



# *the Crookston* Benedictine

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down  
out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned  
for her husband. Rev. 21:2*

*Spring, 2013, Vol. 26, No.2, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Crookston, MN, 56716*

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from our administrator . . .



**Sister Jennifer Kehrwald**

August is a month for transitions. Summer activities are winding down; its leisurely pace starts to change as fall schedules appear. The harvest will soon be gathered and shorter days are coming.

We are not always aware that our bodies and our lives are in transition every moment. We are changing without noticing. As Benedictines we try to acknowledge and direct

this change through a vow of conversion of life. We seek to direct our lives toward a search for God and growth in loving one another.

This issue holds stories of transition: oblates growing in their living of Benedictine spirituality; sisters who are changing ministries or ministry locations; jubilarians who are marking years of transition; a celebration of the many years of ministry in Texas; and two sisters who have made the transition to fullness of life.

We are grateful to God for calling us to this life of transition and for being with us on the journey. And we are glad for you, our fellow travelers.



**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, **Sisters Anne DeMers, Michelle McGurran** and **Denise Schonhardt**, staff.

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## Liturgy Schedule

<b>Morning Prayer:</b>	11:20	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 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
	11:15	am Wednesday
	4:30	pm Saturday (Sunday Mass)



## Sisters Celebrate with Good Shepherd Monastery, Rio Grande City, TX

*Sister Lois Spors and Sister Michelle McGurran*

Wednesday, June 19, was set aside to celebrate with Sisters Fran Solum, Luella Walsh and Nancy Boushey and to wish them well as their plans move forward. The community gathered in Marian Hall lounge at 2:00 p.m. for a tea followed by a program with Sister Anita Whalen as emcee. First, Sister Fran related their history after which Sisters Luella and Nancy also spoke.

The Mount presented them with several gifts: a bag of earth from Crookston, a bag of earth from Saint Mary's, in Pennsylvania (the first Benedictine settlement in the U.S. from Eichstatt, Germany and our roots), three large Benedictine medals cast in St. Mary's, PA, three marble pieces from our original monastery with the word PAX hand-lettered on them by Sister Lois, a poster called OBEDIENCE from Monte Cassino, and a basket of cards and well wishes for the sisters.

In return, the Texas sisters presented a beautiful polished, mesquite cross made of wood that had been aged for over 30 years.

After evening praise, the day ended with a special meal where we could get a steak right off the grill (the first in our history) thanks to Sister Myra Schmieg, Sister Eileen Mohs and Dan Johanneck.



**Top: Sister Anita Whalen wishes the sisters of Good Shepherd Monastery, Rio Grande City, TX, well as they move forward to establish an independent Benedictine community in Texas. Above: Sister Fran shares a few anecdotes from the history of Good Shepherd Monastery.**





# Sisters celebrate 50, 60 and 70-year jubilees

70 years

Sister Petronilla  
Hermann

I was born in rural Georgetown, Minnesota, the oldest of four girls. Because I was born on the feast of Saint Andrew, my Dad's namesake, some thought was given to naming me Andrea. But with a baby brother already named Andrew, the name Agnes was chosen instead.

I learned my work ethic from my parents, and I saw it lived. My Dad was a quiet, efficient, hard-working farmer, but so present to his children. Mom had a career in teaching and nursing prior to her marriage. She was multi-talented and perceptive and also sensitive to our interests and talents. We were all taught basic piano-playing. My sisters continued practicing the piano, but I didn't.

My interest and skill was sewing. I was using our sewing machine by the time my legs barely reached the foot-operated treadle. My first projects were clothes for my sister's dolls.

My elementary education took place in a two-room school in Georgetown. We had the good fortune of having two dedicated teachers. Since my parents believed strongly in Catholic education, my sisters and I all attended high school at Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston. After that, I entered the Mount Saint Benedict

community. Upon becoming a novice I was given the name Sister Petronilla.

In 1944, following my novitiate, I was enrolled in the Saint Cloud Hospital School of Nursing in Saint Cloud, MN and graduated in 1947. I was a staff nurse on the medical-surgical floor at Saint Vincent Hospital in Crookston, alternating a twelve-hour shift on days and then nights with Sister Gemma. I'm especially grateful for the night shifts because Sister Immaculata was staff nurse in obstetrics and pediatrics. The night shift gave us a golden opportunity to become

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**Top Left: Sister Petronilla at the graduation of a class of LPNs from Saint Francis School of Nursing. Bottom: Sister Petronilla with a directee.**

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## Sister Petronilla

fast friends. My third year at Saint Vincent Hospital was in the operating room. When the new Saint Francis Hospital opened in 1950, I was assigned as head nurse on the surgical floor, with on-call duty in the operating room. This assignment lasted almost ten wonderful years.

In 1957 Sister Charitas, the hospital administrator, asked me to give up my beloved surgical nursing for one year to fill in as the director of Saint Francis Hospital School of Practical Nursing, until a qualified director could be recruited. Before long, it became evident that my assignment had become a long-term commitment, and I was sent to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. where I earned a bachelor's degree in nursing in 1961. When Saint Francis Hospital closed in 1970, so did the school of nursing, but I was hired by the public school system to direct the newly formed Agassiz Valley School of Practical Nursing. I became the director of this program, and along with a dedicated staff we were instrumental in developing and promoting a program by which an L.P.N. could work to become a registered nurse without having to begin the R.N. program at day one. When this program was in place in 1979, I felt called to retire from nursing.

After twenty-one years as director, first of the Saint Francis School of Nursing and then of Agassiz Valley School of Practical Nursing, I made a request to leave nursing education and administration. My request was granted!

My years of nursing and nursing education were happy, fulfilling and successful. As a nurse educator I had been able to recruit a dedicated and efficient faculty. We worked hard, yet managed to have fun times together. Up until two years ago I was able to join these women for an annual 3-day get-together.

As a group of educators we saw many changes, both in what was happening in nursing and nursing education and also in the practice of medicine in Crookston.

After receiving a Master's degree in Spirituality/Spiritual Direction from Mundelein College in Chicago in 1980, I was assigned to the formation department at the Mount for one year and then to spiritual direction and to conducting the spirituality component for the MSB Center Ministry Program. Around the year 2000 I had to begin downsizing my spiritual direction practice.

The Mount became my place of residence. Being able to engage in community life, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, is a gifted experience.

When Sister Cathi Merck became prioress in 1999, she asked me to accept the assignment of writing the intercessory prayers for the Liturgy of the Hours for the community. This has become a life-giving assignment for me. Because of failing vision, arthritic fingers and other health issues in 2010 I requested a move to Good Shepherd Hall, the community's assisted living department.

I have many hobbies, but sewing has remained a life-long joy. Using a sewing machine and most fine crocheting and embroidery are now next to impossible because of failing eyesight. I have found creative ways to work with heavy yarn and with plastic canvas. For several years I have sent items to the Polk County Fair and each year I have won blue and red ribbons for my crafted items.

