

*the* *Crookston*  
**Benedictine**



# from the prioress . . .

Dear Friends,

As I write, we are on the threshold of a new liturgical year. We're beginning to hear the strains of John the Baptist's "Prepare the way of the Lord." And we face the conversion we must undertake. The Baptist is charged with the task of preparing something else, too. The angel who describes John's mission to Zachary in the announcement of the child's birth also notes that John is to prepare a people fit for the

Lord (Luke 1:17). What we often forget, especially in these times, it seems to me, is the call to allow ourselves to be formed into a people.

Yet, that is what I think of so often as I look back on the year that is coming to its conclusion and on all the ways you, our friends—friends near and far, old friends and new friends—have joined with us in the celebrations of our centennial. Truth is, we've been on a people forming journey together for 100 years as our presence to and with one another makes visible what we hold in common and



Sister Shawn Carruth

makes dim and inconsequential what separates us. In our times, especially, the practices that support our mutuality, our appreciation of one another, our sense of being a people committed to the common good are precisely what show us to be fit for the Lord.

Thank you for all the ways you have shared yourselves, your prayers, your gifts with us. May God bless all of you at Christmas and into the New Year.



The Crookston Benedictine articulates the vision, charism and mission of the Sisters of Saint Benedict, Crookston, MN, and helps the monastic community maintain and build relationships with the wider community.

The Crookston Benedictine is published twice a year by the Sisters of Saint Benedict, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Sister Denise Schonhardt, editor, and Sisters Anne DeMers and Lorraine Kraft staff. Katrina Genereaux, Heidi Whiting and Sister Denise Schonhardt, photographers.

Cover: Lippi, Fra Filippo; *Madonna and Child*, c. 1450-1465, tempera on panel, 92 cm x 63.5 cm (36 in x 25.0 in), Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Page 2: Martini, Francesco Giorgio. *Nativity*, 1475, Wood, 198 x 104 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena.

Page 36: Schonhardt, Sister Denise. Icon. c. 2000 personal collection.  
page 2

## Liturgy Schedule

<b>Morning Prayer</b>	11:30 am Sunday 8:30 am Monday - Saturday
<b>Noon Prayer</b>	11:50 am Monday - Saturday
<b>Evening Prayer</b>	4:30 pm Sunday 5:00 pm Monday - Friday
<b>Eucharist</b>	8:00 am Tuesday and Thursday 11:15 am Wednesday 4:30 pm Saturday (Sunday Mass)

# Sisters host Rose Ensemble to honor centennial



by Katrina Genereux  
Associate Editor, Our Northland Diocese



*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*

On April 8, the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict sponsored a free concert by the Rose Ensemble at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to honor and celebrate their community's centennial.

"It is so wonderful to see such a full and happy, joyous crowd here this evening," Sister Shawn Carruth, Prioress of Mount Saint Benedict said, addressing the crowd of 300 gathered for the concert. "We are pleased to be able to simply offer this to you as part of our centennial celebration."

She spoke about the community's foundress, Mother Eustacia Beyenka. As a young sister at the monastery in Duluth, Minnesota, Sister Eustacia was sent to study Gregorian Chant. In May 1919, Bishop Timothy Corbett, the first bishop of the Diocese of Crookston, asked her to lead a new community in his diocese.

"For many years at Mount Saint Benedict, Mother Eustacia herself directed and trained the sisters in the schola in this style of singing which we call Gregorian Chant. For at least the first half of our history, Gregorian Chant was at the core of our liturgical celebrations," Sister Shawn said. "I think being able to sponsor this musical event in our centennial year should be very pleasing to the spirit of Mother Eustacia. Once she said, 'Sisters, if ever the love for music or the beauty of Gregorian Chant dies out among you, you may look for me in these corridors for I will come back to haunt you!'"

The Rose Ensemble was founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Jordan Sramek. The group is in their 23rd and final season. They have performed across the United States, Europe and Latin America with a repertoire spanning 1,000 years and 25 languages. To learn more, visit [www.roseensemble.org](http://www.roseensemble.org).

Eight vocalists and two guest instrumentalists captivated the crowd performing sacred music composed or inspired by Benedictine monks and sisters in the 1600s. The singers were Chelsie Propst, Phoebe Rosquist, Alyssa Anderson, Raquel

Above: Sister Shawn Carruth visits with Bishop Victor Balke.

Winnica, Garrett Eucker, Bradley King, Jordan Sramek and Daniel Mahrun. They were accompanied by Paula Fagerberg on the Italian-Baroque triple harp and Michael Asmus on the positiv organ.

Sister Marmion Karel, a sister of Mount Saint Benedict for 67 years, enjoyed the performance and the many connections the pieces had to her experience of monastic life throughout the years.

"Being at the Mount for high school, Gregorian Chant is something I have kind of grown up with," she said. "Then, after high school, staying and joining the community and belonging to the schola, I just love Gregorian Chant."

She appreciated the portions of the Rule of St. Benedict and stories of the lives of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica that were read by members of the Rose Ensemble between performing pieces of music. One of the stories was about a yearly visit St. Benedict paid to his sister, St. Scholastica, at her monastery. She begged him to stay longer, and when he declined, she appealed to God. St. Benedict was trapped at the monastery overnight by a storm too severe for travel.

"In my teaching at the grade school, we performed the little skit about Benedict and Scholastica almost every year on the feast of St. Scholastica," Sister Marmion said. "The students dressed up as Benedict and Scholastica. That's just been part of my whole life."

The concert also connected with her current experience praying Liturgy of the Hours in community.

"As they were singing, and the English translations were on the sides [of the program], I noticed that they sang many of the things that we prayed at 5 o'clock prayer tonight," said Sister Marmion. Lines including "God come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me" and the Gloria Patri, or Glory Be stood out to her during the performance.

Teresa Cymbaluk, a parishioner of Cathedral, was a graduate of Mount Saint Benedict's final class.

She enjoyed the performance.

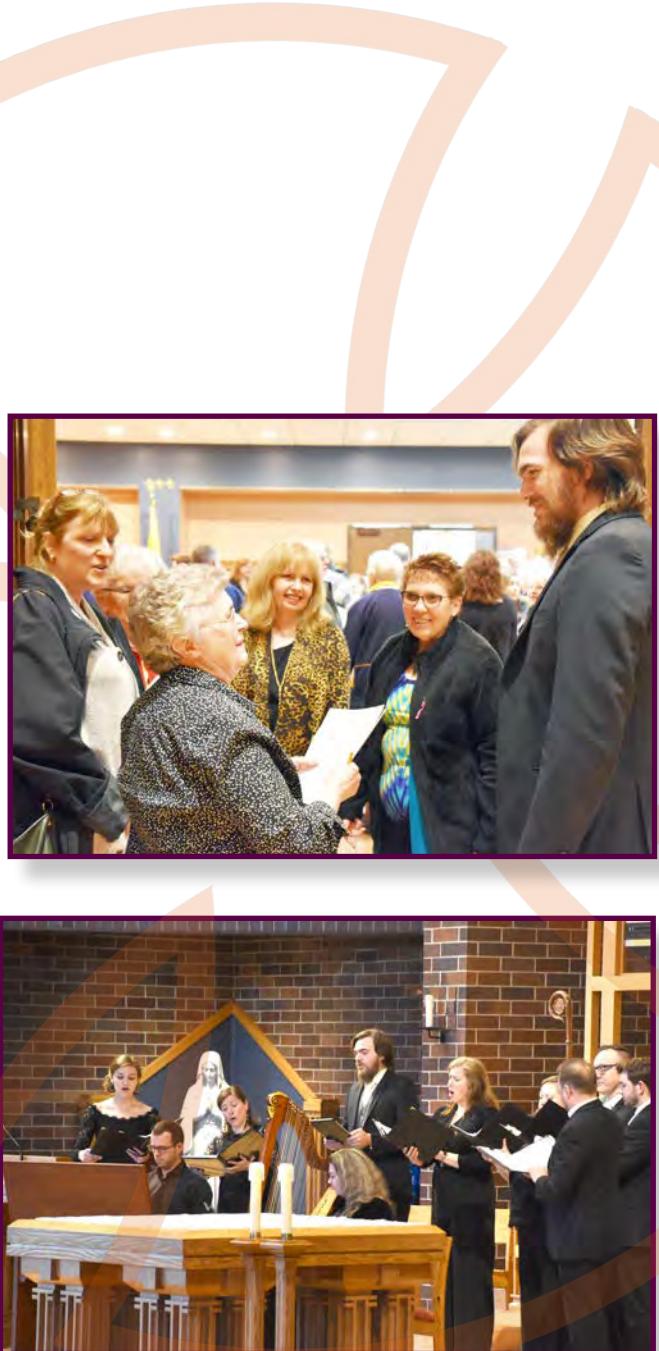
"It's amazing to be able to bring them here to Crookston," she said.

