try to call each person by name. This lets them know I care. Several of the staff have said to me, "Oh, you know my name." I also ask staff members about their lives, their hopes and dreams, and just listen to them."

Sister Mary Anita said, "Because of my current physical condition and travel limitations, I am mainly able to fulfill my mission to bring God's compassionate presence here. With a count of over 300 residents, plus over 200 employees, and a number of visitors, I don't have to look further for places and ways to minister. I feel that I bring God's compassionate presence to those at Lutheran Hillside Village by being a welcoming presence, in particular, calling each Assisted Living resident by name; being an example of caring; being present to each one with my attention; being available when a need arises; and being informative of services, programs and activities being offered, especially to new residents."

For Sister Mary Patricia, "I live and bring God's compassionate presence to all the best I can. First of all, my friends and residents at Lutheran Hillside Village are an inspiration and example of God's compassionate presence to me. Additionally, the staff are so generous with their time, offering to help the residents with whatever requests we have. For me, I try to be pleasant, to speak with, to visit with, and to listen to all."

Sister Mary visits friends and sisters almost daily. Also, "now and then, we are offered opportunities to go to help prepare Christmas boxes which are distributed to poor children living in poverty throughout the world. When I am able, I assist with these boxes," said Sister Mary.

In addition to spreading God's love, these sisters also experience God's love at a greater level through increased prayer. As Sister Mary said, "The change that I've noticed in my prayer life since I've moved to Lutheran Hillside Village is that since I have more time to pray, I take more time to pray." Sister Mary Anita echoes this, "With more time to ponder, I have come to the knowledge that what I say in prayer is not nearly as important and stressful as it is that I pray from the heart." Sister Mary Ann notes that the amount of time and the quality of her time in prayer have both increased.



Sister Mary Anita Pauwels, Sister Mary Dries, Sister Mary Patricia Masterson (not pictured Sister Mary Ann Mehuys)

Other members of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception visit the four sisters almost daily. Sister Mary Ann said, "I appreciate Sister Kathleen Ann (President) and other sisters coming to visit me almost daily, and also bringing me the things I request, especially Holy Communion." For Sister Mary Anita, her community life is flourishing in many ways: communications (phone calls, and emails) and the physical presence of her sisters who visit several times a week and recite prayers together during the distribution of Communion. Additionally, other sisters provide assistance with transportation, especially for events at the Motherhouse.

Sister Mary Patricia said, "Contact with our sisters at the Motherhouse and elsewhere has been greater than I expected. Sisters visit almost every day, bringing Holy Communion followed by newsy and enjoyable conversation. Phone calls are also a welcome contact." For Sister Mary, "Since moving here, I feel joined to all of my sisters as I pray daily the scripture reading of the day's Mass and our daily community prayers. Many of the sisters at our Motherhouse take turns bringing Holy Communion to us. They usually stay to visit for a while and share news of life at the Motherhouse. Other sisters might just stop in to visit now and then. I greatly appreciate all that our sisters do for us, and I am always happy to see them."



*Sisters Celebrating Two of our Jubilarians:
Sister Mary Barbara Buckley (70 years) and Sister Mary Patricia Masterson (75 years)*



*Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens
70 years
(not pictured due to COVID)*



Sister Mary Barbara Buckley



Sister Mary Patricia Masterson