I have two living siblings, Sister Olivia and Sister Agatha. Both are members of the Mount community and are now retired from teaching and living at the Mount. We do not have far to travel to have a family reunion!

## Sister Rosella Dentz

*Sister Michelle McGurran*



Sister Rosella Dentz was born September 5th, 1924, into a loving and close family, the first of five children. She was baptized Rosella Julianna Dentz, in Saint Michael's church, in Mahanomen, MN. She recalls that her parents were strict Germans from Stearns County, MN. Her mother told her that they were not

allowed to sing any secular songs on Sunday.

Her father's mother always accepted anything they

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Sister Rosella Dentz



**Sister Rosella with one of her first grade classes.**

would give her. The children would run to the meadow to pick some wild flowers and give them to her. Her grandmother was always pleased and made a big fuss over them no matter what they looked like. They would be placed in a vase on the table.

Rosella attended Saint Michael's grade school for eight years until the school burned down. She spent three years at Mahnomen High School. The last year she attended Mount Saint Benedict boarding school. Rosella found it difficult to leave home, but she very much wanted to be a sister. She was taught by Benedictines and thought they were wonderful sisters and teachers. She wrote, "I loved the sisters very much and this love was nurtured by my parents."

Rosella entered the Benedictine community on January 1, 1942 and made her final commitment on July 11, 1947. She described her feelings on that day, "When I made my final vows I thought I was close to heaven. I felt free and that now I could stay in the convent. I wasn't going to be sent home."

"What appeals to me now as a Crookston Benedictine", she said, "is the family spirit which is so cheerful. I also like the spirit of prayerfulness. The Benedictine life is

so ordinary." When asked what she considered her greatest accomplishment, she replied. "My greatest accomplishment in community is trying to be a good teacher, especially of first grade. Thinking back on her life she wrote, "I am most grateful for the good parents God gave me and for my vocation."

Sister Rosella graduated from Viterbo College in LaCrosse, WI with a bachelor's degree and taught for many years in various schools of the Crookston Diocese. Describing her first teaching experiences, Sister Rosella wrote the following, "We had no training except by word (mentoring from experienced teacher). I taught with Sister Amabilis, She was a great teacher, and Sister Celine was also a great help to me."

Sister also describes some other sisters who had much influence in her life. "The gentleness and patience of Mother Monica and the kindness and helpfulness of Mother Blandina influenced my life. Sister Florentine was an ideal sister to me. Sister Charitas Brophy helped me much when I began teaching. Sister DeChantal had lots of patience with me. I also admired her cheerfulness."

"It was exciting to go on my first mission which was Saint Joseph's School in Red Lake Falls, MN. It became almost a second home to me. I was there ten years. I taught grades one to three, but first grade was my favorite grade to teach. I loved the little ones they were so close to God.

I retired from teaching three years ago. I missed the children and it was very hard to retire from teaching."

Sister Rosella received the following words from a former student during teacher appreciation week.

*"Dear Sister Rosella,*

*Thank you for instilling in me the beauty of nature. The gerbils we had in our first grade classroom taught me more lessons about life than I could have imagined then! You taught me to see the beauty and value in every one of God's creatures. I THANK YOU! For all you did to shape me into the person I am today. ... You are deeply loved and hold a special place in my heart.*

*With love and admiration,*

*Lisa McDonald, grade 1, Saint Francis DeSales,  
Moorhead, MN, 1972.*

In all that Sister Rosella related heard back from sisters, friends and former students; it seems that on her 70th Jubilee of profession, she has much to celebrate. She had achieved what she strove for those 70 years: to be a good Benedictine sister and teacher, especially a first grade teacher.

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60 years

## Sister Bernadette Kostrzewski

*Sister Anne DeMers*

Sister Bernadette entered this world as Rosalie, the youngest of eleven children.



Both of her parents, William and Anna (Szczepanski) Kostrzewski, were born in Poland and came to the United States with their families as young children. The family lived

on a farm near Stephen, MN and Rosalie and her four sisters and six brothers attended a country school. She remembers walking to school with at least one of her older sisters watching over her. As a farmer's daughter she can look back at milking and herding the cows and cleaning the barn.



**The staff from Riverview Hospital honor Sister Bernadette at her retirement party.**

For high school, Sister Bernadette first went to the Cathedral High School and then to Mount Saint Benedict Academy. After getting to know some of the sisters and working with them she decided to enter Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in 1952, becoming

Sister Bernadette, a sister of Saint Benedict in 1954. Two things impressed her during her formation days: She admired the older sisters for how hard they worked to build the foundation of the community so that others may profit by it. And she remembers working in the garden as a novice with Sister Benigna.

Sister Bernadette attended Saint Gabriel's School of Nursing Diploma Program, Little Falls, MN and then a Bachelor of Science Degree in nursing from South Dakota State University's College of Nursing, Brookings, SD. She served as a registered nurse at St. John's Hospital, Red Lake



**Sister Bernadette proudly displays items she makes for the gift shop.**



Falls; Saint Francis Hospital, Crookston; St. John's Hospital, Browerville; St. Mary's Hospital, Detroit Lakes; Mahnomen County Hospital in Mahnomen, and Riverview Healthcare, Crookston. After twenty-two years at Riverview Healthcare serving as a nurse and also as clinical supervisor of Riverview's ICU/ICCU Unit for a time, she retired from nursing in 2000.

But she didn't retire from work. Sister takes

care of medication requests, and uses her sewing skills to produce a variety of beautiful items for the gift shop. In her spare time she can be found working on a jigsaw puzzle.

Sister Bernadette shares her thoughts: "Nursing was a rewarding ministry, and it was a privilege to be involved in the lives of many people from birth to death.

Now living at the Mount allows me to participate more fully in monastic life through community prayer and activities."

## Sister Constance Suedbeck



**Though she doesn't dance much in recent years, Sister Constance enjoyed dancing. She dances here with Sister Alexine Braun.**

I come from a family of six girls and one boy. I was born in Adrian, MN and grew up in Slayton, both towns in southern Minnesota.

I spent three years of my elementary education in a Catholic grade school in Adrian with the Franciscans.

The Catholic priest from our parish came into our classroom once

a week to help teach religion. One of the questions he always asked at the end of his class was "How many of you girls are going to be sisters when you grow up?" I always wanted to put my hand up high, but I never had the courage.

As the years went by and I graduated

from high school I thought more about getting a job and earning some money. I didn't think of being a sister much anymore.

I went out on dates with different guys who asked me, but none of them seemed like a good catch for a husband. After age 21, I still didn't have any plans for my future life. I did pray about it and seriously asked God, "Why was I created?