She was also grateful for the high attendance and opportunity to celebrate the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict.

"They are such a beautiful group of women. It's wonderful to celebrate them," she said.

On September 15, the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict held another public Centennial Celebration including Mass and a reception at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Above right: Sister Anita Whalen and others chat with one of the performers after the concert. Right: Members of the Rose Ensemble.



# Memories of centennial celebration



*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*



PREVIOUS PAGE: Clockwise from top: Top Left: One of the members of the Rose Ensemble. Top Right: Carol Parkin, Donna Riendeau, Bob Johnson and Joyce Johnson enjoy each other's company at the employee appreciation picnic. Bottom Right: Jodi, Leah, and Nathan Johanneck relax together after the employee picnic. Bottom Left: Sister Dominica expresses appreciation to Rose Ensemble members. THIS PAGE: Top: Sister Kathy Kuchar greets a friend at the Rose Ensemble Concert. Middle: Members of the Rose Ensemble. Bottom: Volunteers Margee Keller, Elaine Sylvester and Jean LaJesse pause for a picture while serving dessert for the sisters during their centennial celebration with members of other Benedictine communities.



*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*





PREVIOUS PAGE; Clockwise from top: Sister Doreene Charest examines one of the photos of sisters that lined the Cathedral gym walls. Middle: Sisters from the Federation of Saint Gertrude: Sister Lynn Osika and Sister Jennifer Kehrwald (Yankton, SD) Sister Virginia Evard and Sister Mary Rose Hammerling (Winnipeg, MB), Sister Jeanne Weber (President of the Federation of Saint Gertrude), Sister Shawn Carruth and Sister Adrienne Kaufmann and Sister Marlene Mineart (Watertown, SD). Bottom: Prioresses of communities in direct relationship with the Crookston Benedictines: Sister Susan Berger Saint Joseph, (MN), Sister Beverly Raway (Duluth, MN), Sister Shawn Carruth (Crookston, MN) and Sister Virginia Evard, (Winnipeg, MB). THIS PAGE: Guest enjoy cupcakes at the reception after the Centennial Mass. Left: Nancy Cournia puts her name in the rosemaled box for the drawing for the box. The box was made by Sister Norma Jean Edie.





*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Sister Myra serves donuts to parishioners. Right: Plates of cupcakes for the reception after the centennial Mass. Bottom: Sisters and others attend the centennial Mass.  
**THIS PAGE:** Top: Members of the choir lead the congregation at the centennial Mass. Middle: Guests enjoy donuts after Mass. Above: Sister Jeanne Weber at the community celebration. Left: Employees enjoy a cerebration especially for them.



Top Left: Sister Beverly Raway, prioress of Saint Scholastica's Monastery, Duluth, MN, addresses the sisters. Top Right: Msgr. Mike Foltz and Sister Karen Violette share a friendly moment. Above: A celebration attendee signs the guest book. Right: Sister Myra chats with her aunt.

# Faces from the centennial celebration



# Benedictine sisters close centennial year with final celebration

By Katrina Generoux/Associate Editor, OND, Crookston –

Throughout the year, the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict, Crookston, have honored their centennial in a variety of ways. Beginning in January, a “Sister of the Day” was featured with a photo and brief biography on their website and in the monastery. The community’s prioresses have been honored in an ongoing series of columns in Our Northland Diocese. The sisters hosted a free concert featuring the Rose Ensemble in April. They also held a private community celebration in May.

On Sept. 15, 350 people gathered at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Crookston, for the final event to honor the centennial year.

Bishop Michael J. Hoeppner celebrated Mass with priests of the diocese.

“We sincerely are grateful for your presence and life as sisters of Saint Benedict here in this diocese,” he said during the homily. “Your good, beautiful, noble works have benefitted so many. They are truly appreciated, and they are not forgotten. The beauty of your life of good works has drawn others to Christ. We are so happy that today your presence and involvement continues with us still.”

Near the end of Mass, Sister Shawn Carruth, Prioress of Mount Saint Benedict, shared a few words of gratitude.

“All of the parishes, and schools and hospitals and outreach, all of the ministries that we have engaged in throughout these past 100 years, all those people have now become somehow part of our lives too,” she said. “We are grateful to the Diocese of Crookston, to all the clergy and all the faithful of this diocese because the goodness of

your lives and your deeds is certainly encouraging to our own hope.”

Mass was followed by a reception. The gymnasium was ringed by a display of all the “Sister of the Day” entries.

Ron Schroeder of St. Mary, Two Inlets, is the nephew of Sister Carol Jean Schroeder. He was impressed by the number of photos of sisters the community has had over the years.

“The sisters have done so much good,” he said. “It is amazing what they have done.”

One of his favorite memories of visiting Mount Saint Benedict was touring the gardens with Sister Flora Klier.

Dianne Foss of Nisswa attended the celebration.

She has been visiting Mount Saint Benedict for



many years to see her two aunts – Sister Joan and Sister

Cuthbert, who is now deceased – and her cousin Sister Karen Violette.

She was viewing the photos of the sisters with Kathy Karge of Rosemount, Minnesota. Karge's niece is Sister Myra Schmieg.

Both women agreed the day was very uplifting and they would not have missed it for the world.

Above left: Bishop emeritus Victor Balke and Bishop Michael Hoeppner begin the entrance procession into the Cathedral.

Above: Sisters Kathy Kuchar and Myra Schmieg reflect during the Centennial Mass.

# Sisters celebrate golden and diamond jubilees

*Sustain me, O God, as you have promised, that I may live. Disappoint me not in my hope.* – Ps. 119:16 Every sister at her profession or a jubilee sang these words. Surrounded by sisters and family members, Sisters Eileen Beutel and Denise Schonhardt sang them on July 11 at their Golden Jubilee Eucharist.

## Sister Eileen Beutel



Sister Eileen Beutel was born on January 4, 1949, to Frank and Eileen Beutel. She was baptised Margaret. She first met the Sisters of Saint Benedict at Saint Jude's School in Mahtomedi, MN. After elementary school, she attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy.

Following high school, Margaret joined the Sisters of

Saint Benedict, and when she entered the novitiate, she received the name, Sister Eileen. She made first monastic profession on July 11, 1969, and final profession on July 11, 1974.

Sister Eileen's first teaching assignment was as a first-grade teacher at Sacred Heart School in East Grand Forks. After receiving a bachelor's degree in library science from Saint Catherine's University in Saint Paul, Sister Eileen served as a librarian at Mount Saint Benedict High School before becoming the assistant director of Mount Saint Benedict Center. In ensuing years she worked with the liturgy at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery while also serving as the librarian at the monastery.

