

*the Crookston*  
**Benedictine**



## from our administrator . . .

Dear Friends,

You will probably receive this Crookston Benedictine as we enter the season of Advent. Advent is the time of waiting for “the coming.” We pray that your season of preparation for Christmas will be as joyful as possible under the conditions of COVID and all the other challenges we have encountered in 2020. And then, may Christmas itself touch each of us with very special blessings.

Life in the monastery has been quiet these days without visitors and public events; and we especially miss our Saturday night Mass attendants. Life is quiet but busy. We continue with our various works within the house and many of us have become accomplished at handling Zoom meetings with people outside the house—Oblates, board members, and others with whom we minister. Our community retreat this summer was even online, so many firsts for us and yet we continue to move onward. When we do venture out it is for doctors’ appointments or to visit our sisters in Villa Saint Vincent (skilled care), following all protocol, of course.

This issue of *the Crookston Benedictine* features our musicians. As Benedictines we sing our prayers, so music has always been a significant part of our lives. We raise our voices in song to give praise to God. I recall decades ago visiting the Mount from my home community and being

impressed with what a beautiful schola (choir) the sisters had; I was envious. Much energy has gone into making beautiful music here—as well as teaching hundreds of school children over the years how to do the same. This issue will also help you catch up on our happenings around the house, and our deaths. We miss hosting so many of you as visitors, at prayer, and for other special occasions. Please know we keep you in our prayer, and we hope the power of our prayer is being strengthened by our months of “cloister” providing more quiet time for talking to Our Lord.

You did not receive an annual appeal from us this year. With all that the year 2020 has brought before us, after much discernment we felt that we had sufficient resources from your previous donations to care for our immediate needs and to continue providing grants this year for the many ministries that we now support financially rather than in person—with your help. We are grateful for this state of sufficiency when so many of you are being stretched by COVID-related losses. Know we will continue to hold your intentions and needs in prayer. Have a Blessed Advent, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy 2021.

*Sister Jane Becker, OSB*

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

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

*Your light will come, O Jerusalem.  
The Lord will dawn on you in radiant  
beauty. We shall see the glory of the  
Lord, the splendor of our God.*



## Sisters receive new monastic leader



Growing up in Evansville, IN, Sister Jane Becker never heard of Crookston, MN, much less dreamt of coming here. Benedictine sisters taught Sister Jane in high school, and she felt drawn to them because they seemed amiable and approachable. She

entered Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, in 1963. Over time, Sister Jane held positions in her Benedictine community as Subprioress, Director of Initial Formation, Coordinator of Planning, and a member of the council. Now, she serves the Crookston Benedictines as Administrator.

Sister Jane finds joy in Benedictine life. She treasures belonging to a group that works together to accomplish the will of God and to make this a better world. She believes Benedictine life gives meaning and direction; the sisters need and support one another. She stated that community life is fundamentally a family living together and meeting challenges together.

Sister Jane earned a doctoral degree in clinical psychology with a concentration in group dynamics. As a psychologist, she has the privilege of gaining insight into the intimate parts of people's lives. She said she has the opportunity to

know the real person and establish an accepting relationship with them. She enjoys working with people to help them with depression, anxiety, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, or personality issues. For twenty-two years, Sister Jane worked in the seminary world, mostly as a staff psychologist at Saint Meinrad College and School of Theology and the North American College seminary in Rome.

Sister Jane never expected to have the opportunity to spend time in Rome. Working at the North American College seminary, she was able to be immersed in another culture. The universality of the Catholic Church became especially evident to her. While she was there, the Berlin Wall fell. Sister Jane came to know of sisters who returned to their motherhouse



Sister Jane thanks the visitators after they finished the visitation report.

in West Berlin for the first time in forty years, because they had been detained behind the Iron

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# Advent: preparation for Christ to enter our hearts

**I**n the beginning, was the Word . . . John the Evangelist begins his gospel with those words, and the book of Genesis begins with “In the beginning.” The term, “beginning” indicates that a new age has come. Darkness is lifted because the Light has come.

Profound hope and anticipation permeate the season of Advent in quiet longing rather than loud celebration. We remember how the Jews waited for centuries for the coming of the Messiah. We wait for his second coming, not in fear but with joy, because we know what God has planned for us.

Advent prepares us to allow Christ into our hearts in ways that are profound and life changing. We know our sinfulness, and we feel its texture and imprisonment. We mourn our sins

and failings, as well as those of our leaders, and we sometimes think that the dark powers of the world overpower us.

We do not fear because we celebrate the coming of the Light, which has plumbed the darkness of sin and defeated it. At his birth, Jesus entered the human condition, and by his death, he redeemed it. The good news is that Emmanuel (God With Us) has come.

The prophet Zephaniah expressed the joy Jesus would bring at his birth. God would fulfill his promise to live among his people, be their savior, and delight in them. Imagine that! The Lord would REJOICE over them.

*On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:*

*Do not fear, O Zion;*

*do not let your hands grow weak.*

*The Lord, your God, is in your midst,*

*please turn to the next page*



## Sister Jane (continued from page 3)

Curtain all that time.

Sister Jane also worked at Saint Luke Institute near Washington, DC and their satellite Saint Luke Center in Louisville, KY. That work included assessments of candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Over the years, she has also given a variety of workshops to groups of religious women and priests on topics of transition, communication, forgiveness, community life, and personal development.

After returning from Rome, Sister Jane served her community as the initial formation director, a position she found intensely rewarding. She believed her main job was to be herself and model religious life. Teaching classes to those in initial formation gave her the chance to study

Benedictine history and spirituality more deeply. Over the eight years in this position Sister Jane taught twenty novices, at a time when most communities were not receiving vocations.

Why did Sister Jane agree to come to Crookston? Sister Jane realized she could use her planning skills to help the Crookston Benedictines determine how they can continue living Benedictine monastic life even when they are older and fewer in number. She hopes to find the assistance of devoted laity to provide advice for the sisters' long-term plans regarding healthcare and financial affairs.

The Sisters of Saint Benedict give a sincere welcome to Sister Jane!



Sisters Barbara Lynn Schmitz, Jeanne Weber and Pat Nyquist present their report to the sisters.

## Sisters are commended for way monastic life is lived

Every five years the Benedictine sisters take the opportunity to reflect on their values and the ways they live them. This process is called a visitation. Sister Jeanne Weber (President of the Federation of Saint Gertrude) from Sacred Heart Monastery of Yankton, SD, Sister Pat Nyquist from the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of Clyde, MO, and Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz of Monastery Immaculate Conception from Ferdinand, IN conducted the visitation Sept. 14-17..

The preparation for the visitation began months before. A committee composed of Sisters Anita Whalen, Eileen Beutel and Judy Moen planned a series of community-wide meetings during which the sisters made several important decisions.

The visitors met with the administrator and team, the sisters' council, committee members and individual sisters. At the close of the visitation, they presented their report to the community, and commended the community while making a few recommendations.



### Advent (continued from page 4)

*a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.*  
--Zephaniah 3:16-17

God With Us comes at the darkest time of the



year, and we may struggle to find hope, and see the Light. And so, the Incarnation brings the Light, acknowledging the dark and dreary though not overcome by it. The infant, marked by a star, lies in a manger and invites us to look up to behold the glory of God. Rejoice! Christ is born!





*Music:  
a blessing to  
Benedictine  
monastic life*

*Salve Regina*, Mater  
 misericordiæ . . . (Hail Holy  
 Queen, Mother of mercy . . .) The  
 Sisters of Saint Benedict have sung these words  
 since the community was founded.

