

the Crookston Benedictine



Mount Saint Benedict
Summer, 2021
Vol. 34.1

from our administrator . . .



Dear Friends,

We have some exciting news to share with you: the Diocese of Crookston has agreed to buy the grounds and buildings of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery—and we are praying for

the success of their capital campaign.

This possibility fits well with our long-range plan. We see that in the future our community will be smaller and unable to manage the beautiful property here. But we want to continue living at the Mount. The diocese has agreed that we can live our monastic life in a section of the building, while they will occupy the remainder. They will move their diocesan offices here. And they will have a place again for meetings, like they did years ago when they used our former Marian Hall for programs.

The monastic community will consolidate our personal living spaces, to two of the five residential wings. We will also maintain a smaller number of offices in the office area surrounding the chapel. Some parts of the building will

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. **Heidi Whiting** and **Sister Denise Schonhardt**, photographers.

COVER: painted ceramic plate by Mother Monica Forkey.

be shared, such as the reception area, parlors, dining facilities (there are two dining rooms), a large conference room, and the main chapel. The diocese will take over management of the grounds, buildings, and foodservice—which will be a blessing for us.

As religious communities across the United States have become smaller, they have been searching for ways to move to smaller residences while putting their larger buildings to good alternate uses. Some religious communities are left with large, empty, unusable structures. We are among the fortunate communities whose large building is relatively new. Our monastery is in excellent condition, and we have a buyer ready to use the building for a worthy, ministry-related purpose. Financially, the earnings from the sale will go into our retirement fund, which is the predominant source on which we now depend. For this reason, we are grateful that the diocese has stepped forward.

We believe that this plan will benefit our monastic community and all of you who support either the monastery or the Diocese of Crookston. If you live in the diocese, the diocese will probably be contacting you. If you are not on their mailing list but would like to contribute to the diocesan campaign, you can check their website at <https://www.crookston.org/perfectfit>.

We look forward to providing a spiritual presence for the diocese's new pastoral center while they attend to the physical care of our beloved grounds.

Hopefully, you too are being blessed in new ways as you move out of the Covid restrictions. We look forward to seeing some of you in person as the world opens.

In God's peace,

Sister Jane Becker, O.S.B.

Artisans and Humility

Sister Jane Becker

“If there are artisans in the monastery, they are to practice their craft with all humility, but only with the abbot’s permission. If one of them becomes puffed up by his skillfulness in his craft and feels he is conferring something on the monastery, he is to be removed from practicing his craft and not allowed to resume it unless, after manifesting his humility, he is so ordered by the abbot.” RB 57:1-3

The word “artisans” is sometimes translated “craftsmen” and other times “skilled workers.” In Benedict’s day, the artisans were the specialists, those with particular skills who helped the monastery keep operating—masons, woodworkers, cobblers, potters, tailors—anyone who could make things well. And of course, they decorated their products with carving, painting, embroidery, etc. Monastic communities made no distinction between the mural painter and the house painter or the sculptor and the mason. Everyone created something practical *and* beautiful for the good of the community.

Today the word “artisan” usually refers to those who have a unique talent for making things with their hands, decorative items that lift the spirit—woodcarvings, cloth articles, greeting cards, household items, and decorations. I would readily add farmers, gardeners, cooks, and bakers to the list of skilled workers who not only make practical products but also help us feel happy about life.

And what creative action could each of us add to the list? How am I helping co-create the kingdom here on earth? In what ways do I contribute to another’s joy? By cooking something special or cleaning up someone else’s mess? By a friendly note? By remembering someone’s concerns? By making someone smile? What is my specialty?

Benedict would surely approve of all these crafts—done, of course, with humility.



Sister Eulalia decorating hurricane candles.



Some of the masks made by Sister Eileen Mohs.



Crane carved by Sister Lamberta Campbell.

To create or not to create

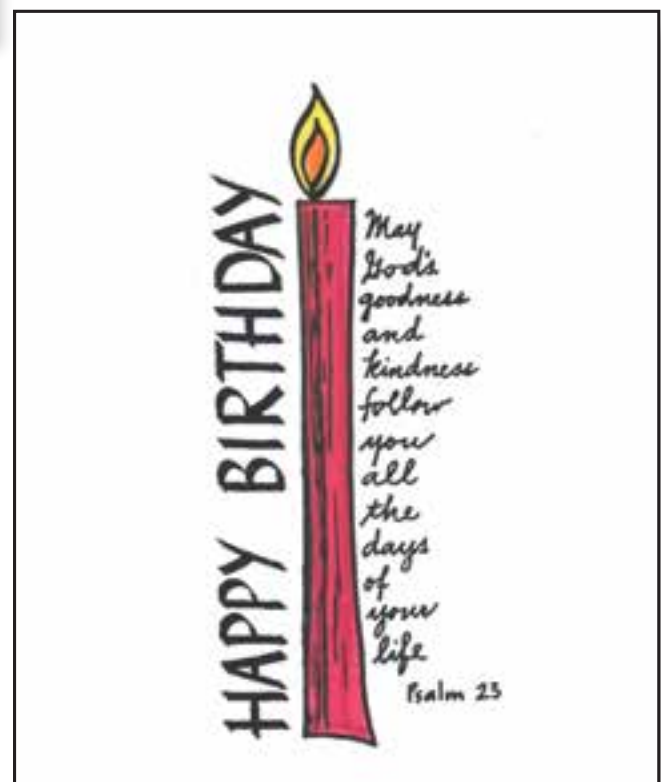
Sister Denise Schonhardt

One day, while I created displays of objects from the archives, I came across a few chalice covers painted by Sister Dorothea. I did not even know Sister Dorothea could paint!

