



# PATHWAYS

*Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters Duluth, Minnesota Vol. 26, No. 4 • Summer 2015*



# A Letter from the Prioress

Albert Einstein once said, “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” Over the years I have come to experience the depth of that profound truth more and more fully.

The unfolding of one season into another fills my heart anew with deep wonder and gratitude for the miracle of life and beauty that our beloved Earth invites us to feel in the very bones of our souls. The precious and grace-filled ways in which, on our spiritual journey through this life, the Liturgical Seasons and our diverse faith traditions invite us to be transformed again and again, are nothing short of a miracle.



In a breathtaking sunrise or sunset, in a newborn child, in an elder in our family or community who shares with us the rich harvest of the years, and in all the moments of life and time in between, we behold miracle after miracle. Those moments of grace in which we experience forgiveness, tender compassion, healing, protection from harm and find meaning in tragedy, suffering, and death surely draw us deeper into the awesome miracle of God’s love and mercy.

Truly, all of life, everything is a miracle meant to reveal to us and remind us that God is present—mothering us, fathering us, shepherding us, healing us, empowering us, and challenging us to see that the ordinary, the everyday is the home of God. Every human experience speaks to us of God if only we have hearts to listen.

Indeed, everything is a miracle! God is present in the Temple of all creation and in everyone, calling out to us, especially in the poor and those who live on the margins. And Christ is God’s resounding Living Word that this is so!

Thank you for being a beautiful presence of God for us in so many self-giving and gracious ways. Together may we live more deeply in the ordinary and make time through prayer, quiet, and reflection to behold our God longing to sustain us and fill us with transforming grace.

Lovingly yours in Christ with prayer and deep gratitude,

*Sister Lois Eckes*

Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress



# A Thank You!

## Sister Margaret James Laughlin Retires (Again!)



Sister Margaret James Laughlin has worked in the Monastery Development Office since August 1991. She officially “retired” from the office March 2015. Her skills as researcher, writer, and proofreader have been invaluable. Examples of her skills in research and proofreading are the history boards that grace the first floor of the Monastery and Sister Joan Braun’s update to the book *All Her Ways*. Sister Margaret James also wrote articles for *Pathways* and proofread, being deemed

the office “Queen of Capitalization Rules.” Sister Margaret James entered gifts to the Community into the Development Office computers and generated cards and letters for various prioresses. She has served on the *Pathways* Editorial Board all these years and assists us in making wise decisions about content and themes.

And, of course, in the spirit of “retirement” such as it is here at the Monastery (Sister just turned 95) she still comes to the office—usually each day—and does a little proofreading, adds stamps to outgoing mail, checks the archives for information we may need, and blesses us with her vast knowledge.

Thank you for your years of Dedication, Sister. Oops. Here she comes now to lowercase that word “dedication.”



Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier

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## “I Will Love You Forever”

Reflection and photos by Sister Therese Carson

Up the hill behind the Monastery there is a deep chasm in the ancient bedrock. Scramble a short way down and sit on a sun-warmed ledge, legs dangling in the open air, and listen. This is the Valley of Silence where, on a quiet day, one hears only birdsong and the wind in the treetops. It is a sacred space to wait for the voice of God speaking.

There I found this message scratched into the stone. I smiled, picturing two young lovers declaring their undying passion, for what first love lasts forever? I read it a second time and caught my breath, stunned. God spoke to my heart, “Love lasts forever. I loved you before you were born, and nothing will separate us.” Then I breathed out, and remembered the summer when I knew God was with me.



*Photo by Sister Therese Carson*

At 91 my mother had a devastating stroke that left her unable to speak or read. In the ER my brother Jim and I watched helplessly as a vital part of her brain died, her eyes unfocused, the right side of her face sagging. Where was she going and how could we follow her?

In exile on Patmos, John wrote, “God is love. If you love, you live in God, and God lives in you” (1 John 4:16). Then why are we so sad, our eyes staring into nothingness? It is because we watch our loved ones suffer and can do nothing. “How can God allow this?” is a human response, but ask instead, “What happens if I face grief and walk through it with God?” Life hurts us all but always, always God loves. We fall into darkness where God waits to bring us to a deeper joy. That summer God showed me how to find joy deep inside grief.

After her stroke, Mom struggled to read and talk. She would finish a book’s opening paragraph, shrug and whisper, “I forget,” and start over. Gradually she stopped struggling and was at peace with her new reality. The right side of her brain took over, and she began to see the world in a whole new way.

In the middle of this, my right knee gave out and had to be replaced. I cried to God, “Why send me this now?” The reply was full of wise compassion: “Because you must slow down to your mother’s speed.” So I let the garden go to weeds and spent my evenings with Mom. We made the most of our time together, walking in the golden evenings, me hobbling along with my grandfather’s old cane and her pushing her wheelchair. We watched Little League games; once when a foul ball hit the fence inches from Mom’s face, she turned to me, completely unafraid, and giggled. When it rained, she watched favorite movies and listened to concert music, entranced. Color was a revelation; she would watch sunlight falling through leaves, caught up in the eternal Now. Only once she paged through a book, said, “I used to do this,” and set it aside.

Where was the woman who feared death, who read incessantly, driven by a need to learn? Color, texture, and sound mattered more. She lived in her senses, happy to watch the boats in the harbor and eat ice cream. One evening soon after my surgery when we had sat for a half hour and my knee was growing stiff, I suggested moving to another bench near a garden. She gave me a look and said, “At my age, doing one thing at a time is enough.” This is how I remember it, but we had become so close that perhaps we didn’t need words. I hid my bittersweet tears, filled with longing, love, and upwelling joy.

God made blessings out of our pain. Mom feared dying, and the stroke took away her fear. She needed me with her, and arthritis became a blessing. She missed her friends, and one became her roommate. We needed time to say goodbye and had eight precious months, so that when she died there was nothing left unsaid.

As October ended and leaves fell from the maple outside her window, she had another stroke. I sat all night with her, asking God to take her home, feeling only love and gratitude for our time together. My brother joined me before dawn, and as the sun rose she slipped into eternity. When Dad died I had felt the sudden presence of God, but now God had rubbed shoulders with us for eight months and was an old friend. I had leaned harder on God than on my cane, wading with Mom into the great whirlpool of love that is the Trinity.

