



# FRANCISCAN Prints



Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception • *“A Caring, Praying Presence”* • West Peoria, Illinois  
Immaculate Conception Convent: 309-674-6168

FALL 2024

## 2024 Rolan Johnson Christmas Ornament

“Glad Tidings of Great Joy and Peace” is the 30th Annual Limited Edition Christmas Ornament, inspired by Rolan Johnson’s 1962 address book cover.

The 2024 ornament is approximately 5.5” x 3”, two-sided, encased in a 24 kt. gold-plated brass frame which displays icons from the original artwork. It is gift-boxed with a numbered certificate of authenticity.

### Available at the following retailers:

Hometown Community Banks  
Immaculate Conception Convent – West Peoria  
Jones Bros. Jewelers – N. Grand Prairie Dr.  
Lagron-Miller Co. – Peoria

### 2024 Ornament Underwriters:

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**\$39**

Order form also on-line at  
[westpeoriasisters.org](http://westpeoriasisters.org)  
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*Sister Kathleen Ann*

## Reflections from the President

Our 2024 Rolan Johnson Christmas ornament was created in 1962 as an address book cover, with the title “Glad Tidings of Great Joy and Peace.” I so appreciate the variety of artistic styles and materials Rolan used over the years to express his Christmas themes. He allowed his God-given talent to try new forms and shapes and color values to create each unique and beautiful rendition of his chosen theme.

The theme of the shepherd watching over his sheep that Christmas Eve is a theme Rolan used several times over the years. This event is recorded in the Gospel of Luke 2:8–20. How significant it was that the first to know of the birth of the Messiah, our Savior, were not the educated or influential or wealthy or powerful, but the lowly shepherds out in the fields.

The work of shepherds kept them from attending Temple and synagogue. They were considered unclean, smelly outcasts. It was to these outcast shepherds that the angel appeared to announce the birth of the Savior. Rolan portrays the shepherd as a noble-looking young man looking up at the appearing host of angels as revealed in all of the glowing gold in the night sky. The shepherds chose faith over fear. They trusted God’s

messengers, the angels, to search out and find the Messiah praising and glorifying God. These shepherds were the first disciples and evangelizers telling others what they had experienced and seen. God delights in using the humble for His glory.

The Gospels give ample evidence of Jesus’ love and care of the lowly, the outcasts, and the marginalized of the world. His regard for the shepherds who witnessed his birth led him to use their example to describe himself as the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep even to the point of giving his life to save his sheep.

Our Shepherd Christmas ornament and its title, “Glad Tidings of Great Joy and Peace,” supply us with a wonderful source for reflection. Can we learn from the shepherds the value of being humble? Can we choose faith over fear? Do we trust that God will reveal to us a greater love for our Savior as we praise and glorify God in the ordinary events of our lives? Will we be the disciples and evangelizers who share the Good News of Jesus with others? Can we, like Jesus, be the compassionate ones who care for the lowly, the outcasts, and the marginalized of our day?

We are again grateful to Rolan for sharing his faith in this year’s ornament. We also continue to be grateful to Fred and Pam and their families who allow us to experience the “Glad Tidings of Great Joy and Peace” with the shepherd in our 2024 ornament.



## *Meditation*

By Sister Linda Burkitt



Sister Linda Burkitt

As we enter into a new season, autumn, I am drawn to listen and be more attentive to the gradual changes occurring in nature. Summer brought a vibrancy of growth in flowers and trees. The days were longer and the nights shorter. But, recently, as I look out my window, I notice a change in the vibrancy of the leaves on the tree near my room. It speaks to me of change peeking around the corner. Autumn is here!

This special tree has become a sacred space for me. When I awake each day, I look out my window and greet this tree to a new day. It has taught me through the seasons that waiting, letting go, accepting, and rejoicing are part of the seasons of life and of nature. The autumn season reminds me to look inward asking the questions, "What is it that I need to let go of in order to create room for something new? Will I approach this inner call with resistance or acceptance?"

