

Sisters of St. Francis

o f M a r y I m m a c u l a t e

Norma Jean Jacobs was born on February 26, 1936, in Freeport, Illinois. She was the daughter of Ruth (Lahre) and Robert Jacobs. Although she had no siblings, she did claim as her distant relative Mother Alfred Moes, foundress of the Joliet Franciscans. Perhaps it was that genetic connection that gave her a feisty personality, an attraction to owning a dog and a talent for leadership in a variety of groups and causes.

Norma Jean left Freeport to join the Joliet Franciscans in 1954 after graduating from St. Joseph Elementary School and Aquin High School. She received the name Sister Brigid Marie. Rather than returning to her baptismal name after the Second Vatican Council, as many sisters did, she just dropped "Marie." Sister Brigid received a BA with a major in sociology from the College of St. Francis in Joliet as well as an MA in theology.

For 20 years Brigid was an elementary school teacher (grades 2-8) and a director of religious education. Her ministry took her to various cities in Illinois and Ohio. During all of her years as a Joliet Franciscan, she enjoyed the companionship of her classmates and other community members. Having been an only child, she seemed to relish her connections to community in many forms. Close friends talk about the trips they took together, the meals they shared, the shopping (during which she was very frugal) and the games they sometimes played. A very special tradition with two friends grew out of a trip they once took to Massachusetts to deliver a treasured item from Illinois to another sister living temporarily in the East. The trip just happened to occur on a Halloween week-end, so this trio purposely planned Halloween trips every year for many years after that.

Alleluia!



Sister Brigid Jacobs, OSF

Brigid loved meetings, chocolate, socks, libraries, McDonald's cheeseburgers, turtle sundaes, and fishing. Above all, she loved meetings! She called them, led them, attended them, looked forward to them...and others dare not be late! Last summer she was very upset when a health issue prevented her from attending the community's annual summer gathering in June. Perhaps she had a premonition that she would never be able to attend one again. Brigid was often the committee chairperson, an organization's leader, a group coordinator, an advocate for women's issues, an intense activist for Social Justice.

After her experiences in educational ministries, Brigid returned to Joliet in 1979, where her involvement in congregation activities deepened. She became the Director of On-Going Formation when the congregation decided that sisters needed more opportunities for growth beyond their initial training. She was elected to the Governing Board, taking on the Office of Spirituality (and immediately forming a committee to meet with her about what that Office could do). She became the business manager for AIDS Ministry of Illinois, served on many non-profit boards, actively

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worked with Pax Christi and Call to Action, and treasured her time serving on JPIC (the community's Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission). One of the most important involvements for her was with the Franciscan Federation. She was the regional chairwoman and served on the national board for eight years. During that time, she also planned the Franciscan Institute which was presented for five summers at the College of St. Francis. Brigid loved being a Franciscan!

When she was asked in 1971 to describe the changing role of women religious in the Church, Sister Brigid said, "I see the Sister becoming a more dynamic, articulate spokesman in ever broader areas, both in the Church and the world, as her sense of mission opens broader areas of concern." She saw the challenge in that as "discerning priorities in our apostolic efforts." During the ensuing years, Brigid certainly lived into that role, and to this day the community is discerning its apostolic priorities as aging and diminishment produce challenges.

The biggest challenge to Brigid's life was the discovery that she had developed a gambling addiction. She didn't hide it, worked valiantly to control it, and succeeded in that recovery effort during the last twenty six years of her life. In fact, with her love for meetings and a heart for advocacy, she emerged as the leader of her local Gamblers Anonymous group and continued to be their wisdom figure and treasured elder right up until her final illness.

Sister Brigid died on October 19, 2025, at the age of 89. As Halloween approaches, Brigid is traveling again. She is probably already organizing a committee in heaven. And certainly she has met and received a welcome blessing from Mother Alfred. Dear Brigid, as you carry a Franciscan spirit into your new role, know that you are loved, appreciated and remembered. Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Alleluia Letter written by
Sister Karen Berry, OSF**

Sister Brigid Jacobs, OSF
February 26, 1936—October 19, 2025

Born: February 26, 1936
Parents: Robert P. Jacobs and Ruth Lahre
Postulancy: September 6, 1954
Novitiate: August 13, 1955
First Profession: August 12, 1957
Final Profession: August 12, 1961
Entered New Life: October 19, 2025

Ministry History

1957-1959 Teacher: Grade 2, Immaculate Conception, Columbus, Ohio
1959-1961 Teacher: Grade 2, St. Peter, Mansfield, Ohio
1961-1962 Teacher: Grade 2, Corpus Christi, Columbus
1962-1963 Teacher: Grade 5, Most Pure Heart of Mary, Shelby, Ohio
1963-1964 Teacher: Grades 5 and 6, St. Rita, Aurora, Illinois
1964-1965 Teacher: Grade 7, St. Mary, Des Plaines, Illinois
1965-1966 Teacher: Grade 7, St. Pascal, Chicago, Illinois
1966-1967 Teacher: Grade 7, St. Ann, Lansing, Illinois
1967-1968 Teacher: Grade 8, St. Mary, Des Plaines, Illinois
1968-1973 Teacher: Grade 8, St. Pius, Lombard, Illinois
1973-1978 Religious Education Coordinator: St. Pius x and Divine Savior, Lombard, Illinois and Downers Grove, Illinois

1978-1979 Religious Education Coordinator: Divine Savior, Downers Grove
1979-1984 Director of Ongoing Formation: Motherhouse, Joliet, Illinois
1984-1988 Guidance Councilor: St. Francis Academy, Joliet
1988-1992 Councilor: Office of Spirituality, Motherhouse, Joliet
1992-1994 Coordinator of Franciscan Affairs: College of St. Francis / Franciscan Federation Region 3 Chair: Joliet, Illinois

1994-1995 Business Manager: AIDS Ministry of Illinois, Joliet
1995-2004 Archivist: Franciscan Sisters Daughters of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary: Wheaton, Illinois

2004-2005 In Transition
2005-2006 Pastoral Ministry: Wheaton
2006-2020 Volunteer Ministry: Wheaton
2020-2023 Volunteer Ministry: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2023-2025 Ministry of Prayer and Presence/Volunteer: StoryPoint, Romeoville
2025 Ministry of Prayer and Presence: St. Patrick's Residence, Naperville, Illinois

Interment: Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
Predeceased by: Her parents, Robert P. Jacobs and Ruth (Lahre) Jacobs
Survived by: Joliet Franciscan sisters, family and friends

Rest in Peace, Sister Brigid!