



FRANCISCAN Prints



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

By Sister Mary Lenore Highland

The picture shown at right is called "Destiny." I first saw and purchased this picture when I worked at St. Joseph's Home in Springfield. It spoke to me of the gentleness and understanding of St. Joseph. I'm sure the dream telling him to take Mary into his home did not fill in all the gaps of how he would be the earthly father of God's Son. I can envision him allowing Jesus as a child to be with him in the carpenter's shop, teaching him the trade, and letting the child Jesus know of his loving care and concern for him. If you look closely at the picture you can see some things which spoke of the destiny of Jesus. Jesus is in the sunlight from the window. The shadow should have been of a little boy playing in the shop. Yet you notice that the shadow behind him is a cross, and the thing he is playing with is a nail. Just as the destiny of Jesus was something that St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother did not comprehend, neither do we know or understand our destiny. The question is not, "Where are we going?" The more important question is, "Who are we trusting on our journey?" Have we put our lives in the hands of Jesus and allowed him and the Father to guide our lives to the destiny that he wants for us? Can we have the trust and faith of St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother? Let us meditate on this as we celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph.



Sister Janice Keenan

Reflections

By Sister Janice Keenan

February 2, 2025, was the 134th birthday of our congregation. On this day in 1891, Mother Mary Pacifica Forrestal and three other women first professed vows as Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception. On birthday cards to family and others, I usually write

"Celebrate well the Gift of Life!" That exhortation seems very fitting when commemorating one hundred thirty-four years of consecrated women striving to live the mission of being a compassionate presence, a sign of the merciful love of a Good and Gracious God, to everyone they encounter each day. Our vocation is a living out of our baptismal calls, recognizing the gift of God's life within us as we strive to follow in the footprints of Jesus loving God and serving others.

We are called to be a sister to everyone in the family of God. As a sister to two brothers and six sisters in my family of origin, I know that this role entails accepting

each of them as unique individuals and loving them whole-heartedly even though we can differ in many ways. I remember my mom telling us when we were children (probably when we were fussing), "these are your brothers and sisters, and you need to get along." When I became a Franciscan Sister, it seemed appropriate to apply this to all my brothers and sisters in the family of God – a very tall order and a life-time work, only made possible by the grace of God, the gift of God's life within me.

St. Francis applied the concept of being a brother and sister to all God's creatures, composing the beautiful "Canticle of the Creatures" celebrating brother sun, sister moon and stars, and all of creation, even sister death. In a world that experiences such a wide variety of persons of different races, cultures, beliefs, family systems, values, educational backgrounds, political views, etc., I believe our Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Love wants for us - AND offers us each day - the grace to find ways to accept, care for, and show compassion to each member of this diverse Family and to celebrate the gift of life we all share.



In Memoriam

SISTER MARY DRIES

AUGUST 10, 1944 – NOVEMBER 26, 2024



Sister Mary Dries

Sister Mary Dries was the first born to Clement and Evelyn Dries of Peoria, Illinois, on August 10, 1944. She is survived by her two younger brothers, Clem and Ray, sister-in-law, Cathy, and many nieces and nephews and their families. Sister Mary professed first vows in 1965 and final vows in 1971. After profession, Sister Mary began teaching a third grade class at Sacred Heart School in Moline. After teaching for nine years, Sister Mary became a student at the University of Illinois and received a degree in Social Work which became a lifelong ministry for her. Her greatest passion and desire was always to assist the poor and those in need. Serving as co-administrator of St. Joseph’s Home in Peoria for 24 years and later as social worker at St. Joseph’s Home in Springfield for a combination of 42 years fulfilled Sister Mary’s desire to help others in need that she always carried in her heart. She celebrated her 50th jubilee in 2015.

As generous as she was giving love and care to all she served in her ministry, Sister Mary also loved the sisters in her community. She never knew a stranger and had many friends all over the country. Anytime you were with her in any place or even another state, Sister Mary would ask, “Do you mind if we stop for a few minutes to visit a relative or friend?”