The Prophet Isaiah in Chapter 43 verse 19 affirms me, "See I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" I am confident of God's loving presence in his care of nature and the inspiration he offers me in the seasons of life.

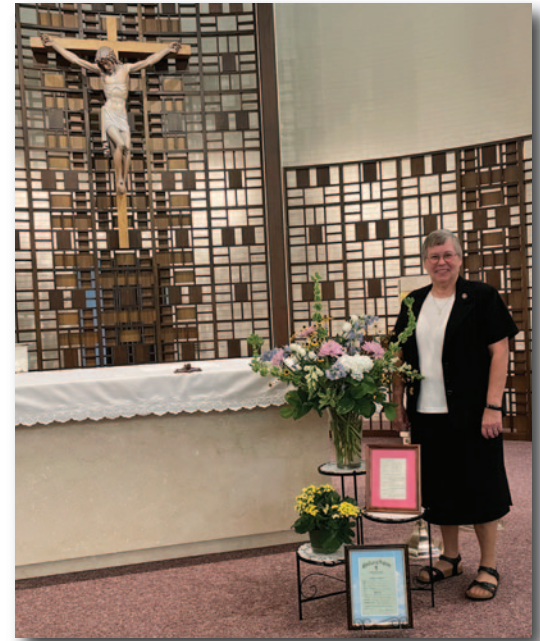
## *Sister Anna Marie Flanigan Celebrates 40th Jubilee*

In 1984, I professed first vows as a Sister of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception. Prior to entering religious life, I taught physical education, served as a coach in Girard, Illinois, and was involved with TEC/Koinonia retreat programs in Springfield, Illinois. Though satisfied with my life, something was missing, which led me to discern religious life.

I did not really know what I was looking for in a community. I thought I was simply looking for a small, Midwest congregation with education being one of their primary ministries. But as I visited different communities, I came to realize that God was leading me in my discernment by helping me to understand my feelings and values, such as family relationships and simplicity. These values led me to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception. The sisters knew each other's family members by name and relation and did not put on airs--what you saw was who they were. Since that accurately describes me, I felt at home and realized, "I could be a sister here!"

Since becoming a religious sister, I have been involved in a variety of ministries: teacher at Seton Catholic (Moline) and St. Philomena (Peoria); principal at St. Cabrini (Springfield) and St. Boniface (Edwardsville); campus minister at the University of Illinois (Champaign); and currently a tribunal judge in my fifth year of ministry with the Catholic Diocese of Peoria. All of my ministries have been my favorite because each of them was a gift at the time. I've always believed that God put me in a particular ministry at a particular time for a particular reason. Who am I to choose a favorite?

I've always tried to be authentic about my vocation. It is not mine; I am not doing it. God led me to a congregation that I knew nothing about and helped me to make it my home. Early in my religious life, I saw a poster that read, "God will never put you where His grace cannot keep you." That became my mantra and my reality because God has been faithful. My advice for those on their spiritual journey is to follow your heart. God's ways are not always logical. Find your quiet place to discover the way God speaks to you . . . and follow your heart."



Sister Anna Marie Flanigan



## Ministry Spotlight

Sister Janice Keenan and Sister Jacqueline Schroeder bring God's compassionate presence to others as retreat directors. Sister Janice serves at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort, Illinois, and Sister Jacqueline serves at the Terra Sancta Retreat Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, as well as travelling throughout the Diocese of Rapid City offering retreats in rural parishes. Both sisters have been in final vows for 55 years.

Sister Jacqueline describes her ministry as "meeting privately for individual spiritual direction with people from the Rapid City area and around the diocese, as well as providing retreats for parish groups and those coming to Terra Sancta." For Sister Janice, her ministry as retreat director "consists of planning, preparing, and facilitating days of reflection and weekend retreats for different groups, such as parish women's groups, religious sisters and their associates, and parish and school staff groups. After talking with representatives of the interested group, I then plan an outline, schedule, talks, reflective activities and materials, song prayer videos, Power Point presentations, handouts, questions for small and large group discussions, and the environmental setting depending on the needs of the group.