Sister Eileen was hired by the Crookston Public Library, first as a part-time assistant and then rising to the position of director. Sister Eileen created friends no matter in what position she served and as she traveled in all kinds of weather to satellite libraries to assist them in serving their communities.

Sister Eileen currently is the secretary for the

Sisters of Saint Benedict, a job she fills efficiently and graciously.

When Sister Eileen retired as Director of Crookston Public Library, the chair of the Friends of the Library praised her for her virtues of kindness and organization. The sisters would add generosity and approachability.



## Sister Denise Schonhardt

Sister Denise Schonhardt, daughter of Harold and Adeline Schonhardt, born on July 12, 1949, received the baptismal name of Gladys. She attended Waubun Public School through 6<sup>th</sup> grade and Saint Michael's School in Mahnomen, for grades 7 and 8. She enrolled at Mount Saint Benedict Academy, where she received her high school diploma.

She adapted well to life at the academy and grew to admire the sisters. When it came time to discern her vocation, she chose to enter Mount Saint Benedict Monastery as a postulant. Upon entering the novitiate, she received the name, Sister Denise. She made her first profession in 1969 and her final profession in 1974.

She began teaching in elementary schools -- Saint Francis Xavier School in Benson, MN, and Saint Joseph's School in Moorhead, MN. She received a bachelor of science degree in history and secondary education from the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND, and later she earned bachelor and master of fine arts degrees from the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

She taught history and art at Mount Saint Benedict High School and art at Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks, MN. But as she looked forward to developing her artistic skills, the community had other plans.

Mount Saint Benedict needed a Director of Development and Sister Eleanor, prioress, chose Sister Denise for the position. Not

Sustáin me, O God



Sisters Eileen and Denise exit the chapel after the renewal ceremony.

long after she began this work, it became evident that the Mount community needed to start a capital campaign because the original monastery building was on the verge of collapse. After the campaign reached its goal, Sister Denise became the Director of Mount Saint Benedict Foundation, formed to support the ministries of the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

Sister Denise had dual responsibilities as Foundation Director and Director of Communications for the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

She continues to be a kind, hospitable presence, welcoming others to the monastery, engaging them, and making friends. One could not miss her hearty laugh.

### Diamond Jubilee

Sisters Adeline Karels, Rosalia Fink, and Evelyn Strei celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> jubilees on July 26 when Sister Adeline joined Sisters Rosalia and Evelyn at Villa Saint Vincent for the celebration.



Sister  
Adeline  
Karels

Sister Adeline Karels was the second of the five children of Marcus and Kathryn Karels. Though her parents baptized her Joanne

Kathryn, she was called Annie.

Annie attended Saint Joseph's School in Rosen, where she admired Sister Bernarda, her eighth-grade teacher. She attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy, where she again esteemed her teachers.

At the age of eighteen, she entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict. She was invested in the Benedictine habit on July 4, 1948, and she received the name, Sister Adeline. She made first vows on July 3, 1949, and final monastic profession on July 11, 1952. A few years later her sister, Sister Marmion joined her as a member of the Sisters of Saint Benedict. Sister Adeline characterizes her as not only her sister but also as her best friend.

Sister Adeline served in the healthcare ministry her entire life as a sister. She received her nurse's training at Mount Marty College in Yankton, SD, and her anesthesia training at Saint Cloud Hospital School of Anesthesia.

Sister Adeline nursed as an RN at Saint Francis Hospital in Crookston. After receiving her anesthesia training, she served at Saint John's Hospital in Browerville, Saint Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes, and the Out-patient Surgery Center in Willmar. Upon retiring as an anesthetist, Sister Adeline found a second ministry in making and decorating candles for sale in the candle department.

Sister Adeline stated that the things she appreciated about monastic life at the Mount were the quiet atmosphere, the Liturgy of the Hours, times for reflection, family-style living, and community celebrations.

Sister Adeline commented that she finds that she has received the hundred-fold

as promised by Jesus. (Mark 10:30)

as you have promised



### Sister Evelyn Strei

The sixth of the twelve children of Joseph and Cecilia Strei, Sister Evelyn Strei was baptized Louise Jean though she was called Lou Jean. Her father was a barber, but his real love was farming.

Lou Jean attended Saint Joseph's School in Rosen and Mount Saint Benedict Academy. Lou Jean entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict on January 3, 1948. She received the Benedictine habit and the name Sister Evelyn on July 4, 1948, and made first vows on July 5, 1949. She made final monastic profession on July 11, 1952.

Sister Evelyn received a bachelor's degree in education from Saint Catherine's University in Saint Paul and a master's degree in theology from Mount Angel Seminary in Mount Angel, OR.

Sister Evelyn was known as an excellent primary teacher. She taught at Sacred Heart in East Grand Forks, Saint Joseph's in Red Lake Falls, Saint Philip's in Bemidji, Saint Jude's in Mahtomedi, Saint Francis Xavier in Benson, Saint Joseph's in Moorhead, Saint Jude's in Osseo, and Cathedral in Crookston. Sister Evelyn became a parish minister in Saint Dominic's in Northfield, Saint Boniface's in Hastings, and Saint Elizabeth's in Dilworth. Sister Evelyn

also served in spirituality ministries at Manna House of Prayer



Sister Shawn chats with Sisters Evelyn and Carol Jean.

in Concordia, KS, and Mount Saint Benedict Center. In addition to these ministries, Sister served as an archivist at Mount Saint Benedict, and she worked to help build an ecumenical Benedictine community at Saint Benedict Center in Madison, WI.

Sister Evelyn wrote about years in the monastic community. ". . . I saw my life as a journey going from place to place serving God's people. Over the years, I have come to realize that the monastic journey is an inner journey of the heart, daily seeing the marvelous works of a faithful God in community and all of creation. As my loving Creator has a place in my life so I am in harmony with my Beloved and I have a place in the Universe."

### Sister Rosalia Fink

Caroline Catherine Fink was born in Britton, SD, of Julius and Emelia Fink. She was known as Carrie to her family. She attended Saint Michael's School and Mahnomen High School.

Caroline and her sister, Joan, entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict in 1948. When they became novices and received the Benedictine habit, Caroline received the name Sister Rosalia, and Joan was named Sister Clarissa. They made their first monastic profession on July

that I may live.



4, 1949, and their final profession on July 11, 1953.

Sister Rosalia received a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from the College of Saint Theresa in Winona, MN, and another bachelor's degree in business education from Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Sister Rosalia's first teaching assignment was at Sacred Heart Grade School in East Grand Forks. She also taught elementary grades at the Cathedral in Crookston; Saint Jude's in Mahtomedi, Saint Bernard's in Thief River Falls,

Mount Saint Benedict. In 1990, Sister Rosalia joined the staff of the Community Action Council of South Texas in Rio Grande City. While at CACST, she worked with almost 500 employees to help oversee care for the abused.

Sister Rosalia returned to Mount Saint Benedict in 2006, where she worked with the Community Supported Garden for three years.

Sister Rosalia felt called to return to Rio Grande City to establish a shelter for abused women. She was assisted by Sister Jeannine Spain. People from the locality formed a committee and named the project the South Texas Empowerment of Women Center.

From the beginning, the District Attorney tried to help by giving them property that had been confiscated from the drug cartel. The night before they were to begin cleaning the buildings, a small building on the property was set afire, and the location was deemed too unsafe to

occupy, so Sister Rosalia was back to square one. Another donor gave three acres for the shelter. Some people thought that transitional housing should be built first but Sister Rosalia saw the need for providing shelter for abused women and children. More than 90 people were served in the first year. Upon completion of the shelter the transitional housing unit was begun.