I began to think of other examples of artisanship in the monastic community: Sister Monica Forkey's breath-taking painted ceramics (shown on the cover), Sister Gertrude's beautiful

Christmas cards made of birch bark, the decorated beeswax candles produced by Sister Seraphica, Sister Eymard, and other sisters, the wood carvings of Sisters Lamberta, Norma Jean, Bridget, and Immaculata. My thoughts turned to needle-crafts by Sisters Anne Goulet, Cecilia Smith, Dominica, Eulalia, Yvonne, Francella, Carol Jean, Kathy Kuchar, Bernadette, Denise, Myra, Eileen Mohs, and other sisters. Christmas, birthday, sympathy, and get-well cards, quilling projects, palm art, rosaries, and prizes for summer religious education classes were other expressions of the sisters' creativity. Sister Lois's calligraphy graced many of the projects. Artisanship has been part of community life at Mount Saint Benedict since the beginning of the community. Many of the articles made by the sisters are available in our gift shop.

We hope you enjoy the photos of some of the handiworks made by the sisters. In the next issue of *the Crookston Benedictine*, we will feature the artists of the monastery.



Birthday card designed by Sister Lois Spors.

Sister Eileen continues legacy of artisanship

Sister Denise Schonhardt

If you asked one of the Sisters of Saint Benedict about the community's artisans, they would include Eileen Mohs.

Sister Eileen created handicraft projects since she was in grade school. Her teacher in a modest country school near Shooks, MN, taught her students how to embroider. Sister Eileen's first project was an embroidered dish towel with a donkey on it. When Sister Eileen's mother died at 93 years, she still had this dish towel. The skill and interest never left Sister Eileen. As a young girl in the fifth or sixth grade, her mother taught her how to sew. Sister Eileen did a lot of sewing using a treadle machine. She started by patching her brothers' overalls and then moved on to other, more complicated things. She also learned to crochet and knit.

Sister Eileen embroiders in the evening along with Sister Myra Schmieg. After spending a long day doing various tasks around the monastery, Sister Eileen enjoys nothing more than sitting down and watching either a Twins or a Vikings game and embroidering. Our gift shop benefits from Sister Eileen's creation of many sets of embroidered dish towels. Sister Eileen's results have not gone unnoticed. She has received many awards at the Polk County Fair.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Sister Eileen foresaw a need for face masks, so she set out to make them. The Sisters of Saint Benedict received the masks first, then she gave them to other people free of charge, but people often left a donation. When the Extension Society notified the Diocese of Crookston that a religious sister in each diocese was entitled to some grant money to go to people affected by the pandemic, Monsignor Mike Foltz asked diocesan staff who should receive the grant. They suggested Sister Eileen. Sister Eileen selected Saint Mary's Mission School in Red Lake, to receive the \$1000

grant. They used the money to install air filters to protect the children from the virus.

Sister Eileen especially loves using her creativity by making her own designs, particularly in quilting projects. She employs her imagination to make life easier for people having dementia. For them, she makes "fidget blankets." These blankets are approximately 18 inches square. They resemble handmade quilts, but they also have objects sewn on them that increase the tactile experience these people need. The whole objective is to increase the ability to feel and experience texture.

Sister Eileen continues a long history of artisans in the monastery.



Sister Eileen holds a table cloth she embroidered.



*Sisters rejoice
in 70 and 60
years of
monastic
life*



70 years

Sister Carol Jean Schroeder

Sister Anne DeMers

On July 8, 1929, Angela Elizabeth Schroeder, the seventh in a family of eight children, was born in Farming, MN, to William and Elizabeth (Behnen) Schroeder. The Schroeder family moved to a farm in Two Inlets in 1933 when "Angie" was four. Her family helped build the new church there, and they remained active in parish activities. Sister Carol Jean attributes her faith, sense of identity, rootedness and security to her family. She recalls the emphasis on daily prayer and her mother supervising catechism around the kitchen table.

Benedictine Sisters from Mount Saint Benedict taught religious education for two weeks in the summer, but Angie had no

inkling of the role Benedictines would play in her future.

After graduating from Park Rapids High School, she worked as a secretary for the Highway Department.

Attending a retreat in Crookston, Angie began to think that she might have a religious vocation.

Her pastor encouraged her to contact the sisters in Detroit Lakes who invited her to Mount Saint Benedict for a profession ceremony. She spoke with Mother Blandina Murray, and they set the date for her entry on September 1. That evening as the sisters chanted the Divine Office, she said to herself, "Yes, this is where I belong." Sister Carol Jean made first vows on July 11, 1951, and final profession on July 11, 1954.

Her first assignment was as office assistant at Saint Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes. Her other appointments as secretary or office manager were at: Mount Saint Benedict (Treasurer); Saint John's Hospital, Browerville; Archdiocese of



Sisters from Two Inlets. Standing: Sisters Carol Jean Schroeder, Imelda Esser, Margaret Ann Eischens and Flora Klier. Seated: Sister Martha Esser.

