

PATHWAYS



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Dear Friends of the Monastery,

There is a theme to this letter which I will name “greening” and “gratitude.” Spring and summer seem to be coming early this year and it is a joy to watch the greening from South to North in Minnesota. Leaves are a full dark green in the South, while in the North a haze of delicate green can be seen on the forested hillsides. Patches of bloodroots are making their appearance along with touches of blue violets, bright yellow daffodils, and marsh marigolds.

I am reminded of the writings of Saint Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine Abbess, in which she celebrates *veriditas*, the nurturing, greening power of God. She writes,

*I am the one whose praise echoes on high.
I adorn all the earth.*

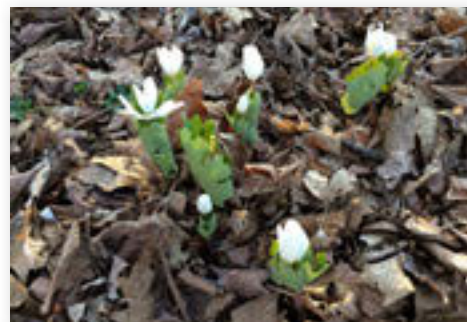
*I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.*

I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.

*I am the rain coming from the dew
that causes the grasses to laugh
with the joy of life.*

*I call forth tears, the aroma of holy work.
I am the yearning for good.**

We live these days with praise and gratitude to God for the beauty of life around us and for this year in which we celebrate 125 years of God’s grace in the life of our Community. Our history has not been without the “aroma of tears.” We remember our beginnings and the struggles of our Sisters past and present who sacrificed so that the Community could grow and serve the people of the region in the “holy work” of education, health care, and pastoral and spiritual ministries.



Bloodroot opening in Gethsemane Cemetery

As events unfold during this year, each provides an opportunity to say thank you over and over again for the gift of God’s blessing throughout our history, and for the encouragement of the many people who have blessed us and supported us along the way. Among them we name those who have built and shaped our Community, those who have partnered with us in our ministries, our volunteers, students and alumni, our donors and all of you.

Our gratitude goes out especially to those who have contributed to our annual appeal which will support the work of renovation and equip our newly blessed Center for Spirituality and Enrichment. We hope that many of you will take advantage of opportunities which will be announced in a fall mailing and on our website.

May God bless you and all of your loved ones in this greening summer time with laughter in the joy of life.

Gratefully in Christ,

Sister Beverly Raway, OSB

*Quoted from Gabriele Uhlein, *Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen*



Tweeting Monastic Life

by Sister Edith Bogue

Benedictines constantly grapple with the task of using a 1500-year-old Rule to guide our 21st century communities. We no longer copy books by hand nor begin our day of prayer in the wee hours of the morning. Yet we consider each change carefully. One telephone was enough for an entire community when calls were mostly for emergencies. Later, a shared telephone on each wing seemed good stewardship. Now we implement St. Benedict's call to silence with individual telephones capable of receiving "silent" voicemail messages.

Social media are now the new frontier for monastic communications. When Facebook and Twitter began a decade ago, monasteries were primarily concerned with their impact on our communal life. We didn't want Sisters to become over-involved with distant relationships on their computers to the detriment of our life together and connections with our visitors. We didn't imagine social media would become a ministry.

Mobile devices and apps changed all that. More people connect to the internet on a phone or tablet. People and organizations connect more often through social media. A year ago, we intentionally focused on @DuluthMonastery on Twitter. We posted 140-character tidbits of Benedictine spirituality and encouragement to those exploring religious vocations. We connected with local government and organization leaders. We shared our daily life in casual snapshots of nature or events. We highlighted issues of social justice. Our circle of connections has grown to over 1000 followers.

"Communication is a means of expressing the missionary vocation of the entire Church. Today, the social networks are one way to experience this call to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ," wrote Pope Francis in his message for World Communications Day in 2014. Our tweets will never replace the relationship of person-to-person conversation with visitors, discerners, friends, or pilgrims. They can – and we hope they do – make the beauty and vitality of monastic life visible to those we would never meet in any other way.

Duluth Benedictines @DuluthMonastery · Jan 1
St. Benedict said he wrote a "little Rule for beginners." We are all beginners. We begin anew each hour, day, and year. #vocation #hope



Duluth Benedictines @DuluthMonastery · Mar 1
St. Benedict tells the Prioress everyone should read a book prayerfully during Lent. Our books were blessed tonight. [bit.ly/2A2QRE](#)



Duluth Benedictines @DuluthMonastery · Mar 12
It's bitter cold in Duluth tonight. If you see someone cold or in need, call [@chumduluth](#) Street Outreach: 218-481-8505. #homeless #dignity



Duluth Benedictines @DuluthMonastery · Mar 25
As spring flowers stir beneath the soil, listen for God's voice stirring in your heart. He has a path of [#ife](#) for just for you. [#FollowMe](#)



Of Wind, Noise, and Fiery Tongues

by Sister Mary Catherine Shambour (mcshambour@duluthosb.org)

“The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit of God dwelling in us, alleluia!” Romans 5:5

On June 4 this year, Christians around the world celebrate the feast of Pentecost, often referred to as “the birthday of the Church.” And what a celebration that first Pentecost was! Talk about noise and wind and fire displays and wild exuberance! Once the divine power, symbolized by wind and parted tongues of fire, had descended upon Jesus’ followers gathered in prayer, such a great transformation overcame them that they burst into the streets of Jerusalem to proclaim the good news. The risen Jesus, whom they had crucified, God has made both Lord and Messiah, and now they, too, through repentance and baptism in his name can receive the same Spirit! That day alone, some 3,000 persons were baptized. (Acts 2:41)

The rest of the story we know. Currently, after more than 2,000 years of trial and triumph, more than two billion currently living persons have received the same Holy Spirit. Do we share the same excitement and commitment as those first believers, or even that of some of our own ancestors in the faith? Catholic and Orthodox Christians honor the Holy Spirit each time we make the sign of the cross before and after our prayers, and believe that we receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and throughout life through the sacraments. Yet how many of us call on and live in the Holy Spirit daily?

Because of their very busy lives, many Catholics who actually make it to Mass on Sunday feel that is about all they can manage, and they trust all will be well with them. Surely, God who reads their hearts will bless them accordingly; but what about the rest of the week? What



Icon of Pentecost by +Sister Mary Charles McGough

about the millions of American Catholics who have abandoned the Church completely as having no relevance to their lives? These are difficult questions to answer, but they are vital to the survival of a dynamic, living Church that provides joy and meaning to our lives and guidance to society. To those who feel that their faith has no answers to offer them, I ask them to recall that the same Holy Spirit that dwelt in Jesus and his followers has been given to them and is pleading for them: *“Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness: for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words”* (Romans 8:26). What is left for us is to call upon and to plead with the Holy Spirit to assist us.

Many of my own generation were taught to say certain prayers and find consolation in them. However, not as much emphasis was placed upon personal and contemplative prayer. Finding privacy and time to pray may be a problem for many, but we all need some space and time to do so, even for a few minutes daily. The important thing is to present ourselves to the Lord as we are, honor Him, present our needs honestly and beg for the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, and then to listen to what the Spirit may be asking of us. This kind of prayer is especially necessary before making important life decisions, be they personal or corporate, and should continue even after we have made them. In today’s hectic world it is still – and always – Pentecost. Today especially we need the Holy Spirit to serve as our “auto pilot” in guiding our day to day existence.

