



the Crookston Benedictine



Fall, 2017 Vol. 30.2
Mount Saint Benedict Monastery
620 Summit Ave. Crookston, MN 56716

from our prioress . . .



Sister Shawn Carruth

Early this summer Sister Kathleen and I attended a workshop titled “Fidelity to the Journey.” The workshop was designed for leaders of religious communities and addressed the challenges we face after several decades of large changes in religious life. We have seen our numbers decrease and our age increase. Ministries we’ve built and nurtured have changed and many

of them are now entrusted to others. Our Church and society, too, have experienced sweeping changes in nearly every area of our lives. The workshop presentations pointed out in various ways that our response in these times of change and uncertainty requires clarity in articulating our core identity. In a time when we do not have clarity about the structures of our future, we can proceed faithfully knowing our identity as Gospel people.

In this issue of *The Crookston Benedictine* you meet our sisters who observed the 60th and 70th anniversaries of their monastic vows. In a time when faithful lifelong

commitment is not easily undertaken by many, they have persevered in witness to the joys of long term fidelity. They show us that fidelity is not dogged determination to do everything we have always done in the way we’ve always done it. They live fidelity to God and to community. They faithfully observe God’s teaching in the monastery (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue 50). Like all the baptized they live as they are named, that is, as members of the community of the faithful. We all listen to God’s call to be with and for the sake of others, with the gifts we are given, in this, our time.

May God bless us all as we continue our journey in faith.



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, Lorraine Kraft, and Yvonne Shafer, staff.

Color photo of the cross on the cover by Laura Vosika.

Liturgy Schedule

Morning Prayer:	11:20	am Sunday
	8:30	am Monday - Saturday
Noon Prayer	11:50	am Monday - Saturday
Evening Prayer	4:30	pm Sunday
	5:00	pm Monday - Friday
Eucharist	8:00	am Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
	11:15	am Wednesday
	4:30	pm Saturday (Sunday Mass)

Jubilate Deo!

Rejoice in the Lord!

Sisters Dolores Norman and Paschal Martin observed their 70th anniversary of monastic profession on July 26, and Sisters Rachel Beitz and Dianne Marsh celebrated their 60th anniversary.



Sister Dolores Norman

Dolores Norman, the daughter of Neil and Mary Agnes (Langdon) Norman, was born March 1, 1926, in East Grand Forks. She was educated in the public schools, graduating from Grand Forks Central High School in 1944. After attending the College of Saint Benedict in Saint Joseph for her first year of college she entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict in Crookston. "This first year in residence at Saint Benedict's," she said, "was an

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Sister Paschal Martin

Lyda Martin was born June 17, 1923 in Oslo, Minnesota. Her father, John J. Martin of German descent, came from Canada; her mother, Laura Iverson, was of Norwegian descent. Lyda, the youngest of fourteen children went to a country elementary school and then attended high school in Oslo. She came to Mount Saint Benedict in 1943, received the name Sister Paschal as a novice, and made her final profession on July 17, 1947.

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Sister Dolores

unforgettable experience. The liberal arts framework in that freshman year fostered a love for learning that still impacts my life on a daily basis.”

She came to the Mount in 1944 and was given the name Sister Paul when she became a novice. She later went back to her baptismal name.

Teacher preparation began in 1948 when she attended the Saint Paul Archdiocesan Teachers’ College. This was followed by teaching assignments in Rosen, Osseo, and Crookston.

Her formal education continued at the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and Saint Louis University, MO. She majored in history and political science, and received BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees.

While teaching history and French at Mount Saint Benedict, Sister Dolores was selected as a team member of Project Bridge, a program funded by the Ford Foundation and designed to improve race relations. At the site for the project (Cleveland, Ohio) Sister Dolores was part of a team teaching an Urban History course at Saint John’s College.

Sister Dolores was involved in the Neighborhood Project, a Saint Louis University Literacy Program, teaching reading to adults in the Indian Studies Program, and teaching Ojibway history to American Indian inmates at the Saint Cloud State Reformatory. This included advocacy

letter writing in support of women and children and led to accepting a position as Professor of History at Bemidji State University.

In the course of her professional life Sister Dolores was involved in many organizations and received many awards and grants. Among them was the opportunity to study at the University of Paris in France under a Fulbright Scholarship award. She was listed in the Directory of American Scholars and she received a faculty award as Teacher of the Year. She received annual recognition by the Indian Studies Department at Bemidji State University. A final award dear to the heart of Sister Dolores was the 1997 Bucky Award designating her as fan of the year in support of the Bemidji State University’s Men’s Hockey team.

Sister Dolores taught twenty-five years at Bemidji State University as Professor of History, and then retired in 1993



Sister Karen assists Sister Rosella in congratulating 60th jubilarian Sister Anne Marie.

as Professor of History with emerita status. Sister Dolores had a life-long love of learning and found her many travels to Europe and Canada life-expanding. She especially enjoyed her visits to national libraries in the United States, Canada, France and England.

At the Mount she became a teacher helper at Sunrise Center for Families and Children. At present Sister Dolores resides at the Summit Apartments. In her words, "I spent all of my life teaching and it has been a memorable experience for me to have taught at all levels: elementary, high school, university and adult education." In respect to

the past sixty years, Sister Dolores said, "Moves in one's life are a road map. In my experience happenings were good ones. . . . There have been few unexpected turns and a constancy of beliefs, few defeats, no intense sufferings, and no big changes except societal or ecclesiastical ones. The progression from convent to convent or from university dorm to university dorm has caused me to take stock. Many times, I've had to decide what to leave and what to take during the search for the sacred." She continued, "The strength and support of the community have meant the most to me."