Saint Paul and Minneapolis; Villa Saint Vincent Nursing Home in Crookston; National Sisters Vocation Conference in Chicago; LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) in Silver Spring, MD and the Diocese of Crookston. After returning to the Mount, she served as House and Travel Coordinator; secretary for the capital campaign, office staff for the development department, and as secretary to the Prioress of Mount Saint Benedict.

Sister Carol Jean remembers being challenged by each assignment. Every change was a new experience, requiring new organizational skills, procedures and technology. Yet, she grew to love the work and the relationships involved.

Sister Carol Jean studied Hospital Accounting in Saint Louis, MO. In 1967 Sister Carol Jean completed a year of Accounting and Business Law at the University of North Dakota, and

in 1970 she graduated with an Associate of Arts Degree in Business Administration from Moorhead State College

When asked what meant the most to her, she replied, “My primary focus has been my community – serving the Church and the surrounding area in a community which models and lives common life and Christian values. Though my ministry, at times, has taken me to other areas, I have always felt grounded and supported by the community. The values which permeate the Rule of Benedict come from Scripture and address every aspect of my life.” Sister Carol Jean said that Scripture has taken on an ever-deepening daily influence in her life.



Sister Carol Jean displays a tatted rosary with Sister Irene Stadwick who taught her the pattern.



Sister Carol Jean performs secretarial work.



70 years

Sister Francella Gust

Sister Lorraine Kraft

Sister Francella and Sister Carol Jean, group companions from the beginning, were honored at a Jubilee celebration celebrating their living the monastic promises for seventy years.

Sister Francella relies on the values found in the *Rule of Benedict* (with the familiar motto of “ora et labora” (pray and work) and the guidance of the Sisters of Saint Benedict. At the Mount Sister Fran found a community with a specific lifestyle that suited her -- with prayer together and community tasks that were second nature to her.

Frances Ann was born in 1932 into a large Catholic family, the tenth of eleven children of the John and Frances Gust family of Tabor,

MN. There was plenty of farm work to engage her and her siblings. She recalls walking to the country school for her eight years of elementary education. School was not easy since she spoke no English (her family spoke Bohemian). Her sister was much older, so Sister Fran learned to play sports and work with her brothers. Their skill challenged her to do her best.

She loved the farm and the excitement at the birth of baby calves, pigs, and chickens. She enjoyed watching the growth of garden plants, so important in her family’s activities.

As the family grew, Fran watched and learned from her brothers.

Eventually, her brothers joined the military one by one, and happily, came home on furloughs periodically. Her brother, Edward, entered the seminary, and Fran was pleased



Sister Francella cares for a patient at Saint Francis Hospital in Crookston.

to attend his ordination at Onamia. Later, Fr. Ed was present at the Mount to preside at her monastic profession ceremony and received her written vow paper.

After the novitiate, she became a nurse aide. She was careful to watch and learn from the experienced nurses. She completed nurses' training at Saint Cloud a few years later.

Sister Francella spent her first years in nursing at Saint Francis Hospital in Crookston. She worked with pediatrics and the elderly sisters. It proved to be a challenging time for her.

Working next at Detroit Lakes' Saint Mary's was a good experience with staff and doctors who showed a more cooperative style in their professional manner. She also had mentoring and the encouragement of Sisters Bonaventure and Gemma on the "Babies and Mothers" floor.

"I can do all things with Christ at my side who strengthens me," was Sister Francella's theme from Scripture. She takes delight in lively music, including spiritual songs. She enjoys watching professional ice-skating, and "homey stories" keep her in touch with the outside beyond nursing.

Since retiring as a counselor and friend of the elderly at Villa Saint Vincent, Sister has strengthened her relationship to Jesus, meditating on meeting with God face to face, as she has always felt God's closeness in daily life.

She manages to find time for hobbies, including her favorite embroidery work on dish towels. She enjoys her collections (menagerie) of tiny animals, butterflies, and rocks, always happy to share these items with her friends. From her room, she goes faithfully to community prayers, meals, and gatherings, sometimes with a bag of popcorn for occasional films in our Chapter Room. Sharing her joys, sadness, and memories makes her life sweet and her burdens light, as Jesus has promised.



ABOVE: Sisters Francella and Rachel pose with a resident of Villa Saint Vincent. **BELOW:** Sister Francella embroiders one of the many dish towels she made.





60 years

Sister Eileen Mohs

haying and harvesting grain, to picking potatoes. She remembered picking corn by hand and then shucking it manually to feed the animals, including the sixteen cows they milked twice a day. She recalled hauling wood for heating in the winter.

For grades one to five, Eileen and her siblings attended a country school near Shooks, MN, a tiny hamlet in the pine forests of northern Minnesota. They attended Kelliher School for grades six, seven, and eight.

When it came time for high school, she attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston.

During her senior year, she entered Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. On July 2, 1960, she became a novice, was invested in the Benedictine habit, and received the name Sister Lauren (she later returned to Sister Eileen).

Sister Eileen has held varied positions: cook, laundress, and travel coordinator. She also

Please turn to page 13.

Sister Denise Schonhardt

Sister Eileen Mohs' family was larger than most; she was the fifth of thirteen children born to Norbert and Martha (Pink) Mohs. Her family welcomed her on August 18, 1942, in Shooks.