When we say that the Church must make changes in order to be relevant today, we forget that WE ARE THE CHURCH! Though the hierarchical Church, for good reasons, makes major changes slowly (even Pope Francis finds this so), all baptized members of the Church share the same Spirit, and through earnest prayer should follow the Spirit's counsel to do what God is asking them to do in helping to build the kingdom of God on earth. This is how religious orders began and how hundreds of thousands of laity around the world are practicing the Beatitudes today, by bringing God's love to a broken world through prayer, volunteerism, research, writing, speaking, and community building of every kind. This is practicing

the faith in the 21st century. The Holy Spirit is at work "making all things new." A recent remarkable book, *The Divine Dance* by Father Richard Rohr, helps explain the Trinity as the continual flow of love between the three divine persons that brings all things into existence, and how we, through our baptism and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, are called to participate in the very life of God by doing the same. This understanding could change our lives. *Veni, Creator Spiritus!*

Interpretation of the Icon of Pentecost

by Sister Therese Carson

This is a summary of Henry Nouwen's meditation on the icon of *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*, from *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1987). The original icon was painted in the 15th century by an unknown Russian iconographer of the Novgorod School, and was used as a model by +Sister Mary Charles McGough.

For Nouwen, the icon reveals three things. First, the Spirit descends as God-Within-Us, bringing symmetry and equilibrium to our lives. Twelve apostles sit in a curve and radiate order, peace, and solemnity. (More recent iconographers added Mary, the 'Theotokos' or God-bearer, at the center of the group waiting in the Upper Room.) The iconographer hasn't forgotten the story of noise, wind, and fire, the voices calling in many languages, and the sarcastic comments about "too much wine". Instead he has focused on the deepest meaning of Pentecost, the indwelling of divine breath that will transform the cowering disciples into people on fire in Christ.

Secondly, it reminds us that life in the Spirit is always life in community, where God reveals the fullness of divine love. It is an answer to our question, "Where

do we find a community of faith upon whom the Spirit descends and through whom God's love can become a beacon to the world?" Healthy communities of faith do not rely on shared interests and compatible personalities; rather they are a true unity rising out of the shared breath of the Spirit, hearts afire with love and the experience of the loving embrace of God. In this icon the Church reveals its unity in diversity: each apostle is different in posture, gesture, and color, but together they form a radiant whole.

Finally, this community is fashioned for the liberation of the world. Beneath the apostles' feet is an opening into darkness, where stands *Cosmos*, a somber puppet king representing all who live in darkness. He holds on the winding sheet of the tomb twelve scrolls: the Word of God preached by the apostles. In the apostles' hands are scrolls that they have passed on to people everywhere so they in turn can carry on the new life of the Spirit.

In conclusion, we must not sentimentalize the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, but instead keep in mind this world's darkness and what may happen if we stop preaching the Good News of salvation.

Center for Spirituality and Enrichment

by Sister Pauline Micke, Outreach Coordinator (pauline.m@duluthosb.org)

The Lenten Retreat on March 11 was a most inspiring experience. In “Stories of our Thirsting, Seeing, Dying, and Rising,” some 32 people listened and reflected on the stories in the Scriptures for the Sundays in Lent, and then shared their insights with each other.

Fr. Steve Ulrich and Sister Pauline Micke facilitated the retreat. In their feedback, participants continue to ask for more offerings like this, where we study in depth the

people we meet in Scripture who then help us encounter Jesus on a daily basis. As one person commented, “It is great to have a place where we can come and continue to grow.”

To arrange for Fifth Step Hearings or Sabbath Days, contact Sister Pauline at Pauline.m@duluthosb.org or call 218-723-7086. Visit www.retreatduluth.org.



Please Pray for the Following Deceased Family and Friends

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| <i>Mariana Rita Elsenpeter Goodwin</i> | 12/18/2016 |
| <i>Mortimer Cushman</i> | 1/26/2017 |
| <i>Julie Moller Sanford</i> | 2/10/2017 |
| <i>Sheridan Frank Sousa</i> | 2/23/2017 |
| <i>Virginia Mae Sullivan</i> | 2/26/2017 |
| <i>Else Sreenivasam</i> | 3/15/2017 |
| <i>Betty Miesbauer</i> | 3/17/2017 |

Sister Profile: Sister Gretchen Johnston

What is the most roundabout way you can imagine becoming a Catholic Benedictine Sister? My vocation story, if not the most circuitous, is surely among the top ten.

I grew up Christian but not Catholic. My sisters and I memorized Scriptures, went to Vacation Bible School, and were homeschooled with a curriculum of textbooks from Pensacola Christian College. Unlike many Sisters who knew in grade school that they wanted to become a nun, I had absolutely no experience with Catholics or Sisters before college. My experience as I grew up was of learning to look at Catholicism askance.

I applied to The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) and the University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) for college, but ended up going to CSS because they took all the college credits I had accumulated through community college, whereas UMD did not. At CSS, I met Sr. Monica, Sr. Mary Jean Tuttle, Sr. Mary Rochefort, and later Sr. Linda. They

Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 by Ludwig van Beethoven



were gentle and kind, especially to one as oblivious as I was. I remember walking through the halls of the college wondering what love was, and they showed me.

The Monastery has an Associate program, whereby women can live, work, and pray with the Sisters for a time. I thought it was only for Catholics, but they accepted me! This was for my last year at college. During this year, the psalms that we pray several times a day started growing into me.

Also during this year, I was looking for a church to which I could belong. I explored many denominations, but finally Catholicism won out. I was captivated, and still am, by the fact that it was such a big-tent church with room for everybody. Through living at the Monastery, I found that together we all make one 'Christianity' with many different flavors!

I went to the University of Missouri for my Master's degree in music. During that time, I also took RCIA classes. I couldn't stop thinking about this community though, so when I graduated I took a job in Superior, Wisconsin, as music teacher and church musician at the Cathedral's parish school so I could be closer to the Monastery. After paying off my bills, I became an Affiliate, the first stage to becoming a Sister. The rest is history!

All my life I have been a musician. Currently I play for Morning and Evening Prayer at the Monastery, help in the Liturgy office, and have other jobs as needed around the Monastery. I teach piano at Hamlin Music Academy in West Duluth and teach other students as well. I am accepting students, if you know of anyone who would like to take lessons! Please call me at 218-576-7804. I also sing and occasionally play at St. Michael's Church in Lakeside and work as an organist at Concordia Lutheran Church, both in Duluth. Working at the Lutheran church helps me expand my Christianity by looking through other lenses.



Celebrating 125 Years: How It All Began

by Sister Judine Mayerle OSB (jmayerle@css.edu)

Although the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery are celebrating 125 years in the City of Duluth, the story really begins 40 years earlier, in 1852, when two groups of travelers left the German port of Bremerhaven for the United States en route to the Territory of Minnesota, which had been created by an Act of Congress in 1849.

On March 12, 1852, the family of Peter and Anna Kerst (including five-year-old Catherine, three-year-old Margaret, and one-year-old Matthew) left Bremerhaven and began their three-month journey to St. Paul, Minnesota. Relatives and friends also made the voyage across the North Atlantic to the port of New York City on the sailing ship *Columbus*, then by rail to Pittsburg, and by river steamer down the Ohio River to St. Louis, Missouri. There they waited for a Mississippi River boat for the four-day trip to St. Paul, the newly-formed capital city of the Minnesota Territory.