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Sister Paschal

Sister Paschal received a bachelor's degree from the University of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul. Later she did graduate work at Mount Angel in Oregon. Her fourteen years as an elementary teacher were spent at Thief River Falls, Moorhead, Rosen, Mahtomedi, East Grand Forks and Benson. She taught Religious Education classes and worked with the migrant summer school program doing catechetical work. She mentioned that she enjoyed working with liturgy and helping with junior and senior high school retreats.

In 1977, Sister Paschal was serving as Coordinator of Religious Education at Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Seattle, WA when Father Richard Stohr asked her to live in Matthew house, a new venture sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Located next to the Washington State Reformatory, it became a safe, nurturing place where wives and girlfriends and children could stay while finding more permanent accommodations.

Word about Matthew House spread swiftly among the inmates and a steady stream of families began arriving at all hours, looking for a meal, and help in finding a place to stay. Besides providing food, clothing and child care, Sister Paschal found herself becoming a sympathetic confidante to women. She volunteered because it bothered her that inmates are served three square meals a day, while many of their families go hungry. In her words, "Whatever the prisoners have done, you can't punish the children and women because their husbands have gotten into trouble."

According to Father Stohr, "Various studies have shown that the greatest hope for the inmate making it on the outside is if they have some kind of stable family life to return to."

While Sister Paschal's work was focused on nurturing inmates' families she also counseled prisoners during a weekly Friday night visit in the prison chapel. She could offer only sympathy and common sense advice, but, nevertheless the inmates appreciated her efforts. After her years of ministering to prisoners and their families, she returned to Mount Saint Benedict due to failing eyesight. In time she moved to the Summit Apartments and later to Villa Saint Vincent where she now resides.

Volunteers recognized for service



Marilyn Amiot and Marilyn Clasuon enjoy each other's company during the volunteer recognition dinner.

60-year jubilarians



*Sister Anne Marie
Geray*

I was born Janet, but I've been Anne Marie much longer. I suppose one could say I came from good German stock. My father came from a tradition of strong religious convictions. Church was everything to him. My mother came from a less rigid religious background. Her family laughed a lot. They played "Solo" for pennies and didn't mind drinking a bit. Wouldn't you know – I inherited most of my genes from my father: long life, strict adherence to responsibilities, firm Catholic faith, and, of course, not as much "fun loving" and laughter from my mother's side of the family.

After college, I taught a few years before I decided to enter the community. My father, although he didn't speak much about it, was pleased. My mom wasn't sure it was a good idea. About this time she was suffering from her third bout with cancer and wasn't up to any unusual struggle. I entered Mount Saint Benedict Monastery two years after she died. I think she was

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Sister Dianne Maresh

Sister Dianne Maresh, daughter of Mary and Alex Maresh, lived her early years on a farm near Fordville, ND. When she was 5 the farm was sold and the family moved to Pisek, ND, where she attended the public school.

Dianne's mother, aunt, and grandmother were women of prayer. The family attended Mass and prayed the rosary together. While in the sixth grade, Dianne attended a parish mission, heard the need for religious vocations, and became determined to offer her life to God's service. After completing her elementary education Dianne chose to attend Mount Saint Benedict Academy which she describes as a place of peace filled with a sense of God's presence. During her senior year she became a postulant. After graduation she entered the novitiate and was given the name Sister Rosamund, but she later changed back to her baptismal name.

She continued her education

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Sister Rachel Beitz

Sister Rachel, daughter of Lawrence and Loretta (Hemberger) Beitz, grew up on a farm near Hillsboro, ND. She completed grades one through eight at the Herberg Township rural school and her secondary education at Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston.

During her high school years she was drawn to the Benedictine way of life and entered the Benedictine community in Crookston. She graduated from Saint Teresa's College in Winona and taught for 34 years in parish schools in the Crookston Diocese. Sister Rachel attended the School of Theology at Saint John's University, Collegeville, participated in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program in Minot, ND, and became a certified chaplain with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC). She ministered as Pastoral Care Director/Chaplain at Villa Saint Vincent/ The Summit from 1996-2016.

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Polk County Fair brings prizes



Sister Adeline won a ribbon for her embroidered dishtowel set. Sister Yvonne Schafer won several ribbons for her crocheting; two blue ribbons and a purple one. Siste Eileen Mohs received a red one for a hardanger runner. She also won a blue one.



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Sister Anne Marie

all right with that decision. By that time my younger sister was in the upper grades and was able to keep the household going.

My early years in the community seemed like being submerged in a foreign culture: new rituals, the Latin language for the Office, common prayer, a new way of living. Everything was totally different from my former life. But I was determined. I had entered; I would stay. I stayed through the novitiate, working in the garden with Sister Benigna and my “group.” I stayed as junior sister when we all took on our “new assignments:” Some were teachers, some went on to school. I changed from Miss Geray, to Miss Janet, to Sister Anne Marie – same person,

different names. I now wore my watch on my cincture, not on my wrist. I stayed as a finally professed religious and will be this until I join my sisters in our cemetery.

I’ve changed through the years. I’ve grown in my love for this life – the prayers, the gradually increasing appreciation of my sisters, of my family, the people I work with, and my God. It is a good life. I think I’m better off here than I’d be in any other vocation. There are ups and downs in every life. It’s what we do with what we’re handed that counts. There are problems and joys in every life. Would I do it all over again? Yes! Thank you, God, for this wild, wonderful life. Life IS good!