After the shelter opened its doors in 2016, and Sister Rosalia felt confident of its future, she returned to Mount Saint Benedict.

Sister Rosalia died on October 22, 2019.

Sister Rosalia is preceded in death by her parents Julius and Emelia Fink, brothers Joseph and Peter, and sisters Barbara and Sister Clarissa. She is survived by many nieces and nephews and the members of her monastic community.

The jubilarians celebrated the fact that God does sustain them, and God does not disappoint them in their hope. The lives of the jubilarians attest to God's faithfulness.

# PEACE



Sister Dominica celebrates Sister Adeline's jubilee with her.

Saint Michael's in Mahnomen, Saint Thomas in Asherton, TX, Saint Vincent's in Osseo and secondary education in Asherton, TX, where she was the principal of the public high school, and Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks. In addition to teaching typing, accounting and business law for 14 years, she directed the cheerleaders and pom-pom girls. She rode over a hundred pep buses to out-of-town games in addition to attending all the home games. Sister Rosalia was known as an excellent educator, and she received a certificate as one of the outstanding educators of America in 1970.

After Sister Rosalia left Sacred Heart High School, she became the office manager for the business department at

# Your messages . . .

Some time ago we requested memories you have of the Sisters of Saint Benedict. You will find them interspersed throughout the next few issues of the *Crookston Benedictine*. Look for them!

*Mount Saint Benedict gave our family the comfort as an extended family for prayer, support and peace. Our prayer request for healing for our daughter Susan's breast cancer and friend's ovarian cancer were answered with an amazing rapid healing and remission. Thank you and God bless you.*

-S.K., Mora, MN

*I need to start my story with my parents Conrad and Blanche Lysne who raised eight children who all attended Cathedral grade school*

*and graduated from Cathedral. The children are Michael Dale Lysne (deceased April 3, 2013) myself, Lorraine Lysne Guttu -90 years old, Joanne (Lysne) Gagnon - 86 years old, Connie (Lysne) Chase -85 years old, Howard Lysne- 82 years old, Geraldine (Lysne) Psick (deceased 7-13-13), Myron Lysne -76 years old, Suzanne (Lysne) Nomis - 71 years old. Suzanne, Suzie was the only one of us that graduated from Mount Saint Benedict. I don't know how our parents managed to see that we all had a good Catholic education. We are very grateful to them and also so blessed that the good nuns and priests made sure we got a good Catholic education. God bless and thank you all.*

-L.G., Pembina, ND

*I went to the Mount for my freshman and sophomore years. My mother, Rachel McDunn, and my aunt, Sister Edwin, also went there. Many memories, but my most favorite was taking piano lessons from Sister Carmella. She was such fun and made lessons enjoyable!! Congratulations on your centennial!*

--R.M.N. Barnesville, MN

*I graduated from Sacred Heart High school in 1974. I have long remembered and will never forget, the great teaching guidance and patience that I received from the sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict. Sister Joyce, Sister Joan, Sister Brian, Sister Marietta, Sister Rosalia, Sister Felipa,*



Sister Scholastica,  
Sister Hyacinthe, Sister  
Bernarda, Sister Alexine,  
and so many more. Last  
but first, was my first  
sister for kindergarten  
and then later Sister  
Germana.

I have wanted and  
intended to write them  
long letters of thanks.  
With time, most are  
now gone, I'm older than  
I wish. I love, and loved  
them all. I got a letter to  
Sister Germana years ago.  
She sent me a rosary.

God bless all of you.  
-T. C., Roseville, MN

Raised on Walsh  
street, and still live on  
Walsh street, for my  
father built my home  
for my husband Roy in  
1956. I was raised in a  
very loving home with  
my brother Dwane. We  
went to the Cathedral  
schools. I was married  
in 1956, and we raised

six children. Roy had  
a heart attack while  
with his oldest son,  
Thomas. The sisters  
from Cathedral and the  
Mount were with us  
throughout our sorrow.  
They brought gifts for

my children and were so  
kind. They prayed with  
us. All of my children  
went to the Catholic  
schools and loved it. So  
many teachers to thank.  
God helped us each day.  
Thank you, thank you,  
thank you so much. My  
daughter attends Mass  
with me at the Mount  
each Saturday night.  
And when my other  
daughters are in town  
they also attend. I love  
going there for Mass.  
Thank you again.

-J.P.B., Crookston MN

A few years ago we  
stayed at the Mount  
for a few days, my wife,

Shirley, and I. We had  
a good time and lots of  
meals and lunches. She  
is gone, for six years. And  
I still miss her. But, I  
have good memories...

W. B., Walhalla, ND

When I was a young  
boy of grade school  
age, Sisters of Saint  
Benedict would come  
to Oslo -- Saint Joseph  
Parish, for two weeks  
of Catechism. Those  
were memorable days -  
learning some long, new  
prayers "Acts of Faith,  
Hope, and Charity," The  
Commandments and  
Beatitudes. I remember  
attending a child's  
funeral (she had died  
of smoke inhalation)  
I especially looked  
forward to "earning" or  
receiving "homemade"  
holy cards, made by the  
sisters. And I still carry  
a "Sacred Heart image"



badge in my billfold.

-- E. D. P., Fargo, ND

I have very fond memories of the Sisters of Saint Benedict – particularly those at Saint Francis Hospital. My father, Dr. O.K. Behr and his family were spoiled rotten by them. They would entertain me on Saturday mornings while Dad made rounds. They provided us with their homemade sausage at Christmas. And they were always so kind and considerate.

Dad had a special relationship with Sister Germana, (and of course, Father O'Toole, the hospital chaplain) that carried on well past retirement. Caryn and I would visit Sister Germana while in Crookston watching our

daughter Cathy play ball for UMC.

Wonderful person!

Wonderful peoples!

Wonderful memories!

Congratulations on your centennial!

-J. B., Willmar, MN

I lived in Sacred Heart Parish from 1968–1976. In 1974–1976 I volunteered at the elementary school. Sister Mary Jean Gust was the principal. I was working with Sister Cecilia Smith and the 1st grade, Sister Eulalia in 3rd grade and various other assigned tasks (I helped tutor students with their multiplication tables), taking the 1st grades for PE etc. I will never forget the hundreds of copies of worksheets I copied.

I enjoyed the

friendship and hospitality and the generosity of all the nuns at the EGF convent at that time. I don't know the names of the person who did the cooking – eating at the convent now and then I found out that I actually liked liver and onions! I can't believe that I went back for seconds!

- A. B., Grand Forks, ND

My first visit was November 2017. I stayed in the Hermitage. A peaceful setting - nice "cabin in the woods."

-- C. S., Hopkins, MN

We, our family, thank the sisters for taking care of Grandma Bertha Stuart in her last days. We also thank you for the care of Sister Mary Ann Stuart. She



loved you all. Linda  
and I continue in  
our support of Mount  
Saint Benedict for the  
wonderful work you do.

God Bless.--D. S.,  
Hershey, PA

I have three aunts  
who were Benedictine  
sister's Sister Digna  
Arends, Sister Enrica  
Arends, and Sister  
Maryanne Arends. They  
are my dad's sisters. He  
was so proud of them! I  
was a student in 1963  
to '65 and I graduated  
in '65. Sister Digna was  
the lab/x-ray technician  
at the hospital. When  
I wanted to "get out" I  
would only have to say  
to the sister at the door,  
that I wanted to visit  
my aunt, Sister Digna,  
at the hospital. We spent  
many hours together  
- she would show me  
x-rays and bloodwork  
under the microscope,

we had good talks. I  
wonder now if she  
influenced me in my  
career choice - as I am  
an RN (retired). She died  
in 1973, and I still miss  
her. She was so special! I  
have a twin brother, and  
mom was in the hospital  
there for a long time  
before we were born. She  
gave me "our" x-ray!