Both sisters expressed that the training for their ministry of retreat director is based on their 55 years of consecrated life. "I have the lived experience of consecrated life for many years as well as teaching and administrative experience," said Sister Janice. Both received training as a spiritual and retreat director at the Franciscan Training Program in Cincinnati, Ohio, and both have been involved in leadership roles with TEC, Cursillo, and other retreat programs in the Peoria diocese which gave them experiences to minister as retreat directors. Sister Jacqueline said, "Most of my training or education has been on-the-job training. I mostly learned by doing, making mistakes, and trying again."



*Sister Jacqueline Schroeder and Sister Janice Keenan*

As retreat directors, Sister Janice and Sister Jacqueline also offer spiritual direction. Sister Janice sees the role of a spiritual director as "a faith companion, allowing the Holy Spirit to provide insight and direction as the director listens intently to the directee providing prompting questions and comments to allow the person to speak freely, without judgment, helping to clarify feelings and to go deeper into what they think and feel as their relationship with God deepens. As a director, I might suggest reading or ways to pray that could be helpful to the directee, always leaving them free to consider these or not."

Sister Jacqueline views being a spiritual director as the primary focus of her ministry of retreat direction. "I accompany

people on their faith journey, listening deeply to their stories and encouraging them, as seems appropriate, to go deeper into their walk with God. Sometimes this involves suggesting a new approach to prayer, asking a helpful question now and then that might support a person in seeing themselves more clearly in their relationship to God and others. It is privileged and holy ground we share in the confidence of God's presence and unconditional love."

For both sisters, there is much joy in their ministry. "My greatest joy is witnessing God at work in an individual and experiencing their utter joy in the discovery of God's ever present and unconditional love for them in every circumstance," said Sister Jacqueline. Sister Janice responded similarly, "My greatest joy is when it is clear that God is at work in a person's life and prayer, and they experience God's presence, love, and power in ways unique to that person." Both expressed that anyone who wishes to deepen their relationship with the Divine, with God, as well as anyone who may be in transition or at a crossroads in their life - discerning a path forward, would benefit from a retreat and spiritual direction.

**Continued on page 4**



## *Ministry Spotlight (Continued)*

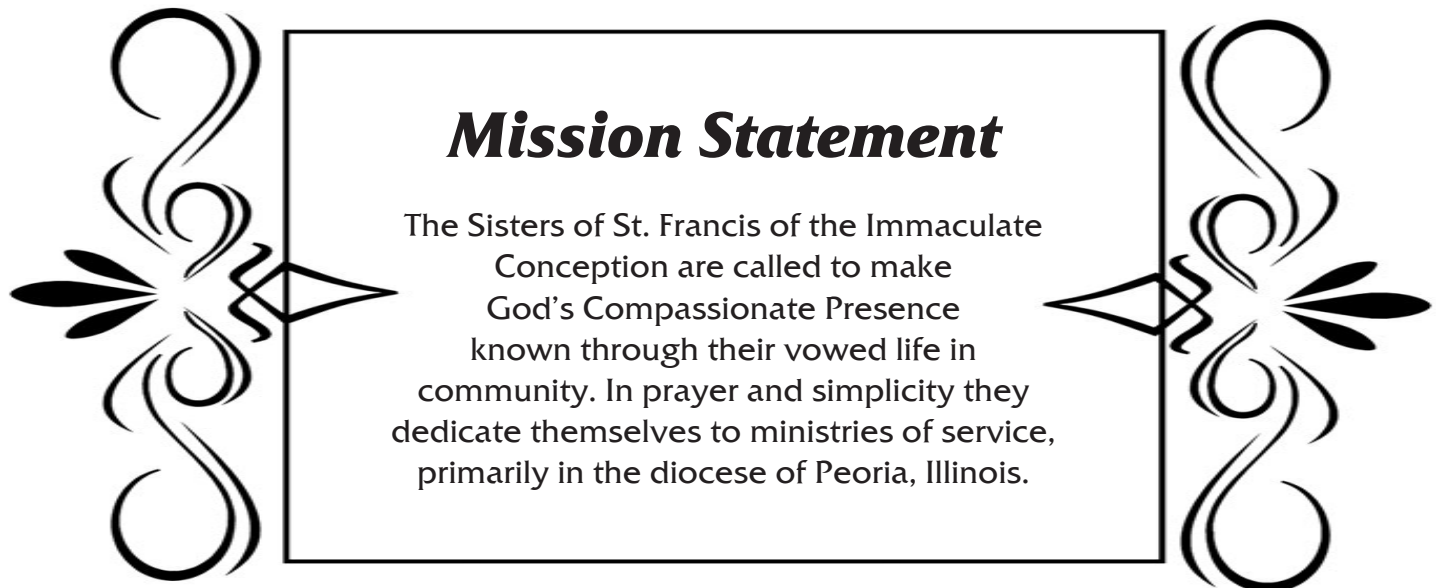
When asked if they had any apprehensions about being a retreat director, Sister Janice responded, “As a retreat and spiritual director, my role is to let the Spirit work and not be talking about my own story and experiences or trying to offer counseling advice. To that end, I am concerned that I might not always be open, attentive, and non-judgmental enough to really be focused and listen well. I try to always invite the Spirit of God to be with us and work through us both in a session.” For Sister Jacqueline, “As I am not the principal actor in the drama, and it’s not about me, and as my role is always to listen deeply to the Spirit of God at work, I find no need to be apprehensive. I only pray that I can listen gently, courageously, and well – and trust in God to keep me focused and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.”