-- Sister Anne Marie Geray

Sustain me, O God that I may live. Disappoint me not in my hope.

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Sister Dianne

at Corbett College, Crookston, and Viterbo College, LaCrosse, WI, where she graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and an area of concentration in social studies. Later she received a Master of Arts in elementary education from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Education as a Reading Specialist from the University of Texas-Pan American.

After teaching for 20 years in parochial schools in Minnesota, Sister Dianne went to Texas where she taught for 13 years in public elementary schools in the lower Rio Grande Valley while at the same time working for social issues through Valley Interfaith. She spent 13 years as the Family Literacy Coordinator under Community Action Council of South Texas and is currently providing training for Head Start and Early Head Start staff and families, mentoring teachers, writing grants, providing free books for ownership through Reading Is Fundamental, and occasionally speaking at Head Start and Child Care Conferences, and at parent banquets.

Among the highlights of the past fifty years, Sister Dianne lists her final profession as a Benedictine Sister, her 40th anniversary gift of a trip to the Holy Land, planned by her parents and provided by her brother and sister, and her opportunity to study Benedictine monasticism one summer in Rome.

Sister Dianne says, "Though jubilees celebrate the past, life looks to the future." In her earlier years, Sister Dianne dreamed of spreading God's word in the foreign missions. This might explain her love of ministry in southern Texas which she says was like a foreign culture at first. However,

Sister dreamed of teaching young sisters in Africa to help prepare them to address the educational needs of the many orphans there. Guess what! She did get to go to Africa to teach English to a group of Benedictine sisters in Tanzania.

When Sister Dianne returned to Rio Grande City, she took a job helping people to obtain their GED.

Whatever the future, Sister Dianne prays for the health to do the work of God "who strengthens us and who works through us...in all times and all circumstances."

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Sister Rachel

Sister Rachel claims the beginning of the Prologue of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*,

"Listen with the ear of your heart," has been her lifetime goal. She says:

"My personal striving at this time of my life is well stated in Scripture:

This is what God asks of you, only this
to act justly,
to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

My 60 years of life as a Benedictine have been filled with many gifts and blessings. I am grateful. I am thankful. I am filled with joy.

--Sister Rachel Beitz



Sisters Dolores Norman, Anne Marie Geray, Rachel Beitz and Dianne Maresh



Sisters empower women of South Texas

Sister Rosalia Fink and Sister Jeannine Spain returned home this summer after spending several years in Rio Grande city, TX establishing a shelter for women and children in one of the poorest areas of the country. The area is alive with the drug trade which adversely affects the lives of the people.

One of the first things they did was to establish a board and to name the project. The name they settled on was South Texas Empowerment of Women Center (STEW). Sister Rosalia says she looked under every cactus plant to see if it grew money in order to build the shelter.

One donation the project received was the gift title to three acres of land (valued at \$600,000). When STEW applied to the IRS to be a non-profit with a 501(c)3 designation the center was told it was necessary to have the gift title rewritten and state that the donor had the right to get the land back if the shelter was not built on it. This meant they were back to square one regarding their

presumably for the drug cartel—threw Molotov cocktails into the buildings and burned them down. The D.A. then gave them the insurance money to build elsewhere instead because the area was not safe. STEW received a \$100,000 insurance settlement for the buildings.

Anybody who is acquainted with Sister Rosalia, knows that she sets her mind on a goal and works until she achieves it! The burning of the buildings was a setback, but that is all it was, because Sister Rosalia was convinced that she was commissioned by God to build the shelter. She tells the story of sitting praying the Liturgy of the Hours and hearing someone call her name. She was reminded of the story of Samuel when God calls out to him and Samuel answers, “Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.” That is what Sister Rosalia did. She heard God’s call and she responded.

Sister had to convince the STEW board that the real need was for a shelter rather than transitional housing as



STEW shelter for women and children who are victims of abuse or domestic violence.

501(c)3 status as a non-profit but the attorney started work immediately and they got it in to the IRS on time.

The District Attorney tried to help them get started on the shelter by giving them land and a building that had been confiscated from the drug cartel. There were a few buildings on this property, and he decided to give them the largest building but the night before they were ready to start cleaning it so they could use it as a shelter, someone

they wanted. The decision was made to build a shelter immediately with the possibility of building transitional housing later.

She had met Arnaldo Garcia in 2010, and she called on him and presented her idea. He saw her vision, and agreed to help her. Arnaldo was a builder and contractor who had just completed building a 36 unit apartment complex. He accepted the position of project manager /construction superintendent.

The first building completed in November 2014 included living spaces for Sisters Jeannine and Rosalia, information center, and offices. When the sisters moved into the building in November, there was still much to be completed. Living space was shared with out-of-state volunteers who helped while the Center was being set-up. There were many tasks that needed to be completed: finishing the shelter itself, setting up the business procedures, grant-writing, furnishing, and a myriad of other details.

The shelter had been promised a grant from the federal government for up to \$500,000, but when the grant finally came in March, 2016, the amount was for the entire Rio Grande Valley. The decision was made to scale back and build a temporary two-story shelter for four families at a time. Each apartment has access to a kitchenette and a common area and is furnished with a full bed, bunk beds and a rocking chair. The center opened in 2016 and is running under full board control. Arnaldo is now the director of the center, and his son is the cook and security guard!

The shelter serves the territory around Rio Grande City, but will also take victims of domestic abuse from other areas in Texas.