St. Paul got it right. “These three remain: faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). In the end, love is all that’s real. It’s all we leave behind and all we take with us, as we leap out into the eternal light and fall into the waiting arms of God.



# Pilgrimage to Rome

By Sister Lois Eckes

In my Prioress's message written for this Summer issue of *Pathways*, I reflected on Albert Einstein's conviction that either one lives life as if everything is a miracle or as if nothing is a miracle. In a recent pilgrimage to Rome, I found that my personal belief and experience that life is indeed a miracle to be lived was wonderfully affirmed.

I was invited by Rocky Chapin, CEO of our Benedictine Health System, and his wife, Barb, to participate with them in a program entitled "Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal for Health Care Leaders." It was held in Rome from April 19-24, and was sponsored by CHA, the Catholic Health Care Association of the United States. CHA has been offering this program since 2001, and this, its 15th year, marked the largest group of participants (57) ever.

It is impossible in this limited space and short reflection time to do justice to such a remarkable and unforgettable experience. Nor is it possible to adequately describe the spiritual formation and transformation that happened within us and among us in those six days. Let me attempt to share a few of the highlights.

- The purpose of the program was threefold: To come to a deeper understanding of one's call to participate in the healing ministry of Christ; To gain greater insight into the spirit, structure, and functioning of the Roman Catholic Church; To explore expressions of spirituality that have shaped Catholic health-care ministry and the relationship of personal spirituality and leadership gifts to the ministry of Catholic health care.
- As participants we were asked to prepare for this graced experience weeks in advance by praying for the heart of a pilgrim and safety in travel for ourselves and fellow pilgrims. We were also asked to do advanced readings on the topics to be covered in our program. Our prayers were wonderfully answered, with the added blessing of beautiful weather every day! The staff of CHA were the presenters, each excellent in his or her presentation of content and in engaging us in both small and large group reflection and sharing.
- Several pilgrimages and tours were built into the schedule to deepen our appreciation for our precious Christian heritage. These included an unforgettable day in Assisi, a general audience with Pope Francis (an experience that was deeply moving for us all as well as a lot of fun), a visit with the St. Egidio community, and a tour of Santa Maria Basilica in Trastevere where every Christmas the pews are removed and tables set up to serve the poor an exquisite banquet and honor them with Christmas gifts.



*Barb and Rocky Chapin with Sister Lois (right)*

The St. Egidio community is a lay community which began in Rome in 1968 at the initiative of a young man, Andrea Riccardi, to minister to the poor. Their commitment to the Gospel is filled with an authenticity that is deeply inspiring.

Several optional tours were offered, two of which Rocky, Barb, and I experienced together. First, the catacombs and St. Clement Basilica; second, the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica where Michelangelo's masterpiece, the Pieta, is enshrined. Again, each tour was a deeply moving experience that filled us with a profound awe for all that is expressed in our Christian faith and its unfolding tradition recorded in architecture, art, ritual, and the living witness of believers.

Rocky, Barb, and I spent an entire day on a pilgrimage to Norcia where Benedict and Scholastica were born and then to Subiaco where Benedict lived for a while as a hermit until God's call to establish community life for those who desired

to seek God together was revealed to him. Here, as on all our tours, we were blessed with excellent and delightful guides whose knowledge and enthusiasm for sharing the "story" of each place was quite impressive. Our visit to these sacred Benedictine shrines was a perfect culmination to this week replete with grace beyond telling. As I reflect on the marvelous gift of our Rome experience, I am immensely aware in a new way that indeed life is a miracle to be lived with one's whole being attuned to God's presence everywhere and in everyone.



# Happy 90th Birthday, Sister Melanie!

By Sister Paule Pierre Barbeau

Photo by Sister Therese Carson



Sister Melanie Gagne may be a relative rarity. Only 4.7% of the US population is 90 or older. While Sister Melanie certainly has bidden farewell to many family members and friends, she still finds herself in excellent company in the Monastery. By the end of 2015 sixteen of our Sisters will have the honor of being nonagerians, which is 21% of our community! This can make for some lively and interesting reminiscing, believe me. Sister Melanie reflects on turning 90:

*I must admit it doesn't feel much different than 89 or each year preceding it. Age has a way of creeping up ever so slowly, until the Psalmist in Psalm 92 shakes one up with*

*the length of days being 70, and after that is labor and pain. I do, however, think that number may have to be tweaked upward a bit in today's world.*

*Finally after more than 72 years in the Monastery, I get to have my first birthday cake and party with my community and family. It is so special, and indeed I feel very much loved!*

*I do believe the accumulation of years has been a gift, and hopefully has drawn me closer to my Maker. In a sense, I see aging as a blossoming time – a time of transformation. There is quality time to spend in prayer, reading, and learning new things. "If seeds in the black earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might the heart of man (and woman) become in its long journey toward the stars?" (Apples of Gold, Betty Huizenga)*

*Furthermore, "a blessing of these years," as Joan Chittister says in her book The Gift of Years, "is that we can, if we will, make them something glorious, a kind of shooting star across the sky of the human race."*

Sister Melanie has become one of the wise elders of our community, and we wish God's blessings on her for many years to come.

## Prayer From Sister Lois's Pilgrimage to Rome

***Beautiful prayers were woven into our pilgrimage in Rome. Here is one we prayed together at the end of Prayer Service April 23, the Feast of St. George, which is the patronal feast of Pope Francis.***

ALL: Good and gracious God, your Gospel calls us to be the Church, the People of God, in our work and in the world. May the Church be a place of God's mercy and hope, where all feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel. Help our organizations to be places where all feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged. May our facilities have doors wide open so that all may enter. Help us to go out through these doors proclaiming the Gospel. Grant us the ability to welcome all with doors wide open in our workplace and at your heavenly banquet table. Amen.

# Bread for the Hungry

By Sister Gretchen Johnston

Every week, I pack up a large bread-mixing bowl, some flours and grains, an apron, and towels. I keep Hildegard House in bread. Not only for themselves, not only for all who enter that house, but I make extra so they have some to give away.

As well, every week when I go, a group of us gathers for prayer. We do a form of group *lectio divina* and then we pray for all who will eat the bread. We also pray for many other concerns.