From the beginning of the community, music  
 has been integral to the life of the sisters. Mother  
 Eustacia made the statement that if  
 the sisters stopped singing Gregorian  
 chant, she would haunt us. Since the  
 beginning, the monastic community  
 committed to the performance of  
 music. Music teachers included Sisters  
 Timothy Knox, Grace Provencher,  
 Eugenia Baril, Cecilia Beaudry, Placid  
 Paul, Dorothea Kripps, Mary Kelleher,  
 Victorine Fenton, Virginia Houske,  
 Anne DeMers, Lucille Marie Adelman,  
 Carmella Buckley, Gertrude Knopke,  
 Olivia Hermann, Marian Connors,  
 Maureen Unzen, and Dominica  
 Gerszewski, the last of the piano  
 teachers.

Sister Dominica, in another article, relates her  
 life and the teaching of piano.

Sisters tutored piano and organ, taught  
 classroom music, and directed choirs. While  
 much of the teaching of music was piano, sisters  
 also taught organ and directed choirs, primarily to  
 enhance the liturgy. For many years, elementary  
 grade school students learned the intricacies of  
 Gregorian chant. After liturgies ceased using  
 Gregorian chant, grade school children still sang



Sister Carmella at the baby grand in her music studio.



One of the choirs of the Sisters of Saint Benedict. Back row: Sisters Lucille Marie Adelman, Eileen Beutel, Lorraine Kraft, Rachel Beitz, Agatha Hermann, Francella Gust, Adeline Karels, Marmion Karels, Constance Suedbeck, Anne DeMers, and Joyce Johnson (director). Front row: Sisters Virginia Houske, Anita Whalen, Cecilia Smith, Lois Spors, Victorine Fenton and Jennifer Basham.



at special liturgies.

At Mount Saint Benedict, sisters spent hours in choir practice trying to perfect the singing of Gregorian chant. The beauty of Gregorian chant soared throughout the chapel and lifted voices and hearts in praise of God. During the Mount's centennial year, the sisters hosted the Rose Ensemble, who graced them with a prayer concert of melodies of Gregorian chant. The chant transported the sisters back to earlier days when they too sang Gregorian chant.

Until recently, sisters also had their own choir. None of the choir members were below the age of 70, yet they were able to sing such pieces as Handel's Halleluja Chorus. They could do this only because of a commitment to spending hours in choir practice.

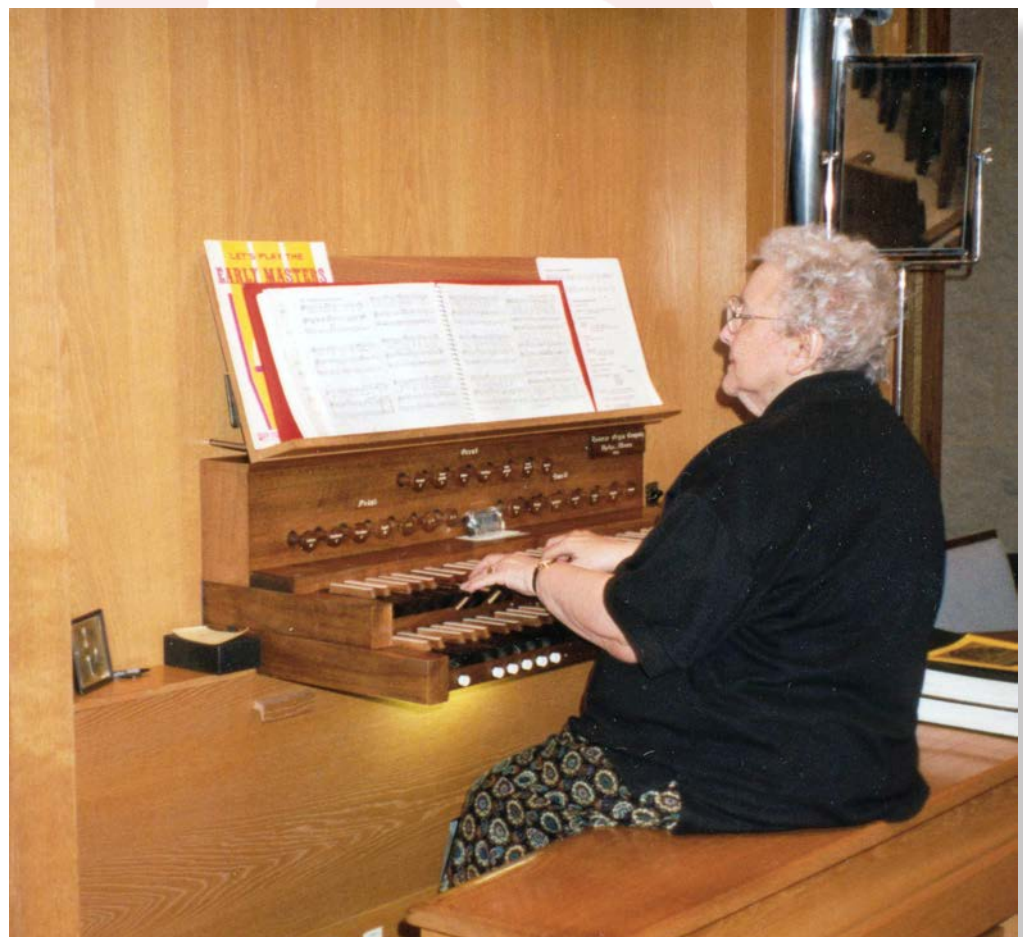
**Sister Victorine Fenton was a long-time music teacher and organist.**

Music has been central to the lives of sisters by praising God through the singing of the liturgy, both the Eucharistic liturgy and the Liturgy of the Hours.

That in all things God may be glorified!



Mount Saint Benedict Conservatory of Music was housed in this building which was the first monastery.





# Sister Dominica reflects on a lifetime of teaching music

*Sister Dominica Gerszewski*

My first two years of piano teaching were in Bemidji, as an assistant to Sister Gertrude Knopke. Sister Gertrude also gave me piano lessons using some advanced piano books. I taught about 40 students that first year. Sister Gertrude helped me a lot and gave me many helpful hints. The second year I was there, I also taught kindergarten half days.

From Bemidji, I went to Barnesville where I started a new class. The music studio had been closed for a few years. The two years I was in Barnesville, I had between 45 and 50 students. I remember having one seventh grade student who made a lot of progress. In the two years I taught her, she made as much progress as other students would make in four or five years. She now lives in California and accompanies a singing group. Another stu-

dent from there became a nurse, and after she retired, she entertained in a nursing home with her guitar in Rochester.

In 1951 I was assigned to Slayton for three years, where we three sisters taught religion classes. Students from the public school would come to the church at different periods of the day. I also started a piano class and had some excellent students. One student later became a piano instructor, and another became an organist and played for our choir. In Slayton, the three of us also taught in Avoca, Lake Wilson, and Woodstock. The pastor of those places would come and get us. Some years later, I returned to Slayton for two more years. In between those years, I taught at Saint Francis, Moorhead, and in Benson, where I was an assistant to Sister Eugenia Baril, who

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Sister Dominica with a group of piano students in 2004.

### *Sister Domínica (continued from page 9)*

had so many students that she needed help. I was at these two places for just one year each.

In 1958 I was assigned to Osseo, where I taught for five years. I taught piano to several students. I also helped the classroom teachers with singing classes in fifth, sixth, and eighth grades. Each of the classrooms had between 40 and 50 students.

In 1963 I went to Barnesville for six years. Now I taught the younger siblings of the students I had before. This time I had two girls who put on a two-piano recital. We rented the pianos from a music store in Fargo, ND.

In 1969 I returned to Benson for nine years. During that time, one student had her senior piano recital. The following year another girl had her senior piano recital. She belonged to a family that was quite musical. The older girl became a classroom music teacher, the next one is a cantor at Saint Mary's Hospital in Rochester, and the third one became a piano teacher in Indiana and did classroom singing besides organist at her Church. One of my students in Benson composed an original piece called "The Wacky Clock," Hence I entered it in the Minnesota Music Teachers Association (MMTA) original composition, and she won first prize. That was an honor for Lecia Grossman.