-J. and J. H., Battle  
Creek, MN

My daughter went  
to Mount Saint Benedict  
for three years and liked  
it very much. Of course,  
we visited there often.

--R.C., Mahtomedi,  
MN

In 1949 to 1950,  
I was hired by Sister  
Beata and worked with  
Sister Imelda on first  
floor. It was a hospital  
and then St. Vincent  
nursing home. Sisters  
roomed across the alley.

December 1, 1950, I went  
to Anchorage, Alaska to  
join my husband. I was  
there from December  
1, 1950 to July 1966. By  
now I had two sons  
and two daughters  
when we moved back  
to Minnesota. One day,  
I went to visit Saint  
Vincent nursing home  
and talked with Sister  
Beata, she offered me a  
job, so I started January  
1, 1968. I went to the  
Villa when it was open  
and worked with Sister  
Bonaventure. From there  
I went to the Mount  
and the new health  
care unit until '96-97.  
I worked with Sister  
Walberg and Sister  
Winifred.

These were some  
enjoyable years in a  
Christian environment;  
the sisters were always  
so kind and considerate.  
I mostly worked nights,  
so my children were



home and secure. When I started working in 1968 my children were 17, 16, 12, and five years old. At my retirement, there was a lovely party given for my family and me which I shall never forget. I was presented with a plaque which hangs on my kitchen wall saying "29 years of service to the sisters of St. Benedict".

--B. S. R., Crookston,  
MN

I liked most all of the sisters when I went to the Mount for two years, but one sister and I didn't see eye-to-eye. I had to quit school and go to the Cathedral because my folks couldn't afford the Mount anymore, and lo and behold, there was the sister, but we got along OK. I liked the Mount, made so many friends, and still have several of the girls that

are close friends. Two or three of the girls are now sisters at the Mount, which is great. Thank you for two good years at the Mount, and the sisters of the Cathedral were good, too.

--D. D., Crookston, MN

Back in 1953, when I was a seventh-grader at Holy Rosary School in Detroit Lakes, my teacher was Sister Casimir. She took me under her wing and helped me

study "Words of the Champions" because she noticed I had a talent for spelling well. With her help I won the county in the five-states spelling contest. We were on our way to the national spelling bee in Washington DC! We took the train which was an adventure for us all! We shared the same compartment for sleeping, and she

made sure she had privacy, getting ready and then sleeping in such close quarters with my mother and me. We had a great time in DC, although I choked in the contest and came in only at 35th Place. The following year she and I accompanied Frank Walz from Holy Rosary to the state contest in Minneapolis. I'll never forget Sister Casimir, OSB, a great teacher.

--M.J.H., St. Paul, MN

Sister Paschal - I had her for sixth grade at St. Francis Xavier and Benson. It was a tough class, I felt so bad for her and Sister Dominica, there were some disruptive boys in the class, and I felt helpless to show her the respect she deserved. She gave us each a book of Psalms, I still have it, and I think of her very often when



reading a Psalm. Also, I remember vividly and love the way she taught us to organize when reading homework text.

Sister Lenore – the paper chain floor to the ceiling American flag, what a great memory. I still love to make paper chains (with scotch tape instead of glue, tho!)

Sister Dominica the small plaster statues for piano rewards.

Sister Lenore guitar playing! So warm and friendly.

-J. G. G., Avon, MN

I enjoyed the back rub Sister Francella gave me after six of my children were born at St. Mary's hospital. Sister Roland took pictures of the new babies and gave the mothers one which I put in my children's baby books. My oldest daughter, Pam was a

candy striper, and Sister Winifred liked her work so well, she liked her to work on weekends as a nurse's aide. Pam became RN and worked for over 43 years nursing as a surgical nurse. Sister Anne gave my youngest daughter some of her guppies. Sister Stella was a sweetheart. Sister Ambrose (Monica Helen) taught me how to make gravy, white sauce and the correct way to slice roast beef and pork. Sister Myra arranged for me to take a home college course and I became a food service supervisor and her assistant. Both Sister Bennett and Sister Charitas were great administrators. I enjoyed working at St. Mary's for over 21 years. Many of my coworkers have retired or expired. Mary Mitchell and I are the

only two "old ones" left.

--J.C., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

Our cousin sister Laurian made a trip here in the 1990s, and we took her to many churches and through the mountains. We enjoyed her very much on this trip. She liked to look at the map and see where we were headed. I believe she enjoyed our cat, Joey. He liked sleeping on her bed. We, the Colorado Lashas, met her the first time for her 50th Jubilee. We have always enjoyed our phone calls and letters from her. I always wished I could slice potatoes for frying as she did! They were perfectly sliced. We all love her very much!

--K.L., Colorado springs, CO

# A treasured legacy and currents in the stream

Sister Cornelia  
Gust



On December 31, 1976, Sister Cornelia Gust was elected the sixth prioress, but would not take office until June 5, 1977. When her predecessor, Sister Victorine, took office there were 290 community members, and when Sister Cornelia became the prioress, the

community numbered 240.

Sister Cornelia taught on all levels of education from elementary grades through college; prefected high school girls at Mount Saint Benedict Academy; worked with young women seeking to become finally professed sisters;



Bishop Victor Balke blesses Sister Cornelia during her installation as prioress.



Paintings of Saints Benedict and Scholastica by Sister Veronica Kavanagh.

directed spirituality programs and served as a spiritual director.

Upon becoming prioress, Sister Cornelia was certain of one thing: that the sisters had elected her to be their spiritual leader. Sister Cornelia was determined to lead the community with an emphasis on holiness, wholeness, and



Sister Cornelia places the mission cross around the neck of Sister Frances Solum while Sister Lorraine watches.

integration of prayer and service.

In 1980 Benedictines celebrated 1500 years since the birth of Saints Benedict and Scholastica. The celebration had three facets. The first was that, at the suggestion of The Congress of Benedictine Abbots, in preparation for the celebration, communities began to re-energize their commitment to monastic values through the study of the *Rule of Benedict*. The sisters responded by studying the themes of the *Rule* to come to a consensus on the values found in the *Rule of Benedict* and key issues facing the community. The Sisters at the Mount opened the celebration on the feast of Saint Scholastica (twin sister of Saint Benedict) on February 10, 1980. It was, as Sister Cornelia said, “a wonderful opportunity to realize the wealth of what it means to be Benedictine.”

The second facet happened when hundreds of Benedictines from Minnesota and surrounding states gathered at Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict to hear presentations and to share insights about Benedictine values.

The third facet occurred when Sister Cornelia convened the monastic community in a life chapter (meeting of all professed members) in which the sisters considered resolutions related to the meaning of Benedictine life,

criteria for ministry, social needs in the contemporary world, religious formation, interpersonal relationships, personal growth, and prayer. By the end of the chapter, the sisters endorsed eighteen resolutions, which they prioritized during the following year.

In spite of this time of celebration, challenges continued to face the community. One of those challenges was

Mount Saint Benedict Academy. Enrollment had fallen from a peak of 315 students to about 160 in 1977. In 1982, despite efforts of the sisters, the diocese and the local Catholic parishes, the school closed, ending more than 70 years of Catholic secondary education in Crookston. Many sisters found this to be especially sad because they had graduated from the Mount.

The closing of Mount Saint Benedict brought the challenge of how to use both Marian Hall Residence and the high school building. Marian Hall provided space for ministry programs, retreats, workshops and meetings and living accommodations for an increasing number of retired and semi-retired sisters. The classroom building remained vacant for three years before being sold to the Cathedral parish to be used as a grade school.