This family lived in a three-bedroom house. The parent's bedroom was downstairs, and the second floor was divided into two dormitory rooms. Sister Eileen commented that the thing she loved the most was that her family did everything together, from



Sister Eileen works on a fidget blanket, surrounded by a plethora of other projects .



60 years

Sister Myra Schmieg

Sister Lorraine Kraft

Two words stand out for me as I recently reviewed the life story of Sister Myra Schmieg: AMAZING! REMARKABLE! These qualities have been part of the sixty-plus years of her monastic life.

Marlys Catherine Schmieg was born on July 8, 1942, the oldest of eleven children of Leonard Schmieg and Myra Jean (Radermacher) Schmieg in Ortonville.

During her growing up years, she lived in the tiny Catholic, German village of Rosen, where everyone's back yard seemed to be a cornfield. The general store, built and owned by her dad and uncle, was the only business in town. Life

centered around the church and school.

After eight years of being taught by the Benedictine Sisters at Saint Joseph's School, Myra attended high school at Mount Saint Benedict Academy in Crookston. During those years, she developed an interest in a religious vocation. As a senior, she took the first steps toward becoming a Benedictine sister, part of a large group of fourteen young women. As novices and sisters in temporary profession, they shared Benedictine life.

During the first four years following the novitiate, Sister Myra worked in the dietary department in Marian Hall (Mount). Incidentally, her pies are incomparable! She then attended Saint Catherine's College in Saint Paul to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Foods and Nutrition. Then came a year of internship at Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital to become a registered dietitian.

Her education and training serve her and the monastery very well. Sister Myra served as the dietitian at Riverview Hospital and Nursing Home in Crookston, Saint Mary's Hospital in Detroit Lakes, and as a dietary consultant for many area nursing homes.

After many years in the dietary field, Sister took courses at Willmar Community College and earned an Associate of Arts degree in accounting.

To this day, Sister serves as treasurer of Mount Saunt Benedict Monastery.

Sister Myra has shared her expertise in accounting with the Federation of Saint Gertrude, as a member of the Finance Committee and as a council member. Over the years, she has also served on hospital boards in Browerville, Red Lake Falls, and the Villa/The Summit in Crookston and the Boards of Care and

Please turn to the next page.

Sister Myra continued

Share and the Catholic Community Foundation.

Sister Myra's sixty years as a Benedictine have not been all work and no prayer or play. She is serious about the Ora et Labora (Pray and Work) basis of Benedictine life, valuing the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours, including her favorite psalm, number 148: "Let all things on Heaven and Earth praise the Lord."

Her relaxation consists of sewing, especially items for our gift shop, embroidery, crocheting, and hardanger (Norwegian embroidery). She has made two beautiful altar cloths for our chapel and doilies and table runners. And, incidentally, she enjoys watching the Minnesota Twins!

Sister Myra continues to display exceptional, remarkable qualities---- from handling the community's finances to baking special pies for the sisters' Sunday dinner. Both of these activities tell a small portion of her interests and achievements at Mount Saint Benedict. She is at home equally in the bakery and the boardroom!



With justifiable pride, Sister Myra points out a hardanger embroidered altar cloth.

Sister Eileen continued

served at Saint Michael's, Mahanomen; Saint Paul; Mount Saint Benedict; Sacred Heart, East Grand Forks; Bogota, Colombia and Moorhead. For twenty years, she was the travel coordinator at the Mount.

Sister Eileen worked with freshmen and sophomores in the religious education program and held a leadership role in Teens Encounter Christ's retreat program. When the COVID 19 pandemic struck, she began making masks --1580 of them!

When asked what she appreciated most about monastic life, she replied it is the prayer life especially the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist. She also appreciates the fun times, and she says that the sisters know how to celebrate: we enjoy each other.



Detail of hardanger embroidery on the altar cloth.

Murgatroyd's Tales

Sister Anne DeMers

I heard that there was no “Monastery Tales” column for this issue of the Crookston Benedictine, so I thought, “I could do that.” I would let people know what is going on around here. I, Murgatroyd Mouse, haven’t been on these pages for a long time

What with that pandemic and all, I kept a low profile. When you last heard from me, I lived in the laundry room for Wings C-D at the Mount. But there was too much traffic. An aged mouse like myself cannot be too careful, so I packed my belongings and embarked on a house-hunting expedition.



I decided to try the employees’ lounge so as to evade busy areas (e.g., the wellness room, the kitchen, the garage). I thrived there for a while --until Donna came down with COVID. I then scampered over to the maintenance room where quiet and serenity reigned – for a time. In the middle of my nap, I awakened, startled by a loud, booming voice. Sure enough. It was Lester. I disappeared so quickly I almost left my tail behind!

Grabbing my backpack, I scooted across the hall into the craft room. Every piece of furniture held treasures -- scraps of material and knickknacks of all colors. Ah, an excellent place to hide – and maybe even finish my nap. Just as I burrowed under some quilt squares to become comfortable, Sister Eileen opened the door and set out in a flurry of activity

– collecting, sorting, stitching. I groaned and quietly inched toward the door, using a quilt square as cover.

As I sat in desperation, wondering what to do next, I heard jangling keys coming down the hall. That had to be Shiloh, one of our nurses. I followed her to Wing D, thinking I might find a closet or two to serve my purpose. What a surprise! Four bedroom doors had quarantine signs -- COVID again.