Father Boniface Wimmer, a Bavarian priest who entered a Benedictine monastery several years after his ordination, heard about the loss of faith among German immigrants in the United States and obtained permission to lead a small group of missionaries from Bavaria to establish St. Vincent's Priory at LaTrobe, Pennsylvania. Five years later, in 1851, he went back to Bavaria to the historic Benedictine Convent of St. Walburga in Eichstatt to ask for Sisters to teach the children of German immigrants at St. Marys, Pennsylvania.

The Eichstatt Benedictines were reluctant to leave their life of strict enclosure and their educational work with girls, but Wimmer convinced them that the loss of faith among the German immigrants showed the great need for Catholic schools. Moreover, he promised their enclosure could be kept, they would be given only girls to teach, and the American convent would be a dependent house of St. Walburga Convent. Mother Edwarda reluctantly agreed that three sisters could go. Sister Benedicta Riepp, who would be the Superior, Sister Walburga Dietrich, and lay sister Maura Flieger boarded the steamer *Washington* at Bremerhaven on June 18, 1852, arriving in New York City on July 3 and at St. Vincent's Abbey several days later. After resting for a few days, they made the 116-mile overland journey to St. Marys, Pennsylvania to open a school for 60 girls.

Several more Sisters came from Bavaria, and soon St. Joseph Convent at St. Marys welcomed a number of candidates from the area as novices. Five years after landing in America, some of the Benedictine sisters of St. Marys followed the immigrant migration to the Minnesota frontier, settling first in St. Cloud and then in St. Joseph, the present site of St. Benedict's Monastery. Mother Benedicta Riepp joined the Sisters a year later and remained with them until her death in 1862.

In the Kerst memoirs, Peter Kerst writes, "We arrived at St. Paul on a beautiful June morning. I was immediately impressed by the future value of land ownership on the site of this rapidly growing city. So I purchased a 640-acre section on the present location of Randolph Street and Snelling Avenue." He settled his wife and children with a family of German immigrants while he built a house and three months later brought them home. Although just 32 years old, as the only son of his deceased wealthy parents, his inheritance enabled him to purchase land that increased significantly in value and established him as a successful businessman. The Kersts were among the early settlers in St. Paul and part of a large German Catholic immigrant group who built Assumption Church in 1856, as "the first church that would comfort and give a sense of belonging to people who had left all things familiar to build better lives for themselves and their families."

Peter and Anna Kerst could not know that most of the rest of their lives would be linked with the Eichstatt Benedictines who had sailed from Bremerhaven two months after them in 1852, linked through their capricious, intelligent, oldest



The only photographs of Peter and Anna Kerst are formal sittings. No photographs of the young couple who crossed the Atlantic Ocean with their children have been found.

child, Catherine, who decided at age fifteen that she wanted to be a nun. In 1862 she became the first postulant at St. Gertrude's Convent in Shakopee, a Benedictine house founded by a second group of Sisters from St. Marys, Pennsylvania. Catherine Kerst became Sister Scholastica and made her perpetual monastic profession there on January 6, 1869. The small Community struggled financially despite generous support from Peter and Anna Kerst who were dismayed by the impoverished living conditions of the Sisters. After two years of study at Benedictine houses at St. Marys and then Erie, Pennsylvania, and the experience of a more stable lifestyle, Sister Scholastica asked for a permanent transfer. However, Abbot Alexius Edelbrock of St. John's Abbey, a friend of her parents who knew they did not wish their daughter to live so far away, instead facilitated her transfer to St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph on September 17, 1877. Less than three years later, in May 1880, the Abbot appointed her interim prioress of her new Community to serve out the term of the prioress who had resigned after repeatedly asking to be relieved of what she had thought would be a three-year position. He then supported her at the August election, saying if she were not elected by the Community, he would appoint her prioress because he "wanted the Community to grow and extend the work and she was the only one who could do it." During Mother Scholastica's nine years as prioress, the Community greatly increased its membership and expanded its ministries, opening three frontier hospitals, elementary schools, secondary academies, and missions for the area's Sioux and Chippewa Indians.



Munger Terrace was designed by architects Oliver G. Traphagen and Francis W. Fitzpatrick and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Mother Scholastica made an overnight trip to Duluth in December 1880 in response to a request from the vicar apostolic of Northern Minnesota that her Community start a school in Sacred Heart Parish. Before leaving the next morning, she agreed that Sisters could come the following year to live and teach in an old frame building previously used as a livery barn and carriage house. However, an extremely cold winter and the deplorable conditions in which the Sisters lived and tried to teach 200 students led to their returning to St. Benedict's Convent. When suitable quarters were found three years later, the Sisters returned to staff several parish schools and a hospital. When the Diocese of Duluth was established in 1889, Bishop James T. McGolrick desired a permanent community of Benedictine Sisters for his diocese.

Thirty-two Sisters from St. Benedict's Convent, including Sister Scholastica who had been teaching for three years after completing her term as prioress and her younger sister, Sister Alexia, established a new independent foundation in 1892. Mother Scholastica Kerst was first appointed prioress by the Bishop and then later elected by the Community, a position she held until her death in 1911.

When the first Benedictines began ministries in education and health care in Duluth, the "Zenith City" had overcome a rather shaky start, having survived a scarlet fever epidemic and two economic crashes that almost wiped the town from the map. A newspaper of the time encouraged people to settle in Duluth, but cautioned, "Newcomers should comprehend that Duluth is at present a small place, and hotel and boarding room accommodation is extremely limited. However, lumber is cheap and shanties can be built. Everyone should bring blankets and come prepared to rough it."

By the mid-1880s Duluth was growing rapidly because of northeastern Minnesota's fur trade, its resources of copper, iron ore, and lumber, and its ability to transport goods by rail from the Minnesota wilderness to Duluth and by boat from its port on the western tip of Lake Superior. The 1880 census listed 3,483 people in Duluth, of which there were approximately 150 Catholic families, not enough to support a parochial school. Four years later the population was close to 18,000, and in 1890 it was estimated there were 33,150 residents, including hundreds of German Catholics with school-age children.

The new Community first settled in Munger Terrace, a large brownstone building with eight townhouses overlooking the city.



Mother Scholastica (4th from left) sitting on the stairs of the front entrance of the first building of Villa Sancta Scholastica.

The Sisters rented three units, using two large rooms in one unit as a chapel, others as living quarters for the Sisters, and two full units as classrooms. However, Munger Terrace soon proved to be inadequate to house the Sisters and their expanding educational ministry, so they built the Sacred Heart Academy at 3rd Street and 3rd Avenue East, the first property in Duluth owned by the Sisters. They used the property for educational purposes from 1894-1910. As the Benedictine Community grew in membership and enrollment at the Academy increased, it became obvious that a more spacious building would be needed. Mother Scholastica had been looking for land on which to build a motherhouse



Early photo of the first section of the first building of Villa Sancta Scholastica.

and academic buildings, and in 1899 learned that 80 acres of farmland two miles from the city's center were for sale. The Sisters took possession in 1900 and in 1905 began to build the first section of what became known as "Villa Sancta Scholastica".