What is my purpose in life? How do you want me to spend the rest of my life?" It wasn't until I was about 24 that I came to the conclusion that I should investigate different orders of sisters. After getting letters from about four or five other religious orders, I consulted our pastor about which one I should choose. At that time the Benedictines from Crookston were coming to Slayton to teach religious education in our parish. Our pastor convinced me that I should join these sisters which I did after speaking to them. And I've never been sorry.

I found that the Benedictines in Crookston are a close-knit group who put community living first. They prayed the Divine Office which I came to love. The psalms tell us about every walk of life and how to live the good life. It is like God is talking to us in the psalms and we are telling God about any troubles and joys. The sisters celebrate daily Eucharist, another way that God speaks to us though the Gospels and the readings at each celebration. It was not hard for me to go along with





all our religious exercises then and throughout the years as I aged.

Over the years, in addition to following the Benedictine way of life, my ministries have included teaching, cooking, gardening and the Foster Grandparent program. I'm still enjoying gardening including 'attacking' the weeds.

I always received what I needed throughout my 60 years as a Benedictine, and at this later age I am enjoying the companionship of community living with the sisters.



**Theresa Chu, an alum of Mount Saint Benedict Academy, visits with Sisters Agnes Kraft and Constance while they work in the cannery.**

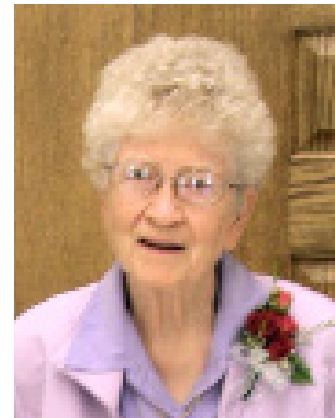
## Sister Norma Jean Edie

*Sister Norma Jean Edie and Sister Michelle McGurran*

Gratitude is the only way I could begin to summarize 60 marvelous years as part of the Mount Saint Benedict monastic, fully Benedictine community! In reflecting on my life at the Mount I feel that God guided me straight here all the way.

God let me be born into a prayerful Catholic family, living most of my childhood two blocks from Saint Mary's Church and School in Grand Forks, ND. The

Sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet gave me a sound basis for loving God and prayer, especially in the first grade. Sister Consolata taught us the habit of praying ejaculations such as "All for thee, oh, Jesus" and "Jesus I love you". Of course the sisters would ask, "How



many want to be sisters?"

In the back of my mind I took this seriously.

As a freshman at Saint James Academy, a religion teacher asked us to report on different religious communities. I wrote to several and was most inspired by the fact that a Dominican community in Wisconsin had aspirants who learned more about religious



**Some of Sister Norma Jean's wonderfully creative "characters" for Halloween.**

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Sister Norma Jean

life as they attended high school. I felt that if I had this opportunity it wouldn't be 'maybe' but a sure 'yes'. The mother of Sister Amata Benoit let my mom know that the Benedictines in Crookston had aspirants and



**"Last Supper" painted by Sister Norma Jean.**

it was there that my 60-year journey began.

There was a period of time that I would tell God why I didn't want to become a sister. The one day I said to God, 'Who am I arguing with?' Then I answered 'O.K., God.' Immediately I felt a deep peace and was convinced that it was a sign that God really meant to have me enter religious life at Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston.

Our aspirant mistress was strict, but I fell in love with the Mount community. My understanding of religious life grew and I became a postulant in my senior year. Our chaplain and religion teacher, Father Roger Schoenbechler gave us a deep love for the psalms and I learned to refer to psalms when I had a spiritual experience or crisis. It seemed God guides me to a psalm that clinches or resolves the experience or crisis. I am most grateful that Mother Eustacia, our foundress, insisted that our community pray the full Divine Office each day. In Latin or later in English we make the Divine Office a priority.

In my grade school years I discovered I had a reputation for being artistic. My favorite pastime was drawing. At Saint Mary's I

remember drawing the figures for a Beatitudes mural the class was making. . As a student in high school at the Mount I was asked to stencil mimeograph portraits of the seniors for the *Dove*, our high school newspaper. There were no formal art classes at that time but I got a feel for blending oil paints when Sister Veronica let me

help paint some outdoor Christmas figures. Later on my first teacher assignment, I wasn't inhibited by our wall size bulletin boards which needed to be

decorated each month. Toward the end of each school year, we delighted in 'schnitzeling,' cutting up holy pictures and making prizes for our two week summer catechism trip to rural areas.

My summers were spent attending courses at Viterbo College in LaCrosse, WI concentration in art. I taught 26 years and then I was assigned to supervise health care activities from 1980 to 2000. Sister Cathi Merck, prioress, assigned me to answer the many requests for Pro-life Billboards, floats for Crookston's Ox Cart Day parades, and many other community needs. During my years working in health care activities, I also stayed nine and a half years at Care and Share, a shelter for the homeless, to help Sister Justina at night. There I painted several wall murals for that shelter.

My largest painting was *The Last Supper* for the dining room wall at Care and Share and for our sisters at Good Shepherd Monastery in Rio Grande City, TX.

As I reflect on these past 60 years of monastic life at Mount Saint Benedict I feel a deep gratitude that I did respond with a "Yes" to God's inner promptings that lead me here! Throughout life with my foibles, strengths and weakness, in times of crisis and surety, health and sickness, fears and hopes, I feel everything has been and will be God's plan for me. I feel enthusiastic and energized about Mount Saint Benedict Community, and ready to face the challenging future in our new monastery.



## Sister Vivian Petersen

*Sister Michelle McGurran*



Lucille Petersen (Later Sister Vivian) was born to Peter Petersen, an immigrant from Norway, and Mary Isabel (Durand) Petersen on July 1, 1933, at home in Bemidji, MN, and baptized on July 10, 1933. In Saint Philip's Church in Bemidji. Her father died of pneumonia when Lucille

was one and a half years old. Her mother was left with three daughters and three sons as well as the unborn child she was carrying when her husband died.

Perhaps Lucille received her indomitable spirit while observing her mother as she faced the daunting task of raising a family of seven children alone. Later, Sister Vivian was able to meet each task she faced with a glad heart and a confident, cheerful spirit.

Lucille received her elementary education at Saint Philip's School in Bemidji. She then attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston. She graduated in 1952 and entered the Benedictine community where she received the name Vivian. Sister Vivian made her final profession on July 11, 1956, thus fulfilling her wish expressed to her mother as a three year old, "I want to be one of them," she said as she pointed to the sisters.

After 60 years she has not looked back. Sister Vivian



taught in Catholic Schools in Minnesota: Thief River Falls, Detroit Lakes, Rosen, Mahtomedi, and Benson, much of the time as principal.