Bread for the women who come for a few days and then have to leave because their lives are in danger. Bread for the women who have been abducted and abused. Bread for the women who have been hurt beyond belief and used by men and as a result trust next to no one. Bread for the women who begin to learn that they are persons and worthy of love, not things to be bandied about.

Many people make bread. They might want nourishment made by their own hands. They might want the smell of bread wafting through the house. They may even want the independence of knowing what they put into their bread or not having to buy individual loaves off a shelf somewhere.



But how many people make bread as a form of prayer? People have told me at various times that I should buy or use a bread machine. They tell me that it would be easier. They use any one of the reasons in the previous paragraph. I always refuse. There are two ingredients in the bread that I feel would be sadly lacking if I used a bread machine. Making the bread by hand and praying while I do it means to me that the prayer and love is mixing into the bread.

A woman who could stay only a month and then had to leave recently contacted me. She remembers my bread. She said it was so warm and comforting. One woman who made bread with me prayed as she mixed and kneaded. When the bread came out of the oven and she had a piece, she said “I can taste our prayers!”

This is my donation. Bread, prayer, and some measure of consistency. Hildegard House subsists entirely on donations. People have been incredibly generous.

We are a Catholic Worker House of hospitality for women seeking to leave the world of trafficking. Hildegard House has room for only four people to stay long-term. So far, since our first guests came on September 17, St. Hildegard’s feast day, we have provided hospitality to eight or so women. There is also a waiting list. If only we weren’t needed! Right now we don’t have space enough for all who need a place to stay. We are also starting some day hospitality, a drop-in day. It is still in its beginning stages.

Someone asked me hopefully a few weeks ago, “But it really isn’t all that bad, is it? Duluth just doesn’t seem like that sort of a city.” Unfortunately, I had to squelch that hope. But one thing I could report, and that is that we are making a difference.

Photo by Sister Ann Marie Wainright

# Highlights

## McCabe Summer Events

By Sister Dorene King

McCabe will be hosting this summer some CSS events. No, these events will not be College of St. Scholastica retreats, but Creativity Summer Sessions for children entering the 5th through 8th grade.

### Contagious Creativity

As a result of the popularity of “Celebrating Creativity” and the expressed interest of those who have participated in that program, McCabe is offering a retreat for those entering the 7th and 8th grade in the fall of 2015. On Saturday, June 20, from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., 7th and 8th grade children are invited to come to McCabe for “Contagious Creativity.” Some of the events planned for the day are “Adventures in Flavor,” “Paw Painting” and “Birch Creations.” “Contagious Creativity” will be led by Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery. The suggested donation is \$20 and scholarships are available. Please contact Sister Dorene King at the McCabe Renewal Center at (218) 724-5266 for further information and registration form.

### Celebrating Creativity

McCabe Renewal Center will be the host this year of “Celebrating Creativity.” We will be enjoying the use of the house and grounds for this retreat for children entering the 5th and 6th grade in 2015. As in the three previous summers, “Mystery Painting,” a most amazing art experience, will be included along with “Nature Detective,” “Instant Identities,” “Nature’s Thumb Prints,” and more! All of “Celebrating Creativity” is designed to encourage creative expression through art, drama, music, and nature exploration. Sign up now, as space is limited for “Celebrating Creativity,” which will be held Tuesday, July 21 through Friday, July 24, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day. Our leaders for “Celebrating Creativity” are Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery. The suggested donation is \$100 and scholarships are available. Please contact Sister Dorene King at the McCabe Renewal Center at (218) 724-5266 for further information and registration form.



*Left, below, right: “Mystery Painting,”  
“Instant Identities,” and “Nature’s  
Thumbprints”*

*Photos by Andi Therrien*





## Highlights, Continued

### Blessing of New BHC Safe Harbor

By Sister Ann Marie Wainright

On the Feast of St. Scholastica, Tuesday, February 10, 2015, Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress, and several Sisters joined the staff of the Benedictine Health Center (BHC), along with family members and friends of residents, for a blessing of the newly renovated Safe Harbor Unit. Father Brian Schultz presided over the ritual during which attendees sang and processed from room to room as he prayed over and sprinkled each room with holy water.

Safe Harbor is a vital part of the BHC's ministry to those in need of memory care services. It now features private rooms for each resident and a larger family/activities room with fireplace. The beautiful new Safe Harbor Unit is part of ongoing renovations to the BHC that will eventually include a larger physical therapy area, more private rooms, and a larger chapel. The Sisters continue to hold the BHC, a sponsored ministry, in special prayer during these renovations.



*Photos by Jarod Champeaux, courtesy of the BHC*



### PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING DECEASED FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Jeff Heidt 9/19/2014  
Karen LaPlanta Flaherty 10/13/2014  
Phyllis Fremont 1/28/2015  
Ruth K. Blom 2/5/2015  
Betty Christianson Lessard 3/19/2015  
Alice Lauer 4/24/2015  
*Sister Mary Josephine Torgorg's sister*



## The Value of Enough

By Sister Gretchen Johnston



*... Above all, overindulgence is avoided. ... For nothing is as inconsistent with the life of a Christian as overindulgence. Our Lord says: Take care that your hearts are not weighed down with overindulgence (Luke 21:34). —Rule of St. Benedict 39:7-9*

*The soul loves moderation in all things. Whenever a person eats or drinks immoderately or indulges in some other excess, the powers of the soul are wounded. ... So in all things let people maintain a proper balance. —St. Hildegard von Bingen*

The year is 2015. She sold her house and moved into a trailer. Ah, but not just any house. This was a “tiny house,” built on a 10 x 16-foot trailer that hitched to her pickup truck. She had spent the last two years anticipating the change, quitting her full-time job, and building the house. She got rid of many possessions she had. She found a group of people doing the same thing. They traveled together in their small houses to various places and gave talks and workshops.

I know what you’re thinking. Why would anyone voluntarily live in such a small space and voluntarily give up the stability of a traditional house and job?

The year is 2015. He decided he wanted to take better care of his small family. “Together time” was important to him. He moved his wife and young child into a large house, with two other small families, on a small acreage. They shared the bills and divided up the workload with the other families. The children played together. All, men and women, took turns growing and cooking food for one another. He cut back on the hours he had spent at work and his wife took a part-time job.

Why would anyone live together with others in such close space? Why not a separate house for each family? Why cook and share jobs with each other? Why grow your food and cook it too and eat meals together with not only your own family but with several others?