Building the Sacred Heart Academy and purchasing land for further construction was a huge undertaking for the Sisters who had only been in Duluth for eight years. The strong-willed and innovative leadership of Mother Scholastica Kerst, both as prioress of St. Benedict's Convent and then at St. Scholastica Convent in Duluth, was clearly influenced by her father, a successful businessman who had expanded his holdings over the years through sophisticated financing techniques. He encouraged his daughter's efforts through wise counsel and generous financial support through loans

and outright gifts. The work of the Benedictine Sisters of Duluth was very important to Peter and Anna Kerst, as were the needs of other Catholic institutions over the years, and their generosity was recognized through apostolic blessings from both Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius X.

Peter Kerst never lived to applaud the purchase of the land called the "daisy farm" or see the first section of the new motherhouse built. He died of meningitis at the first St. Mary's Hospital in West Duluth on March 22, 1900. His death was reported in the *Duluth Evening Herald* on Friday, March 23, 1900. The headline AN AGED MAN DIES was followed by "Peter Joseph Kerst, age 80 years, died yesterday at St. Marys. He was the father of Mother Superior Scholastica of The Villa and was formerly of St. Paul. He was well-known throughout the state and has many friends and acquaintances who mourn his death. There will be a short funeral service at the German Catholic Church this evening and the remains will then be taken by train to St. Paul for burial. Tomorrow morning there will be a service in the Church of the Assumption in St. Paul." The *Saint Paul Globe* for March 23, 1900, described him as "an old St. Paul Pioneer, well-known to all old residents, especially in the Fifth Ward, and very prominent in Catholic circles."

Funeral arrangements were made by Peter Kerst's nephew, Peter M. Kerst of St. Paul. Archival records show that Mother Scholastica gave him \$40 to pay for the church services (\$33 for the church, \$7 for the priest), as well as \$54 for seven carriages to go from the church to Calvary Cemetery: one for Mother Scholastica, two for pall bearers, one for the priest, and three carriages for guests. The undertaker agreed to wait 60 days for payment. Certainly Mother Scholastica did not make the trip to St. Paul by herself, but there is no indication in archival records of any companions, including her mother or her sister, Sister Alexia.

Peter and Anna Kerst had purchased a large plot in Calvary Cemetery in 1854, just two years after arriving in St. Paul. Their infant son, Mathias, died and was buried a few days before they reached Minnesota. The first family members to be buried in the Kerst plot died of cholera: Nicholas Kerst, age 15 months, and one-year-old John Kerst. Margaretha Kerst died of small pox at age 23 a year after her marriage to Charles Rapp in 1871. Conrad Kerst, who had attended St. John's University in Collegeville, died of gangrene in February 1881, and was the fourth child buried in the Kerst family plot.



Margaretha Kerst



Conrad Kerst



The Kerst family plot's tall granite marker has a Benedictine cross carved into the stone and the name Peter Joseph Kerst at the base. The large center section is inscribed in German: Here lies the family of Peter Joseph Kerst.

Although the Kersts had spent considerable time in Duluth after the founding of the new Benedictine Community, Peter Kerst wondered whether he should be considered a resident of St. Louis County, Duluth, or Ramsey County, St. Paul. His lawyer advised that it would be better for him to remain a resident of Ramsey County since he would be buried there and probate of his will would be easier. Peter Kerst had left everything to his wife, Anna, who in turn left everything to her daughters, Mother Scholastica and Sister Alexia, when she died ten years later, age 96, on December 29, 1910. In the last years of her life, Anna Kerst expressed a desire to be “buried near her daughters’ home.” She is buried in the Sisters’ Gethsemane Cemetery on a hill behind Tower Hall rather than in the Kerst family plot at Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul.

During Mother Scholastica’s nineteen years as prioress the Community grew from 32 to 161 members, and by the time of her death in 1911, was staffing 18 elementary parish schools, four secondary schools, five hospitals, an orphanage, a retirement home, and a School of Nursing.

Mother Scholastica died in the early evening of June 11, 1911, the Feast of the Holy Trinity, after a long struggle with cancer. At Bishop James McGolrick’s request, her funeral was held at Sacred Heart Cathedral, where “hundreds of clergy, religious of other communities, her relatives, and the Sisters of the

Villa were present. A choir of fifty priests of the diocese chanted the Office of the Dead prior to the Solemn Requiem Mass.” During his sermon, Bishop McGolrick said, “She built my diocese! May her good work grow and prosper.” She is buried at Gethsemane Cemetery, next to her mother. She only saw completion of the first section of Tower Hall in 1909, before her death, but often spoke of her vision of what should follow: “My dream is that someday there will rise upon these grounds fine buildings like the great Benedictine abbeys. They will be built of stone; within their walls higher education will flourish...”

On July 11, 1911, one month after the death of Mother Scholastica, the Community held an election of a new Prioress. Sister Alexia Kerst, sister of Mother Scholastica, was elected on a first ballot by 130 capitulars to continue the work begun by her sister and the pioneer Benedictine Community.

Peter and Anna Kerst never knew how their lives were caught up in the mission of the Eichstatt Benedictines, who crossed the North Atlantic from Bremerhaven two months after the Kerst family and formed the communities that attracted their daughters and called them forth to leadership. And the Eichstatt Benedictines who began their voyage from Bremerhaven had no idea that their future leadership was a young child travelling just ahead of them who was caught up in the excitement of an ocean voyage. The line of Peter and Anna Kerst ended with their two Benedictine daughters, their other children having died without progeny. But their exemplary lives of service shaped the character of the Duluth Benedictine’s first two leaders, and their generous support over the years played a significant role in furthering the dreams of Minnesota pioneer Benedictine women.



The funeral procession near Gethsemane Cemetery. The horse-drawn hearse and entourage came from Sacred Heart Cathedral.



Anna Margaret Kerst



Peter Kerst

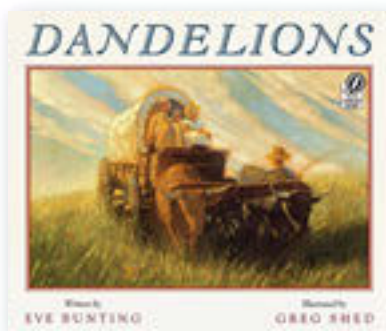
The Great Fact of the Land Itself: The Prairie in Picture Books

by Sister Sarah Smedman

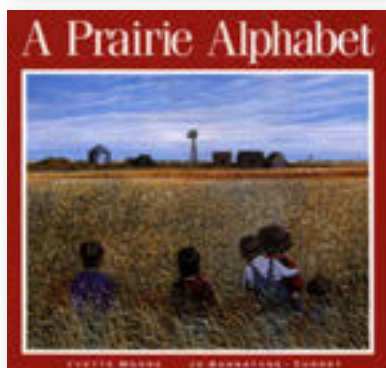
In “A Visit with Eudora Welty” Welty averred that place is the fountainhead of a person’s knowledge and experience, that character grows out of place, is shaped and identified by geography and climate, and that one’s validity and propriety are tested by place (Ferris, Bill. *Conversations with Eudora Welty*. 1984. 176-77). In prairie fiction, as well as in the Southern writer Welty’s fiction, place can become co-author and character. In addition to providing a backdrop for the action, the prairie has important dramatic significance, determining to a great degree the events that occur and objectifying, as well as causing, the mental and emotional states of characters.