After 33 years of teaching and administration in elementary schools, Sister Vivian resigned as principal in Benson and made a career change. She attended the School of Theology at Saint John's University and earned a Master's degree in Theological Studies in 1988 with a focus on rural life. Sister transitioned easily into Pastoral Ministry. She served as Pastoral Associate in Detroit Lakes and later in the same capacity in Georgetown, Felton and Callaway, all in the Crookston Diocese.



**Sister Vivian prepares the altar for Mass.**

In 1993 she began serving as Pastoral Administrator of Saint James Church in Dawson, MN in the New Ulm Diocese where she is presently ministering. Sister Vivian has been very active throughout these 60 years wherever she served. She is involved in Hospice Care and was active in Prison Ministry. Sister also served on many community and Diocesan committees. In 2012 Bishop John M. LeVoir presented Sister Vivian the distinguished award for outstanding service in the Diocese of New Ulm.

The parish of Saint James in Dawson celebrated Sister's 60 anniversary of profession at a Mass of thanksgiving followed by an open house reception. There she was lauded in the following words: "Sister Vivian continues

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**Parishioners from Dawson bring Sister Vivian fresh tomatoes from their garden.**

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### Sister Vivian

to be a beacon in the church for both new and old parishioners alike, as well as a pillar of the community.”

In a reflection Sister Vivian gave at the monastery Jubilee vigil in Crookston, Sister chose the following scriptures: “My child when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of calamity. Cling to God and do not depart...trust in Him and He will help you, make your ways straight, and hope in Him.” ... (Sirach: 2:1-6) and “Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things

through Jesus Christ. To him belongs the glory and the power forever and ever.” (1 Peter 4:9-11)

Reflecting on the words in the prologue of the Rule of Benedict, the following words spoke to her forcefully, “Listen my daughter to the instruction and attend to it with the ear of your heart,” She commented, “I want to love others sincerely in simple practical everyday ways. It isn’t a question of doing great things, but of doing little things with love. The Serenity Prayer helps me in my daily relations: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference” My daily prayer includes asking God to love, bless, and guide each of us in our daily journey. “That in all things God may be glorified.”

50 years

### Sister Brian Wild



Sister Brian shares her reflections about 50 years as a member of the Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.

When I first thought of being a sister in 1949 to July 11, 2013 is indeed longer than 50 years. Certainly before 1949 I am indebted to my parents for our family’s firm foundation and family life. We lived on a farm thirteen miles from Langdon, ND, which meant we attended country school for our first eight years. Since we lived in the country all eight of us children worked and played together.

When it came time for high school, our parents arranged for us to go to high school at Saint Alphonsus in Langdon and come home on weekends. We girls could



stay at school, which was staffed by the Presentation Sisters from Fargo, and our parents arranged for the boys to have a place to do light housekeeping during the week. It was during those high school years when we had more exposure to the sisters and priests who staffed Saint Alphonsus parish and school. Each spring, the high school students had a mission/retreat and it was during my senior year – and I can remember the very pew I was sitting in during the retreat that it came to me what I should do after high school -- enter religious life. I didn't tell anyone and there was nothing in writing but in my mind it was a "promise" to God and I was not

teach, two conditions were always part of my decision making. Because of my "promise" during senior year, I desired to keep that thought uppermost in my mind so I wanted a town where I would be able to attend daily Mass and a town near enough to be able to drive home each weekend.

Teaching mathematics in Devils Lake, ND, met both of those conditions, so the first two years after graduation I spent in Devils Lake. After those years, I worked in the public school system in Moorhead, MN, for two years, this time, in charge of two libraries (my minor in college). Although I didn't know it at the time,

this situation also met my conditions plus it also gave me the help I knew I needed. I was getting older and I also knew that age thirty was sometimes a cut-off point for considering a religious vocation. I was able to attend daily Mass at Saint Joseph's Church. Father Ferdinand, the pastor, noticed me and he talked to Sister Lioba, the principal at Saint Joseph's School at the time about this girl who always comes to Mass.

Sister Lioba approached me shortly after and asked if



**Sister Brian and Lester Wilkins, an employee from Mount Saint Benedict, enjoy a moment of levity.**

about to break that "promise."

Somewhere along the way I had read the quotation "GOD WRITES STRAIGHT WITH CROOKED LINES." I thought of that quote many times and I guess that pretty well describes my years since high school graduation that spring in 1949. After a year at home I enrolled as a student at Mayville State Teachers College (now a University). I received a one year scholarship provided I would return to my home county to teach in a rural school for two years. This I did, and then went back to Mayville to earn my bachelor's degree with a math major. As I was looking as to where I might

I would be interested in seeing the Mount. I don't think I even knew the Mount existed. The only thing I knew about Crookston was that there was a school of agriculture there. That was the break-through I needed because I knew I was not able to do any of this on my own. It is really thanks to Father Ferdinand and Sister Lioba that my "promise" would be fulfilled. I entered Mount Saint Benedict that fall as a postulant with Sister Brigetta as the postulant mistress. There were 12 postulants at that time and we lived in "Angels Dorm" – the top floor of the music conservatory. We were

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## Sister Brian Wild

six when we moved to the Mount for the novitiate. Sister Aquina, novice mistress, and Sister Cornelia, juniorate mistress, certainly did their utmost to further strengthen bonds with the community. After the novitiate and final vows in 1968, came 25 years of teaching math (each year a very enjoyable and rewarding experience) at Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston, Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks

and Shanley High School in Fargo, ND. Later, I taught grade school at Saint Joseph's in Moorhead.

I have been back at the Mount since 1990. It was at this time it became necessary to demolish the original monastery and begin the construction of the new one. I was very much interested in this, and the previous sister in charge of buildings and maintenance was no longer with us which meant there was an immediate opening for me in that line of ministry – a ministry in which I am still involved today. Now another new building is to be constructed, which I hope means I will be able to continue to be involved. Those crooked lines have finally become straight, for which I am certainly most grateful along with the helpers along the way.



Pentecost marked by celebration with Sisters of Saint Joseph and oblates

Pentecost Sunday (June 19) marked the end of the Easter Season and a resumption of ordinary time. After evening praise the sisters and guests followed Sister Karen Violette who carried the paschal candle in procession to the dining room for a festive meal. Guests included the Sisters of Saint Joseph and the oblates who were here for their regular meeting before the summer recess.





# After the Garden, What?

Sister Denise Schonhardt

Last October, I, with other sisters from the Mount, had the privilege to be at Saint John's Abbey, when Abbot John Klassen mentioned that he was going to speak on the topic of "After the Garden, What?" Abbot John was speaking on Benedictine ecology, but I thought it would be a good reflection article for an issue of *the Crookston Benedictine*. I began to think about our relationship to God as manifested in the Garden of Eden, the Garden found in the book *The Song of Songs* in the Bible, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden of the Resurrection and the New Jerusalem where humanity has become God's people and God has become their God.

God wants us to live in a garden. God created the Garden of Eden for us where his bounty overflowed.