In 1970 I signed up to be a member of

MMTA. Since then, I had many students who took part in these contests and theory tests and then were eligible to play in the Sixteen-Piano Honors Concert in Minneapolis. The first student that I had was Catherine Luzum from Benson. She played in 1973 and then maybe three years later.

From Benson, I transferred to Detroit Lakes. In 1978. There I did a little classroom singing along with my piano students. I



**Katherine and Marietta Geist:** two students who played in the Honors Concert in Minneapolis.

was in Detroit Lakes for seventeen years. I was one of the organists for the parish choir. I also helped out in the Pastoral Care Department at the Hospital and Nursing Home. Detroit Lakes was one of my favorite places to teach.

Before I left, they had a reception for me – it was good to see so many of my good friends. As our music teachers were becoming few, there would be no one to replace me, so it was up to me to close the

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## Sister Dominica (continued from page 10)



Sister Dominica holds an award from Music Link for ten years of service.

studio. I had a sale of pianos, furniture, and music books.

Our prioress, Sister Michelle, asked me to come to Mount Saint Benedict to help as one of the drivers for sisters having appointments and continue to teach piano. There were three other piano teachers here – Sister Carmella Buckley, Sister Victorine Fenton, and Sister Virginia Houske. I had one of the back rooms in the conservatory that Sister Pierre had used before I came. Eventually, I acquired more students. Sister Carmella fell

and broke her hip, then went to the Villa to recuperate. A few years later, Sister Victorine retired from teaching, so I acquired some of her students. Then Sister Virginia became ill and died, so I gained several more students.

In 2003 the music conservatory moved to Marian Hall. Sisters Carmella and Victorine had their studios in Marian Hall; Sister Virginia had her studio in Marian Hall Chapel. I taught on the fourth floor of Marian Hall. After a few years, I moved to the first floor in Marian Hall. After the new monastery was built, I had my studio here.

Through the years, I had many students who took part in the MMTA Piano competition and were winners who participated in the honors concert in Minneapolis. Besides this, I had joined the North Dakota Piano Teachers Festival in Grand Forks, ND, in 2010. Students were graded on how they performed – Superior, Excellent, or Satisfactory. Most of the time, the students receiving Superior ratings. If a student received three Superiors, they received a gold cup; if they received three more, they would receive a larger gold cup. One student received the third gold cup in 2019 and one in 2020.

In the years I was here at Mount Saint Benedict, I had three students who played in the honors concert in Minneapolis; one played two different years.

In 2020 I had five senior girls who were preparing their senior recitals.

After the Virus came, all lessons ended.

*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.  
And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you  
will name him Jesus. --Luke 1:30-31*

*Sustain  
me, O  
God, as  
you have  
promised.*

## Sisters celebrate Jubilees

August 6, Sisters Joan LaCoursiere, (80 years) Dominica Gerszewski (75 years), Jeannine Spain (70 years), Kathleen McGeary (60 years), and Kathy Kuchar (25 years) celebrated jubilees.

Usually the diamond jubilarians enjoy a celebration with the community, and the silver jubilarian will have a celebration that includes the community and family and friends. Due to COVID - 19, all the jubilarians celebrated with the community only.

### 80 year jubilarian Sister Joan LaCoursiere



Sister Joan LaCoursiere was born in Terrebonne to Paul and Sophie (Violette) LaCoursiere in a family of two brothers and five sisters. Sister Joan's family was steeped in French-Canadian culture and the Catholic faith. She was baptized Olive – a name she did not like. She followed her sister, Sister Cuthbert, into Mount Saint Benedict. When she received the Benedictine habit as a novice, she received the name Sister Hiltrudis – another name she did not like. When the sisters returned to their baptismal names, she asked if she could be named “Sister Joan.”

When asked what brought her to Mount Saint Benedict, Sister Joan LaCoursiere told of her desire to come to become a sister, “I was about five years old when Sister Cuthbert, my sister, spent two weeks vacationing on our farm near Dorothy, MN. I admired and loved her very





Sister Joan and Sister Cuthbert with one of their nieces. Sister Joan is the taller of the sisters.

much, and I wanted to emulate her. . . Had it not been for Sister Cuthbert, I would not have considered coming to Mount Saint Benedict.”

Sister Joan wrote of her first year of teaching in Mahanomen. She related that she taught second and third grade, and she had no idea what to teach them. She ended up teaching multiplication to the second-graders and division and fractions as well as geography to the third-graders. Sister Joan went on to teach in Lefor, ND, Crookston, and East Grand Forks. In Crookston, she was the principal at the Cathedral and the assistant principal at Mount Saint Benedict High School, and in East Grand Forks she was the principal at Sacred Heart High School

Sister Joan told about a student who struggled through the science courses she taught. Later he visited her at least once a year and thanked her for teaching him to love God’s creation.

After many years in education, Sister Joan undertook another ministry – pastoral coordinator in Fertile and Mentor, MN. She enjoyed teaching scripture, visiting homes,

counseling, and providing spiritual direction.

As the seventh prioress of Mount Saint Benedict from 1985-1989, Sister Joan faced many challenges, including diminishing membership and the sale of Saint Mary’s Hospital in Detroit Lakes and the closing of hospitals in Browerville and Red Lake Falls. The ministry of education also faced deminishment with the withdrawal of sisters from Saint Philip’s School in Bemidji and Saint Francis de Sales School in Moorhead. She immersed herself in scriptural prayer and drew from it the strength to make peaceful and patient responses to people and events that entered her life.

After her term ended, Sister Joan went to work at a homeless shelter: Care and Share. Sister Joan found teaching scripture and establishing the Adult Learning Center to be rewarding.

Sister Joan then became the pastoral care coordinator for the sisters in the infirmary at the Mount. When Sister Joan left this ministry, she she was appointed director of the guest department. She enjoyed making the guests’ stay at the Mount comfortable and pleasant.

Eventually, Sister Joan moved to the Summit, an assisted care facility, and from there to the Villa, a long-term care facility.

## 75-year Jubilarian Sister Dominica Gerszewski



I was born on July 11, 1926, and baptized on the same day by Mathilda Barto, a midwife, who was my godmother. I was the 2nd in my family – a sister, Irene, was older than I. Later, there were six others. My sister Delphine died when she was six weeks

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old. Sister Jolenta, the fourth child in the family, entered the community six years after I did.

I attended a country school, Turtle District No 10. After finishing 8th grade, my parents decided to send me to the Mount, as my cousin, Sister Bernadine Paschke, had attended high school here and entered the convent. At that time, classes were discontinued at the Mount, so we walked to the Cathedral except in the winter when Mr. Ellingson would take us girls in the covered truck. Sister Mary John was in charge of the girls and would accompany us. I attended the Cathedral for two years. In my junior year, they started having classes at the Mount for the aspirants and postulants. During this time, I also took piano instruction from Sister Placid. I had taken some lessons in my 7th and 8th grade from a teacher in Oslo. In my senior year, I asked to be admitted to the community on January 5, 1944. At the end of the school year, we had a graduation ceremony for the three postulants who were seniors (Catherine Brennan, Mary Herman, and myself) with parents attending.

On July 11, 1944, we three seniors and Mary Hansman received the habit and were novices for a whole year. During this time, we were not allowed to visit our parents or even receive any mail. The following year we professed our first vows for three years.

Most of my years, I was teaching piano lessons on our missions where we had schools except two years before when I taught third grade at Saint Joseph's School in Moorhead. My first assignment was helping Sister Gertrude Knopke with piano lessons in Bemidji. The other places I taught were Barnesville, Slayton, Saint Francis in Moorhead, Benson Osseo, Detroit Lakes, and then finally at MSB.