Sister Mary was also the navigator and planner of many trips and mini-vacations of the sisters. She had a wonderful sense of direction and could find her way to most places the sisters wanted to go. Every trip was memorable not only for all of the sisters but especially for Sister Mary because every museum or any other place they happened to go, she was always there reading every explanation and all the literature that went with every display. Sister Mary became a resident at Lutheran Hillside Village in 2022 and joined in many activities there including bingo, games, and visiting with the many friends she made while living there. She joined in the fun and companionship of the sisters which Sister Mary, to her last day, always wanted in order to be present and to participate in giving to the community. Sister Mary embraced life and lived each day to its fullest. She had a spirit of joy, compassion, and love which is greatly missed.

Focus: Sister Kathleen Ann Mourisse, President

Sister Kathleen Ann Mourisse began discerning religious life at age 13 when she entered the Aspirant School with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception. She entered as a postulant in 1968, and professed final vows in 1975. In 2021, she celebrated 50 years as a religious sister. Sister Kathleen Ann is from East Moline, where she lived with her family on a small farm. Her childhood was spent riding horses with her sister.



Sister Kathleen Ann

and experiencing the elect and candidates complete their Sacraments of Initiation,” said Sister Kathleen Ann.

When asked what has sustained her in religious life, she commented, “Certainly my relationship with God in all three persons of the Trinity has sustained my religious life. But just as the great commandment requires love of God it also requires love of neighbor. It has been my prayer life, my relationship with God that has sustained me. But the second part of that commandment has been equally important, the relationships

in my life; first with family, and then later with my family of community member, which has also sustained me.”

As president of the community, she is responsible for the care of members, the mission, and the resources. “I am fortunate to have the assistance of my leadership team as

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Ministry Spotlight: Diaconate



Sister Diane Marie
Vandevoorde

Sister Diane Marie Vandevoorde serves in ministry with the Diaconate, especially in formation of new deacons. When she was invited to become assistant to the Episcopal Vicar of the Diaconate, her first duty was to set up an office in the Campbell Building (which was demolished when the Pastoral Center was built) and to minister as assistant to the Vicar. Sister Diane became enrolled in a spiritual direction program and worked with the director of the program in training others.

In the beginning, her role in the diaconate program was to maintain the office and to teach the spiritual/human dimension of the educational program which she continues teaching.

"I have ministered in the diaconate program for the last twenty-five years. My time with the men and women in the program has been a joy and an enriching experience. I find them to be sincere, eager to learn, willing to change, and dedicated to becoming willing and loving servants.

The path of the deacon and the deacon's wife includes intense year-long discernment and a five-year formation program. The program includes psychological testing, academic work in Theology, Church History, Canon Law, Spirituality, Pastoral Ministry, Liturgical Ministry, ongoing service ministry to people in need, and carrying the Gospel into the Marketplace."

"I find that in all the opportunities I have been given to teach and to serve with others in ministry that the Holy Spirit is present and at work in me and in all of us. I can see the goodness our God has placed in the people with whom I minister and serve and all of his people, and I see how we are changed and shaped in our relationship with one another. I thank God for the vocation given to me to live with my religious community and to teach, to serve, and to be as much as I can be a 'compassionate presence' as directed by our community mission statement."

In addition to her ministry with the diaconate, Sister Diane is also a spiritual director and serves as liturgist and organist, and kitchen coordinator at the Motherhouse. "My culinary, cooking, etc., skills are at the level of "Trust in the Lord," she says humbly. Those who live at the Motherhouse are grateful for her ministry to her sisters.

Focus

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well as the sisters and our lay employees and advisors. This is not a ministry one can accomplish solo." To be most available to the community, Sister Kathleen Ann practices self-care including attending to her own spiritual life and development as well as keeping herself healthy with exercise and a healthy diet. Taking time for proper rest and recreation also help her keep her life in balance. Her favorite hobbies are walking outside, enjoying the beauty of nature in every season, cooking, and baking.

"Reflecting on the guidance I would offer to those on their faith journey, I suggest to look to the person or persons that they most admire and the values and qualities of that person that are most attractive. Those are what we should try to imitate on our faith journey. Those qualities are the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."





Advent lessons and carols



*Sisters celebrating Feast of St. Francis of Assisi
(Sister Rose Madonna, Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens,
Sister Marion Lemon, Sister Paula Vasquez)*



Sister Mary Jo Yutt with the crèche



Our chapel decorated for Christmas

**Join us for Stations of the Cross on Friday, April 11, at 7pm.
Prayers for you on your Lenten journey**