*"Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow*

*every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. "* (GEN. 2:9-10)

The Garden of Eden was the place where God walked in close proximity and in intimacy with humans, where they and God are so close that Adam and Eve do not know shame. After eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve and humans ever since, allow their own self-will to come between them and the One who is the source of all good knowledge. Thus begins the split between humans and God, but God refuses to allow the split to completely destroy the relationship established in the garden. The whole Bible is a narrative of God always reaching out in forgiveness



and love, inviting human beings into communion with Him. The Garden of Eden is one of connectedness but also one of disconnection and self-will.



The Garden in the *Song of Songs*, a place of erotic love, contains some of the imagery found in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis Adam and Eve walk freely without clothing. In the *Song of Songs*, the woman is the garden and her lover comes to the garden. This



garden is a place of sensuous delights of apples, figs and pomegranates, of various trees: cedar, palm and spice. The garden is lush with fruits, plants and animals. Fountains of living water spring up, calling to mind the river that flows out of Eden and foreshadowing Jesus' promise to the woman at the well that he would give her living water. (John 4:10)

The Garden in the *Song of Songs* is a testament that God desires us to live in a garden, replete with all good things, and God continually invites humans into communion.

In contrast, the Garden of Gethsemane is no garden



of delights; it is not a garden where God walks in perfect harmony with humans and all creation. It is a place where humans experience the debt that God in His great love is willing to shoulder on our behalf.

The Garden of Gethsemane is not a garden of peace but a garden of agony and desolation. It is a garden where Jesus found not consolation but alienation. His disciples fell asleep and offered no compassion, and even the Father appeared to have deserted him. It is a garden where there is no living water, except the One who is the living water and who slakes the thirst of those who long for the springs of eternal life. It is a garden of total surrender to the will of God rather than to self-will. The Garden of Gethsemane leads ultimately, however, to the garden of the resurrection.

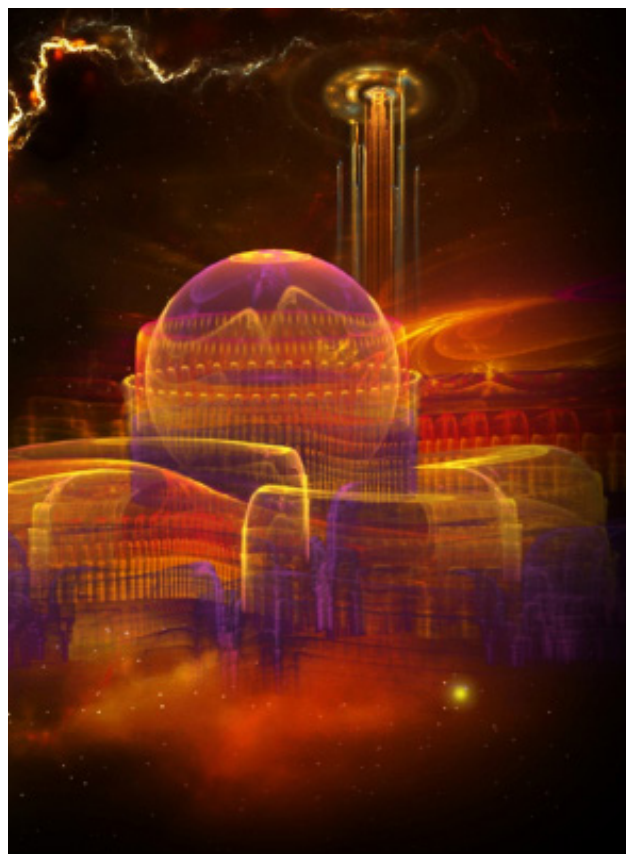
John the Evangelist tells of Mary Magdalene weeping in the Garden at the tomb where they had laid Jesus. She was in deep distress when the women realized that the body of Jesus was no longer there! The angels who were there asked her:

*"Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). JOHN 20: 13 - 18*

With this encounter between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, the relationship between humanity and God, split at the beginning of time, is now healed and God again walks in close proximity and in intimacy with humans. It would seem that everything has come full-circle, but God desires even deeper communion.

In the book of Revelation, the Garden becomes the New Jerusalem. Richard Rohr says in *Things Hidden*:

*"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels." Heb 12:22*



#### *Scripture as Spirituality:*

"By the end (REVELATION 21 -- 22) it becomes the New Jerusalem, where there is no temple, but only the River of Life and the Trees of Life, where even 'the leaves are for the cure of the pagans' (22:2) and where 'God lives among humans' (21:3).

. . .humanity has become God's people and God has become their God. There is no need for a religious building because the Garden itself is the temple. Life is now one sacred reality." ( p. 210)

Human beings are again in close communion with God and they walk together in intimacy.

Graphic: [http://fc03.deviantart.net/f571/f/2012/020/1/0/city\\_of\\_god\\_by\\_peterpawnd4n13vt.jpg](http://fc03.deviantart.net/f571/f/2012/020/1/0/city_of_god_by_peterpawnd4n13vt.jpg)



# Sister Kathy leaves lasting legacy

(Excerpted from an article written by Charmaine Barranco and printed in *Our Northland Diocese*, May 23, 2013 issue.)

Like the shower of raindrops falling outside, words of heartfelt thanks poured over Sister Kathy Kuchar at an evening retirement party in her honor:

“Thank you for helping my children.”

“Thank you for all you have done for this school.”

“Thank you for praying for us.”

“Thank you for being my principal.”

More than 200 people of all ages streamed into the downstairs dining hall of Saint Bernard’s Catholic School May 16 to honor the Sister who has been their principal for the last 17 years. They stood in line to speak with her, to wish her well, and to say good-bye as she prepares to leave Saint Bernard’s and return home to Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Crookston.

“You may be retiring, but you will never retire from our hearts,” said Misty Mehrkens, one of the first people to speak at the microphone. “Sister Kathy, you have been a blessing to work with as an employer, as a school board member and as a role model in our school. Everything you have done for our kids, my kids, and all the families that you have touched every single day here – we will never forget you.”

Although the farewell party was scheduled to be an outdoor picnic in the park, heavy rains drove the event indoors. But that didn’t dampen the spirit of those who were present.

People from throughout the area brought more than two dozen salads and an array of desserts. The Knights of Columbus donated the hot dogs and buns for the feast that was made complete by a large sheet cake that read “Thank you, Sister Kathy.”

Judy Dupree, next at the microphone, explained that Sister Kathy was her employer for 14 years.

A scholarship fund in honor of Sister Kathy was established at the event. The fund will be used to help at least one boy or girl attend Saint Bernard’s School next year. Had she not retired, a photo of that student would likely have joined the many school pictures Sister Kathy has hanging on a large peg board on her office wall.



**It is evident to all that Sister Kathy has a deep regard for children -- her face radiates the love and interest she has for them.**

Many of those photos are of former students who have since graduated from college. Some have returned to see Sister Kathy during her final days at Saint Bernard’s.