But never fear. There is always the Curlicue -- a pleasant, clean place with just the right ambiance. Surely I could find a niche there to call my own. And so I did -- until Tracy, one of our housekeepers came to clean. She found what she called “mouse tracks” on the floor and exclaimed, “It’s time for some stern measures here.” It didn’t take me long to pack.

I stopped in the chapel for a quick prayer: “God, you are merciful to those in need, but it looks like there is no room for me in the inn.” I barely uttered these words when Sister Lorraine arrived and went into a closet behind the organ. When she left, I hurriedly bounded under the pews and into the closet, breathing a sigh of relief. How perfect -- an answer to prayer. In the closet, music equipment and paraphernalia filled every nook and cranny. As tired as I was, I managed to drag my aching bones onto a shelf before falling asleep, snuggled into the quilt square behind a stack of music.

Weeks of peace and tranquility passed. I missed my cohorts, but the daily prayer of the sisters kept me company. Soft chanting washed over me like waves beating against the seashore. The sisters didn’t know it, but they had become my cohorts. We were in this together. We would beat COVID.

My position was too good to last. One morning

I awoke to a resounding, jarring. WHUMP!! I jumped so high; I think I left my feet behind! Sister Anne must have pulled out all the stops. Her fingers on the keys and toes on the pedals produced sounds I had never before heard. I hoped the organ didn't have COVID! But God is good. Al, the organ tuner, walked into the chapel. He unpacked his toolbox, and Sister Anne quit the organ and left him to his task.

I found a perch between the pipes in the cabinet and watched Al run his fingers over the organ keys -- pushing and pulling levers and making more noise. Then he hopped off the bench and went to open the closet door. Time for "fight or flight," I thought as I scrambled to find cover. I made a beeline to a perch on a candle shelf, hopping up to watch from a safe distance. The pipes shook, boomed, and squealed as this circus of sound continued. No pipes were spared.

Suddenly I gasped. The enormous pipe in the left corner started swaying -- it was going to fall out of the cabinet! I watched with awe as Al's arms rose to the occasion. Encircling the pipe to steady it, he eased the 16-foot pipe out of its slot, lowered it to the floor, and then maneuvered to lay it down on a row of armless chairs nearby. Al called Sister Anne, who notified Sister Jane, the superior, and together, they hurried to the chapel.

The bottom of the pipe had bent and crumpled under its sheer weight. And a tie holding the pipe in place had come undone. Al stated that it "was but for the grace of God that this hadn't happened sooner." The falling pipe could have caused severe bodily harm. He advised hiring a metal worker to make the needed repairs for several pipes on the verge of crumpling.

That evening I detected an extra bit of gratitude woven into the chant at Evening Prayer. I even added a special note of my own, "God is good, and all is well."

Margaretta Mousé



Doily made by Sister Yvonne Shafer.



Tablecloth crocheted by Sister Denise.

Treasured Legacy and Currents in the Stream concluded

Catherine Louise Merck was born in, MN on June 1, 1942, the youngest of seven children of Anthony J. and Margaret (Jerome) Merck.

She went to Saint Rose of Lima School in Argyle, MN

from first through eighth grades. She attended Mount Saint Benedict Academy and graduated in 1960. As a senior, she entered the Sisters of Saint Benedict, and that summer received the Benedictine habit and a new name, Sister Natalie. She made her first monastic profession in 1961



Sister Cathi Merck



Sister Cathi hired consultants to assist the sisters with issues facing the community.

and perpetual profession in 1966. Later she returned to her baptismal name and preferred to be known as Sister Cathi.

Despite being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in her mid-twenties, Sister Cathi served on the staff of Corbett College in Crookston; Colegio Santa Maria in Bogotá, Colombia; Holy Spirit parish, Fargo, ND; and Saint Rose of Lima parish, Argyle. She was monastery treasurer, director of community self-study and ongoing formation and subprioress.

In 1999 the Benedictine Sisters elected Sister Cathi as their tenth prioress. Sister Cathi modeled the first word of Saint Benedict in his Rule – LISTEN – to listen with the ear of her heart. She encouraged the sisters to do the same. She engaged consultants and facilitators to help the community receive and process information regarding issues facing



The sisters gather in the conservatory to pray their goodbyes. Pictured are music teachers Sisters Carmella, Victorine and Dominica.

it. Out of these consultations, came a viability study titled “A Critical Juncture.” Sisters joined committees and engaged in a survey of critical

Please turn to the next page.

issues of ministry, monastic promises, sharing our common Benedictine spirituality, leadership among community members, relationships, new membership, corporate structures, assets and financial management, retirement, and risk-taking.

Sister Cathi realized that with the changing makeup of the community, new ways of providing care for sisters requiring assisted living was necessary. At the same time, some sisters needed skilled care, and they vacated Good Shepherd and moved to Villa Saint Vincent. Sisters needing assisted living moved into Good Shepherd Hall.

It became evident that outlying buildings needed attention. The music conservatory was vacated, sold, and moved off the property. Piano teachers, Sisters Carmella, Victorine, and Virginia, and Dominica relocated to available places in Marian Hall. The candle house, a wooden structure, needed to be vacated. Thus, the candle industry decreased. Eventually, a candle shop in Crookston purchased the equipment.