What are some similarities in these scenarios? Both of these scenarios are totally imaginary. Yet, both are representative of trends that are happening today. Both are also representative of the ways timeless values are being rediscovered and lived out by millennials in today’s world. One of these values is moderation.

In a word, enough. ENOUGH. What is enough?

The value of Enough permeates these two scenarios. She had Enough when she got rid of many extraneous possessions. She had Enough space when she moved into her “tiny house.” He had Enough when he moved his family in with others and shared the bills. He had Enough when he cut down on the number of hours in the workplace.

I am not necessarily advocating that people need to go out and live in several-family dwellings. Nor am I necessarily advocating that people build themselves a house that is a fraction of the size of their current house. However, I am advocating that people can live out the value of Moderation/Enough in their lives.

What could Moderation or Enough mean in your life? One simple but not easy way of finding out could be asking yourself, “Is this Enough?”

- Food or drink: “Is this Enough?”
- Social activities: “Is this Enough?”
- Financial issues: “Is this Enough?”
- Housing: “Is this Enough?”
- Environmental impact: “Is this Enough?” Etc. . . .



## *Distribution was made to each one as he had need (Acts 4:35).*

If the answer to any of these questions is “Too Much,” what things can you do to make Too Much into Enough? The two aforementioned scenarios might aid you to think outside the box.

One side effect of Moderation/Enough lived out well is joy. I have read many stories and distilled them into these two scenarios, and the people involved all had some kind of joy. Fewer possessions to own oneself, less stress at work, more time with family, living in cooperation with others and not total dependence on oneself or one’s family, were common themes mentioned as bringing joy to people’s lives. I have also talked to many of my older Sisters, and they have reported a kind of joy in these very same things.

The people in these scenarios can be compared to modern-day monastics. They see the values of Community, Stewardship, and Moderation and make a radical choice to live these values in their daily lives. These people are truly Benedictine at heart.

You can be truly Benedictine at heart also. Search out the value of Moderation and Enough. Ask yourself what you are willing to do to witness to these values in your life.

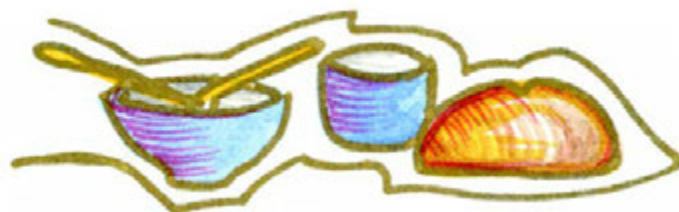
Oh, and one other thing.

Listen especially to the other generation(s). Younger generations, such as millennials, can have totally novel ideas about how to search out and live Benedictine values in the context of everyday life, and older generations can have a lived experience and accumulated wisdom about how things have worked in the past. As a millennial (the only one at this Monastery), I envision a moderation of ideas: timeless principles and wisdom from our elders balanced with the innovation of the “youngers.” If we skewed too much to either side, I believe we could have either an irrelevant world or an irreverent world. Skewing to one side also means that the other generations would feel marginalized. This should not be so. There’s enough room for all of us, and we are all needed.

## *Everyone has his own gift from God, one this and another that (1 Cor 7:7).*

Every generation has wisdom. Our job, as Christians, as Catholics, and as Benedictines, is to search out where wisdom may be found in any generation and time and to live it to the best of our ability. The Benedictine value of Moderation is born from wisdom.

*Images from the illustrated Rule of St. Benedict  
Illustrations by +Sister Mary Charles McGough,  
and calligraphy by Meredith Schifsky  
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## Seeking God, Finding Beauty: A Profile of Sister Katie Doyle

By Sister Ann Marie Wainright

“Kathleen Ann” was born the fifth of eight children in Dubuque, Iowa. At age six her family moved to Des Moines for her father’s new job. She attended a Catholic elementary school and spent the summers at her great aunt’s farm in Cascade. During those summers she “learned the beauty of nature on a farm where planting was done by hand.” After one year of high school at a Catholic boarding school, she transferred to a nearby Catholic high school and graduated.

The boarding school was run by an order of active Sisters who either became teachers or nurses. “Kathleen Ann” discovered there were contemplative religious orders after reading *The Rose Unpetalled* at her new high school. She felt called to religious life, but in a contemplative order and not an active one. She entered the Passionist nuns at 17 years old after graduating from high school.



Photo by Andi Therrien

Their stark, austere life matured her in the ten months she stayed. She returned home to work for about a year for Msgr. Luigi Ligutti. Sister Katie then entered a semi-cloistered Benedictine community in 1950, making her first monastic profession in 1952 and her perpetual monastic profession in 1957. The changes of Vatican Council II and their effects on her community brought Sister Katie to a crossroads once more. God opened a new road before her when, in 1968, she transferred to St. Scholastica Monastery.

She studied to become a physical therapist, taking her first job in Des Moines so that she could care for her younger sister who was dying of cancer. Sister Katie returned to Duluth and began working at Polinsky Rehabilitation for several years. She also worked at the Benedictine Health Center, helping to design the first physical therapy department. In the final years of her physical therapy career, she worked in home care as a physical therapist. Knowing she was not going to be physically able to continue the demanding work of physical therapy, she retired and became manager of the Monastery Books and Gifts Shop.

Reflecting on her life, Sister Katie states, “Beauty is always what I enjoyed accompanying me.” The summers of her youth on a family farm; the rich beauty of silent contemplative prayer; six weeks spent in Ireland; living with artist +Sister Mary Charles McGough at The Barn and dabbling in art as a hobby; and a natural gift for seeing the inner strength in a person—all these make her a contemplative as well as a modern mystic. Her life of seeking God led to finding God’s beauty in every person she helped. “I really enjoyed helping people get out of the doldrums of their disability and watching them transform.” Having recently retired from managing the gift shop, Sister Katie continues a life of seeking God with humor and grace, and of finding God’s beauty everywhere.



# OF WINDOWS, WIND, AND DOORS

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Photo by Jeff Frey; courtesy of CSS



A long time ago when I was a young religious, an older Sister said to me, “There are only two kinds of Sisters: those who want the windows open and those who want them closed.” At the time I considered her remark a rather odd commentary but gave it no further thought. However, after years of striving for peace and harmony while living closely together with others in community, I began to see the purpose of windows in allowing all enough air to breathe freely without causing others to suffer from the cold. The same could be said of doors. (For one who grew up in a home where we never locked our doors because mother said that if anyone needed what we had more than we did, they could have it, living in a convent with a Sister who woke three times during the night to check that all doors and windows were locked took some adjusting.)