Looking at that peg board full of memories, days before her farewell party, she said, “Kids remember that last thing they hear, so you always want to make sure

*please turn to page 19*

# A change for Sister Dominica

by Sister Anne DeMers

The postman's motto – "Neither rain, nor snow nor sleet nor gloom of night stays these couriers from their appointed rounds!" might be applied to Sister Dominica's weekly trips to Euclid. For 17 ½ years she traveled 15 miles to Euclid to play the organ for the liturgical celebrations at Saint Mary's parish. Though most of the time she drove herself, when the weather proved too threatening she would catch a ride with Deacon Denny Bivens or the current pastor.

*Please turn to page 19*



**Sisters Eileen Beutel, Norma Jean and Germana join Sister Dominica for her retirement gathering.**

continued from page 17

## Sister Kathy

that the last thing they hear is something positive, even if they got called to the principal's office."

Sister Kathy talked about the multiple fundraisers the school has conducted over the past 17 years, the financial struggles, the steady increase in parental involvement so crucial to student learning, and the joys of running a school where staff members have come to consider one another as "family."

"It has truly been a privilege to be the principal of Saint Bernard's," said Sister Kathy, who didn't receive a "Catholic education" until she entered college. "This has been an honor. Leaving is bittersweet because I will be missing what I have and what I've been, but I just don't have the energy I once had to be able to do the best job that I would like to do."

Looking around her office, she said, "Where you are is always a combination of where you've been and what you've done. Each time you do something, it adds to your growth."

Looking at a big, hard rock she's always had in her office, she added, "Like I tell the kids, we all need to

work towards changing our hard hearts and being what God wants us to be. I am moving closer to the place that He wants for me and that's the place where I want to be too. But I will always carry a piece of this school with me."

Spoken of with love and admiration for who she is and her passion for Saint Bernard's school and its students... her admirer continued, speaking of the foundation she has laid for the next principal to work from, and that they hope to move forward smoothly with God's blessing.

As for Sister Kathy's future, Sister Anita Whalen, one of several Benedictines in attendance at the party, said, "We are very proud of her. Sister Kathy's talents, which you have all spoken of here will now be shared with us."

A fifth grade girl summed up Sister Kathy's legacy at the microphone:

*"Sister Kathy has been with me through all of my school years and I will truly miss her, and I know the rest of the school will miss her too. She has helped us through the years. She's been with us; she's heard every sorrow; she has prayed with us, and we have prayed for her. She has really helped us. Thank you, Sister Kathy."*



This year, at age 86, and with the blessing of Sister Jennifer Kehrwald, she gave notice that she is retiring. It isn't that she doesn't have enough to keep her busy at the Mount. She intends to continue offering piano lessons to over 30 students and to accompany monastery liturgies.

On Sunday, February 24, to honor her years as organist at Saint Mary's, the parish feted her with a brunch after the Eucharistic celebration. The parish showed appreciation for her years of faithful service and Sister Dominica thanked her song leaders for their dedication.

While giving piano lessons has been her main duty for most of her religious life, she has also served as a home visitor, and as a town driver at the monastery accompanying other sisters on different occasions.

When she attended high school at the Mount academy, she received piano lessons from Sister Placid. She then enrolled at Viterbo College in LaCrosse, WI, and graduated with a degree in music. Since that time she has served the parishes of Barnesville, Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, Slayton, Osseo, and Benson.

Sister Dominica prefers teaching piano lessons to classroom instruction, and states that it is "a joy to work with youngsters that practice and want to learn." She is proud of the various students who received recognition through the Minnesota... and also the North Dakota Federation of Music Club. When asked what the future holds, Sister Dominica says, "As long as I can keep going I plan to continue giving lessons."



**It appears that Sister Dominica is a bit overcome with emotion as she bids the people of Saint Mary's Parish farewell. While she will not miss the seventeen-mile trek in the storms of winter, she will miss the friendships and affection of the people of the parish.**



**Golden cup award winners.**

## Piano Students Participate in Contests

*Sister Dominica Gerszewski*

On January 26 seven students participated in the preliminary piano competition sponsored by the Minnesota Music Teachers Association that was held in Detroit Lakes, Mn. The four students who were declared winners were Katherine Geist, Marietta Geist, Pearl LaCoursiere and Eliza Meyer. Those four participated in the final competition held at the

*please turn to page 20*

## Mount Saint Benedict Conservatory of Music Awarded

On April 29, 2013 at the annual high school awards ceremony, the Crookston chapter of Kiwanis International recognized Mount Saint Benedict Conservatory as an outstanding supporter of music education for nearly a century in Crookston and the surrounding area. Receiving the award on behalf of the Sisters of Saint Benedict were Sisters Victorine Fenton and Dominica Gerszewski, active piano teachers, and Sister Anita Whalen, subprioress. The award was presented by Bruce Reichert and George French, associate professor of music at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.



continued from page 20

## Music Students

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. On Saturday, March 16, 2013. Marietta Geist was chosen as an alternate to play in the twenty-piano concert on May 18, 2013.

Two students, namely Kennedy Cwikla and Pearl LaCoursiere took a theory test on December 1, 2012 at Bemidji State University and Brooke Cymbaluk took her theory test on May 4, 2013 in Detroit Lakes, MN.

On February 9, 2013 fourteen students participated in the North Dakota Federation of Music Clubs Festival held at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, N.D.

The Spring Recital was held in the Sacred Heart

Chapel at Mount Saint Benedict on April 21, 2013. At the recital the students who were District Winners in the MMTA Competition each received a certificate. Six students qualified for the Challenge Award – Marietta Geist received a Bronze Medal; Katherine Geist, Kennedy Cwikla, Kasey Cwikla, Stephanie Mager and Pearl LaCoursiere each received a Rosette Ribbon.

Those performing in the Grand Forks Festival also each received a certificate. Three students received their Gold Cup award for earning a Superior Rating for the past three years. These students were Katherine Geist, Marietta Geist and Rachel Hefta.

Sister Dominica Gerszewski is the piano teacher.



# Oblate News

*Sister Marmion Karels*

The Mount Saint Benedict Oblates gathered for their annual retreat on Saturday, September 7 and Sunday, September 8. The title of the retreat was "Pondering the Questions of Jesus." Conferences enlarged on:

- What are you looking for? A Seeker's Heart,
- What are you discerning? Holy Conversation
- Do you see this woman? Showing the pure love of Sisters/of Brothers

Our Retreat Director was Sister Mary Coswin OSB, from Saint Benedict's Monastery, Winnipeg, Manitoba. She received her education in both Canada and the United States, with a rich background in psychology, education, spirituality and counseling. She has offered retreats and spiritual direction to women and men of all denominations in Canada and the United States for over 30 years.