Sister Cathi also was aware that Marian Hall was quickly becoming too large for the community and was a financial drain on the community. She began negotiations with the diocese regarding the possibility of them using the building. The diocese recognized the contribution that MSB Center made to it, and they did not want to lose it. These negotiations continued into the term of the next prioress, Sister Lenore Paschke.

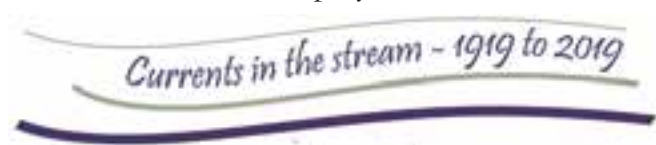
Sister Cathi led the community in a movement toward a greater understanding of the meaning of what it means to be monastic. The shift toward our monastic roots was slow but unstoppable. Beginning in the 1960s after Vatican Council II, the movement gradually gained momentum. The sisters adopted charism and mission statements and core values to articulate a deeper awareness of the community's monastic grounding.

Peace and justice issues formed an essential

aspect of community life, supported by Pax Christi Northwest Minnesota, a local ecumenical group that gathered at the Mount to tackle these issues. In 1999, Mount Saint Benedict hosted the Pax Christi Minnesota state assembly at the. In his keynote speech, the speaker, Father Michael Crosby, addressed "Living Compassionately in a World of Violence."

Compassion was rewarded when Sister Justina Violette received the 1999 Lumen Christi award for her 32 years of generous, stalwart service to the poor. In the words of Bishop Victor Balke, who nominated her for this honor, "She knows that all people deserve equality, dignity, and respect She has changed hearts, policies, and certainly lives."

Sister Cathi's gentle leadership flowed into the stream of the lives of the Sisters of Saint Benedict, to be taken up by Sister Lenore



Sister Lenore Paschke

Paschke.

Sister Lenore Paschke became prioress in August 2005. During Sister Lenore's term, the Benedictine Sisters dealt with issues regarding the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours book, land stewardship, a study

of the use and future of Marian Hall, master and strategic planning, and ongoing formation.

The sisters determined that the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office) books needed updating. The sisters pray the Liturgy of the Hours three times daily. The community invited an Old

Testament expert to speak to them on the psalmody. Input that the sisters received helped them appoint a committee led by Sister Anne DeMers to develop a new Liturgy of the Hours book. The

committee took more than three years to complete the project.

Saint Benedict states in the *Rule of Benedict* that the goods of the monastery are to be treated as the sacred vessels of the altar. With this in mind, the sisters, from the beginning, engaged in organic gardening rather than the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizer. Examples of this included the growing of buckwheat and then plowing it under to fertilize the land, using ladybugs to rid the garden of aphids, and utilizing diatomaceous earth to clear the garden of pests. With increasing awareness of environmental issues, the sisters approved of a statement on the environment *On Holy Ground: Statement of Land Use*.

Care of the goods of the monastery also extended to the use and future of Marian Hall, a large four-story building constructed in 1960-1963 as a residence for high school girls. After Mount Saint Benedict Academy closed in 1982, retreatants, participants of programs such as Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) along with other groups like quilters and spinners, used the building. Sisters also lived in part of the building. Eventually, the building was too large for the sisters' residence, and the sisters no longer had the resources to host programs. Closing of



Novices work in the organic garden in the '50s or '60s.

the fourth floor led to the shutting down of all programs held there. The sisters tried selling the building; they even tried giving it away, but no one wanted it.

Realizing that they needed the help of people with more expertise, the sisters engaged the help of laymen and women in a Master Planning Committee. The committee made recommendations to the sisters and led them to consider a broader range of planning than property and buildings.

In addition to giving attention to temporal goods, the sisters initiated a Benedictine Renewal program. They invited others from Benedictine communities from across the nation to participate. Some of the best scholars in the Benedictine world gave presentations on a variety of monastic topics. Sisters came from such places as New Jersey, Texas, South Dakota, Manitoba, Missouri, and Minnesota.

Another event happened closer to home. Since 1976 the sisters had operated a dental clinic in Warren with Sister Anita Whalen as the dentist. After more than 30 years, Sister Anita knew it was time for her to retire, and another entity assumed the dental practice. Other projects undertaken included the construction of Subiaco,

Please turn to the next page.

a hermitage for the use of the sisters and other people seeking solitude, Wi-Fi installed in Marian Hall, and inclusion of daily prayer for the parishes of the diocese.

After Sister Lenore's term ended, the sisters saw the need to step back, take a breath, and delay the election of a new prioress. When Sister Jennifer Kerhwald became the administrator of the community, she started a new current in the stream of the history of the Sisters of Saint Benedict.



New monastery building



Sister Jennifer Kerhwald

The Crookston Benedictines found themselves at a place where they welcomed assistance from people from the outside. The Federation of Saint Gertrude provided that help in the person of Sister Jennifer Kerhwald who assumed

the position of administrator. Sister Jennifer, a member of the Yankton, SD, Benedictines and a former prioress, had the same rights and responsibilities as a prioress.

Sister Jennifer led the community bring to life the vision to "1) Continue to welcome others to the campus while creating a new

monastery where the sisters can live and receive the necessary health services to age in place. 2) Build upon a partnership of ten years which has been a win-win for both BHS and Mount Saint Benedict. 3) Ministry for the elderly will 'live on' as a legacy to Mount Saint Benedict.

