



**Sisters of  
St. Francis  
of Assisi**

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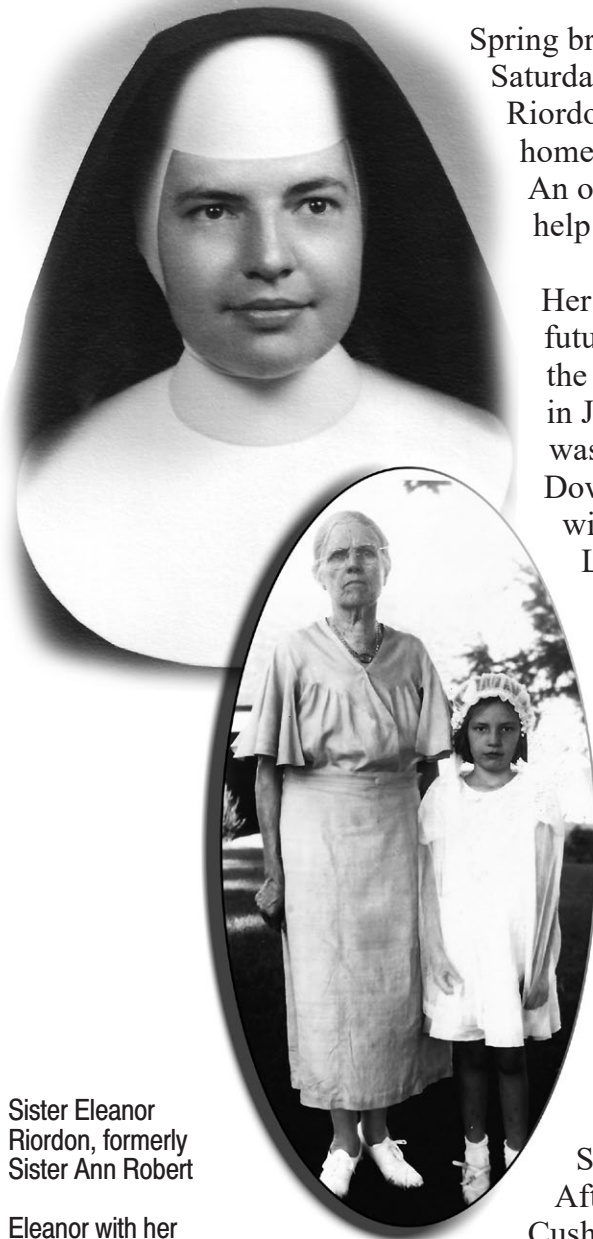
Dear Friend,

Spring brings new life, and in March of 1934, which was Holy Saturday eve, Eleanor was born to Robert and Ruth (Burns) Riordon in Clinton, Iowa, across the state line from their home in Fulton, Ill. What a joyous Easter gift for the family! An older sister helped welcome her, and later Eleanor would help welcome a brother and then a younger sister.

Her younger sister would become the catalyst for Eleanor's future. Sister Eleanor wrote, "I became acquainted with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi at St. Coletta School in Jefferson, Wis., when my younger sister, Mary Jane, was enrolled there. Each visit made it easier to accept her Down syndrome and deal with the separation from family with the kindness and time taken with my family by Sr. Leonilla Donnermeyer (+1974). No matter what day or time we arrived, she was there for us with a smile, a big welcome, making us very comfortable. She was especially kind to my father as she realized he was having a difficult time with the separation of Mary Jane from the family.

"Sr. Leonilla and other sisters were very special for me, and so from observing their 'life,' I became interested in the Franciscan community. I was accepted as a postulant on September 8, 1953, received as a novice on August 11, 1954 (Marian Year) and given the name Sr. Ann Robert, but I went back to my baptismal name after Vatican II. I took final vows on August 12, 1959."

Sr. Eleanor's ministry began at St. Coletta of Wisconsin. After 10 years, she was transferred to the Cardinal Cushing Centers in Hanover, Mass. Here, in her own words, is a reflection on how she approached her responsibilities as a child care worker at that time:



Sister Eleanor  
Riordon, formerly  
Sister Ann Robert

Eleanor with her  
Aunt Margaret on  
the day of her  
First Communion

“My years spent as a child care worker have been beautiful, exciting, fulfilling, and very rewarding. What joy is experienced when a child accomplishes the art of tying his shoe laces, buttoning his shirt, or zipping his jacket. The little things in life, which so many of us take for granted, are a real challenge to a young child with special needs.

““Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name, welcomes me.’(Mt 18:5). As an individual, as a child care worker, I am always challenged to review, modify, and change the techniques in dealing with the children. I need to work with their challenges, their family background and environment, and their changing personalities.

“My role as a child care worker is that of a parent substitute, providing love, security, and direction for a group of young vivacious little boys. I must supplement parental care while he is living at the school. This is a grave responsibility, since we do not want them lacking in the essential elements of human growth and development. I also am the adult leader and stimulator (facilitator) of the group living situation, the director and manager of the department.

“Since I work with younger children, my day is very active. I wake them in the morning,



Sister with her friends, Betty and Marianne.



guide them as they dress, supervise them during meal time, always alert for any indication that he might not be feeling well and also an overseer of leisure activities. As the day begins with prayer asking God’s help – so it ends, thanking God for the blessings received.