Being a retreat and spiritual director has helped Sister Jacqueline and Sister Janice on their respective spiritual journeys. “Whenever I am called upon to direct a retreat, I feel that I am called to enter into a cave of darkness, that place of unknowing. There in the darkness I listen to the whispering of God in my heart. I also enter into a deeper study of whatever topic or theme I’m asked to present. This prayer and study – always in deep listening - has slowly been transforming me into the person God has created me to be – hopefully a person filled with humility and God’s joy-filled compassion,” said Sister Jacqueline.

For Sister Janice, “being a retreat director has made clear for me the need for prayer, spiritual reading, personal directed retreats, and opportunities to do faith sharing with others. I feel all of these have helped me to grow spiritually, especially in trust in God, belief in the Paschal Mystery, and the unconditional love of God for me and others. Preparing for talks and programs is a very reflective, prayerful experience where I know in very real ways that God is working in my life.”

Sister Jacqueline added “I am so grateful to our community for the opportunities I’ve been given throughout my 55 years of vowed life. So many of our sisters, knowingly or not, have been spiritual directors for me and have taught me through their witness, loving listening and encouragement, and gentle suggestions, how to become who I am to do what I do. As our Sister Mary Joseph used to say so often, “it takes a lot of slow to grow.” God is so patient and kind – I want to be like Him when I grow up.”

Sister Janice also greatly appreciates being a retreat director. “As a retreat and spiritual director, I am honored and privileged to be with so many different people and hear their very personal faith experiences and relationship with God. I have come to know that God is very REAL and can use me as an instrument. I know it to be true that God provides all the grace, insight, and love that each person needs, if not always quickly, always over a period of time.”



### ***Mission Statement***

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception are called to make God’s Compassionate Presence known through their vowed life in community. In prayer and simplicity they dedicate themselves to ministries of service, primarily in the diocese of Peoria, Illinois.



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GIVE  
thanks  
WITH A  
grateful  
HEART

*During this season of Thanksgiving,  
we thank God for you! We will especially  
remember you and your intentions in our  
Mass on Thanksgiving Day.*



*Sisters celebrating Sister Linda's and Sister Anna Marie's jubilees  
with friends and family*



**Advent Lessons and Carols**

The Sisters of St. Francis of the  
Immaculate Conception will host

**Advent Lessons and Carols  
Sunday, December 1, 2024  
4 pm**

**Immaculate Conception Convent  
2408 West Heading Avenue  
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Fall**