To facilitate the vision, the sisters agreed to create a new monastery to the south of Good Shepherd Hall, the monastery's, assisted living area. The sisters also decided to sell the Villa/Summit to Benedictine Health System and to transfer the sponsorship to the Benedictine Sisters of Duluth. In the transfer ceremony, the prioress from Duluth recalled that the Duluth Benedictines had built the original Saint Vincent's Hospital in 1912. The Crookston Benedictines also approved the sale of part of the north campus to BHS. The money gained from this transaction of this land helped fund the construction of the new monastery.

Sister Jennifer met at various times with the architect to develop plans for the new monastery. She arranged for a groundbreaking ceremony and for the blessing of the new monastery. The sisters were grateful for the assistance of many volunteers when moving day came. They were overwhelmed by the generosity of the volunteers, and they were delighted to move into their new living spaces. Each of the four wings had nine

Please turn to the next page.

History

bedrooms, a kitchen, and a dining-living room, and most appreciated was the fact that each bedroom had a private bathroom!

Sister Jennifer led the community in working with other issues as well: the establishment of a non-canonical community in Marshall, MN and the formation of Good Shepherd Monastery in Texas as a Public Association of the Faithful which made it easier for them to accept new members. The community consolidated the ongoing formation, oblates, and spirituality programs. She helped create a spirituality center to take the place of MSB Center. A committee revised the document that defines the guidelines that govern the day-to-day activities of the sisters.

One of the accomplishments effected during Sister Jennifer's tenure was the completion of the books the sisters use daily for the Liturgy of the Hours. The sisters were grateful to receive the new books because of the ease of use. Booklets for feast days were revised. Another accomplishment was the revision of the website.

Other activities also were completed. Sunrise Center, a childcare facility, developed

a strategic plan for the future. Mount Saint Benedict Foundation reached the point where it could now give grants to designated recipients, and guidelines and application and report forms were developed. The sisters hold Sister Jennifer and the Yankton Benedictines with high regard and gratitude.

Sister Jennifer remained with the community through the election and installation of Sister Shawn Carruth, who created a new current in the stream.

Sister Shawn wrote, "For the future we know not to what other currents we will be joined nor whither and how this current will continue to flow. But for all of it we know ourselves to be blessed and we are grateful."

Sister Patricia Fitzpatrick wrote in her poem Mount Saint Benedict, "In God's creative now moved the spirit of Saint Benedict . . ." The Sisters of Saint Benedict do not know how our current will continue to flow into God's creative now. We do know that as our current flows into the stream of eternity, we enter into the Paschal Mystery.

Currents in the stream - 1919 to 2019

Rosebush on the Mount grounds.

Prefer nothing
to the love of
Christ.

Rule of Benedict, Ch. 4



Your Messages

When I was about eight years old, after the school year was over, we, the country school kids, went for two weeks of religious instruction in Mahanomen. We were taught by the Benedictines. I loved that two weeks of "Sister School" as we called it. I remember one nun in particular, Sister Carmel. Everyone loved her. I remember one time at recess, which was very fun and funny. The lawn was literally covered with dandelions Sister told us, whoever can pick the most dandelions gets a "holy card." The lawn was dandelion free in a matter of minutes. Sister loved everyone. We were given holy cards for learning our prayers. They were a prized token. However, the most memorable event was related to prayer.

As I recall we were badly in need of rain with no rain in the forecast.

I heard my parents expressing their concern. Sister told us about the power of prayer and that we were all going over to the church and ask God to send us a good rain. It was hot and sunny when we went into the church. Sister led us in prayer for maybe 15 or 20 minutes. When we came out of church, it started to sprinkle. We hurried back to school so as not to get too wet. School was over, and we waited for parents to pick us up. I don't know how much rain we got, but I remember the thankful comments I heard when my mother came to pick us up, she commented about the rain. I told her "Sister has prayed for rain and we got it!" It impressed upon me the power of prayer.

--E.J., Crookston, MN


I always enjoyed visiting the Mount. I remember going to visit

my sister, (Sister Mary Ursula) even when she first started at the Mount - that would be back in the late 1940s. When my children were growing up we went there several times from Minneapolis, and they all enjoyed it. Sister Ursula showed them everything; from the place she worked in the laundry, to the bakery, candle shop, garden, and the whole place, by the way, do you still do the candle-making? I love the beautiful candles you made and always came home with a car full of garden produce from Sister Flora.

I always wish that I could come just once more to see your new place, but I think that is going to be impossible now.

God's blessings on all you do.

Love and prayers
--D.G., Ortonville, MN



Memories of visiting the old Mount and hearing the sisters singing the liturgy in the chapel.

- The sound was magical.

Helping the sisters cleaning grapes and apples and singing some old tunes and laughing as we enjoyed our chores.

Just visiting the sisters at mealtimes and enjoying the varied conversations.

Enjoying the beauty of the moment...

Just seeing Sister Cornelia, Sister Mary Jean, and the rest of the sisters... each of them special.

Anytime we came to the Mount was special as Bob and I always felt so at home there, we always requested "our room." The atmosphere was always welcoming and cozy - we felt at home

Family reunions - all the Gusts stayed at the Mount.