I had many gifted students; many of them took part in the music contest, and several participated in the Honors Concert in Minneapolis. Quite a few of my students went into music as piano teachers, liturgists or classroom music teachers.

One trip I took with my two sisters that I recall was in 1983 to Europe, where we toured about 13 different countries. That was a year the Passion Play was performing. It was all in German and took all day with a two-hour intermission at noon. We also visited the Vatican, had an audience with the Holy Father, received his blessing, and saw the museum and several different churches. On our travels, the scenery with the Alps was so beautiful. One day we passed through about 50 tunnels.

During the summers, we had summer school classes taught by different Sisters from Winona.



The people of Detroit Lakes express their gratitude to Sister Dominica for her years of service.



Quite a few of those summers, I attended Viterbo College in LaCrosse, WI, where I received my degree in music. It was sweltering and humid there. Two summers, I helped with the Migrant Program.

In my spare time, I enjoy crocheting, reading good novels and biographies, watching movies, and keeping up with the news

Every day I thank God for my vocation to this Benedictine community. There have been many changes in our community during my lifetime. I have received many blessings throughout the years.

*70-year jubilarian  
Sister Jeannine Spain*



Sister Jeannine's life has taken many twists and turns in her 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.

Except for a year when she lived with an aunt in Ironwood, MI, Jeannine received her secondary education at Sacred Heart School, East Grand Forks. After high school, she was happy to get acquainted with young nuns already novices at the Mount. Her grandmother's prayers and the hospitality of the Benedictine sisters nurtured her vocation. She entered the Mount Saint Benedict in 1948, with Sisters Rochelle Kielty and Janet Huderle. At the end of 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,



Sister Jeannine along with Sisters Rita Parenteau and Marcelline Riske modeling modified habits and a traditional habit.

under the direction of Sister Pancratius.

Sister Jeannine 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's degree in nursing.

She also had the opportunity to study at the University of Washington. She earned a master's degree in psychiatric nursing, emphasizing drug and alcohol addictions, which she used while working at the Hazelden Institute, a treatment center for addictions 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 and 1991, she did home nursing, served as a 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 returned to Texas and was employed by Community Action of South Texas at Rio Grande City, TX, as director of nursing for five clinics. For six years, she worked with 7th to 12th-grade students, using a curriculum stressing responsibility to self and family.

She assisted Sister Rosalia Fink in building up a shelter for women and children in abusive home situations. They helped to found the South Texas Empowerment of Women Center(STEWC). They built two buildings, one as a home and office, and the other as a Hospitality Home for four women with their children who experienced domestic violence and abuse. They accomplished all of this because of their trust and gratitude to God.

Sister Jeannine's life was dedicated to nursing and education, caring for the poor and needy both in Minnesota and Texas. She stated that she appreciates nature, loves her Benedictine community and her family, community, and professional life. In short, Sister Jeannine's life has been dedicated to nursing, educating many young women, and caring for the poor. Believe it or not, she has found time for fishing, hunting, rooting for the Twins and Vikings, and appreciating nature. For her sisters, she is a loyal friend with a unique sense of humor! Sister Jeannine currently resides at the Summit, an assisted living facility.

## 60-year Jubilarian Sister Kathleen McGeary



On a farm near Danvers, MN, my parents, Harold and Mary McGeary, modeled what it means to put God first in life. Day after day, I witnessed the many sacrifices Mom and Dad made to get all eleven children to

school, to Mass, and religious education classes. When the Presentation Sisters from Aberdeen, SD, came to our parish each summer to teach catechism, they inspired me to consider religious



Sister Kathleen leads the oblates in a discussion.

life. I wanted to radiate God's love and joy in my life as they did.

In seventh grade, I began taking piano lessons from Sister Eugenia Baril, OSB, in Benson, MN, where the Benedictine Sisters from Crookston staffed a Catholic school. When I told my parents that I was interested in Benedictine life, they



and Sister Eugenia arranged for me to attend Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston. My parents assured me that I would be free to choose religious life or not at the end of my high school years. In 1959, I graduated from the Mount Academy and joined the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

Growing up in an environment where prayer and work were values, I was pleased to learn that Benedictine life emphasized those same values. And in that setting, I was further inspired to live out my favorite Scripture passage, "Where your treasure lies, there your heart will be." (Luke 12:34). Sixty years later, that Scripture passage is still one of my favorites! I have also learned that St. Benedict has a few 'heart' passages of his own to help me live community life. In the Prologue, he says, "listen with the ear of the heart" and "run with an expanded heart." After sixty years of Benedictine life, all still sounds challenging, especially the word "run"!

I am genuinely grateful to my community for gifting me with an excellent education, compassionate care in times of illness, and unending support throughout my mission life. I, in turn, have found a deep sense of fulfillment in sharing my God-given gifts within that same community.

My ministry experience has included eighteen years of elementary teaching in both private and public school; fifteen years of full-time parish ministry at Saint Anthony's in Fargo, Saint Bernard's in Thief River Falls, and Holy Rosary in Detroit Lakes; and twenty years serving in various positions at the monastery, including that of Subprioress which is my present position.

*"Christmas isn't just a temporal celebration or the memory of a beautiful (event). Christmas is more ... Christmas is an encounter!"*

*- Pope Francis*

## 25-year Jubilarian Sister Kathy Kuchar



Kathleen Kuchar was born on October 6, 1949, the second of six children of Stan and Helen (DeVore) Kuchar in Anoka, Minnesota. At the age of six months, the family moved to Mora, MN, where she attended Mora Public Schools and graduated from high school in 1967.

She spent time after school with an elementary teacher, helping her correct papers and other classroom teacher duties. This activity ignited Kathy's desire to become an elementary school teacher herself.

Kathy's mom was a good cook and shared love of cooking and baking with Kathy and her siblings. As a sophomore in high school, Kathy began working at the local drive-in restaurant, The Mug, first in the front filling the frosty mugs of root beer and fountain items. She quickly moved into the kitchen to fill the grill and fryer orders. Working at The Mug continued through high school, college, and even summers in the first several years of Kathy's teaching career. Cooking and baking are still a great interest of hers, as anyone would know by looking at the voluminous array of cookbooks and recipes she has!

After graduation in 1971 from the College of Saint Scholastica in Duluth, with a major in elementary education and minors in psychology and theology, Kathy began teaching in the Melrose Public School System. She taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade at New Munich Elementary for 22 years.

Kathy's interest in religious life had begun while in college, but she kept ignoring God's

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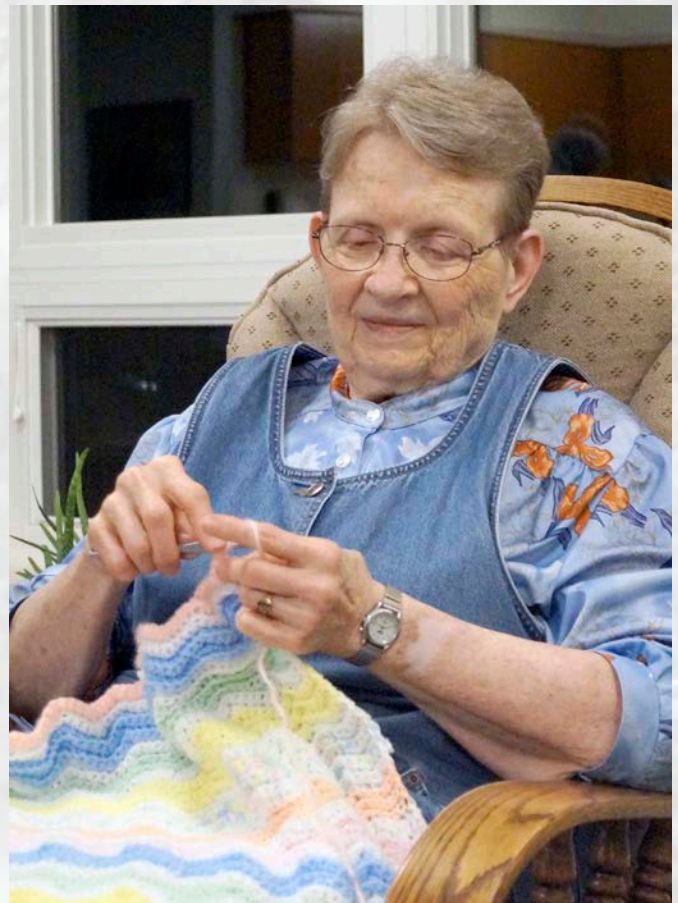
## Sister Kathy (continued from page 17)

gentle tug. When she attended several TEC's at Little Falls, Minnesota, and followed them up with FIAT retreats, the interest blossomed further, and Kathy quit ignoring that tug. At this same time, the associate priest at Saint Mary's in Melrose had recently been ordained while in his 50's. Kathy, in her early 40's, thought that it wasn't too late for her!