The house rules for living in a monastery are much like the lessons one is taught in childhood, which is why some say that all they needed to learn about living they learned in kindergarten. St. Benedict tells those who enter a monastery in order to seek God that they have come to a “school for the Lord’s service” where they will learn to put on the mind of Christ. This they will learn by following the precepts of the *Rule*, which regulates their daily life of communal prayer and work in a way that honors God and one another so that “no one is to be grieved in the house of God,” but above all by their daily practice of *lectio divina*, prayerful reading of Scripture and other sacred texts. After a lifetime of striving – and not always succeeding – to balance one’s work with sacred reading, I have recently been struck with the recurring theme in Scripture of individuals or groups of people being open to or closed to God’s all-encompassing love. Windows and doors.

Without space to cite countless Biblical examples, I invite my readers to try the same. Spend twenty minutes in quietly praying with one of the Gospels (Try the Prologue to John’s Gospel) and contemplate what you are learning about who God is and what God is offering you. Think in terms of doors and windows. Do you find yourself in the story? If so, what is your response?

The story of the magnanimous, all-encompassing love of God for all creation continues after the death and resurrection of Jesus for those who accept it because Christ remains with us as He promised by sending the Holy Spirit who works through the Church, the people of God. Nonetheless, a study of church history from its very beginnings continues to be a story of the struggle between Christ’s followers who wish to preserve the sacred treasure for themselves and those who wish to throw open the floodgates of God’s mercy. Windows and doors. A half-century ago Pope John XXIII summoned the Church “to open the windows” and let in the fresh air, and what a wind the Spirit blew in!

Today the Church, along with all human society, is faced with tremendous issues that challenge its very existence. (While many have abandoned the faith as having no relevance to their lives or the world’s problems, other Christians are being slaughtered for being considered the cause of its problems.) It is time as never before for faithful Christians to call on the Holy Spirit for guidance and be enflamed with the fire of God’s love. This week’s observance of Pentecost should remind us all of the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. Will we open our windows and the doors of our hearts?

Next week the Sisters of St. Scholastica will gather together, initially in silence and prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to guide us at a crucial time in our history as we choose our Prioress for the next six years. The issues facing the Community are unlike any we have faced before but similar to the problems facing many parishes. The *Holy Rule* guides us by stating that “Goodness of life and wisdom of teaching must be the criteria for choosing the one to be made abbot (or Prioress)” and reminds us that the one in charge has above all the care of souls, a frightening responsibility. Yet the practical responsibilities of leading an aging community into an uncertain future are equally daunting. With tremendous love and gratitude for Sister Lois’s untiring efforts and spiritual leadership of the past ten years, we wish her a much needed relief from the burden she has so faithfully carried. We call on the Holy Spirit and also on your prayers to help us choose the needed leader for this time. My hope is that the windows will be wide open!

## On Being a Healing Presence, and Finding Wholeness

By Sister Ann Marie Wainright

Modern life often is centered on doing, sometimes to the detriment of being. When one's sense of self-worth becomes tied to doing, this can present emotional and spiritual crises when the person's health fails or some other circumstance limits one's sense of productivity and self-worth. Part of our spiritual journey, I am convinced, is remembering how to be.

*"I missed your presence while you were gone."*

Sisters sometimes said this to me after I returned from a trip out of town. It gave me pause to wonder: "What is 'presence' and what is my unique presence?"



*Presence is more than just being there.*

— Malcolm Forbes

I believe in the power of healthy relationships and empathy to nurture and heal. During my counseling internship in graduate school, I strove to create a sacred space where my clients felt seen, heard, safe, accepted, and cared for.

*Deep listening is the kind of listening that  
can help relieve the suffering of another person.  
You can call it compassionate listening.  
You listen with only one purpose:  
to help him or her to empty his heart.*

— Thich Nhat Hanh

My journey through the transformative process of Clinical Pastoral Education began in response to a discerned call to chaplaincy and pastoral care. The transformation flows from ministry to those who are struggling in the midst of aging, illness, or dying with letting go, grieving, and learning to be in these circumstances. Those to whom I ministered as a chaplain intern often became my best teachers in compassionate caregiving and presence.

*Listening is being able to be changed by the other person.*

— Alan Alda





*Listen carefully,*

In Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) the student listens to her own unique sacred story as well as that of others to facilitate her personal integration, spiritual formation, and professional identity development as a chaplain. Based on an action-reflection model of adult learning, she contemplates within each act of pastoral ministry not only how she was with the other person (the doing), but who she was (the being), and what is God's call to her.

*Our listening creates a sanctuary for the homeless parts within another person.*

– Rachel Naomi Remen

Deep listening to self and others allows the CPE student to heal and mature as a pastoral minister. CPE is a challenging process that demands honesty, accountability, and patience while learning how to be the unique person in whom God delights and through whom God ministers.