One example of that was a young woman who had been forced into the drug trade by her boyfriend. They compelled her to drive drugs from place-to-place, but she got caught by law enforcement and she spent two years in prison. Upon her release, she received help to avoid the “druggies”. She regained custody of her child and Texas Child Protective Services took them to STEWC which was empty at the time. Child Protective Services issued a restraining order against the father of the child.

Jesus told us that whatever we did to the least of these, we did to him. May Sister Rosalia’s and Jeannine’s commitment to “the least of these” be a blessing for generations to come.

Who are these determined women who worked so hard to get this shelter on its feet? Let us introduce them!

Sister Rosalia

When she was a young girl, Sister Rosalia Fink never dreamed that she would spend years serving the poor in South Texas. But she did!

Sister Rosalia’s journey to Texas began on February 20, 1932, in Britton, SD as second youngest of the five children of Julius and Emilia (Bauer) Fink. The family later moved to a farm east of Mahanomen, MN where she attended Saint Michael’s School and then Mahanomen High School through her junior year. She attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy for most of her senior year, but she graduated from Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks. In January, 1946, she and her sister, Sister Clarissa, entered Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. In 1948, she made her first monastic profession and in 1951 she made her final monastic profession. Immediately after making her first profession, she was assigned to Sacred Heart where she taught fourth grade for four years. Sister Rosalia’s teaching ministry took her also to Mahanomen, Thief River Falls, Cathedral, Mahtomedi, Osseo and to Asherton, TX, where she taught at Saint Thomas School and was the principal of the public high school for six



Sister Rosalia with one of the advocates for abused women.



Sister Rosalia

years. The last 14 years of her teaching ministry were spent back at Sacred Heart where she taught in the high school. After her years at Sacred Heart, Sister Rosalia worked in the Mount business office for eight years.

Sister Rosalia's college education was varied and in three different educational institutions: the College of Saint Teresa in Winona,

Concordia College and Minnesota State University, both in Moorhead. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and accounting from Minnesota State University, Moorhead.

Sister Rosalia always had a place in her heart for the poor, and in 1990 she went to Rio Grande City, TX, located on the Rio Grande River and a major route for drug smuggling. From 1990 to 2006, Sister Rosalia was employed by the Community Action Council of South Texas (CACST) as an administrator helping employees

provide good service to the poor. She worked with 500 employees in Starr, Jim Hogg, Duval and Zapata counties, some of the poorest in the country.

In 2006, Sister Rosalia "retired," left CACST and returned to Mount Saint Benedict where she was the liaison between the manager of the Community Agriculture Garden and the monastic community. In 2010, she returned to Rio Grande City to fulfill a dream to start and open a shelter for women and children suffering from abuse and domestic violence. She returned from Rio Grande City in August, 2017, having completed her mission there.

Upon returning home, Sister Rosalia promptly got involved in the tasks of the monastery, and she contributes to the community life of the sisters by distributing the mail, caring for the sacristy and preparing the chapel for liturgical services, and performing whatever other tasks need doing. When she is not involved in contributing to the quality of the life of the sisters, she is crocheting items for the gift shop at the speed of a "mile a minute." Stop in the gift shop sometime to see the fruits of her handiwork! Welcome home Sister Rosalia!

Sister Jeannine

Sister Jeannine has been back from mission work in Texas since May, 2017.

It wasn't exactly planned this way, but an accident

caused a major change in her plans. Now there's time to take care of her own health and healing needs.

Her life has taken many twists and turns in her 67 years as a member of the Benedictine community. Sister Jeannine was born in 1929 in Grand Forks—her mother was Lucy Kuebar and her father Bernard Spain (Spehn). Two brothers: Charles and David, were also born to this family.

Jeannine was educated at Sacred Heart School, East Grand Forks, except for a year when she was sent to live with an aunt in Ironwood, MI. After high school she was happy



One of the shelter rooms for victims of abuse and the children



Sister Jeannine

to get acquainted with young nuns already novices at the Mount. Her vocation to the religious life was nurtured by her grandmother's prayers and the hospitality of the Benedictine sisters. She entered Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston in 1948 along with Sisters Rochelle Kielty and Janet Huderle. At the

end of that summer, they were glad to welcome two more postulants who became her good companions: Sister Mary Ann Welsh and Sister Georgiana Loisel. It was a busy introduction to the life of a sister at the Mount: kitchen work, garden work, and laundry duties, under the direction of Sister Pancratius.

Sister Jeannine was introduced to nursing at Saint Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes. She attended the Saint Cloud School of Nursing, and became a registered nurse. She supervised and taught at the Saint Francis School of Nursing, leading students to receive their LPN certificates. After time with the student nurses and seeing to their certification, she spent three years at Saint Mary's Hospital in Duluth, earning a bachelor of science in nursing from the College of Saint Scholastica.

At the end of this experience, she had the opportunity to do further studies and she chose the University of Washington. There she earned a master's degree in psychiatry with emphasis on drug and alcohol addictions, which she put to good use while she was employed at the Hazelden Institute in Minnesota.

After leaving Hazelden, Sister Jeannine returned to Detroit Lakes

where she supervised the opening of an outpatient clinic to counsel DWI clients.

Between 1988 to 1991, she did home nursing, served as driver for sisters at the Mount and worked at Care and Share, a homeless shelter, accompanying Central American refugees to the Canadian border.

In 1991, Sister Jeannine went to Texas and was employed by Community Action Council of South Texas at Rio Grande City as director of nursing for five outpatient clinics. For a period of six years she worked with 7th to 12th grade students, using a special curriculum stressing responsibility to self and family.