Kathy's interest in Benedictines began early in her life while attending summer religious education with the Benedictine Sisters from Saint Joseph, MN. It grew even more while at the College of Saint Scholastica. In 1992, she took the summer to spend a few days at Saint Scholastica Monastery and visited and volunteered for three weeks at Mount Saint Benedict, and for two weeks at Saint Benedict's Monastery in Saint Joseph, Minnesota.

Mount Saint Benedict felt so much like home the first day she arrived that Kathy had a strong feeling that this was where God wanted her to be. The following summer, Kathy turned in her resignation at Melrose and began the process of formation, receiving the name Sister Kathy as a novice in January of 1993. She made first monastic profession on March 21, 1994, and final monastic profession on July 11, 1998.

After finishing her novitiate, Sister Kathy worked as a teacher of toddlers at Sunrise Center



for Children and Families for a year and a half. She then began 17 years as the principal at Saint Bernard's School in Thief River Falls. After returning to the Mount and a brief respite, Sister Jennifer Kehrwald appointed her subprioress. Currently, Sister Kathy is assistant for on-going formation and coordinator of receptionists and housekeepers. She is also responsible for the website.



*"May the God of hope fill  
you with all joy and peace  
in your faith, so that in the  
power of the Holy Spirit you  
may be rich in hope."*

*— Romans 15:13*



# COVID-19 pays a visit

COVID-19 became an unwelcome visitor across the country and around the world. More than a million people have died. Benedictine communities, including Mount Saint Benedict, have not been unaffected. The first step we took was to restrict all the sisters to the Mount except for trips to the doctor, and we wore masks when

leaving the Mount. Sister Eileen Mohs made over 1,000 masks, including ours. Eventually, we were tested for the coronavirus, and we all tested negative -- what a relief!

Sister Myra filled orders for purchases for sisters from a local grocery store. That lasted for a few months, until it was decided that Sue Murphy, our transportation coordinator, could fill orders at the local Walmart.

Then, one of our employees tested positive for coronavirus! OH MY! Everything changed when two of the sisters checked positive. Now, our masks are our friends whenever we leave our bedrooms! COVID-19 has overstayed its welcome!



ABOVE: Sisters Dominica Gerszewski, Denise Schonhardt, Judy Moen, Kathy Kuchar, Kathleen McGeary, Anne DeMers and Diane Maresh sport their new fashion -- masks! LEFT: Sue Murphy unloads items from her shopping for the sisters.



# Treasured Legacy and Currents in the Stream continued



Sister Eleanor Mueller

In 1989 the Crookston Benedictines chose Sister Eleanor Mueller as the eighth prioress of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. Sister Eleanor had absolute trust in the Holy Spirit, and she

promoted a discernment model of leadership, one that built consensus.

In October 1991, unexpected developments sprang up. An architectural and engineering firm employed to monitor the condition of the seventy-year-old original Mount building reported that the structure was unsafe and in danger of catastrophic failure due to shifting soils under the four-story masonry building. They recommended that the west wall temporarily be reinforced within thirty days and plans made for evacuating the building. That would mean relocating the health-care unit (housing about twenty-five sisters in varying levels of nursing care), Corbett Library, the archives, and heritage room, about ten offices, bakery, cannery, and five living spaces. To where? As the realization of the critical situation sank in, Sister Eleanor felt utterly devastated. “I wanted to sit down and weep!”

Steel supports, placed in the dining room temporarily propped up the west section of the building, but the shifting persisted though at a slower rate.

Sister Eleanor informed the sisters of the condition of the building. As the time for decision-making drew near, Sister Eleanor asked the sisters to pray daily for God’s blessing on the endeavor. They decided to construct a building that incorporated a chapel, library, living spaces, archives, infirmary, and administrative offices.

As construction began, days of excitement became interspersed with ones of regret as the ancient trees were cut down, the organ dismantled and stored, the



Chapel building planned for by Sister Eleanor and the monastic community.



chapel stripped of its furnishings and fixtures--woodwork, marble altar and lectern, and lights--almost everything except the flooring. Even the tiles and timber from the roof were recycled, and birds flew freely in and out of vacant windows. At last, on a calm day in April, sisters gathered to pray and ritualize their farewell to Sacred Heart Chapel. Sister Eleanor reminded the sisters of the significance of the building project. "As we watch the old give way to the new, we are reminded that we too require constant renewal. . ."

Under the leadership of Sister Denise Schonhardt, the development office began a fundraising campaign, and people responded generously.

Near the end of her term, Sister Eleanor informed the community that she would not accept a nomination for a second term. At a day of appreciation, her sub-prioress, Sister Lenore Paschke, listed thirty-three projects that had been initiated, directed or completed by Sister Eleanor.

On August 5, 1993, she passed the leadership of the community into the hands of her successor, Sister Michelle McGurran.

In her final address to the community as prioress, Sister Eleanor reminded her sisters: "We will not be remembered for our buildings or the beauty of our charism statement. We will be remembered by how well we did or did not live out what we profess to be, how well we truly live by the Spirit."

In this spirit, she invited Sister Michelle McGurran to steer the community in a new current in the stream.

Sister Michelle McGurran grew up in Grand Forks, ND. She taught in elementary schools in the dioceses of Crookston and New Ulm and in high schools at Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston and Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks.

A deep sense of social justice impelled Sister Michelle as a social studies teacher, an advocate for peace, and the chaplain of the Minnesota



Sister Michelle McGurran

State Senate. She held the words of the psalmist deeply, "I have not concealed Your justice within my heart; Your truth and Your salvation I have declared." (Ps. 39:11).

On August 5, 1993, Sister Michelle McGurran became the ninth prioress of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery and accepted the many challenges facing her during a six-year term of



Chaplains at Villa Saint Vincent Sisters Francella Gust and Rachel Beitz spend a moment with one of the residents.

office. It was up to her to put the plans made by Sister Eleanor and the community into action by overseeing the construction of a new chapel and administration addition. At the same time,





Sister Michelle, prioress, Mike Siekas, administrator of Villa Saint Vincent, and Barry Halm, CEO of Benedictine Health System, sign the agreement transferring management of Villa Saint Vincent to BHS.

Villa Saint Vincent wanted to expand, and the Memory Care Unit began to take shape in 1993. Renovation in the Saint Francis section of the Villa was inaugurated to provide apartments with additional care services. Sunrise Center for Children and Families opened under the direction of Sister Judy Moen. The community purchased a house in Moorhead to serve as a convent for the sisters who ministered there. And eventually, a capital campaign was launched to help make all of this possible.