*Be patient with everyone, but above all with yourself.*

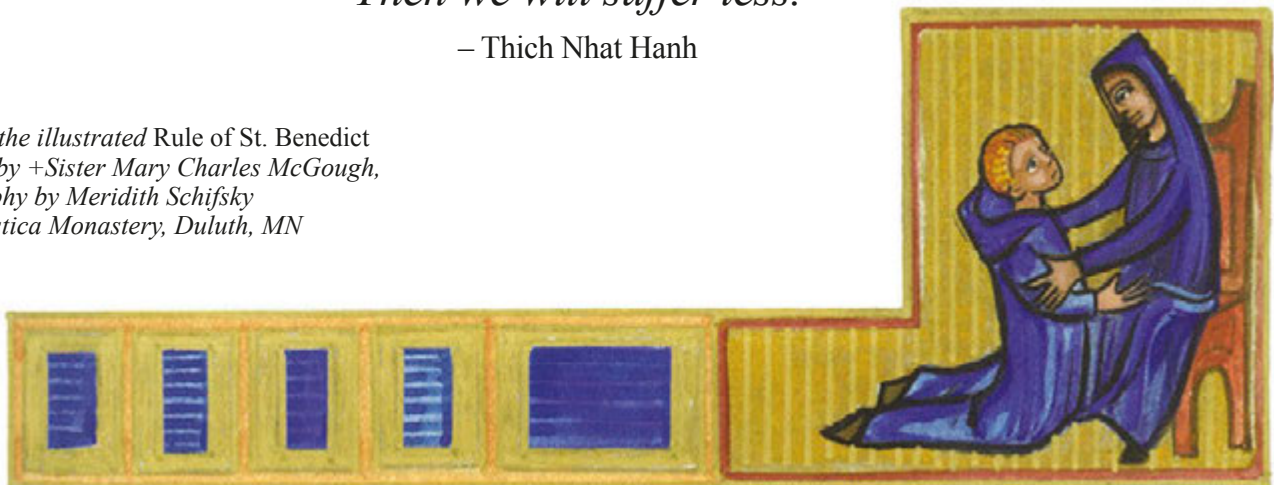
– St. Francis de Sales

Having completed four units of CPE, I realize I am only beginning a life-long journey of sacred listening, learning and presence via pastoral care. Pray for me as I discern and look for work as a chaplain.

*The most important thing is that we need to be understood.  
We need someone to be able to listen to us and to understand us.  
Then we will suffer less.*

– Thich Nhat Hanh

*Images from the illustrated Rule of St. Benedict  
Illustrations by +Sister Mary Charles McGough,  
and calligraphy by Meridith Schifsky  
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# The Woman Behind the Wheels

By Sister Pauline Micke

Photo by Andi Therrien



Sister Gloria Ess entered St. Scholastica Monastery on September 8, 1958, and professed her vows on July 11, 1960. For some years she served in the ministry of housekeeping and cooking at the Monastery, St. Mary's Convent in Duluth, and also in Ely and Cloquet. In 1969 she came back to the Monastery and assisted Sister Benita Hayden in The College of St. Scholastica's Instructional Materials Center.

It was in 1998 that she began working in the Monastery's Transportation and Maintenance Office. She says this keeps her young, as there are always surprises, challenges, and something new.

Let's take a journey with Sister Gloria so you can better come to know this "woman behind the wheels" who now has a sign on her desk that reads "Director of Transportation," the title given to her ministry in 2014.

I could have, at this point, inserted a statement about a "typical day" in the life and work of Sister Gloria—however, there is no such thing as a "typical day" much less week or month in her ministry. So what are some of the different areas and details that Sister Gloria takes care of as she serves the needs that come to her desk?

- Assigning cars on a daily basis from the written requests the Sisters provide.
- Assigning cars for overnight and out-of-town meetings, etc.
- Checking the gas bills that come to her office.
- Delivering medications that come for the Sisters Monday through Friday.
- Making out slips and posting them indicating cars, cell phones, and handicap permits that are needed for the out-of-town trips.
- Serving Maintenance people when they need keys for particular rooms to make repairs, paint, etc.

So what kind of surprises and challenges does she meet in her ministry? Lest you think it's all work, work, work, let me tell you of an incident that Sister Gloria shared with me. As she checked the cell phones, she was missing one—she couldn't find it anywhere, nor was it signed out. Imagine her surprise when she got up from her chair and found the lost phone off in the corner of her chair. Laughter could be heard all over.

One of the things she likes most about her ministry, she says, is how she is able to meet the needs the Sisters have whether that is scheduling cars/rides for appointments, cars for outings, or cars for an emergency that arises. Through all these interactions, she states that she "really gets to know the different personalities of people" and then she laughed and said, "and they get to know mine."

When Sister Gloria has finished making out all the car slips for drivers and appointments and has given the work orders to Facilities, you will find her praying her rosary or praying from a book of prayers titled "Pieta"—a prayer booklet with prayers from St. Bridget. She also always has her yarn with her. This is for her crocheting and knitting projects—making mittens, large afghans, baby afghans, and slippers for anyone who has need of Sister Gloria sharing her wonderful talent for knitting and crocheting.

It is also important to consider some of the challenges Sister Gloria faces in this ministry—Sisters who put car keys in their pockets and forget to return them to the Transportation Office, or someone who forgot to put in a request for a car until the day she needs it. You can see how this ministry is good for developing patience.

When I asked Sister Gloria what she is most grateful for in this ministry, she said, "I think I've blossomed more in this position than in any other ministry I've had." What a blessing that is for Sister Gloria and what a blessing Sister Gloria is for us!



# Happy 90th Birthday!

## Sister Marguerite Baxter

By Sister Joan Marie Stelman



Sunday, February 22, 2015, was a very festive day at the Monastery—we celebrated Sister Marguerite Baxter’s 90th Birthday in style. Sister Marguerite, who as she put it is “the oldest living Baxter,” grew up in a large and close family in Houghton, Michigan. Sister Marguerite is grateful for that experience because, as she says, “it challenges you to learn to give and take.” Although none of her siblings are still living, many of Sister’s nieces and nephews and their families came to honor her and celebrate with her. She enjoyed the Baxter family reunion thoroughly and all the tributes, quipping that “for a while I thought I was dead!” Recognizing that this birthday is a milestone, she commented that you live day to day, and then suddenly

realize, “my gosh – I made it!” She went on to say that “my 1925 model is wearing out – and there are no replacement parts.”

Reflecting on her journey has been an interesting experience for Sister Marguerite. She spoke of being able to see the pattern of her life and to see how its various facets – family, friends, community, ministry – flow together. Most importantly, looking back she could see how, “in everything, the Lord was with me.” Regarding her career in Medical Technology, she feels that her greatest accomplishment was developing the curriculum for the Med Tech program at the College and maintaining its high standards. Even so, Sister Marguerite identifies herself primarily as a health-care professional rather than as an academic.

She has no regrets about letting go of her earlier ministries. She told me that “God has a plan in each time of your life that all comes together.” She went on to say that she has all she needs – her books and music, and most of all, her “close and immediate” relationship with Jesus. Pointing to a special image of Jesus that she placed near the door of her room she said, “Everything you need is here!”



*Photos by Sister Therese Carson*



## Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner April 14, 2015

By Kathy Noble, Volunteer Coordinator

On a beautiful spring evening in Duluth, Sister Lois Eckes and the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery warmly welcomed volunteers and their guests to Evening Prayer and the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. Over 40 volunteers and guests enjoyed a delicious meal and “world-class” entertainment.