She assisted Sister Rosalia Fink in the effort of building up a shelter for women and children in abusive home situations. All of this was accomplished because of their trust and gratitude to God.

Sister Jeannine's life has been dedicated to nursing and education for many, while caring for the poor and needy both in Minnesota and Texas. She states that she appreciates nature, loves her Benedictine community and her family, community, and professional life. Believe it or not, she has found time for fishing, hunting, rooting for the Twins and Vikings, and appreciating nature. For all of her sisters, she is a loyal friend with a unique sense of humor!



Sister Shawn blesses Sister Agatha during the annual missioning ceremony while Sisters Brian, Anne Marie and Vivian wait in line.



Sister Mary Jean Gust

was honored by a reception on August 14, 2017 as she completed her seventeen years of parish ministry at Saint Joseph's Church in Fertile. The evening started with a celebration of Eucharist at 6:00 p.m. and continued with a festive "potluck" supper, until late in the evening.

Hundreds of parishioners and friends from the town and surrounding area joined Sister Mary Jean in this rather bittersweet event. The Mass was a joyful uniting of hearts and voices, which set the tone of appreciation and gratitude for all that Sister Mary Jean has meant for her friends and the parishioners of Saint Joseph's Church. Father Joe Richards presided at the Eucharist and invited Sister to speak, sharing some of the highlights of her ministry at the parish and of Fertile. Sister Mary Jean recalled her early years at

Saint Joseph's parish from May 2000 - 2011, first serving as Pastoral Associate with Monsignor Roger Grundhaus, then for a year with Father Tony Fernando until he was re-assigned to Saint Michael's parish in Mahanomen in May of 2011. For the next eight months Sister "ran the parish" depending on Bishop Balke and priests from the diocese who were available for Sunday Masses. It was a happy day when Father Joe Richards arrived as pastor in January of 2012. For a few of the early years, Sister Mary Jean was joined by her sister, Sister Cornelia Gust, who shared in the life and duties of parish life.

Sister Mary Jean addressed the people, expressing her

gratitude for the many activities for which she needed and appreciated their participation. To list a few of those activities, there were sacramental preparation for sacraments and records to be kept; religious instruction to be provided for children, youth, and adults; ministry to the sick and dying as well as to their families; and Communion ministry to those who were homebound. She



Sister Mary Jean greets two of her many friends from Fertile.

shared in the responsibility of working with volunteers, who had various roles in the finishing and furnishing of the new church. Not the least of Sister's list of things to be grateful for were the experience of addressing "things that came across my desk;" to the Moms and Dads who volunteered to teach the children and youth of the parish; to all who helped plan the annual Christmas programs and the Vacation Bible School held yearly; and to the persons who are carrying out their commitment to the "Safe Environment" program.

One young student recalled the story of the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, who for a long time remembered

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Sister Mary Jean

the incident happening at the Sand Hill River! Sister Mary Jean will never forget the incident of a 6-year-old's realization of his grandmother's death, reporting to her as she entered nursing home, with a ringing "She's gone!" She took him by the hand and asked him to bring her to his grandma's room. There she asked the family members standing by to join hands and pray the "Our Father." Grandma "Bergie" (a good Lutheran) had become her good friend during numerous visits at Fair Meadow Nursing Home during her illness. It was noticed that Sister Mary Jean had over the years, taken turns praying with the residents (Catholics and persons of all faiths) of the nursing home, and facilitating group Bible studies for them.

Sister was personally grateful for the help of parishioners who helped her set up her apartment when Father Joe became the resident pastor recent years; for their support when her mother, two brothers, and Sister Cornelia died; and finally, for all who surprised her with a memorable 85th birthday celebration. The parish has honored Sister Mary Jean, with a gift of the wood carved Stations of the Cross, which have been mounted in the



Sister Mary Jean visits with two young parishioners on whom the future of the Church depends.

nave of the church. Another gesture of gratitude was a gift to the Sisters of Saint Benedict, Crookston, by giving the name "Saint Benedict Hall" to the new social hall. Sister Mary Jean expressed over and over again her gratitude for being able to share herself in ministry to life at Saint Joseph's Church and the Fertile community.

New oblates received



ABOVE LEFT: Oblates renew their oblation: Christina Campos, Bev Wander, LouAnn McGlynn, Helen Schmitz, Nancy Cournia, Deb Armstrong, Rosemary Griffin, Dave Armstrong and Daria Habacheck. BOTTOM LEFT: Sister Kathleen McGeary hands oblate novice Elaine Jordan a copy of the Rule of Saint Benedict while Sister Shawn Carruth observes. ABOVE: Sister Shawn receives Heidi Whiting's final oblation as an oblate of Mount Saint Benedict while Sister Kathleen observes.



God -- found also in darkness

Sister Denise Schonhardt

Have you ever felt the need to just “hang on?” Have you ever experienced desperation so dire that the world seemed dark and there was no way out? Have you ever faced a darkness of soul so dense that even God seemed absent?

I believe in the God found in darkness. This is the God who is present in the most desperate times of our lives. This is also the God who called creation out of darkness. This is the God who formed human life in the darkness of the womb, but unlike the birth of a child, the umbilical cord to God is never cut. We live in the womb of God. This is the God who accompanies us to the darkness of the tomb – and promises life and light.

This is the God who is with us when along with Jesus, we cry out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But this is also the God who entered the tomb and raised Jesus from the dead. This is the God who walks with the people of southeast Texas, Florida, the US Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico as they battle the effects of hurricanes and the loss of their homes, in fact with all people everywhere. This is the God who reaches out through the arms of friends, neighbors and strangers and comforts the fearful and sorrowing.