As the sisters mourned the loss of their four-story monastery, the community celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1994 with special liturgies and events. The original Mount building, finished in 1923, was demolished in the spring of 1995, signaling that an old era had ended and a new one had begun. As the bell in the old tower rang

for the last time, the sisters shared their many “Mount memories.” Sister Michelle led the community in the final commitment: “We commit the Mount building to its rest. We commit our lives to the God of peace. We commit our future to the will of God.” The new monastery consecration took place on March 19, 1995, with Bishop Victor Balke presiding.

The sisters initiated the capital campaign with a goal of \$975,000. Without the help of

more than 200 volunteers from Crookston and communities where our sisters ministered the goal would not have been met, let alone passed by more than \$200,000. Numerous parishes held fish fries, barbecues, breakfasts, and other events



Sisters Aloysius Sherry, Irene Stadwick, Karen Violette and Mary Daniel Neumann, greet Alma Gustafson, a survivor of the flood of 1997. The flood occurred when the Red River overflowed its banks and in some places spread out to twenty miles.

to help raise the money. In the words of Sister Michelle, “This seed money will grow through





Children from Sunrise Center present their Christmas program to their families and friends.

the years and insure that Benedictine women will continue to dwell in this monastery, listen to God's word directing and guiding us as we seek God in community, praise God through worship and minister to the needs of the church as they become known to us."

The winter of 1996-1997 proved memorable for residents of the Red River Valley because of record snowfall. It resulted in a flood of the Red River of the North extending the full length of the valley. In some places, the river grew to twenty miles wide. On Saturday, April 19, 1997, a caravan of people from East Grand Forks who fled their flooded homes in the early hours arrived at shelters in churches and schools in Crookston. Mount Saint Benedict provided short-term housing for evacuees with medical ailments and handicaps. More than sixty people found refuge at the Mount, including people who did not have disabilities. Some of the survivors were not able to find permanent lodging until September.

The sisters were able to provide food, a warm, safe refuge, and listening hearts for their guests. The evacuees responded by sharing their spirit of

courage, patience, trust, and good humor in the face of adversity.

Another milestone during Sister Michelle's term was the establishment in 1998 of a shared sponsorship agreement with BHS (Benedictine Health System) to ensure the future of Catholic health care at Villa Saint Vincent. This same year Sunrise Center for Children and Families became a separately incorporated entity. The Mount Saint Benedict Retreat Center expanded to include the Elderhostel program as it continued to serve numerous other individuals and groups.

Three sisters left for South Texas to share our Benedictine charism by serving in the Community Action Council of South Texas (CACST). Three other sisters who had served in South Texas for many years established a dependent monastery in El Sauz. Back at the monastery, two women entered the initial formation program of the community. The number of volunteers helping in the garden, with mailings, and other tasks grew and proved to be a godsend.

On August 6, 1999, Sister Michelle turned over her position as prioress to Sister Catherine Merck.

# Monastery tales

Because of COVID-19, the sisters closed their chapel to outside visitors, and had to terminate the celebration of the Eucharist. They found an alternative in watching the Mass as celebrated by Bishop Robert Barron from Los Angeles. In July the Saturday evening Masses resumed with no public present.

Sisters now have the opportunity to exhibit their baking skills. There is need in the kitchen for assistance, so sisters step in to help. We have been graced with delicious cookies and bars every evening.

On September 20, two oblates made their final oblation, and one became an oblate novice via Zoom. Michelle Snyder and Elaine Sylvester made their final oblation, and Sue Henderson became an oblate novice.

The monastic community, participated in three weeks of prayer and non-political dialogue in anticipation of the presidential election. Dialogue centered around gospel-centered values. Sisters signed up for half-hour time periods on November 3, to pray for a peaceful election.

Sister Denise Schonhardt received a huge surprise when Sister Kathy Kuchar told her about a message received on the prayer request page of the sisters' website. The message was from a gentleman residing on St. Croix in the Caribbean. He was inquiring about a painting found in a house damaged by Hurricane Maria. He described the painting and indicated that it was inscribed with Sister Denise's name on the back. Sister Denise immediately recognized the painting as one that she had painted in the first painting class she had taken. Sister Denise has never been to St. Croix but her painting has!



*The Benedictine  
Sisters wish you  
all the blessings  
promised through the  
coming of Christ.*

Campin, Robert. *The Nativity*, oil on panel, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Dijon. 1425



## Your Messages . . .

Some time ago we asked you for memories of the sisters. Many of you responded and your messages are printed below. You will also find them in successive issues of *the Crookston Benedictine*. Look for them.

*My memories are so fond of the sisters of Saint Benedict. They laid the groundwork for our pathways to life. They were forever our "mom's" away from home. They guided us always to do the right thing and to follow God's life. They were*

*always there to dry our tears when we were sad or lonesome. They developed our spiritual, emotional and intellectual being. I have so much admiration for them all!*

*Sister Eleanor  
Sister Basil  
Sister Carmella  
Sister Baptiste  
Sister Lois and all!  
-J. B. class of '73,  
Shoreview, MN*

*Thank you for letting us gather at the convent for our brother and sister get-togethers such a peaceful place together, and the food*

*and hospitality were amazing. Love to all of Mount Saint Benedict.*

*R. and S. M.,  
Monticello, MN*

*I have fond memories of typing for Sister Mary Faye.*

*Typing consisted of the history of Mount Saint Benedict. Near noon, we attended a prayer service in the chapel followed by a lovely noon meal. Another fun memory was helping Sister Lorraine Kraft. Sister Lorraine would call me to assist in the dining room. We would set up the tables and help with serving*

*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*





*the meals on  
different occasions.*

*Helping with  
Mount mailings  
has been my last  
experience with  
helping at the  
Mount. We would  
take a break at 10  
AM for coffee and  
cookies, go back to  
work, and stop at  
noon for lunch. We  
worked two or three  
days to complete the  
mailings.*

*--C.P., Crookston,  
MN*

*Dear Sisters of  
Saint Benedict,*

*My first  
memories of "The  
Mount" was going  
to visit my aunt  
Sister Paschal, and  
having a delicious*

### *Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*

*meal of homegrown  
vegetables. She was  
very attentive to  
the dog, "Buttons." It  
was a fun place to  
visit and see all of  
the plants.*

*Later I also  
visited my aunt,  
Lila Michalski, in  
the Villa, where  
Sister Pascal is now  
residing. All the  
inhabitants were  
well taken care of  
and happy.*

*I want to wish  
all the sisters a  
Happy Centennial.*

*--C.J.,  
Hendersonville, NC*

*Sister Mary  
Daniel Neumann*

*grew up across the  
street from my  
family. We grew up  
on Park Avenue in  
Bemidji, Minnesota.  
She was a few years  
older than I was,  
but was a great  
friend with my two  
older sisters. I was  
in fifth or sixth  
grade when Mary  
went to Crookston  
to join the Sisters  
of Saint Benedict.  
I remember being  
in awe of such  
an important  
decision.*

*J. B., Morris, MN*

*I have a lot of  
fun memories of  
the sisters. I was*



born and raised in Benson, Minnesota. I attended Saint Francis's school. I loved all of my teachers, but especially enjoyed those involved with music. Sister Eugenia and Sister Dominica were my piano instructors. Sister Cheryl (the basketball playing nun) taught me to play a bit of organ. (I now teach piano students). Sister Lenore drew me to the love of singing as she had such an angelic sound and gentle mannerisms. Sister Hyacinth

led me to the state competition in the spelling bee, with the top three in the local competition being all from her class. Although I did not know her well, my great aunt was Sister Macrina. She was very much similar to my grandma, Irene Kirchner, in looks and laughed the same. I deeply admire the dedication and heart of all the sisters in my life.