Sister Lisa Maurer provided lively humor as the MC and expressed appreciation for the 2,100 hours of service given by the volunteers over the past year in the areas of the Gift Shop, Information Desk, Benet Hall, Drivers, Schola and Monastery Contemporary Singing Groups, Eucharistic Ministers, and the Gardens.

Sister Lois thanked all of the volunteers for their commitment to the Monastery and their many hours of service. She presented service pins to Donna Leonard and Mary Tanner (10 years) and to Jean Captain, Yodit Gidey, and Linda Senta (5 years). Sue Anderson (15 years) and Judith Gerald (10 years) were unable to attend. Greg Haugen, who passed away last year, was remembered for his outstanding volunteer service in the Gift Shop.

This past year Sister Mary Rae Higgins retired as Coordinator of Volunteer Services. Sister Lois recognized and expressed appreciation for Sister Mary Rae’s many years of faithful and outstanding service and honored her with a lovely floral arrangement.

The evening’s entertainment was indeed “world-class” as Sister Barbara Higgins provided pantomime acts of Maurice Chevalier and Al Jolson. She was fabulous in these roles, and there was much laughter and merriment. The Sisters sang a fun and creative song, “O Volunteers, You Are A Great Gift,” to the volunteers. Meridith Schifsky provided beautiful and calming music on her harp.

Kathy Noble, representing the volunteers as the new coordinator, expressed appreciation to the Sisters for their hospitality and the blessings they bestow upon volunteers. It is a pleasure and a joy to volunteer at the Monastery.

The Sisters concluded the evening with a special blessing for the volunteers.



*Left to right: Sister Lois presents 5-year pins to Jean Captain, Yodit Gidey, and Linda Senta.*



*Donna Leonard (left) and Mary Tanner received 10-year pins*



*Sister Mary Rae Higgins was honored as outgoing Volunteer Coordinator*



*MC for the evening, Sister Lisa Maurer*



*Meridith Schifsky*



*Sister Barbara Higgins performing pantomime*



*Volunteer welcoming table*



*Sisters, volunteers, and guests*



## Benedictine Center of Spirituality

By Sister Pauline Micke, Director

**The Lenten Retreat**, held on February 28, 2015, had 34 participants. This retreat was another “landmark” for the Benedictine Center as it was led by Fr. Steve Ulrick, pastor at Holy Name in Medina, and Sister Pauline Micke. This was the first time we had a number of men attending and the first time Fr. Steve was one of the facilitators.

The retreat was on “Living the Covenant of God’s Unconditional Love.” There is not enough room here to quote all the excellent evaluations we received—a sampling will give you a feeling for the needs we are meeting: “Have more retreats, bringing Scripture to life—like today.” We received a number of comments regarding participants’ growth in understanding that “God’s unconditional love always takes the initiative” and that “leading with love and compassion is always the correct choice.” We promise to keep your suggestions in mind as we plan the offerings for next year.



*Photos by Sister Therese Carson*

**The May Retreat** was held May 16, 2015, at the Monastery. Sister Ann Marie Wainright led this retreat, which helped us to reflect on Mary, Jesus’ mother, who was also an apostle, prophet, and a woman of incredible faith. We considered, with Mary, the “treasures she held in her heart” (Luke 2:19). The 30 participants expressed many comments in their evaluations of what they gained from this retreat.

**Summer Retreat: “Did you Hear the Good News?”** Saturday, August 8, 2015, from 9:00 to noon. Facilitator: Sister Sarah O’Malley. This retreat will consider four women doctors of the Church and how they lived and preached the Good News. Look for more information in your church bulletins. To register, call 218-723-6555 or email [Pauline.m@duluthosb.org](mailto:Pauline.m@duluthosb.org).

We continue to offer “Sabbath Days” and Spiritual Direction—some of you have asked about this. Call Sister Pauline at 218-723-7086 to schedule some time for yourself.



## *In Loving Memory*



*Sister Ingrid in Chile*



*Senior Companion, International Falls, MN*

### **Sister Ingrid Luukkonen, OSB** ***September 21, 1927—January 30, 2015***

Sister Ingrid Luukkonen, OSB, 87, died January 30, 2015, at St. Scholastica Monastery. Born in Zim, Minnesota, she was the daughter of Albert and Helmi Luukkonen. Sister was in her 56th year of Monastic Profession.

Sister Ingrid entered St. Scholastica Monastery in 1956 as a Postulant; she professed her Triennial Vows on July 11, 1958, and her Perpetual Vows on July 11, 1963. She began her teaching career at St. Anthony's Parish in Duluth where she taught fifth and sixth graders (1959-61). Then she was assigned to Our Lady of Victory School in Minneapolis and taught first and second grades from 1961-1966. Also during this time she earned a B.S. in Education with a minor in Sociology from The College of St. Scholastica.

Sister Ingrid had great love for the poor and elderly. In 1967 she volunteered to travel to Salar del Carmen in Antofagasta, Chile, to live and work among the poor. Although she was not familiar with the culture or the people nor fluent in Spanish, she became immersed in the community, eventually forming classes ranging from cooking to Bible study, to church and family issues. She returned to the Monastery in 1974, where she served as Vocation Director from 1975-1981.

Attending Loyola University in the summers of 1980 and 1981, she earned a Master's Degree in Pastoral Ministry, Adult Education, leading to her service as a Parish Minister at St. Thomas Parish, International Falls from 1982-2001. From 2001-2009, Sister Ingrid volunteered at St. Thomas Parish as a Senior Companion, helping the senior citizens of the parish by visiting them in their homes, taking them shopping, to the library, or to the clinic or hospital. "They are the pillars of the Church, and we should not forget them," she declared. Sister Ingrid returned to St. Scholastica Monastery in 2010.

Sister Ingrid was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers Everett, Victor, Jalmer J., Roy W., Jack A., and Warner B. Luukkonen, and by her sister Marian Koski. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, she is survived by her brothers Edwin and Raymond, and by her sisters Esther Koivunen and Lorraine Aho, nieces, nephews, and many good friends.