God doesn't intend us to live in utter darkness -- to be alone. God walks with us. Saint John of the Cross, a 15th century mystic, wrote something that has always struck me. He wrote, *“If a man wishes to be sure of the road*

he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark.”

We must close our eyes and walk in the dark because God is the only one who can lead us to union with God. Darkness strips away all our dependencies on things which are not God. Through the darkness we come to know the intimate presence of God in whom we dwell.

Our soul is made to be God's dwelling place, and the dwelling place of our soul is God who was never made – Julian of Norwich

We are in God and God is in us and we cannot exist separately from God. God wants this intimacy for us, and so God leads us into darkness where we can contemplate nothing but God. Along with Saint Paul we know that *“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* -- Romans 8:38-39

There is a poem I want to share with you. The author, Jessica Powers, was a contemplative Carmelite nun.

Garments of God

God sits on a chair of darkness in my soul.
He is God alone, supreme in His majesty.
I sit at His feet, a child in the dark beside Him;
my joy is aware of His glance and my sorrow is tempted
to nest on the thought that His face is turned from me.
He is clothed in the robes of His mercy,
voluminous garments—
not velvet or silk and affable to the touch,
but fabric strong for a frantic hand to clutch,
and I hold to it fast with the fingers of my will.
Here is my cry of faith, my deep avowal
to the Divinity that I am dust.
Here is the loud profession of my trust.
I need not go abroad
to the hills of speech or the hinterlands of music
for a crier to walk in my soul where all is still.
I have this potent prayer through good or ill
here in the dark I clutch the garments of God.

--Jessica Powers

May you know the mercy of God as you clutch the garments of God.



Sisters share Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*

Sister Anne DeMers

Sisters Lorraine Kraft, Dianne Maresh, and Anne DeMers attended the Monastic Institute – “Reflecting on *Laudato Si'*” -- held at Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary, Collegeville. Their trip was uneventful except for a flat tire on I-94 before they arrived at their destination (with the aid of some Fergus Falls police). Upon their arrival the hospitality of the monks reached out to them as Brother Neal Laloo saw that the tire was changed, and he and others helped them with their luggage.

The main speaker, Monsignor Kevin Irwin, a priest from the Archdiocese of New York and a teacher for over thirty years at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., gave the background of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, and explained how it came to be written. Some of Pope Francis' predecessors spoke about our relationship to the environment and Msgr. Irwin established how *Laudato Si'* fits into our Catholic tradition and the teaching authority of the Church.

Pope Francis invites us to see the world through a Catholic lens – one that is global and universal. He reiterates what has been said in previous councils and encyclicals on the environment but enlarges upon it, stressing the importance of the topic today, not just to Catholics but as a message concerning all of humanity.

Dr. Bernie Evans, another presenter and a retired professor of Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary,

spoke of how the economy fits into this picture and what we can change in order to better serve the “common good” as recommended by *Laudato Si'*.

Pope Francis asks readers to undergo a conversion in their lives. We are connected to one another and to all of creation and we are affected by what happens to every part of creation. God, in great mercy, forgives us for what we do; we are able to forgive one another and we do, but creation cannot forgive. If things get out of balance and if inequalities remain unchecked, results will be unleashed that are uncontrollable. What we do to creation has consequences, and at least some of the problems we humans cause seem to be irreversible.

What can we learn from the spirituality of our religious orders that will help us with personal and social conversion? Speakers presented aspects of Franciscan and Benedictine spiritualities that can help us make a difference.

Our community asked our three participants to share what they experienced at this Monastic Institute on this important topic at an August chapter meeting. How is God asking us to change? What can we do as we face the future together? What is to be our legacy?

The community will study the contents of the encyclical throughout this year. In the words of Pope Francis, “It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. . . . The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn” (160).



The Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) Camp held every summer at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, brought together about 145 students from Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Canada to focus on enhancing its participants' leadership, communication and teamwork skills. Local participants in RYLA came to the Mount on July 10 to offer the sisters a “random act of kindness” by their visits and handing out beautiful roses of every color. Sisters Vivian and Norma Jean converse with a young woman from Somalia.

*We cannot own the sunlit sky,
The moon, the wild flow'rs growing.
For we are part of all that is,
Within life's river flowing.
With open hands receive and share,
The gifts of God's creation,
That all may have abundant life
In ev'ry earthly nation.*

By Ruth Duck, © 1992, GIA Publications, Inc.

Let the music begin!

Sister Dominica Gerszewski

The students of Mount Saint Benedict Piano Studio presented a piano recital on April 30, 2017 at 2:00 PM in the Mount Saint Benedict Monastery Chapel. At this time awards and certificates were presented to the students who participated in the Minnesota Music Teachers Association (MMTA) District Piano Contest in Detroit Lakes, the State Contest in Minneapolis, and the North Dakota Piano Festival of Music Clubs in Grand Forks, ND.

The winners of the District Contest in Detroit Lakes were Chloe Boll, Aspen Mendez, Caleb Mendez, Charlotte Whiting, Cassidy Baatz and Emma Sherman. They played in the state contest in Minneapolis in March. At this contest Cassidy Baatz was declared a winner and took part in the 20 Piano Honors Concert on June 10th, 2017.

Emma Sherman and Emma Boll took a theory test and received certificates with a rating of High Distinction.

Gold cups from the Music Club Association were presented to Amanda Schultz, Caleb Mendez, and Cassidy Baatz who each earned 15 Points; Kathryn Halos received her 2nd gold cup earning 30 Points.