While Mount Saint Benedict Academy struggled, the healthcare ministry also needed attention. American Healthcare Management leased three of the healthcare institutions for nine years. Experience with AHM varied in the different institutions. The sisters realized they did not have the expertise to address the challenges facing the healthcare industry, so they terminated sponsorship of their healthcare institutions except for Villa Saint Vincent in Crookston and the Warren Dental Clinic.

Internally, the sisters began experimenting with small group living. Small groups of sisters began living in the former chaplain’s residence and Mary Mount Farm. At the Mount small groups formed for recreation, prayer, and study.

*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*



After the closure of Mount Saint Benedict Academy, Marian Hall was used for conferences and retreats, such as the Progoff workshop led by Sister Virginia Evard from Winnipeg, MB, Canada.

The sisters chose to share their life by establishing an Oblate program which grew quickly. Oblates share in Benedictine values to the extent that their way of life permits.

Sister Cornelia's term ended on August 6, 1985, when Sister Joan LaCoursiere continued a current in the stream.

### Sister Joan LaCoursiere



Sister Joan LaCoursiere grew up in a family steeped in French-Canadian culture and the Catholic faith. She followed her sister, Sister Cuthbert, into the monastic community at Mount Saint Benedict.

Sister Mary Fay, in her short biography of

Sister Joan, wrote, "After her religious profession in 1940, Sister Joan spent over thirty seven years as a teacher and school administrator, a ministry in which she was effective, well-liked and successful . . ."

In 1978, Sister Joan accepted an appointment by Bishop Victor Balke as the pastoral coordinator of the parishes of Mentor and Fertile. She promoted lay leadership in these parishes along with an ecumenical spirit. Sister Joan left this ministry reluctantly when the community called to her to be prioress.

Once again, one of the challenges that faced the new prioress



Sister Joan teaches chemistry at Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks.



Sister Anselm Hammerling, President of the Federation of Saint Gertrude installs Sister Joan as prioress.

the dismay of many citizens of Red Lake Falls.

In 1986, Sister Joan began to receive reports about complaints at Saint Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes about patient care, in-service programs, and staff relationships. When the Council conferred with the management firm for Saint Mary's with these concerns, they promised to work on a plan of action to resolve them. Meanwhile, Sister Rebecca Wright contacted the community indicating

centered on the healthcare ministry. Due to low census, problems with physicians, the depressed economy of the area and the possibility of alternate uses for the Saint John's Hospital the city of Red Lake Falls and Northwestern Hospital accepted the sisters' proposal to terminate sponsorship of Saint John's to



Saint John's Hospital, Red Lake Fall closed due primarily to low census.



Saint John's Hospital, Browerville closed when the last physician left.



Saint Mary's Hospital, Detroit Lakes, was sold to Benedictine Health System.

that Benedictine Health System from Duluth might be interested in sponsorship of Saint Mary's. Benedictine Health System promised to emphasize quality care of the sick. The monastic council voted to sell the hospitals in Detroit Lakes and Browerville to BHS. When the sole physician in Browerville decided to move, there was no other option except to close Saint John's Hospital.

Funds from the sale of Saint Mary's helped begin a fund to be used for the retirement of the sisters. Despite this, the general financial condition of the community continued to be a challenge. One of the reasons for this was that fewer sisters were earning each year while healthcare and plant maintenance costs were increasing.



Sisters Joan and Evaristus with parishioners from Saint Joseph's in Fertile.

When sisters and other lay people were allowed to serve as pastoral associates and parish administrators, several sisters responded to the opportunity of pastoral and parish ministry.

The ministry of education also faced diminishment primarily because of the retirement of sisters. Sisters withdrew from Saint Philip's School in Bemidji and Saint Francis de Sales School in Moorhead.

Within the monastic community, one of the issues Sister Joan dealt with was a clarification of the essence of monastic life. Sisters realized that ministry flowed out of their monastic way of life. The sisters studied monastic economics, the meaning of monastic poverty, simple living and stewardship.

Sister Joan appointed Sister Mary Beth Banken as Development Director to explore options for Marian Hall. Mount Saint Benedict Center used the entire first floor, and parts of third and fourth floors provided accommodations for overnight Center guests. Sisters who came home in the summer also needed space. The sisters decided that Marian Hall would continue to be used for those purposes.

Another issue challenging the sisters was the care of elderly sisters. In light of their Saint Benedict's value of caring for their sick as Christ, the sisters decided to establish a healthcare unit where the sisters could live a monastic life for the rest of their lives.

During Lent, 1989, the sisters began a discernment process to elect a prioress. Sister Joan had announced that she would not accept nomination for another term. On June 23, the sisters chose Sister Eleanor Mueller as their prioress for a four-year term to begin in August 1989.

After the close of her term Sister Joan fulfilled her dream of working with the poor at Care and Share Center in Crookston where she taught English as a second language to persons from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. After three years at Care and Share, Sister Joan was asked to tend to the spiritual needs of the sisters in the healthcare unit.

Sister Mary Fay aptly wrote, "Sister Joan, as prioress, teacher, and pastoral minister, remained true to her vision, that of being a professional Benedictine woman, a leaven in the community, in the Church and the world."

Sister Joan passed the leadership of the community on to Sister Eleanor Mueller who continued the current in the stream of the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

*To be continued in later issues.*



*creative commons*



Bishop Hoeppner blesses one of the murals in the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict Addition.

## Sisters honored by Sacred Heart School

May 10, 2019, Sacred Heart School honored the Sisters of Saint Benedict for their service to the school. One-hundred forty-seven sisters served at Sacred Heart since 1919.

Sacred Heart has a good problem. The school has grown to such an extent that it needed to add five additional classrooms. Imagine a Catholic school having to add classrooms rather than closing! Sacred Heart honored the sisters by naming the new addition to the school Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict Addition. We hope that they will grow



**MIDDLE RIGHT:** The faces of Sisters Eileen Mohs, Judy Moen, and Marmion Karel exhibit the emotions they experienced during the dedication. **RIGHT:** Students, carrying signs thanking the sisters, line the hall to the cafeteria.

Please turn the page.





Monsignor Mike Foltz blesses the mural of the Good Shepherd.

so much that this will not be the last addition they will need to add.

The dedication ceremony began with Bishop Michael Hoeppner blessing the addition. Bishop Hoeppner reminded the attendees that Jesus Christ is the reason for the school. Monsignor Mike Foltz, pastor of Sacred Heart parish expressed gratitude to the sisters for their service to the school. The audience made up of Sacred Heart students and alumni responded with a standing ovation. Sister Shawn Carruth, prioress of Mount Saint Benedict, expressed the feelings of the sisters when she said that the



A crucifix is placed in a classroom.

sisters are humbled by the decision of the school to name the addition after the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

Part of the dedication ceremony was a procession throughout the elementary school led by the Knights of Columbus to place crucifixes donated by the sisters in the classrooms.

The sisters took seats in the commons area for the unveiling of three murals one of the child Jesus, one of Jesus with the children and one of the Good Shepherd. The main attraction is a wall made of glass which has a giant cross that divides the wall into four parts. The corners have a Benedictine medal displayed in them. At the crossing is an image of the Sacred Heart. The Benedictine motto “That in all things God may be glorified.” is at the top and bottom of he cross. By the time all these were unveiled, there was hardly a dry eye among the sisters.

Many sisters commented that the most poignant part of the ceremony was walking between two lines of students holding signs that said, “Thank you, sisters.”

The Sisters of Saint Benedict return their gratitude to the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of Sacred Heart School.