**Daria Miller, Thompson, ND, becomes an oblate novice.**



**Lonnie and Carolina Peck make their final oblation.**



**Oblates renew their oblation in the presence of Sister Matmion Karels and Sister Jennifer Kehrwald. Pictured are LouAnn McGlynn, Charmaine Barranco, Bev Wander, Nancy Cournia, Rosemary Griffen and Dolores Normandin.**

# Programs and Retreats this Fall

*Penny Millspaugh*

There is just something about fall.

Spring is the season of new life; everything is fresh and green and filled with hope.

Summer is the season of sunshine and lazy days by the lake. Days filled with watermelon and nights around the campfires with old camp songs that just beg to be sung under the stars.

Winter is the season of. . . well winter is winter. Not my favorite time to be outside, especially up here in the north. But it is my favorite time to light a fire in the fireplace and cozy up with a cup of cocoa, a warm afghan and a good book.

But Fall. Fall always feels like a new beginning. The summer ends and a new school year lies just ahead of us filled with unexplored opportunities to learn and grow. It's a time for new clothes, squeaky shoes and the fresh smell of crayons and freshly sharpened pencils - all just begging to make a creative mark on the world and to take us into the future.

The MSB Center hopes to be doing just that this fall. Offering new opportunities . . . new expressions of faith . . . making new, creative marks on the world . . . and giving you chances to learn and grow and discover what we can become together. To assist in this journey, some new programs will be kicked off this fall.

First, a mid-week morning program called "A Cup of Conversation" will offer a chance to come together, to enjoy fellowship and a cup of coffee and to share on a topic of the day. The program will begin at 9:00 am and end as we attend Mass together

from 11:15 to Noon. A variety of topics will be shared through the year. This informal group will kick-off on Wednesday, September 11. Come and join us and help to shape the path this group will take.



On September 21, we are offering a very special program for women and their daughters. Sister Linda Soler, Sub-prioress of Saint Paul's Monastery will lead this three-hour retreat designed to take us, through experience and conversation, to nurture those relationships we hold most dear. Suggested donation is \$30 for the first two family members (mother/daughter





or grandmother/granddaughter) and \$10 for each family member after that. This is a great opportunity for women and their daughters/granddaughters age 8 and up. Pre-registration is required. Fees include program materials and a morning "Tea".

Finally, if you have been looking for a way to move closer to God, to put a new spark into your worship and devotion, consider signing up for "A Year of Discipline." This program will be a small group that will walk through the classic Spiritual Disciplines of the Church. Using small group gatherings, independent home study, and regular spiritual direction, we will seek to increase our faith as we move closer to God through these

timeless expressions of devotion and worship. Two short retreats will be held in conjunction with this program and only a limited number of participants will be accepted for this inaugural year. Additional details are available through the MSB Center Office.

As the Autumn leaves begin to change from summer green to gold, amber and brown, we hope that these new program offerings will cast a light of peace and joy into your faith journey. Contact Penny Millspough, MSB Center Director for information on these programs and more that will be offered this year.

[msbcenter@gmail.com](mailto:msbcenter@gmail.com)

218-281-3441

## Monastery Tales



Mount Saint Benedict hosted the volunteers for a dinner to show the sisters' appreciation for all the ways these generous people serve. Here Sister Adeline distributes a gift of Sister Karen's homemade treats to Victoria Dathe.

### Gratitude for DVD series on Catholicism

This spring the sisters enjoyed and appreciated a weekly DVD series on Catholicism. Each Wednesday Penny Chmielewski from the MSB Center set up the equipment and had a few refreshments for the

### Sisters receive popcorn machine



There is a dandy, red and yellow popcorn machine on a movable cart parked in Good Shepherd Hall. Special thanks go to Benedictine Health System (BHS), Randy and Jill Brown and John Janssen. Pictured are Sisters Laurian Lasha, Lucille Marie Adelman, Lois Spors, Constance Suedbeck, Petronilla Hermann, Mary Fay and Edith Bedard.

participants. This 10-part series was a gift of Joseph and Sharon Lutgens of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Joseph is a nephew of Sisters Petronilla, Olivia and Agatha Hermann.

# Remembering . .

## Sister Lois Spors



Sister Lois Spors, 75, died unexpectedly at Villa Saint Vincent early in the morning on July 27, 2013.

Sister Lois Spors was born Lois Marie on December 19, 1937, the last of the six children of John Andrew Spors and Mary Elizabeth (Hackert) Spors. Lois was a twin to her brother, Leon, who was born 15 minutes

before she was. Lois spent her childhood near Rosen, MN, on the family farm which her grandfather had homesteaded in the 1800s. Lois attended elementary school at Saint Joseph's School, Rosen, and Mount Saint Benedict Academy for high school where she was the valedictorian of her senior class.

She entered the Mount Saint Benedict community on January 2, 1955, and became a novice after receiving the name Sister Leon Marie and the Benedictine habit on



Sister Lois and her brother, Leon in front of their family's 1940s car.



**Sister Lois as a bride on the day she enters the novitiate.**

July 2, 1955. After a year-long novitiate she made first monastic profession on July 11, 1956 and her final profession on July 11, 1959.

Sister Leon Marie began her college education at the College of Saint Benedict in Saint Joseph, MN, but she received her bachelor's degree cum laude in mathematics and physics from Clarke College in Dubuque, IA. Later, she obtained a National Science Foundation grant to

study mathematics at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, where she received a Master's Degree in mathematics.

Sister Lois' career in education extended from the first grade to some college-level classes at Corbett College in Crookston, MN. Sister Lois began her ministry as an educator at Cathedral Grade School in Crookston, where served for six years during which she taught first, second, fifth and seventh grades. Most of her teaching career was at Mount Saint Benedict High School (1965 – 1982) and Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks (1982 – 1992). While she was teaching and supervising boarding students at Mount Saint Benedict, she went back to her baptismal name of Lois.

Upon completion of her teaching ministry, Sister Lois returned to Mount Saint Benedict Monastery where she assisted Sisters Anne Marie Geray and Lorraine Kraft at Mount Saint Benedict Center. Her mechanical skills in dealing with such things as the sound system were much appreciated by Center staff and the monastic community.

1994 to 2012 she was director of initial formation, guiding new members as they transitioned to becoming members of a monastic community.

Sister Lois assumed the role of Alumni Director of Mount Saint Benedict Academy and single-handedly designed, produced and





**Sister Lois with two students from Mount Saint Benedict High School.**

mailed the *Mount Saint Benedict Alum News*. She connected with and coordinated many class reunions. Sister Lois took great interest in the lives of former students and enjoyed all her contacts with them. Sister

Lois' talents

included calligraphy and the graphic arts, and she was frequently called upon to design cards for the gift shop and for individual or community needs. The words "no

time" were not in her vocabulary. Her one request was "tell me what you want to say," and Sister Lois would soon have accomplished the task. Sister Lois also served as editor of *the Crookston Benedictine* and coordinator at the monastery reception desk. Sister Lois was a peaceful presence in whatever capacity she served.