Challenge awards were presented from the MMTA to Chloe Boll who received a rosette ribbon; a bronze medal to Charlotte Whiting and Cassidy Baatz and a Silver Medal to Katherine Geist.

Two students, Katherine Geist and Caleb Mendez attended a music camp at the International Peace Gardens in ND. They received a scholarship from the ND Music Club Association.

TOP: Audrey Harbott, Janae Luckow, Kathryn Halos, Emma Sherman, Lily Sandman, Emma Boll, Cassidy Baatz, Eliza Meyer, Katherine Geist and Sister Dominica, **MIDDLE:** Madeline Harbott, Aspen Mendez, Sister Dominica, Kalea Luckow, Jay Reese, Chloe Boll, Adelyn nudson and Dukessa Ramirez. **BOTTOM:** Sister Dominica, Thor Harbott, Ethan Boll, Jackson Reese, Caleb Mendez, Ava Lopez, Charlotte Whiting and Grace Miller.



Monastery Tales

Bats, Wasps, and Tree Frogs

Recently our maintenance staff installed two screen houses: one on the patio outside of our community room and the other one outside of the dining room. They enable us to sit outdoors without being beset by hot sun beating down on concrete and it is a blessing. They add another dimension to our lives; the one outside the dining room continues to introduce us to a myriad of God's creatures. Even before we had an opportunity to enjoy this godsend, bats attempted to take up residence by hanging on the edge of the inside roof. Also wasps began building a nest. Our efficient maintenance staff took charge and managed to prevent these encroachments. We have mosquito netting surrounding this framework and all is well.

One day a small tree frog took a liking to our company. It dropped down from an overhead light fixture and greeted us but we managed to keep it outside. However when we returned to the dining room the little frog hastily hopped in, eluding our efforts to catch him by taking refuge in the base heater. In spite of it being Sunday, Dudley, one of our maintenance managers responded to an SOS, took apart the heater, captured the little frog, and deposited it in an outdoor flower pot. All summer we enjoyed the opportunity for a close-up view of the hummingbirds and other flora and fauna.

Tornado Drill

Murgatroyd Mouse

I didn't think I would be writing so soon but I have been disturbed a few times this summer. I live in a hidden corner room between Saint Catherine's and Sophia deaneries. There are two of these rooms and I heard them called shelters. As far as I can tell, this space I call my patio, serves as an all-purpose room for storage and hanging laundry.

One evening, I was minding my own business when I heard a commotion -- chairs scraping and voices speaking softly. Peeking out from my perch I saw sisters in nightgowns filing onto my patio, arranging chairs to accommodate themselves and one another. Stunned, I watched more sisters arrive, unstacking more chairs, filling empty spaces and continuing to do so -- exacerbating my claustrophobia.

My ears perked up as I heard: "I hope this won't last long," "It's stuffy in here;" "Does anyone know what's

going on?" "C'mon in! We can always make room for more." "Can we get another wheelchair in here?" "No, sister; it's not time to go back to your room."

Someone turned on a radio. "The storm is heading toward Climax and funnels have been spotted south of Crookston. Stay tuned for more weather updates." Immediately I began praying and before long, according to the radio -- and to my relief -- the storm had passed; one by one my sleepy guests slipped silently into the night and all was well.

Foxes and Deer

Recently a family of foxes has taken up residence on our property. A mother and four little kits have been seen frolicking on the edge of the woods near the monastery, seemingly undisturbed by the presence of some deer grazing nearby. Both groups seem to find enough food in the area to support themselves.

Schola Party

Our director, Joyce Johnson, and her neighbor who is also our newest choir member, Mary Normandin, treated us to one of our annual choir parties, serving pizza, beer, and melon, cucumber, or banana- flavored popsicles on sticks. We sang, played games and enjoyed the occasion.

Community Retreat

Father Joel Rippinger, O.S.B., a monk from Marion Abbey in Aurora, Illinois, directed the sisters' retreat this summer June 18-23. The theme chosen for the retreat days was: *Making Friends with the Wisdom of the Rule and the Benedictine Tradition*. The schedule of the days allowed time for conferences, spiritual direction, and extra time for prayer and relaxation.

Tours

A rather new, unique vehicle around the Mount is a small six-seater trailer, lined with benches, on which groundskeepers Lonnie or Carolina Peck give us tours around the grounds. It was a welcome opportunity for those of us who have difficulty climbing up and down the hills to the cemetery, to the wild flower field, or to the pond with its family of swans. So, when TOURS were announced, we knew we were in for an interesting trip seeing the old and new features of what's going on, especially with some landscaping currently in progress.

MSB Alumni News

Deceased Alumni, Family members, Friends, Faculty and Staff

Sally Marie (Saint Michel '55) Herzog died August 16, 2016.

Mary 'Pat' (Mercil '76) Earp died September 18, 2016.

Carolyn Theresa (Klava '66) Miller died January 28, 2015.

Patrick William McGurran died August 14, 2017 Brother of Sister Michelle McGurran

Ray Plutowski died August 8, 2017; Husband of Rose Ann (Breidenbach '55) Plutowski

LaVonne Jacobson died January 25, 2017; Mother of Merylann 'Mimi' (Jacobson '67) Schuttloffel

William Jon Noah '78, died September 22, 2017.

Saints of God, come to their aid!.

Hasten to meet them, angels of the Lord!

May Christ, who called them, take them to himself.