Bethlehem this day resembles heaven,  
hearing from the stars the singing  
of angelic voices. Ask not how. For  
where God wills, nature yields. For  
He willed. He had the power. He  
descended. He redeemed. All things  
move in obedience to God. This day  
He Who is born and He Who is  
becomes what He is not. He is God  
become man, yet not departing from  
His Godhead. Saint John Chrysostom

# Remembering . . .

## Sister Catherine Merck, OSB



Catherine Louise Merck was born in Ada, MN on June 1, 1942, the youngest of seven children of Anthony J. and Margaret (Jerome) Merck. She attended Saint Rose of Lima school in Argyle, MN from first to eighth grades. She attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy as a five-day

boarder and graduated with the class of 1960. In her senior year she entered Mount Saint Benedict convent and that summer received the habit of a Benedictine sister and a new name, Sister Natalie. She made her first profession of vows in 1961 and perpetual profession in 1966. Some years later she returned to her baptismal name and preferred to be known as Sister Cathi.

Sister Cathi was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in her mid-twenties. Despite the unpredictable and cumulative physical limitations it imposed on her, Sister Cathi attained a broad education and filled a number of responsible roles.

She earned a bachelor degree in business administration and took opportunities for courses in topics ranging from monastic life to film studies, from team leadership to interior design. Her energy and interests always ran to whatever was uplifting and inclusive.

She used her education, her savvy and talents to contribute in a variety of significant ways to Mount Saint Benedict community and others. She was an engaging and welcome presence on the staff of Corbett College in Crookston, Colegio Santa Maria in Bogota, Colombia and Holy Spirit parish in Fargo, ND. She was monastery treasurer for a time and later the director of community self-study and ongoing formation. She was a subpriorress for Sister Cornelia Gust.

In 1999 Sister Cathi was elected as the tenth prioress of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. During her five-year term she consistently approached the critical issues of the community by calling the Sisters to listening and dialogue. She engaged qualified consultants and seasoned facilitators to gain and process solid information for the entire community. She trusted fundamental Benedictine values, met new challenges with an open mind and relied on the monastic chapter to make well-considered decisions. During her term the community took new initiatives for providing care of elderly infirm sisters and began to vacate and remove outlying buildings on the Mount campus. Whether they were concerns of the community or of individual Sisters, as prioress she addressed them with discretion, fairness, consultation and courage.

Sister Cathi was a friendly person, light-hearted, interested and appreciative of others. She was gentle in manner, even genteel. Being herself neither defensive nor confrontational, she could be stunned by rudeness.

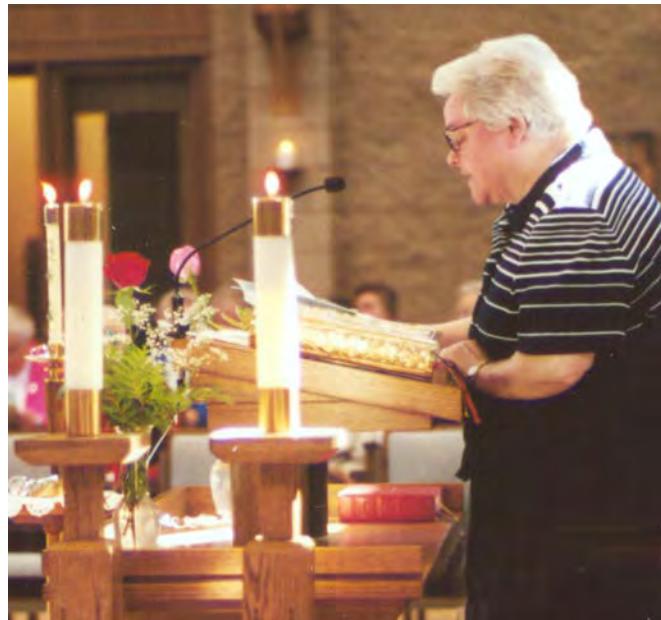
She was modest about her achievements. She seemed most proud of having established the custom of a

continually filled candy dish in the subpriorress' office. Her accepting nature and turn toward enjoyment were matched with a brave inner strength of which she may not have been completely aware.

Due to increasing disability, Sister Cathi moved to skilled care in Villa Saint Vincent in August 2013.

Until her last illness, she transported herself around the facility in a motorized chair. She died February 5, 2019 at Altru Hospital in Grand Forks, ND.

She is preceded in death by her parents, brothers Anthony, Jr. and Leo and her sister, Anna Marie. She is survived by brothers Lawrence Michael, Robert and Edward, her niece Sister Anita Whalen of Mount Saint Benedict, many other nieces and nephews and the Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.



Sister Cathi leads the community in prayer.

## Sister Lucille Schafer



Sister Lucille Schafer (88) died at Villa Saint Vincent, Crookston, on January 17, 2019.

Lucille Schafer, daughter of Rose (Kuld) Schafer and George Schafer came into this world on December 20, 1930. She was the third of four children, two brothers: Raymond and John and a sister, Sister Yvonne.

Sister Lucille said that one of the things she was most grateful for was the Catholic faith passed on to her by her parents.

Lucille started her education in the rural public-school district #63. When she was in the sixth grade, she transferred to Saint Joseph's School in Red Lake Falls. She attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy for high school. She graduated magna cum laude from the College of Saint Benedict in Saint Joseph, MN. Later she received a master's degree in theological studies from Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN.

Lucille joined the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston on January 2, 1948. She made her temporary monastic profession on July 5, 1949 and her final profession on July 11, 1952.

Sister Lucille taught in elementary schools in Crookston, East Grand Forks, Red Lake Falls, Benson, Mahnomen, and Detroit Lakes. She also taught in a catechetical school in Slayton. She served as principal in Red Lake Falls, Mahnomen and Detroit Lakes. Later she served as pastoral associate in Red Lake Falls, and as a foster grandparent in Thief River Falls where she also served as a safe environment worker for Saint Bernard Parish.

Sister Lucille was known for her quiet, gentle ways in the classroom and out of it. She declared that even if she had not entered the monastic community, she would have been a teacher.

Sister Lucille wrote, "Throughout the years I sought and found my way of seeking God in living and praying in community with the Sisters of Saint Benedict. I further tried to pursue God's call through my ministry of working

with people and parishes and schools. Years of true fulfillment were found in teaching, administration, serving as pastoral associate and in tutoring students.

"I served as a parish pastoral minister and as a school tutor in the Foster Grandparent Program. Opportunities to travel to Rome, Medjugorje and Croatia were added occasions for spiritual and cultural enrichment.

"Now it is with a grateful heart that I glance back over the past years observing all the favors God has extended to me."



Sister Lucille in her office as principal.

Sister Lucille was preceded in death by her parents and her siblings: Ray, John and Sister Yvonne. She is survived by many nieces and nephews and by the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

## Sister Mary Jean Gust



Sister Mary Jean Gust died on July 31, 2019, at Mount Saint Benedict, Crookston, MN.

Sister Mary Jean was the third child of George and Julia Gust of rural East Grand Forks, Minnesota. She said that her childhood days were filled with peace. She loved school and loved to read. She also enjoyed weeding in the family garden, though not neglecting

household chores. Sundays were special days of going to church and visiting with grandparents.

When sisters came to her family's home asking for donations, they often brought a pail of Mount honey and one time brought small rosaries for the children.

Mary Jean and her elder sister Margaret had the good fortune of attending high school at Sacred Heart in East Grand Forks and grew to love their teachers, the Benedictine sisters. They appreciated the dedication and interest that they had for each student. In 1946 Mary Jean was inspired to take steps to begin her life as a Sister of Saint Benedict, together with her older sister, Margaret.

Mary Jean and Margaret entered the community on June 24, 1946. They entered the novitiate and were invested with the Benedictine habit on March 19, 1947, when they got their religious names. Mary Jean received the name Sister Ameliana, and Margaret became Sister Cornelius. Sister Ameliana later returned to her baptismal name, Sister Mary Jean. During her first years in the novitiate and juniorate, she grew in understanding the Divine Office and the monastic life. She didn't really understand what meditation was about but she did her best to practice it, even though she might fall asleep during the meditation period which she admitted was the Lord's way of showing her she needed more rest.