Having previously quoted passages from a select few picture books, novels for young readers, and *Giants in the Earth* (a seminal story for me), I am interested in whether writers/illustrators of picture books depict the prairie in the same images and metaphors as Rolvaag and other adult novelists, Willa Cather, Bess Streeter Aldrich, and Lois Phillips Hudson to name a few. The answer: basically “yes.”

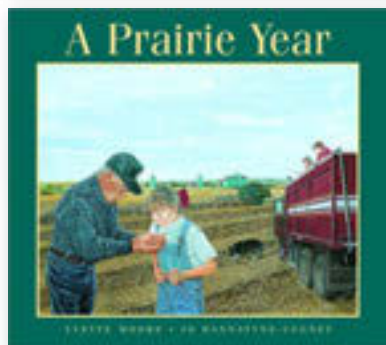
Many of the images characterize the prairie as vast, limitless and empty, merging with the sky; of pure and various colors; as sweeping over waves of grasses. In picture books, many of which were published in the 1990s and tell stories of times after prairies have been cultivated, the illustrations, more than the words, create the images, beautiful, breath-taking images.

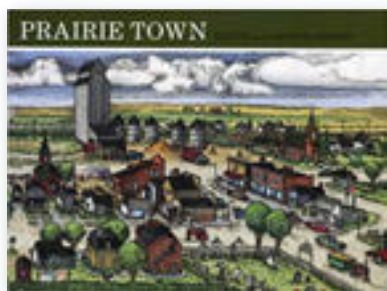


The text of Eve Bunting’s *Dandelions* (1993) illustrated by Greg Shed, does tell a story, one quite derivative of *Giants in the Earth*: a father determined to carve a home on the prairie for his family, despite his pregnant wife’s fear of the immensity, loneliness, and incivility of living in a sod house, miles from neighbors in tall grass that “closes behind us . . . as if we’d never been” (n.p.). A patch of dandelions, inexplicably blossoming in that tall grass, proffers hope for a happier future. Father and daughter Zoe, concerned for Mother’s sadness, carefully dig up the dandelions and transplant them in the sod roof of their home. The final illustration depicts in soft vibrant greens and blues a vast grassland with a trail leading to the bright yellow roof of a lone soddy. The dandelions symbolize a garden, a prevalent image of hope in prairie fiction.



Several picture books depict life on the prairie in more recent times. Both text and pictures in *A Prairie Alphabet* (1992) and *A Prairie Year* (1994) by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet, illustrated by Yvette Moore, present detailed information about contemporary life on the prairie. The first, described as “an alphabet book for children and an art book for adult,” was critically acclaimed as “a book that makes you homesick for the prairies even if you never lived there.” The second book presents family life on the prairie, about which the “Introduction,” claims: “Life on the prairies is governed by the seasons, and prairie folk take pride in adapting to each season’s weather and temperature.” While Moore’s exquisitely realistic paintings focus on people and their activities, the prairie is often the dramatic force as well as the backdrop of the action. Most often Moore illustrates the prairie as the land that meets the sky, that “infinite horizon.”

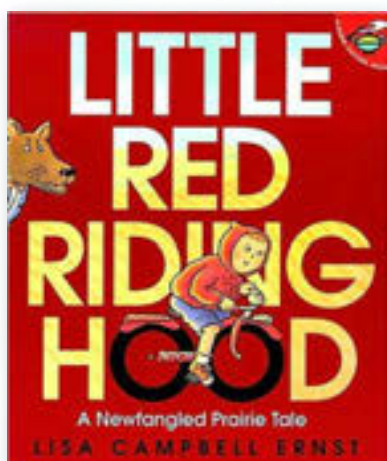




Bonnie and Arthur Geisert's *Prairie Town* is a view of the social and economic life of a small, isolated prairie town connected to the world by the railroad. As its title proclaims, the book focuses on the town, but surrounding that town is the vast, empty prairie and a limitless, cloudy sky. The town buildings and streets are rendered in straight lines and geometric shapes. Both realistic backdrop and foreground paintings emphasize Prairie Town's isolation but also the vitality, resilience, determination, and independence of its residents in every season.



Two city boy-cousins' "summers. . . belonged to the country, to the prairie. / Heat shimmer, bug whine, freedom" in Nancy Hundal's *Prairie Summer*. (Illus. Brian Deines. 1999.) The text contains phrases like: "Flanked by waving wheat;" "the wind sculpts dust whirls. . . The wind disturbs the groves of tress huddled together. Grasses bow, clouds wander." Yet it is the illustrations in intense pure and various colors, primarily brown and blue tones, that create the seas of grass and "the infinite, level, and roomy horizon" where heaven meets earth. "It was endless then, and the space it left us inside to roam is endless now."



Too funny to be missed is Lisa Campbell Ernst's hilariously ironic tale, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Newfangled Prairie Tale* (1995). Little Red leaves her home in town at "the edge of a great prairie" to deliver her mother's wheat berry muffins and ice-cold lemonade to her grandmother on the prairie. Having been warned not to talk to strangers, Red says "Sure, Mom," as she climbs on her bike and "zigzagged between the crops" to Grandma's house. On her way, she meets the wolf and, despite her promise, tells him of her mission. The wolf sets out to beat Red to Grandma's house, only to discover Grandma on a tractor plowing her fields. The tough, witty lady outfoxes him and drags him home. When Little Red arrives, the three together enjoy the muffins. Grandma eventually moves from her prairie farm to open her own muffin shop in town. The wolf becomes her chief baker, salesclerk, and dishwasher, with his disposition improved by all the muffins he can eat, and now much too busy to cause trouble. Little Red delivers Grandma's muffins, riding her bicycle across the prairie. The bright, bold, exaggerated illustrations depict the prairie primarily as setting and also support the theme: if one is smart, strong, and tenacious, one can overcome wild and foreboding forces. Thus the taming of the wolf becomes a symbol of the settling of the prairie.



If You're Not from the Prairie (Story by David Bouchard, images by Henry Ripplinger, 1995) focuses on a boy growing up on the prairie from the perspective of a man looking back on what it means to be a prairie person. Each double-page of the repetitive, poetic text, accompanied by a realistic, 'pure' and exact illustration with a depth that encourages imaginatively walking into the picture, evokes nostalgia and longing. "If you're not from the prairie – You don't know the sun – You can't know the sun. . . . You can't know the wind, . . . the sky, . . . seen what's flat, . . . heard grass, . . . know

snow, . . . never been cold. . . "You just can't know *ME*. . . . *If you're not from the prairie, you can't know my soul, . . . You can't know my mind, nor ever my heart.*"

The book ends with figures of a man holding the hand of a little boy as they walk together up a flat road alongside farm buildings into a golden sunset, under a deep blue cloudy sky. Obviously symbolic, the image conveys satisfaction, contentment, and peace.

And that is the Prairie, the great fact of the land itself. Amen.