--J. P. D.,  
Lafayette, IN

We had a family

reunion party in Riverside Park in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and my sweet aunt Sister Michelle McGurran was talking to someone on one side and waving a chicken drumstick on the other. This was too much for my black lab, Ben, to resist, so he helped himself to the drumstick that he thought was being offered to him! We had a good laugh about this! But I'm pretty sure Sister Michelle didn't think it was as funny as we did. I got her a fresh drumstick with no dog teeth marks on

*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*





it...right away!  
God bless her!  
P.S. - Ben was  
called the black  
devil by my dad, Joe.  
Michael J  
Brossart and Ben  
4ever, black lab Xx  
--M. B., Grand  
Forks, ND

I first visited  
the Mount with  
Sister Mary Ann  
Stuart, nearly  
45 years ago. She  
helped me with my  
school's production  
of the Sound of  
Music. As our  
friendship grew, I  
came to know and  
respect her as a  
gifted teacher and  
speech coach, as  
well as a spiritual  
light. There will

always be a special  
place in my heart  
for her, the Mount,  
and Benedictines  
everywhere.

--C. and D. B.  
Normal, IL

Our story of  
memories stems  
back to my days  
in school at St.  
Joseph's in Red  
Lake Falls. I was  
there for four years  
after our country  
school closed. I  
had Sister Alcuin,  
Sister Modesta and  
Sister Florentine  
(my cousin); they  
were also kind  
and helpful. After  
our marriage we  
lived on a farm  
near Crookston,  
we visited the

Mount on special  
occasions. The  
last few years I've  
been sharing my  
garden produce, as  
the sisters haven't  
had a garden.  
Sister Flora was my  
sister of advice, as  
she was the chief  
gardener. Sister  
Virginia was a  
lady of music,  
so I cantored at  
the Cathedral  
sometimes, and  
she was the  
accompanist for us.  
Willard has been  
with the Peace and  
Justice group, but  
this winter has  
been tough for him.  
He always enjoyed  
sharing with them.  
We have a special  
place in our heart



for all of them.  
Much love!

--W. and J. B,  
Crookston, MN

I remember  
Mount St. Benedict  
very well. It was  
always a special  
day to visit at the  
Mount, and I was  
so honored to have  
two aunts, Sister  
Humilitas and  
Sister Louis, both  
Benedictine sisters  
as well as Father  
Louis Benoit, my  
uncle.

My father was  
Clement Benoit,  
brother to the above.  
Sister Humilitas  
died in 1939 and  
Sister Louis died in

1987, and both are  
buried at Mount St.  
Benedict cemetery.  
I'm quite sure the  
picture here was  
taken in the early  
'30s before Father  
Benoit left for  
China. He was in  
China for 17 years,  
and he came back  
in 1947. I remember  
skating on the ice  
rink there; I also  
remember the  
candle shop and  
the parrot who said  
a few prayers. I  
remember the Alton  
Ellingson family,  
the beautiful  
vegetable garden,  
and also many  
sisters as I attended  
the Cathedral,


graduated in 1944.

I married Les  
Martin, who also  
was a graduate of  
Cathedral. After his  
death, I married  
Jim Mended,  
also graduate of  
Cathedral. . . Father  
Benoit was from the  
order of the Divine  
Word, Techney,  
Illinois.

Mount Saint.  
Benedict was  
so beautiful - I  
remember the  
beautiful floors...  
oh, those Crookston  
years - my dad  
Clem Benoit died  
in 1936. Mother  
was widowed at  
age 34 and Sister  
Humilitas wrote  
a detailed letter of  
his death at Saint

*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*





Vincent Hospital  
and how we nine  
children were  
brought in to see  
him before he died,  
except for the six-  
month-old baby.

I'm sure the  
celebrations will  
be "Glorious"!!! God  
bless all the sisters,  
and thank you for  
all that you do.

Sincerely,  
--D.B.M.M.,  
Newport Beach, CA

I became  
familiar with  
the Sisters of Saint  
Benedict when I  
began working for  
flood relief as a  
new mental health  
counselor and then

in a homelessness  
worker with  
Northern Minnesota  
Health. I had  
heard of and then  
met, Sister Justina  
– she and some of  
my clients told me  
of you sisters and  
the peace and love  
of the monastery.  
Eventually, I was  
able to experience  
being with you  
all a few times,  
1997-2001 at dear  
Sister Justina's  
funeral. Besides  
these poignant  
experiences I  
knew ladies from  
every state of the  
community and  
from areas far and  
wide who came to

the monastery for  
peace, sustenance  
(spiritual), love,  
understanding  
and all sorts of  
spiritual healing.  
As a counselor  
who cared for  
my clients, I was  
never capable of  
calming, cheering,  
enlightening those  
clients (some with  
serious diagnosis)  
in the way that  
a few days with  
you all could. So I  
came to know that  
the highest care  
is love and you  
sisters convey that  
love, and I will  
always love you all.  
Thank you for your  
blessings.

--C.F.M., Palm  
Coast, FL

*Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019*



# Remembering...

## Sister Laurian Lasha

January 24, 1929 – January 2, 2020



Sister Laurian Lasha (90) died January 2, 2020, at Villa Saint Vincent, Crookston.

Mary Jane Phyllis Lasha was born in Red Lake Falls, MN, the last of five children born to Emery and Josephine (Morin)

Lasha. When Phyllis was a few months old, her parents moved to a farm near Red Lake Falls. She attended country school for seven years. When Phyllis was ready for eighth grade, her parents returned to Red Lake Falls, where she attended Saint Joseph School. She went two years at Lafayette High School before transferring to Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston for her junior year.

During those two final years of high school, Phyllis was attracted to the Sisters of Saint Benedict and asked to join the community in 1946. Given the name of Sister Laurian when she entered the novitiate, she made her final profession in July 1951.

Sister Laurian earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, MN and a master's degree in library science from the

University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. In her early religious life, she had attended the Diocesan Teachers College in Saint Paul and had taken summer extension courses from the College of Saint Teresa, Winona, MN.

Sister Laurian's teaching career began in Rosen, MN, followed by years in Moorhead, Detroit Lakes, Osseo, Barnesville, Crookston, and Red Lake Falls. She served as principal in Rosen, Cathedral Elementary in Crookston, and Red Lake Falls. After earning her library science degree, she served as the librarian in Sacred Heart High School in East Grand Forks. During those years, she also taught algebra and journalism. She spent many years teaching summer vacation school, two summers with the migrant program, and one as a nurses' aide in Detroit Lakes.

In 1987 Sister Laurian began working in Crookston's public library and became director of the library ten years preceding her retirement in 2000. She always said she didn't retire; she just changed jobs. Among the jobs she had while residing at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, she coordinated a local peace group (Pax Christi), worked as a receptionist, and maintained the

**Sister Laurian files documents in the archives.**



monastery archives. These were all assignments that she enjoyed.

Sister Laurian will be remembered for her unwavering commitment to her community, her passion for peace work, and her extraordinary attention to detail. Who else recorded the name of every student she ever taught?

Preceding Sister Laurian in death were her parents, two sisters and two brothers and their spouses: Noella (Lawrence) Audette, Robert (Lorena) Lasha, Clement (Bernice) Lasha, and Doris (Leonard) Goulet. She is survived by several nieces and nephews, other relatives, and the members of her religious community.

Memorials in honor of Sister Laurian Lasha may be given to Mount Saint Benedict Foundation.

## Sister Dorothea Kripps

June 27, 1915 -- January 9, 2020



Sister Dorothea Kripps, 104, died January 9, 2020, at Villa Saint Vincent, Crookston.

Dorothea Kripps, the first of three children born to Anton and Anne (Avenson) Kripps, was

born in Park Rapids on June 27, 1915. She attended both elementary and high school there and was the class valedictorian. Sister Dorothea's musical talent led to her being the parish organist at a young age. She was inspired to be a sister through her service as the organist. Each



Sister Anita and Sister Dorothea share a moment on Sister Dorothea's jubilee.

summer, the pastor sent the choir girls to the Mount to witness the monastic receptions and professions. Mother Eustacia, always looking for women who might be called to Benedictine life, would go out of her way to greet them and talk with them.