Her education prepared her for teaching and administration of schools. After eighteen years of teaching, she became the principal at Sacred Heart Grade School, working with parents and students in a loving and supportive way. In 1978 Sister Mary Jean began serving as Director of Schools and Religious Education for the Diocese of Crookston. Under the leadership of Bishop Victor Balke, she served in that capacity for eight years. She put on thousands of miles visiting parochial schools in the rural Crookston Diocese. As such, she developed close relationships with numerous people across the far-flung diocese. She also served in the same capacity in the Fargo Diocesan Office and developed relationships there also.

A special opportunity presented itself when she was able to accompany Sister Karen Violette to Belgium to help a group of contemplative semi-cloistered Benedictine Sisters in their retreat and outreach programs. The year she spent there was blessed with spiritual and physical renewal.

When she returned from Belgium she began work at the Cathedral parish in Crookston, on staff with Deacon

Denny Bivens, who introduced her to the parish needs and programs.

The pastor at that time, Monsignor Roger Grundhaus, asked if she would consider going to Fertile to be a pastoral presence to the people in the parish and community and to assist him with his parish responsibilities.

Sister Mary Jean



Sister Mary Jean and her sister, Sister Cornelius.

was a presence not only to Catholics but to the entire community which is predominantly non-Catholic. After many years at Saint Joseph Church in Fertile, she realized that she needed to retire and return to the Mount in 2016 to tend to her failing health and live a more relaxed Benedictine monastic life.

Sister Mary Jean is preceded in death by her parents, George and Julia Gust, brothers Joseph, Robert, and Gerard and sister Sister Cornelius Gust and sisters-in-law Rosemary, Alice and Risong. She is survived by sister Betty Ann (Burnell) Skelton, brothers Timothy and Philip (Zenaida), sisters-in-law Susan and June Gust, many nieces and nephews and her Benedictine community.

## Sister Petronilla Hermann



Sister Petronilla Hermann 93, died Thursday, August 16, 2019, at Villa Saint Vincent, Crookston, MN.

Agnes Hermann was born in Georgetown, Minnesota, on November 30, 1925, the oldest girl of four of Andrew and Delia (Denery) Hermann. They had a brother a year older than Agnes. When Agnes was born on the feast of Saint Andrew,

her parents considered naming her Andrea, but her baby brother was named Andrew, so the name Agnes was chosen instead.

Agnes attended Georgetown Elementary School (a two-room school) for eight years. Her high school years were spent at Mount St. Benedict High Academy in Crookston, Minnesota. After that, she entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict. Upon becoming a novice, she received the Benedictine habit and the name Sister Petronilla. Her sisters Mary (Sister Olivia) and Angela (Sister Agatha) also became members of the community.

In 1944 the community enrolled her at Saint Cloud Hospital School of Nursing in Saint Cloud, MN. Upon graduation in 1947, she was assigned to active duty as a registered nurse for one year in the operating room, followed by ten years as head nurse on the surgical floor first at Saint Vincent's Hospital, then at Saint Francis Hospital in Crookston.

In 1957 Sister Charitas Brophy, who was the hospital administrator, asked her to give up her beloved surgical nursing for one year to fill in as the director of St. Francis Hospital School of Practical Nursing. Twenty-one years later, when Sister Petronilla was requesting to leave nursing, Sister Charitas was chair of the Mount Saint Benedict Personnel Committee. The committee granted her request

Her years of nursing/nursing education were happy, fulfilling, and successful. As a nurse educator, she recruited a dedicated and efficient faculty, and a strong camaraderie developed.

When Saint Francis Hospital closed in 1970, so did the school of nursing, but Sister Petronilla and her staff became the core-faculty hired by the public school system to direct the newly formed Agassiz Valley School of Practical Nursing. Sister Petronilla was the director of this program and was instrumental in developing a plan by which LPNs could work to become registered

nurses without having to repeat classes common to both programs. When this plan was in place in 1979, Sister Petronilla felt called to retire from nursing.

After earning a Master's degree in spirituality/spiritual direction, Sister Petronilla was assigned to the formation department for one year and then to spiritual direction and to working with the spirituality component for the MSB Center Ministry Program.

Living at the Mount was a new experience for Sister Petronilla. The only other time was her novitiate year. Being able to engage in community life, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, was a gifted experience. When Sister Cathi Merck became prioress in 1999, she asked Sister Petronilla to accept the assignment of writing the intercessory prayers for Morning and Evening Prayer



Sister Petronilla receives Crookston's 1979 Nurse of the Year Award.

along with the Eucharist. Sister Petronilla found that writing these prayers was a life-giving assignment and one that she fulfilled until 2012 when failing vision forced her retirement. Health issues were constant in Sister Petronilla's life. In 2010 she moved into Good Shepherd Hall, the community's the Assisted Living Department, and she moved to Villa Saint Vincent in 2018.

Sister Petronilla enjoyed sewing. In any spare time, she was at her sewing machine or doing embroidery or crocheting. With failing eyesight, Sister Petronilla had to give up fine needlework but took up a new needlepoint craft with plastic canvas. Whenever she sent items to the Polk County Fair, she won blue/red honors for her crocheted and craft items.

Sister Petronilla was preceded in death by her parents Andrew and Delia Hermann, brother Andrew and sisters Helen Lutgens and Sister Olivia Hermann. She is survived by Sister Agatha Hermann, many nieces and nephews and the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston.



SAINT BENEDICT  
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Crookston, MN 56716-2799

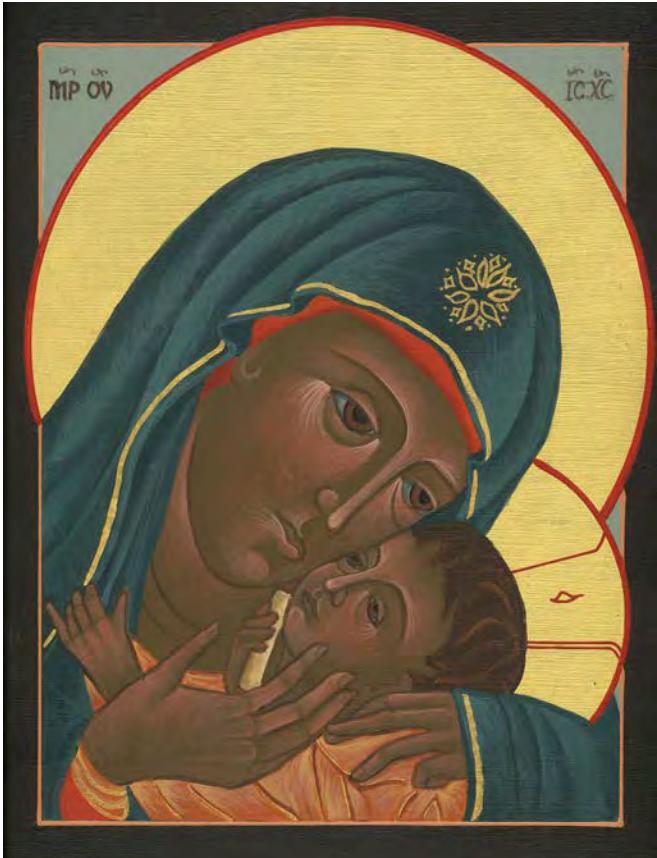
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Please let us know if you have remembered the Sisters of Saint Benedict in your will and estate planning.

Please contact: Heidi Whiting,  
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*He was created of a mother whom He created. He was carried by hands that He formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy. He, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute.*  
*saint Augustine*