Community Builders Micaela Jacobson and Josie Steller: Sister Mary Rochefort Scholarship Winners

by Sister Sarah Smedman

After Sister Mary Rochefort's death on February 9, 2016, to honor her and recognize her 16 years as Associate Vice President of Mission Integration, The College of St. Scholastica established two significant Sister Mary Rochefort Scholarships; one for full tuition, room and board, and a second for full tuition, both to be awarded for four years to incoming freshmen. Because Sister Mary's primary concern was building community based on the mission and values of the College, she did not sit in her office but was out and about establishing personal relationships among faculty, staff, and students. Many faculty members invited her to speak to their classes on the lifetime significance of living the Benedictine values—Community, Hospitality, Respect, Stewardship, and Love of Learning—as students and modeling them for colleagues, friends, and families for the rest of their lives. Always a bit uncomfortable with her title, Sister Mary never referred to herself as Associate Vice President for Mission Integration because she feared it might set her apart from those with whom she worked. This was as true on her regular visits to St. Scholastica's satellite campuses in Rochester, St. Paul, Grand Rapids, St. Cloud, and Brainerd as it was here on the Duluth campus. The outlying campuses looked forward to her regular visits, not only to the welcome and sense of inclusion she disseminated, but to the classes she worked with. Often her presence was celebrated with refreshments, to which she contributed “blue and gold” candies and *Dove* ice cream bars.

The Feast of St. Scholastica, February 10, was always a special day for Mary. Each year she arranged breakfast treats of doughnuts and orange juice for everyone, a display of historical mementoes of the founders of St. Scholastica Monastery, and a brief program. Because Ash Wednesday preempted the Feast of St. Scholastica on February 10, 2016, St. Scholastica's day was forwarded to February 9. Sister Mary Rochefort died on that day. Providentially!

The first Rochefort scholarships were awarded for the 2016-2017 academic year on the basis of five-minute

videos in which applicants introduced themselves and spoke of their work in community building in their local areas. A committee of the Deans of the Academic Schools or their representatives judged the videos. Micaela Jacobson, a graduate of Minnetonka, Minnesota, High School, was awarded the four-year tuition, room and board scholarship. Josie Steller, a graduate of Durand, Wisconsin High School received the four-year tuition scholarship. Recently I had the privilege of interviewing these two outstanding young women.



(L to R) Sr. Sarah Smedman, Sr. Clare Marie Trettel, Josie Steller, Micaela Jacobson

Question: Tell me a bit about your application video. What did you say about your “community-building” experiences that rose to the top of 48 other applicants?

Micaela Jacobsen: I emphasized two activities. The first was my membership on the Minnesota Youth Council Education Committee. The Minnesota Youth Council, composed of a high school student from each of Minnesota's legislative districts (I represented District 3), met periodically with adult representatives to discuss and vote on Omnibus issues that affect youth. My membership on the Youth Council ceased when I graduated from high school.

The second activity I highlighted was my work in founding a 501c3 non-profit organization, *Youth Hope Rising*, which worked with homeless youth and established a shelter for homeless youth in downtown Minneapolis.

Josie Steller: Born and raised in the small town (177 residents) of Arkansaw, Wisconsin, I became actively

involved in community affairs at age 12. Over the years I accumulated more than 120 hours of volunteer work for numerous events and causes.

I emphasized my work with successful fund raising for the maintenance of my local United Methodist Church. Also, having accumulated so many volunteer hours, I represented the town in the Miss Durand Pageant, which recognized outstanding participation in community affairs. Competing with a number of other qualified candidates, I was thrilled to be crowned Miss Durand. As such, of course, I represented the community in a variety of events, including the Minneapolis Winter Carnival.

Both young women mentioned that they had been elected to the National Honor Society and actively participated in leadership roles, particularly in the Student Councils, of their respective schools.

Question: Tell me about your background, about your family or anything particular you would like to mention.

Micaela: I would like to say that, although St. Scholastica was my first choice for college, I would not have been able to attend without this Scholarship. I am so grateful that it has enabled me to be here. My parents have always been supportive of me and, of course, are delighted that I can be at the college of my choice.

I am the only girl in a family of two brothers and five male cousins. I do enjoy being with my brothers during vacations, especially playing ping-pong with them.

Josie: I am an only child. My father is a cheese-maker; my mother, a school-bus driver. Although I am pretty much the “focus” of their lives, spoiling me was anathema! They have given me many opportunities, supported me, and are proud of my achievements.

Question: What are your majors/minors at St. Scholastica?

Micaela: Nursing, with a minor in psychology. I want to pursue a doctorate in nurse-midwifery.

Josie: I enrolled as a nursing major, but before the end of the first semester, I changed to elementary education. After my summer experience with children, I realized I

really wanted to work with children, to have an impact on their formation and lives. I plan to apply for the special education program at St. Scholastica, scheduled to begin in 2018, and hope to become a licensed Academic and Behavioral Strategist.

Question: What have you been able to do to build community here on campus? Any campus organizations of groups you have worked with? Any independent efforts?

Both girls spoke at once, eager to tell of their early arrival on campus and their activities during “August Adventures.” This is a series of discussion-based programs that focuses on multicultural leadership and on inclusivity of all students regardless of their ethnicity, cultural, gender, or religious differences.

Micaela said she had organized **Community Service Orientation**, which introduced students to local groups that offered city-wide opportunities for volunteer participants; to name a few: Loaves and Fishes, Animal Allies, and the Rose Gardens. Micaela serves as the Leader of Community Service Orientation.

Micaela went on to add: As a member of Med Life, I went with a group from CSS to Cusco, a city in southeastern Peru, where we served primarily poor and under privileged pregnant women and children. I hope to go with a CSS group to Tanzania.

I am also a member of a recreational basketball team. My team was very successful: No. 1, until we were beaten in the final!

Josie said she had organized **Kindness in Chalk Day**, the purpose of which was to spread inspirational words in chalk. The project was so successful that sidewalks were covered with quotations, simple words from individual’s hearts, signs and symbols. Notable examples: Gandhi’s famous words, “Be the change you want to see in the world”; peace signs; hands holding the world.

Josie added, I am active in Campus Ministry. One highlight was an overnight retreat at McCabe led by Sarah Kroska. I also volunteer at the Vineyard Church Infant Center. I am a member of the Pep Squad, and I

performed in the leading role in the CSS production of *The Miss Firecracker Contest*.

Both young women are active participants in “Praise and Worship,” an inter-varsity Christian group which sponsors a non-denominational Christian service one evening a week in the dorm. Both are also involved in “Better Together,” a program that sponsors lecture-discussions about non-Christian faiths to increase understanding and break down barriers among Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Christians.

Both, too, have made it their business to get to know and establish relationships with as many of their peers as possible. Both are on the Dean’s List.

Question: What do you hope to do during your subsequent years at St. Scholastica? What are your current plans for your future after graduation?

Vitally interested in student government, **both young women** plan to pursue leadership roles here to have an impact both on students and the administration.

Micaela: I want to continue as Leader of Community Service Organizations and with Med Life. Once I have my doctorate in midwifery, I think I would like to establish my own clinic so I would not be limited by hospital and clinic rules. I could control my own time, which would allow me to make home visits. I could help the poor and disadvantaged free of charge. Of course, I will have to think this through carefully, but that sense of freedom really attracts me.

No longer eligible for the Minnesota Youth Council, I will serve on the Board of Events Committee of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth for the foreseeable future.