“Though all may be quiet, boys in bed and sleeping, there is always one to be covered, or a cough heard, or a sound from a corner bed. I must be on hand to respond to these occasional night needs.

“Life is very rich for a child care worker. Much satisfaction is gained from working with God’s special little ones.”

Sr. Eleanor’s ministry would evolve from working with the young boys to house manager of a special needs adolescent community residence in South Yarmouth on Cape Cod in 1977. This residence was funded by a grant along with financial assistance from Fathers John Kean and Richard Casey. Sr. Genevieve Bies [+2006] also worked at the house. In her next move to Braintree, Mass. in 1981, Sister with children at St. Coletta of Jefferson and Sr. Marjorie Lombard (left).

she worked at St. Coletta Day School as a crisis intervention counselor and behavioral therapist.

While living in Braintree, Sr. Eleanor was active on the Sisters' Senate for the Boston Archdiocese. She served as vice-president for four years and president for one year. For several years, she was a board member of New Bethlehem, which attempted to establish a "L'Arche" residence for developmentally disabled on the South Shore.

Coming from the Midwest, one of the great joys for Sr. Eleanor was exploring the historical sites in and around Boston and to the south. For her silver jubilee, her family gave her a trip to Taipei, Taiwan, to spend time with sisters from our congregation. This gave her a firsthand understanding of and appreciation for the Chinese culture. It also connected her with the pioneer work of our sisters in Taiwan in special education. Sr. Eugenio Chu (+2015), who was a very special friend with whom Sr. Eleanor had worked closely at St. Coletta in Jefferson, gave her an in depth look at what was being done with tours and visits to the programs.

In 1988, Sr. Eleanor's life was interrupted with the diagnosis of a brain aneurism. After surgery to contain the aneurism, there was a long period of recuperation. The sisters' house in Braintree closed, and she began a journey of living intercommunity with the Sisters of Charity of Halifax in Dorchester. As her health improved, she applied to work at the Neponset Health Center in the medical records department and helped out at the switchboard. Beginning with one hour a day, Sr. Eleanor's stamina grew and eventually she worked up to eight hours a day and added



(above) Sr. Eleanor with her Dad, Robert, and her Mom, Ruth.

(below) Sister with her family in 1954, at her profession: Ed and Ann Toomey, Mary Jane, Sr. Ann Robert, Mom and Bill

coordination of the Center's volunteer programs to her responsibilities.

In 2006, Sr. Eleanor retired and lives at the Cushing Residence in Hanover, a senior housing complex adjacent to the Cardinal Cushing Centers. Her service continues with driving other residents to appointments, involvement with the local parish activities and maintaining contacts with our associates in her area. She is grateful for the quality





(l to r) Sister with her siblings, Mary Jane, Bill and Bill's wife, LeAnn.

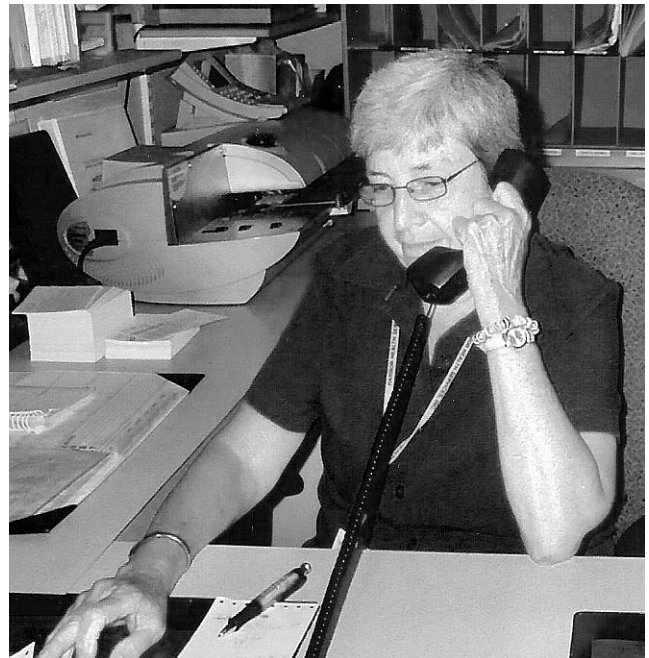
time she has for prayer, reading and assisting others.

In July, she celebrated her 60th Jubilee. Sr. Eleanor wrote, "I celebrate my 60 years with joy, peace and gratitude for all that has been and all that will be as I continue my earthly journey as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi."

Sr. Eleanor, like all of our retired sisters, lives life with great trust in God's providence. The unexpected has taught her that God is truly in charge. We may plan, but we have no guarantee that that is how things will turn out.

The care she once gave so lovingly to the young boys in her department is the same loving care she has given to all to whom

Sister Eleanor on a recent visit to the "Sisters' Inn" at Cardinal Cushing Centers.



Sister Eleanor working at the health center.

she ministered in subsequent years. But in many instances, her active ministry was not adequately compensated. This left little or nothing to put aside for retirement needs. And whatever we receive is combined to use when the need arises.

Will you consider being a part of God's providential care by sending a donation for the needs of our retired sisters? The peace of mind that you can give them with your gift is an answer to prayer. Your reward is daily remembrance in their prayers. And God will not be outdone in generosity.

In the name of our sisters, I thank you for your generosity. Whatever you can share with us will be gratefully received and blessed by God abundantly.

Gratefully,

*Marcia Lunz, OSF*

Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF



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