Mother Eustacia's hospitality and interest made an impression on Dorothea and influenced her to join the monastic community on August 16, 1934. Sister Dorothea was invested in the Benedictine habit on February 10, 1935. She made her first monastic profession on February 11, 1936, and her final profession on July 11, 1939.

Sister Dorothea attended Corbett College, Crookston; Alverno College, Milwaukee; St. John's University, Collegeville, and the Sherwood Institute of Music in Chicago and other schools. From 1936-1976 Sister Dorothea taught music, played the organ, and directed choirs in Crookston, Bemidji, Mahanomen, Moorhead, and Benson. After thirty years in music ministry, she retired due to hearing loss. She then took classes in home nursing to become a certified nurse



assistant and used her newly acquired skills at Villa Saint Vincent from 1976-1991. Both staff and residents appreciated Sister Dorothea for her kindness.

Sister Dorothea retired to the Mount, where she pursued her hobbies of stringing rosary beads, sewing, knitting, and being of assistance where needed in Good Shepherd Hall. Even in her old age, she remained a courteous and generous conversationalist, putting the other person at ease, and affirming each in turn.

Sister Dorothea was preceded in death by her siblings Basil Kripps and Elizabeth Rieden. She is survived by several relatives and the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston.

Gifts in memory of Sister Dorothea may be given to Mount Saint Benedict Foundation.

## Sister Shawn Carruth

Prioress of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery  
June 18, 1942 -- March 26, 2020



Sister Shawn Carruth died unexpectedly at RiverView Health, where she was taken after suffering a stroke while in her room.

Mary Louise Carruth was the eldest of the three children of Frances (O'Leary) and

Milton Carruth. She grew up in Benson, MN, where she attended Saint Francis School. It seems that the inclination to become a sister began early in Mary Louise's life. When Mary Louise was a junior high school student, her pastor told her that she would become a sister.

Mary Louise attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy, and after graduation, she entered the

Crookston Benedictines. A few months later, she received the Benedictine habit along with a new name, Sister Shawn.

Sister Shawn loved three things: studying, teaching, and being a member of the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston.

Sister Shawn's love of learning and language began at an early age when she taught herself Latin while she was still in junior high school! She was able to do this because the Mass was said in Latin, and the prayer books had Latin and the English translation. From there she learned vocabulary, conjugation of verbs, and uses of other parts of speech.

Sister Shawn loved to study. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and secondary education from Saint Catherine's University in Saint Paul, MN, a Master of Arts degree in theology from the School of Theology, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, and a Ph.D. in religion with a concentration in New Testament from the Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, CA.

Sister Shawn worked as an active member of the Q Project, a reconstruction of a common written source used by the writers of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. She served as the managing editor of several volumes that resulted from the study. Sister Shawn wrote not only on topics related to the New Testament but also on many related to monasticism. Sister Shawn said that she felt most like herself when she was studying for hours on end. Her scholarly articles can be found not only in volumes published in the United States but also in Australia. Sister Shawn satisfied her love of language by learning French, Spanish, German, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Coptic.

Sister Shawn also loved to teach. In her early years as a Benedictine sister, she taught in elementary schools in Bemidji, Red Lake Falls, and Mahtomedi. From 1972 to 1980, she taught French and religion at Mount Saint Benedict High School and also served as the director of



Sister Joella Kidwell, president of the Federation of Saint Gertrude, congratulates Sister Shawn at her installation as prioress.

ongoing formation for the monastic community. Before she even finished her dissertation, she accepted a teaching position at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN.

She taught in the religion department and also accompanied students on several study semesters abroad. Due to her acquaintance with international scholars, students were amazed at her friendships with people from other countries. She told the story of a trip to Europe when the plane had an overnight layover in Reykjavik, Iceland. Sister Shawn had a friend who lived in Reykjavik, and the students were astounded. She also told the story of being with a group of students in Rome and meeting one of her friends on the way to lunch at McDonald's. The students asked her if she knew someone in every country of the world. When Sister Shawn left Concordia in 2013, she received the honor of Professor Emerita. Sister Shawn was a member of several honor societies, notably Pi Delta Phi (for French), Phi Beta Kappa, and Kappa Gamma Pi (for graduates of women's colleges). She also won several awards for teaching and scholarship.

Sister Shawn spent ten summers working

with a summer renewal program in Rome for English-speaking Benedictine women. Sister Shawn also was involved with many Benedictine communities of men and women in the United States and even as far away as Australia! She was regarded highly by Benedictine and Scripture scholars in Europe, Australia, and the United States.

Most of all, Sister Shawn loved being a member of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. Sister Shawn recalled one time that she had met a sister who was also a college professor and, 'First, a college professor,' is how she introduced herself. This impressed upon Sister Shawn that FIRST, she would always be a sister and, secondly, a college professor.

Sister Shawn was asked the question, "What has brought you fulfillment in monastic life?"

She replied, "The expectations of monastic life: prayer, quiet, service . . . All of that I respond to. And the overall presumption that we're all seeking God . . . that is what each of us is here for." Sister Shawn loved all aspects of monastic life, but she especially loved the Liturgy of the Hours, prayer in common with the sisters. On many occasions, Sister Shawn shared her gift of scholarship with the sisters by giving talks on scripture and monastic topics.

In January 2016, Sister Shawn became the prioress of the Sisters of Saint Benedict in Crookston, MN. Sister Shawn had said that she never wanted to be involved in administration, but now she was fully involved. During her tenure as prioress, Sister Shawn walked with many sisters through illness and, for some, to their final destination with God.

Sister Shawn is preceded in death by her parents Francis and Milton Carruth. She is survived by her sister Kathleen (Ron) Holtan, her brother Richard (Patty) Carruth and the members of her Benedictine family.

Gifts in memory of Sister Shawn may be given to Mount Saint Benedict Foundation.



from MSB Foundation director . . .



I have been honored to serve as director of Mount Saint Benedict Foundation since January 1, 2019 - the first day of our centennial year here at Mount Saint Benedict. We spent that year celebrating 100 years that the

Sisters of Saint Benedict have been a presence in Crookston, Minnesota. The year 2019 was filled with lots of remembering, storytelling, and beautiful music. We kicked off our centennial celebrations with a community concert featuring *The Rose Ensemble*, who included us in the northern tour of their final season. There is a long history with music at Mount Saint Benedict monastery. Our founder, Mother Eustacia, directed and trained the sisters' schola herself in the style of Benedictine Gregorian Chant, which made the repertoire the night of *The Rose Ensemble* that much more special for each of the sisters and for each of you that joined us.

Who knew what the year 2020 would bring to our doorsteps, touching each of us in one way or another! Yet, Benedict reminds us to welcome the stranger and to listen with the ear of the heart. As we enter the eve of 2021, it is true that we have experienced loss, but we have also found what it means to walk *together* toward God. We are people who need one another in this journey.

I know that the sisters at Mount Saint Benedict have meant a great deal to each of you over the years. I recognize that the forged partnership, coupled with your generosity, ensures that the Mount Saint Benedict Foundation can continue to support our historic ministries through our grant-giving. Thank goodness we are in a position

to continue our grant-giving through this time of a global pandemic, racial injustice, and political turmoil. Our foundation has two emphases: to care for our retired sisters and to help ensure that our traditional ministries continue to serve, educate and minister well into the future - and it will be because of you. At this time, we ask you to partner with us in prayer for this world, for one another, and for our families as we enter this time of Advent and Christmas. We pray that our hearts are filled with joy and peace.

Heidi Whiting



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

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