



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

MAY 2024



**Sister Diane Marie
VandeVoorde**

Reflections

At the heart of the Franciscan charism is the model of the founder, St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis loved all of creation, nature and animals, the poor, and the rich. He nurtured community, risked his life for peace, and sacrificed to preserve his vision of ministry to the Church and all the people of God.

St. Francis, our patron, along with our patroness, Mary, Mother of God, has inspired us through 133 years to serve in the same spirit of compassion and presence. The impact of the values of St. Francis has inspired our sisters to volunteer all kinds of service to many people – young, old, wealthy, and impoverished. Recently, two of our sisters began volunteering in pastoral care: Sister Rose Madonna ministers in the pastoral care department at OSF St. Francis Medical Center, and Sister Paula ministers as receptionist and greeter at OSF Richard L Owens Hospice Center. Their stories are featured in this newsletter.

This year, we celebrate four sisters who have accomplished among themselves 265 years of compassionate presence and ministry. Sister Mary Patricia Masterson who has served 75 years, Sister Mary Barbara Buckley and Sister

Mary Elaine Haertjens, each 70 years, and Sister Linda Burkitt for 50 years, all celebrate their jubilees this year. These four sisters continue to live the charism of St. Francis with a loving, compassionate heart witnessed by community and the people of God whom they serve. The community is indeed blessed and mightily thankful for their life-giving perseverance and presence.

Throughout the 133 years of this Franciscan Heading Avenue community, the invitation to respond to the needs of our diocesan church has been a part of the charism of compassionate presence. All through the decades, the sisters have established and taught in schools throughout the diocese, established and built homes for the elderly, cared for girls, orphaned and homeless children and teenagers, volunteered with poor in the city of Peoria, and served on Standing Rock Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Our sisters served as religious education coordinators and teachers. They conduct retreats, offer massage therapy, serve as spiritual directors, Cursillo, TEC, adult and diaconate instructors as well as all the ministries it takes internally to maintain a happy, well-functioning community of sisters.

May the God who has enabled life, sustained courage, and provided strength, remain with all of us forever, and may the people of God be forever blessed.

Honoring our Jubilarians

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception have strived for 133 years to make known God's compassionate presence to all we meet and serve. This year we honor four of our sisters who have special anniversaries, known as jubilees, of bringing God's compassionate presence to those they meet and serve. These four sisters have dedicated most of their lives to serve God and the people of God. We are grateful for their examples of prayer, faithfulness, and love to all:

- Sister Mary Patricia Masterson – 75 years
- Sister Mary Barbara Buckley – 70 years
- Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens – 70 years
- Sister Linda Burkitt – 50 years



**Sister Mary Patricia Masterson, Sister Mary Barbara Buckley,
Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens, Sister Linda Burkitt**



Our Jubilarians



Sister Mary Patricia Masterson – 75 years

Professed Vows: 1949

Ministries: Teaching (St. Philomena School in Peoria, St. Joseph School in Pekin, Immaculate Conception School in Spring Valley, Bishop Dunne School at Guardian Angel Home in Peoria, Seton School in Moline), Principal of St. Mary's School in Metamora, Formation Director for community, Co-Administrator of St. Joseph's Home in Springfield, president of community, and currently making God's compassionate presence known to the residents of Lutheran Hillside Village where she lives.

Favorite ministry: "While I loved my time in each ministry I was called to, I particularly like working with the elderly because of the relaxing joy working with residents, their families, and staff."

Favorite thing about religious life: "My favorite thing about religious life is the wonderful opportunity to be at prayer with my sisters and the time for individual prayer. High on my list, also, is being with my sisters for conversation and fun."

Guidance for those on their faith journey: "Remember that God is always with you on your faith journey."



Sister Mary Barbara Buckley – 70 years

Professed Vows: 1954

Ministries: Teaching (Sacred Heart and Seton School in Moline, St. Mary School in Lincoln, St. Mary School in Canton, Epiphany School in Normal), school administration (principal of Sacred Heart in Moline, coordinating principal in Moline, principal of Epiphany School in Normal, assistant principal of St. Mary School in Metamora,) Administrator of St. Joseph's Home of Peoria, and Co-Administrator of St. Joseph's Home of Springfield, president of community and currently is local treasurer and sacristan for the Motherhouse community. She also brings joy to the sisters and others by making special, personalized cards for celebrations.

Favorite ministry: "I enjoy all the ministries I have been called to and am currently involved in. There is great joy in being part of a greater whole with all our gifts and weaknesses blended with other sisters to be a compassionate presence in our world. I appreciate being useful to give what I have to others."