*Photos from Monastery Archives unless otherwise noted.*

# *In Loving Memory*



## **Sister Agatha Riehl, OSB** ***February 17, 1921—February 7, 2015***

Sister Agatha Riehl, OSB, 93, died February 7, 2015, at St. Scholastica Monastery. Born in Raleigh, North Dakota, on February 17, 1921, she was the daughter of Melchior and Emma (Wagner) Riehl. Sister Agatha was in her 74th year of Monastic Profession at the time of her death.

Sister was raised on a farm in North Dakota where she and her six siblings spoke only German at home. When in the 7th grade, she passed a test that would allow her to travel to Minnesota and attend Stanbrook Hall for her high school years, since there was no high school in the area where she lived. While she struggled with English the first year, she soon overcame her difficulty and became an honor student. When she graduated from high school in 1938, she knew she wished to grow in her relationship with God and entered St. Scholastica Monastery.

Sister Agatha professed her Triennial Vows on July 11, 1940, and her Perpetual Vows on July 11, 1943. She earned a BA in Nutrition from The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) in 1942. Sister Agatha was a talented scholar who discovered that she had a proclivity toward chemistry and analytical studies. In 1942 the Archbishop of Cincinnati gave an open invitation for several Sisters to come to a research facility, Institutum Divi Thomae, to study cancer. Sister Agatha was awarded a scholarship to participate in the program and returned to CSS in 1945 with a MA in biochemistry. She was co-founder with Sister Petra Lenta of a research laboratory at CSS within a year, taught chemistry half-time, and continued cancer research half-time. Sister Agatha worked closely with Sister Petra in the research lab, and they published a number of articles on their cancer research from 1949–1960.

In 1958 Sister Agatha began graduate work in organic chemistry at Catholic University in Washington, DC, where she earned her Ph.D. in 1965, and returned to The College of St. Scholastica as a Professor of Chemistry, teaching full time from 1966–1996. She served as Chairperson of the Department of Chemistry at CSS from 1972–76. Then she served as Chairperson of the Natural Science Division at CSS from 1976–1992. From 1981–86 she was also Project Manager of an Environmental Protection Agency Cooperative Agreement Contract, a Federal Government grant to study water pollution control. In 1998 Sister Agatha retired from teaching Chemistry at CSS. Over the years Sister was a member of Sigma Xi, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, and the American Institute of Chemists. She was the first CSS recipient of the prestigious Max H. Lavine Award for Teaching Excellence in 1978.

Sister Agatha once declared, “I believe that each of us receives a call from God to the role that we are to play during our time on earth and that He gives us the necessary abilities to live out that role. I feel very privileged that my call has been to the Benedictine way of life.” Sister celebrated her Silver Jubilee August 15, 1965; her Golden Jubilee August 12, 1990; her Diamond Jubilee August 13, 2000; her 70th Jubilee August 15, 2010.

Sister Agatha was preceded in death by her parents, Melchior and Emma Riehl and her brother Eugene. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica, she is survived by her brothers Emil and Theodore and her sisters Dorothy Leader, Alvina Wang, and, for three weeks, by her sister, +Sister Claudia, OSB, and by many devoted nieces, nephews, friends, and colleagues.



*Celebration of the Sister Claudia Riehl  
Living a Legacy Program, 2010,  
Photo courtesy of BHS*



*Sister Claudia leading a tour of the Monastery*



## **Sister Claudia Riehl, OSB** ***February 13, 1927—February 26, 2015***

Sister Claudia Riehl, OSB, 88, died February 26, 2105, at St. Scholastica Monastery. Born in Raleigh, North Dakota, on February 13, 1927, she was the daughter of Melchior and Emma (Wagner) Riehl. Sister was in her 67th year of Monastic Profession.

Sister Claudia was raised on the family farm in North Dakota, one of seven children of devout Catholic parents. During these years she developed a profound sense of being in relationship with her family and with God. She graduated from Flasher High School in 1944, and entered St. Scholastica Monastery as a Postulant on January 8, 1946. She professed Triennial Vows on July 11, 1947 and Perpetual Vows on July 11, 1950.

In 1948-52 Sister Claudia began her teaching career at St. Anthony School in Duluth and continued to teach from 1952-57 at Our Lady of Victory, Minneapolis. From 1957-65 she taught at St. Thomas School, Phoenix. She was principal and teacher at Assumption School in Hibbing from 1965-67. She received her BS degree in Education from The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) and an MA in Religious Education (Scripture concentration) at Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles. Other graduate studies included programs at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, in Education; the University of Minnesota Duluth, in Counseling; Summer Session Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, in Scripture; and St. John's University Collegeville, Minnesota in Scripture.

Sister Claudia was Novice Director at St. Scholastica Monastery from 1967-1970. She served as an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies/Psychology at The College of St. Scholastica from 1970-82, where she taught Scripture and Group Dynamics. In 1978 she co-led a six-week study tour of Israel, Turkey, Greece, and Italy, giving lectures at the biblical sites. Sister also participated in The College of St. Scholastica's Irish Studies Program in the spring of 1982. She served her monastic community as a member of the Monastery Initial Formation Team, as the Director of Monastery Volunteers, as Circulation Coordinator in the Monastery Development Office, and as Director of Human Resources. She celebrated her Silver Jubilee on July 11, 1972, her Golden Jubilee on July 11, 1997, and her Diamond Jubilee on August 12, 2007.

Sister Claudia served on a number of Boards and in other administrative positions including the Benedictine Health Center, CSS, and the Benedictine Health System (BHS). In 1991 the Prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery requested that Sister Claudia become Director of Mission Integration at the BHS, a newly-formed position. She served in that position for nearly twenty years with exceptional wisdom, grace, energy, and joy. To her, the goal was clear; she "was keeping alive the healing ministry of Jesus." On September 14, 2010, as part of the 25th anniversary year celebration of the founding of the BHS, Sister Claudia was honored for her work when the BHS Foundation established the Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program. This program recognizes the work of others at each of the facilities in the System who model Sister Claudia's dedication and commitment to the BHS Mission and Core Values. Sister Claudia retired from the BHS in 2011 due to ill health.

Sister Claudia was preceded in death by her parents, her brother Eugene, and her beloved sister and best friend, Sister Agatha, OSB. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, she is survived by her brothers Emil and Theodore, and her sisters Dorothy Leader and Alvina Wang, and by many devoted nieces and nephews, friends, and associates.



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