God bless you all
--J. G., Lily Dale, MN

I grew up being

taught by the Sisters of Saint Benedict at the Mount in Crookston, Minnesota. I have wonderful memories of them from kindergarten through high school. Thank you for all that you do.

--M.F.P San Clement, CA

When Deacon John was in formation for the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Crookston, the Sisters of Saint Benedict provided hospitality - room and board for the candidates and their wives. The convenience, since most of the classes were there and hospitality was unsurpassed. Being in a faith-filled atmosphere added to the preparation. It is a lesson to imitate when we are in charge of providing hospitality for others

Thank you.

--M.M.J.M., Germantown, WI

We remember the sisters in their black habits, with the long black rosaries and also the veils. We would go see Sister Jolenta

and Dominica every August around the 15th before they went to their different places for the year. The sisters had a candle house and made some wax candles. They had cattle and a very big garden.

Our granddaughters, Hannah and Bailey, helped one summer cut up rhubarb. They enjoyed working with the sisters. We remember when they didn't have to wear the long black dress anymore. It was a big change for them, and for us too, as sometimes you didn't know there were visiting sisters at your church at Mass. It's nice to go and have meals with the sisters in the new home and visit them.

--D.G., Manvel, ND

The Sisters of Mount Saint Benedict have been a part of my life in one way or another for more than 70 years, beginning in 1947, when I was in the first grade at St. Joseph's School in Red Lake Falls - Sr. Florentine, Sr. Dami-

an, Sr. Stella, Sr. Mary William, grades 1 – 4. In 1959, Sr. Hildegard was my supervisor at St. Francis Hospital in Crookston, in the Medical Record Department, kindly guiding me through my training and education as a Medical Record Librarian, enabling me to move on to my supervisor position at the Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Fargo.

Then marriage and a family. My husband and I were blessed with sending two of our sons to Assumption Catholic School in Barnesville until it closed in 1980. It was at Assumption that Sr. Odelia, biological sister of Sr. Hildegard, became a friend as well as a teacher. She gifted me with a bicycle she had used – a bike used when she was in Red Lake Falls; it had an emblem from Thibert Chevrolet on the fender. Needless to say, this is a very special gift, and it continues to have a place in our home.

I attended several parish workshops over

the years, as well as organized spiritual help groups, spearheaded by the Sisters of the Mount.

The years have moved along and brought me into my “twilight” years, and the Sisters of Mount St. Benedict are still a part of my life – being a holy and compassionate presence at Villa St. Vincent (Sr. Barbara presently) to my sister and to my now-deceased mother, as well as to other relatives over the years.

Sr. Mary Jean Gust, an elementary grade teacher of mine in Red Lake Falls, remained a friend, a friendship I value, and I know she has been a blessing to many even in her own “twilight” years, as a pastoral minister.

I’m grateful for the blessings of all these holy women, who have touched my life over the many decades. Bless them all.

J.A.C., Barnesville

One early memory I have is participating in sum-

mer instruction in Tabor, Minnesota, with Sisters Ameliana and Cornelia.

A more recent memory is of the kindness of a sister from Mount Saint Benedict sitting with my mother, Martha Hendrickson, as she was dying.

--P.H.K., East Grand Forks, MN

Sister Denise Schonhardt is from the same hometown of Wabun, Minnesota. I recently moved to Detroit Lakes in the summer of 2016. I knew her parents and grandparents very well, and I remember Sister Denise, too.

--M.P., Detroit lakes, MN

I worked at the Mount for 20 years. I love all of you. God bless you all.

--M.P., Crookston MN

Had the honor to work for the Sisters of Saint Benedict.

--T.S., Bagley, MN

Sister Jane
 SAINT BENEDICT
 Mount Saint Benedict Monastery
 620 Summit Ave.
 Crookston, MN 56716-2799

PLEASE HELP US KEEP OUR MAILING LIST CURRENT

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

from our foundation director . . .



Heidi Whiting

Here at Mount Saint Benedict, we have in our gift shop and throughout the monastery beautiful work by the artisans of the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston. Not only is their work detailed, but it is also timeless and beautiful.

Their work reminds me of the saying, “do what you do and do it well.”

The sisters live this adage in all that they do, and everything touched is left better than when found. Good stewardship is at the foundation of Benedictine living.

Sister Jane points out in her introduction of this Crookston Benedictine when speaking of the artisans of the monastery, “Everyone created something practical and beautiful for the good of the community.” For the good of the community is rooted in Benedictine life and makes me ponder how I walk throughout my day, how I approach daily work. Do I, myself, do what I do and do it well? For the good of our community? How do we each bring about good works for those we love and for our community, for our world?

Because you support the Mount Saint Benedict Foundation, we continue to do good works within the scope of our traditional ministries. This year alone, our grants have supported the funding of scholarships and reading specialists to our Catholic schools for our underserved populations, young adult faith formation in the university setting, and a campus-wide nurse call system at Villa Saint Vincent/Benedictine Living in Crookston. These are just a few examples of how the Mount Saint Benedict Foundation continues to support our historic ministries through our grant-giving, bringing about good works. Our foundation has two emphases: to care for our retired sisters and help ensure that our traditional ministries continue to serve well into the future; we can do all of this because of you, our donors. Thank you.



Sister Kathy Kuchar knits one of the many baby booties she has made.