May angels lead them to the bosom of Abraham.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Two Masses have been offered for the living and deceased alumni members this summer. If you know of any recent deaths of alumni, please notify Sister Yvonne Schafer, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 620 Summit Ave., Crookston, MN 56716

Notes of interest . . .

Congratulations to Sister Delores Dufner '56 on receiving the Christus Rex award from Valparaiso University Institute of Liturgical Studies at their annual conference in Valparaiso, Indiana. This award is given to someone for a life time commitment of liturgical renewal of the church.

Congratulations to Sister Anne Marie Geray, Sister Rachel Beitz '56 and Sister Dianne Maresh '56 on celebrating their 60th Jubilee of Profession on July 26, 2017.

A *Grand Forks Herald* article of 3/22/2017 told of Regina (Wald '46) Klein's 90th birthday and that she is still working as a server in the Ramada Inn in Grand Forks as she has done for the past 38 years. Regina is still active, and recently she and her son, Roger, came to the monastery with a pickup-load of sweet corn for the sisters. Not only that, but a couple days later, Roger brought another half-load of corn! The sisters froze 56 gallons, in addition to having several meals of corn on the cob! A delicious treat and much appreciated by the sisters.

Sister Dianne Maresh '56 was honored for 60 years of religious life on February 5, 2017 at the annual Mass of World Day for Consecrated Life at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle – a National Shrine in Texas. Sister Dianne has ministered in Texas for many years.

The pictures of the graduation classes that have been in the hallway at Marian Hall and here are being refurbished this summer so take a look when you come to visit.

We invite you to submit news about yourself or other alumni for publication in the Alumni News column here. Have you moved, do you have new grandchildren, is there a marriage in your family, has a family member passed away? Your classmates, friends and teacher would love to know what is happening in your life. Please use the form on the next page -- or just drop a note.

Please turn to page 23.



Selfie! Selfie! They've invaded the monastery! But this "invasion" was FUN. It was women from the class of 1982! Pictured are standing: Julie (Donarski) Romuald, Michelle (Brekken) Solheim, Shelly Delichte, Theresa (Block) Breierly, Mary (Biermaier) Sowada and Penny (Altepeter) Boucher. Seated are Theresa (Snyder) Cynbaluk, Barb (Gregg) Kennedy and Sheila Delichte. The selfie-taker is Michelle (Richard) Lenertz

ALUMNI CONTACT NOTES

I appreciate receiving any news from the past spring and summer. Thank you. Sister Yvonne Schafer

Alumni Visitors

During spring and summer we have had some alumni come to the monastery to visit with the sisters: Dorothy (Kranz '63) Nelson, Ruth (Kranz '61) Kokenge, Elaine Schmieg '61, Jean (Schmieg '64) Kirchberg, Joan (Polichio '78) Palm, Margaret McConnell and ten members of the class of 1982.



How many women do you know who can still get into her high school locker 35 years after graduation? Sheila Delichte '82 can! Sheila is pictured with Penny (Altepeter) Boucher, Theresa (Snyder) Cynbaluk, Michelle (Richard) Lenertz and Barb (Gregg) Kennedy.

Dear Sister Yvonne,
I would like to share the following.

Name

Address

Phone

Email

Graduation year

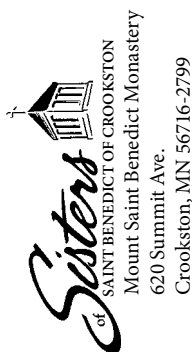
You may either email the above to Sister Yvonne or mail via the US Post office. Do the same for photos. Thank you and God bless you.

Photo Gallery . . .

Do you know who any of the people are in the two photos below. If you do, tell us who you think they are. Tell us what you remember about them. First one who gets one photo right gets a PRIZE! Just like in school!



TOP: Pails of paint, brushes, drop cloths and ladders were a common sight at the Mount, not to mention the “do not enter” signs and the all-pervasive scent of PAINT! Seriously, the sisters were happy to see the Mount refreshed with new paint for the first time in more than twenty years. ABOVE: Sisters pitch in to help shuck a pick-up-and-a-half of corn given to the community.



PLEASE HELP US KEEP OUR MAILING LIST CURRENT

- ☐ New Address
 - ☐ Please add my name
 - ☐ Please remove my name
 - ☐ Receiving more than one copy
- (Send all labels indicating which is correct)

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

Please contact: Sister Denise Schonhardt,
Mount Saint Benedict Monastery,
620 Summit Ave.,
Crookston, MN 56716-2799
phone: 218-281-3441, email: denise.schonhardt@bhshealth.org

Visit us on the web at www.msb.net

from our foundation director



Sister Denise Schonhardt

When you were young, after you were given a gift, did your mother ever ask, "What do you say?" and you responded with a thank you? Even as children, we knew that the proper response was, "Thank you."

The Sisters of Saint Benedict say thank you to those who know us as family members, or teachers or health care providers, those who are friends or are acquaintances or have simply heard of us, those who

are on our mailing list and those who are not, those who give from their abundance and those who give from their poverty -- especially those who give from their poverty.

This is the season for giving thanks, and we all thank God for this life and for eternal life. We thank God for the greenness of the summer grass, the color of fall leaves, the whiteness of winter snow, the bare branches that etch filaments of lace against the winter sky and the paleness of spring green. We thank God for friends and enemies, for heat and cold, for light and darkness, for earth and water and fire and air, for animals and plants and rocks, and for Earth and the universe. We thank God for parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, for aunts and uncles and cousins. We thank God for peace and joy, for love and prosperity, We thank God for YOU! Most of all we thank God for all things named and unnamed.

May God fill you with magnificent abundance!