Favorite thing about religious life: "The joyful, loving spirit of the Heading Avenue Franciscan sisters I knew as a child in Pekin attracted me to religious life. I find no greater joy, peace, and fulfillment than being who God wants me to be, a Heading Avenue Franciscan."

Guidance for those on their faith journey: "Remember you are part of a whole community, the people of God. Pray for the courage to follow God's will."



*"Loving and provident God, I most trustfully
commit into your hands my entire self
and my total unknown future"
– prayer daily recited by the Heading Avenue Franciscans*



Our Jubilarians



Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens – 70 years

Professed Vows: 1954

Ministries: Teaching (St. Joseph School in Pekin, Immaculate Conception School in Spring Valley, Sacred Heart School in Annawan, St. Philomena School in Peoria), Director of Learning Center at Sacred Heart School in Moline, Assistant Administer of St. Joseph's Home in Springfield, assisting with meals and chapel in the Diocesan Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield, began and operated the pre-school in our Motherhouse in Peoria. Currently, she is involved in our prayer ministry and assisting with various office work for the community.

Favorite ministry: "It is a tie with the years spent in the pre-school and the years spent in the seminary. The Rector of the Diocesan Seminary wanted sisters to serve as examples of religious life to the seminarians. Both opened the experience of widening love, each in its own way. Those memories are beyond measure."

Favorite thing about religious life: "I joined the Heading Avenue Franciscans because of the close association all through my grade school years at Sacred Heart in Moline. I witnessed the spirit of the sisters, always joyful and loving one another. I still experience that spirit today. I love sharing the daily life experiences with my fellow sisters, while having Jesus as the Center of all life, especially in daily Mass and Holy Eucharist. I enjoy spending time with my sisters in prayer, as well as my individual time in prayer."

Guidance for those on their faith journey: "God is ever near. Trust Him in every step of the way. Double down on hope in God and in God's love."



Sister Linda Burkitt – 50 years

Professed Vows: 1974

Ministries: Teaching (St. Mary School in Metamora, Sacred Heart School in Moline, Epiphany School in Normal, St. Philomena School in Peoria), serving the residents in St. Joseph's Home in Peoria and St. Joseph's Home in Springfield, and some of the sisters who need assistance both at St. Joseph's Convent and at the Motherhouse, Cathedral secretary in Peoria, and Marriage Tribunal in Peoria. "Later, I had the opportunity to study and be certified in spiritual direction which is a ministry I continue to this day."

Favorite ministry: "All of my ministries have been so meaningful to me. The ministries of teaching, serving our elderly in our Homes and our sisters, as well as the ministry of spiritual direction, all have deepened my faith, prayer, and commitment to God."

Favorite thing about religious life: "The one thread that continues to flow in living my religious life is the opportunity to touch so many lives – young and old – listening, praying, sharing joy and sorrow, and all the time growing in God's compassionate love that called me to this life. I selected this community because of the sisters' hospitality and spirit of joy that I experienced whenever I visited. I experience the same spirit of joy in this community and in religious life fifty years later. I thank God and my sisters for their love and support for all these years."

Guidance for those on their faith journey: "I recommend to those on their faith journey to be open to God's call; growing in fidelity to daily prayer as well as trusting in God's compassionate love and guidance."



Easter dinner with Monsignor Charles Beebe
(Sister Mary Elaine Haertjens, Sister Mary Patricia Masterson,
Sister Alice Marie Rogers, Sister Paula Vasquez)



Celebrating St. Patrick's Day
(Sister Irene Marie Fritch, Sister Betty Jean Haverback,
Sister Holly Marie Schultz)



Celebrating St. Patrick's Day and Sister Mary Patricia
Masterson's feast day with Sister Marion Lemon, Sister Linda
Burkitt, Sister Mary Patricia Masterson, Sister Mary Dries,
Sister Kathleen Ann Mourisse



Stations of the Cross - Sister Barbara Ladd
carrying the Cross



Sister Rose Madonna
Gibbons

Meditation

For many months the Church has been encouraging Catholics to cultivate a renewed understanding and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. My study and reflections have led me to a deeper insight into what participation in the Mass calls me to, day after day.

We believe that "the Eucharist is the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. At the same time, the Eucharist is the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is made present and perpetuated." The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Church, the Body of Christ, is also offered "whole and entire" with Jesus, her Head. And "in the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body." Jesus' sacrificial offering was one of total self-giving in loving obedience to the Father's will. Therefore, each member of his Body is challenged at the celebration of the Eucharist to make a total gift of oneself in union with Jesus' offering. Receiving Him in Communion, I ask for the grace to make and live the gift.