Josie: I look forward to being a Resident Assistant in Somers Hall next year, where I plan to bring residents together through common activities. Next year I will be a hockey cheerleader. I hope to continue my work with the theater, particularly with costumes. Besides being an elementary school teacher and ultimately an administrator, I do want to be a Coordinator of the Miss Durand Pageant at home. Because my experience did so much for me, I want to give back to my home community.

Question: Reflect for a moment on your first year at St. Scholastica.

Both Micaela and Josie: Commendatory comments flowed freely. Each agreed whole-heartedly with whatever the other said. (It was difficult to discern who said what first.)

I felt comfortable and at home at St. Scholastica immediately.

Everyone was so welcoming!

The College Community is small enough so I have gotten to know my peers.

The Faculty is interested in students’ success, not just academically.

I have been able to establish close connections with my teachers.

I love St. Scholastica!

The committee of reviewers and judges has recently selected and informed the winners of the 2017-2018 Sister Mary Rochefort Scholarships. The full tuition, room and board scholarship has been awarded to Liana Blomgren from Mountain Lake High School in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The full tuition scholarship has been awarded to Matthew Tautges from Pierz-Healy High School in Pierz, Minnesota.

It is hard to imagine that these next winners, as deserving as they undoubtedly are, can be any more community-minded or more successful achievers than this year’s winners, Micaela Jacobson and Josie Steller. Congratulations to the four of you!



Josie Steller (left) and Micaela Jacobson

The Sisters Endorse Social Justice Statements

by Sister Therese Carson

“The greatest challenge of the day is how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us.” These are the words of Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

Mahatma Gandhi further challenged us to “become the change we wish to see in the world.” St. Teresa of Kolkata brought it home when she said, “To seek the face of God in everything, everyone, all the time, and God’s hand in every happening: this is what it means to be contemplative in the heart of the world. We see and adore the presence of Jesus, especially ... in the distressing disguise of the poor.”



Icon of Mother Teresa of Calcutta
by +Sister Mary Charles McGoagh

In March of 2013, the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses approved social justice statements on gun violence and human trafficking. In February of 2017, they added statements on racism and immigration. You may read the full statements at <http://www.duluthbenedictines.org/peace-and-justice>. The following summary is taken from the statement on Racism:

“In the spirit of Benedict, who urges us to listen with the ear of the heart and to respect the gifts of each person as unique individuals, we recognize the injustices caused by racism in our society. We recognize that we have reached a point in time when many implications and effects of racism are emerging on every side. The conversion called for is pervasive.

“In solidarity with other religious/faith leaders, we recognize that racial injustice is *social* sin. We commit ourselves to examining the root causes of injustice, particularly of racism, as a consequence of unacknowledged white privilege, and our own complicity over the years in this societal reality. We commit to working for systemic change that will promote a society that respects all people and that recognizes the equality, human dignity and human rights of all.

“We commit ourselves to use our collective voice, resources, and power in collaboration with others to establish racial justice which reflects God’s abundant love and mercy.”

Please read the full statements on racism, immigration, gun violence, and human trafficking. May we speak with one voice as we work to rid ourselves of these social and personal sins, and work for the kingdom of God here on earth.

Highlights

New Sponsor Council

by Sister Beverly Horn

One hundred twenty five years ago the Duluth Benedictines began ministries of health care and education. Today, rather than being actively involved in these ministries, the Sisters ensure that their mission and values of Catholic health care and education continue through Sponsorship. This is a formal relationship between the Monastery and the following organizations: The College of St. Scholastica, the Benedictine Health System, and the Catholic Entities of Essentia Health.



(front) Sisters Beverly Raway (prioress), Clare Marie Trettel, Beverly Horn (sub-prioress) (back) Bob McLean, Rocky Chapin, Terry Scott, Sister Kathleen Hofer, Dr. David Herman, Lori Collard, Collette Geary, Mary F. Ives

The Sisters have formed a Sponsor Council that now includes lay members who will be integral to Sponsorship in the future. The first meeting of the Council, with Sisters and lay members was held on March 31, 2017, a truly momentous occasion.

Blessing the New Center for Spirituality and Enrichment

by Jan M. Barrett

The Monastery's Center for Spirituality and Enrichment received special blessings from Bishop Paul Sirba on April 2, followed by tours and refreshments. The opening of the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment is slated for Fall 2017 under the direction of Jeff Hyatt. It offers renovated guest rooms, meeting rooms, and a dining area. This expansion allows the Monastery to offer additional opportunities for personal and group retreats, workshops and seminars on a variety of life topics and spiritual interests, while expanding the Sisters' work and increasing the number of people they reach.



Bishop Paul Sirba, with Sr. Beverly Raway and Jeff Hyatt

The Sisters welcome you to have a retreat at the Monastery or the McCabe Renewal Center, also in Duluth, where we will offer a variety of programs and retreats throughout the year. Topics will include Art and Spirituality, Lectio Divina, children's programs, Contemplative Prayer, Environment and Spirituality, and many more. www.retreatduluth.org.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Gilbertson reminisces about her time in the novitiate in Stanbrook Hall, now part of the guest rooms for the Center.



Highlights, continued

We Love Our Volunteers!

by Jan M. Barrett

Monastery volunteers were honored and celebrated with a special dinner and entertainment on April 25, in the Rockhurst dining room. The Monastery's dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer leaders, Kathy Noble and Mary Tanner, organized a beautiful event enjoyed by volunteers and Sisters. Sister Lisa Maurer emceed the evening with a special focus on "what happened 125 years ago," in celebration of the Monastery's 125th year anniversary. After dinner, guests enjoyed a beautiful dedication from Sister Marie Therese Poliquin in memory of our beloved and recently deceased Sister Mary Rae Higgins, who was the director of volunteers for nine years. Sister Marie Therese Poliquin and Sister Barbara Higgins were presented red roses in memory of Sister Mary Rae and her dedication to our volunteers.

We are blessed to have more than 60 volunteers who have worked more than 2,500 hours this past year in the following areas: information desk, gift shop, Benet Hall, Monastery Schola and Contemporary Group choirs, Eucharistic Ministry, Monastery gardens, McCabe, and educational programs in the community and the Monastery Christmas Bazaar.

Sister Theresa Spinler announced that the Monastery Christmas Bazaar is planned for December 7. Donations of volunteers' time as well as baked goods, gently-used items, hand-made items, and so forth are needed. Last year's Christmas Bazaar raised more than \$14,000 for new windows at the Monastery.

Award pins for fifteen years of service were presented to Barb Coffin and Pam Christensen.



Sister Beverly presents 15-year pins to Pam Christensen (top) and Barb Coffin (bottom).



Michael Roemhildt, Koresh Lakhan, Sister Grace Marie Braun, Regina Roemhildt, Sister Judine Mayerle, Jill Lakhan



(L to R) Christy Alvar, Jennifer Swanson, Anne Hansen, Sr. Mary Josephine Torborg, Gerry McGraw, Pam Christensen, and Sr. Clare Marie Trettel.



(L to R) Sr. Josephine Krulc, Sr. Joyce Fornier, Lisa Roseth, Sr. Sarah Smedman, and Sr. Claudia Cherro.



(L to R) Sr. Sarah O'Malley, Nancy Erickson, Cindy Behning, Sr. Melanie Gagne, Jean Captain, and Sharon Captain.