As one by one her siblings passed on Sister Lois continued to take great interest in her nieces' and nephews' lives and accomplishments.

Sister Lois is preceded in death by her parents, John and Mary Elizabeth Spors, her brothers Lawrence and Father Roman and her sister Mildred. Sister Lois is survived by her twin brother Leon (Mariann) of Fort Collins, CO, her sister Marita, (Marietta, MN), the sisters of Saint Benedict Monastery, and many nieces and nephews.

Memorials in honor of Sister Lois Spors may be given to Mount Saint Benedict Foundation, 620 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN.

--Sister Denise Schonhardt with assistance by Sister Michelle McGurran

# Peace

## New Alumni Director

Sister Yvonne Schafer is the new Alumni Director. If you have information about your family -- weddings, births of grandchildren, deaths in the family, new job, moving to another address or city, state or country, etc. Sister Yvonne is the one you contact. Sister Yvonne is also the one to contact with information regarding class reunions and lists. You may reach Sister Yvonne via:

email: ymschafer@yahoo.com,

phone: 218-281-3441 or

US postal service: 620 Summit Ave., Crookston, MN 56716

With the passing of Sister Lois, alumni news, photos, etc. will be incorporated into a special page of *the Crookston Benedictine*.

*Sister Lois will be missed by many people. May she rest in peace, and may the angels welcome her into paradise*



**Sister Yvonne Schafer**

## Sister Victorine Fenton



Sister Victorine Fenton, 93, died at Villa Saint Vincent Crookston, MN at 4:05 p.m. on August 1, 2013.

Sister Victorine was born in Valparaiso, IN, on March 20, 1920, one of three children of Richard

Edmund Fenton and Harriet (Hargreaves) Fenton. At her baptism, she was given the name Virginia Harriet Fenton. She attended Catholic schools in California, Arizona and Texas, and Saint Philip's School in Bemidji where she came in contact with the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston whom she grew to love. Virginia graduated from Mount Saint Benedict Academy as valedictorian of her senior class.

She entered Mount Saint Benedict Monastery on January 1, 1938. She received the Benedictine garb and a new name, Sister Victorine. Upon the completion of her novitiate, Sister Victorine made first monastic profession in 1939 and final profession on July 11, 1942. Sister Victorine was asked what influences led her to Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, and she answered: the sisters who taught at Saint Philip's school, the Holy



**Sister Victorine and her father in 1942.**



**Sister Victorine in her doctoral gown and hood upon receiving her PhD in musicology.**

Spirit and her father.

At various times in her life, Sister Victorine was involved in education from grade school children to adults.

Sister Victorine's passion was music. She attained bachelor's and master's degrees summa cum laude in music from

the University of North Dakota. She went on to earn a PhD in musicology at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA.

Her studies, however, were cut short when, in 1967, the monastic community elected her to lead them as prioress. She put aside her love for intellectual pursuits to respond to the call of leadership by the sisters. Sister Victorine took seriously Vatican Council II's, mandate for men and women religious to go back to the spirit of their founders. It was a period of trying to discern how the spirit of Saint Benedict, who lived 1500 years ago, could be translated into an authentic religious witness into the future. Sister Victorine also helped the monastic community face the diminishment of the community from 290 members to 240 which led to closing of schools, some of the hospitals, and the two-year Corbett College, located on the Mount campus. Amidst all this, Sister Victorine led the monastic community through the intricacies of moving from Latin to English in the Liturgy of the Hours, the community prayer prayed by the sisters. Before the end of her term, she began choosing the psalms, antiphons and hymns to be used in a new





**Sister Victorine addresses the monastic community.**

English version of the Liturgy of the Hours.

After 10 years as prioress, Sister Victorine worked in earnest to complete the six volumes to be used for the common prayer of the sisters. These six volumes were used by sisters for almost 20 years, and other Benedictine communities also asked to purchase the volumes.

Finally, after these volumes were completed, she was able to return to the University of Iowa to finish her doctoral degree in music. In preparation to writing her dissertation she traversed the country by bus and visited 97 Benedictine communities to gather data for

her dissertation on "The English Monastic Liturgy of the Hours in North America." Sister Victorine is respected for her contributions to the Benedictine common prayer to this day, more than 30 years later. Once she finished her dissertation, she returned to Mount Saint Benedict and prepared several lectures on various aspects of music and composers in addition to teaching piano. In her later years, she continued to teach music to a limited number of students.

Though Sister Victorine's first love was music, she also was appreciative of many art disciplines including painting, art history and literature. She also presented several lectures to various groups, particularly on topics of contemporary renditions of the Liturgy of the Hours and on Saint Hildegard of Bingen (12th century, Benedictine abbess and visionary).

Through it all, Sister Victorine lived the Benedictine motto of, "That in all things God may be glorified."

Sister Victorine is preceded in death by her parents and siblings. She is survived by many nieces and nephews and the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

Memorials in honor of Sister Victorine Fenton may be given to Mount Saint Benedict Foundation, 620 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN.



## Students visit

Each spring groups of students visit the Mount and the diocesan offices in Crookston. High school youth from Fertile came in April. Three grade school groups came in May: Holy Rosary in Detroit Lakes, Saint Michael's in Mahanomen and Saint Bernard's from Thief River Falls. The students from Saint Bernard's had a surprise the day they came on May 22. The seventh and final volume of the Saint John's Bible arrived, and Sister Anita opened it in the gathering space in their presence. They spontaneously broke into applause.



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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



Sister Denise Schonhardt

Walking  
together into  
an unknown  
future

The reflection article in this issue ends with a short description of the new Jerusalem coming from God out of heaven. What will this new Jerusalem be like? We do not know the future we walk into. What we do know is that the new Jerusalem is beyond our comprehension. God has marvels in store for us.

Some of these marvels are experienced now, and one of the things I marvel at is our donors. I am incredulous at the faithfulness of so many of our donors. A while ago I wanted to see how many donors had given every year for the past ten years -- there were almost 200 donors. I am sure that if I would break it down even further some of those donors would have been giving for 15 or 20 consecutive years. This shows an incredible trust you place in the Sisters of Saint Benedict. You can be assured that the money you give is put to good use. Our infirm sisters now have a wheelchair accessible van, children are cared for in an environment that nurtures growth, two schools where the sisters had taught in the past received desperately needed technology equipment. Your gifts promote continuations of the ministries of the sisters. You leave a legacy that you can truly take pride in. We together walk into an unknown future, but we know that our God is faithful and overflowing with generosity.

Everyday all our donors are remembered in prayer, and it is my hope that we will all come together in the new and heavenly Jerusalem. May God's blessings come to you beyond your wildest imagination.