Ministry Spotlight

If you are at St. Francis Medical Center on Wednesday afternoons or at Richard L. Owens Hospice Center, chances are you may see Sister Rose Madonna Gibbons or Sister Paula Vasquez. The two sisters were made aware of the need for volunteers in both places, and both felt called to bring God's compassionate presence to the patients, and their families and friends.

Sister Rose Madonna began serving as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at St. Francis Medical Center over two years ago. "Previously, I had served as an extraordinary minister in two parishes and at St. Joseph's Home in Springfield. I was happy and grateful to be given the opportunity to continue to bring Christ to the sick." At St. Francis Medical Center, Sister Rose Madonna receives a list of patients from the Pastoral Care Office, then goes to the Chapel to get the Blessed Sacrament. "On entering a patient's room, I identify myself as a volunteer from the Pastoral Care Department, and some patients immediately ask if I have brought Holy Communion. Their eagerness and devotion are edifying. Others want to talk about their condition and feelings. My role is one of reverent listening. If they wish, I offer a prayer for their intentions, reflecting the concerns that they have shared, and then offer Communion to them. When patients have a medical condition which prevents their receiving, or they are not disposed to receive, they usually welcome prayer for their intentions. Family or friends who are present are included in the prayer and may also receive Communion.

About a year ago, while visiting a patient at Richard L. Owens Hospice Center, Sister Paula saw a sign asking for volunteers, and after obtaining approvals, she began volunteering. While at Owens, Sister Paula typically answers the telephone, directs visitors to patients, helps to make visitors comfortable, and brings God's compassionate presence to those who enter the doors. "I have the privilege of watching nurses minister to families and the dying. The love and grace shown



Sister Paula Vasquez and
Sister Rose Madonna Gibbons

by these nurses and staff at Owens to patients and their families and friends are a testament to the love of God. Recently, an elderly man was a patient. His granddaughter bought a new car. The man, who loves his granddaughter and loves cars, could not go to see the car, so the loving nurses took him in his bed to see the car. Those nurses brought such joy to the patient and his family." Sister Paula also enlists assistance from her sisters in making posters for holidays and seasons to decorate Owens which visitors and nurses often take home. "Where one of us is, all of us are. Those posters are from our community and a way of sharing our love."

Sister Rose Madonna had training over several weeks, including orientation to being a volunteer at St. Francis Medical Center, and also the role of an extraordinary minister in a hospital setting. Then, she underwent the second phase of the training, which included study and testing via a computer program covering everything from the Sisters of the Third Order's history, charism, and goals to safety issues and HIPPA laws. "Finally, I was assigned a mentor, a trained volunteer and extraordinary minister, whom I shadowed on two occasions as he

visited patients and helped me navigate the buildings. I proudly donned my badge in March of 2022, and I am required to pass a review test prior to beginning each new year of service."

For Sister Paula, training for her volunteering at Owens Hospice involved learning their telephone system and technology. Her time previously at St. Joseph's Home in Springfield ministering to residents, families, and staff was invaluable to her service at Owens. She brings her compassion as a reverent listener to accompany families as they desire. For Sister Paula, witnessing God's love is her greatest joy of volunteering at Owens. "I watch so many people, both people of faith and people seemingly with lesser faith, go into the Chapel. They go into the Chapel with sadness in their eyes, and leave the Chapel with some sense of peace. Witnessing them have an experience with God is priceless. As a Heading Avenue Franciscan, I am able to share our community with those at Owens." As a volunteer at Owens, Sister Paula is often asked if she is a Heading Avenue Franciscan, and if she knows a particular sister, who is a member of the community. Sister Paula will invite the sister to visit the patient or family at Owens, thereby helping to reconnect relationships at a time of suffering.

At St. Francis Medical Center, Sister Rose Madonna also brings God's compassionate presence to patients and their families and friends. "As I knock on a patient's door I am keenly aware of my inadequacy: I do not know what I will encounter in this room. I know that many patients are very vulnerable, anxious, sad, in pain, maybe even angry. Some are relieved, thankful, improving. But it is only God's compassionate presence that will comfort, strengthen, and heal. I pray and trust that my attentive listening, my demeanor, the prayer I offer or the reverence I show in offering the Lord's gift of Holy Communion will be seen as a reflection of God's love and compassionate presence to each patient I visit."



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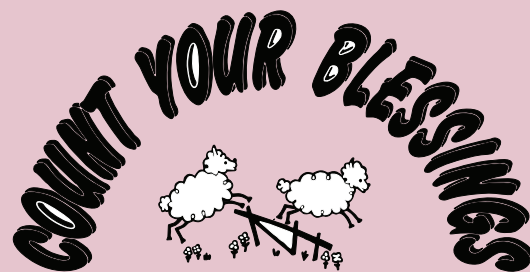
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