Highlights, continued **Serra Club Social**

by Sister Therese Carson

Each spring the Duluth chapter (Region 8, District 7) of the Serra Club hosts a social with the Sisters, where we enjoy pie and pleasant conversation, both favorites at the Monastery. Named after Saint Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary in California in the 18th century, the Serra Club is an international organization whose mission is to encourage and support vocations to ministry in the Catholic Church. Serrans are lay Catholics who come from all walks of life.

This year the social was held on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 23. Sister Beverly Raway welcomed everyone to

our Monastery, and Father John Petrich, Serra Chaplain, led us in prayer.

Thank you to all the wonderful Serrans for the vital work you do in supporting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, and in bringing joy into our lives. You are in our prayers.

To learn more about how you can make a difference and share in our ministry to foster and encourage vocations, go to: www.SerraInternational.org or contact the Duluth Serra Ministry President, Al Makynen, at almakynen@gmail.com.



Sister Beverly Raway, Prioress, Father John Petrich, and Serra President Al Makynen.



Serra Club member Thomas Vecchi (left) and Sister Grace Marie Braun (right).



It's a full house!

Highlights, continued

Sisters Collaborate at Benedictine Living Community Health Fair

by Jan M. Barrett

The Sisters participated in a Health Fair at the Benedictine Living Community (BLC) of Duluth on April 25, with an exhibit featuring the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment. Sisters visited with and queried residents, families, and community members regarding the expansion of the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment.

The BLC is part of the Benedictine Health System. Sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters, the System is a nationally recognized Catholic, non-profit, health care system providing a full spectrum of health and housing services to aging adults.



(L to R) Sister Pauline Micke and Sister Lois Eckes at the Health Fair

St. Patrick's Day Snowfall

by Sister Therese Carson

From the benign warmth of summer, we look back on the traditional Feast of St. Patrick Snowstorm. Sister Theresa Spinler made short work of the day's snow. Now, it wouldn't be Saint Patrick's Day without snow, would it?



Sister Mary Rae Higgins

December 16, 1930 -- March 30, 2017



Sister Mary Rae (Genevieve) Higgins, OSB, died on March 30, 2017, at St. Scholastica Monastery. She was in her 66th year of Benedictine Monastic Profession.

Born on December 16, 1930, to Clinton and Genevieve LeBeau Higgins in Duluth, Minnesota, Mary Rae was one of a family of twelve children. Her strong Catholic upbringing and her many siblings contributed to her desire to live in a Benedictine Community. She entered St. Scholastica Monastery on September 8, 1948, made her First Monastic Profession on July 11, 1950, and professed her Perpetual Vows on July 11, 1953. She celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1975, her Golden Jubilee in 2000, and her Diamond Jubilee in 2010.

Sister Mary Rae received her B.S. degree from The College of St. Scholastica and her M.A. from St. Cloud State University in Special Education. Her teaching career spanned 42 years. She taught grade school in International

Falls, Virginia, and Aitkin; in Crosby, where she was also principal; and at Our Lady of Victory in Minneapolis. She was a Special Education teacher at Brainerd State Hospital for one year before going to Washington, D.C., where for eight years as teacher and prefect for mentally challenged girls.

After a year of a sabbatical in San Antonio, Texas, Sister taught at Holy Name School in Medina. She served in Pastoral Ministry at her home parish of Holy Family, at St. Mary Star of the Sea in Duluth, and at St. Leo's in Hibbing. While at Star of the Sea, Sister taught GED in the Duluth County Jail.

Sister Mary Rae's beautiful smile, compassionate heart, and boundless energy brought joy and hope to many who deeply needed it. When she retired and returned to the Monastery in 2004, she continued to provide meaningful contact with others through Spiritual Direction and as coordinator of volunteers.

Sister Mary Rae was preceded in death by her parents, brothers "Butchie" (Lawrence Joseph), Don, and James, and sisters Susan Krier and Pat (Larry) Marlenga. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery and her beloved sister, Sister Barbara Higgins, she is survived by sisters Nancy (Chuck) Davidson, Irene Williams, and Bonnie (Mike) Tweedy, brother Wayne (Carol), many nieces and nephews, sisters-in-law Evelyn Higgins and Elaine Higgins, and many cousins and their children.



Her Wake and Mass of Christian Burial were held April 7, 2017, with Reverend Brian Schultz presiding. Interment was in Gethsemane Cemetery. Memorials may be directed to St. Scholastica Monastery.

(L to R) Sisters Donna Schroeder, Mary Rae Higgins, Jeanne Ann Weber, and Melanie Gagne, playing cards in the Monastery Community Room.

Sister Margaret James Laughlin, OSB

May 25, 1920 – April 9, 2017

Sister Margaret James Laughlin, OSB, 96, died at St. Scholastica Monastery April 9, 2017, in her 75th year of Benedictine Profession.

Sister was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan, to James and Margaret Dillon Laughlin, and named Kathleen. She was third of four children until age seven, when her parents became legal guardians of seven first cousins and they became a thriving family of 11 children. She graduated from Iron Mountain High School in 1937 and worked for a year as a clerk at the State of Michigan Old Age Assistance Bureau.

Margaret Laughlin wanted each of her children to have at least one year in a Catholic school, so in 1938 Kathleen joined a cousin at The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) in Duluth. In her third year of classes, she entered St. Scholastica Monastery, taking the names of her parents as her religious name. She began her novitiate in 1941, professed First Vows in 1942, and Perpetual Vows in 1945, celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1967, her Golden Jubilee in 1992, and her Diamond Jubilees in 2002 (60 years) and 2012 (70 years).

Sister Margaret James brought to religious life a strong, quick, and disciplined intellect, along with twinkling blue eyes and a winning Irish smile. Completing a B.A. in History at CSS and M.A. in Education at the University of Minnesota, she taught business courses for six years at Duluth Cathedral Senior High and was its assistant principal from 1951 to 1961. She left to become principal at Stanbrook Hall from 1961, until it closed in 1967, was the CSS Registrar from 1968 to 1976, and assistant to the CSS president from 1976 to 1991. Former College President Dan Pilon remembered her as the “College’s own Radar O’Reilly, with a down-to-earth solution to any impossible problem.”

From 1991 to 2008, she served the Community as secretary and records coordinator for Monastery Development, and on hospital boards for St. Joseph Hospital in Brainerd and St. Mary’s Hospital in Duluth. She was a faithful member of many of the Monastery’s standing committees, and served as Chair of the special Sesquimillennium Committee that marked the 1,500th anniversary of the founding of the Benedictine Order.



Sister Margaret James, Miley, and Sister Monica

In the fall of 1970, Sister Margaret James joined six Sisters in an experiment in small-group monastic living that included her blood sister, Sister Monica. They shared 40 years of communal life that included a series of dogs. Sister loved those dogs dearly, along with gardening, watching Viking games on television, and playing ping-pong, cribbage and Boggle. While she never served as cook, she kept financial records, handled snow blowing, and performed a myriad of other tasks with constant good will and humor. She was truly a dedicated servant to her family, her Community, her ministries, and her God.

Sister Margaret James was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers William and Thomas, her beloved sister, Sister Monica, and her seven cousins. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, she is survived

by many nieces, nephews and cousins. Her wake and Mass of Christian burial was April 22, 2017, Father Tom Foster presiding. Interment was in Gethsemane Cemetery. Memorials may be made to St. Scholastica Monastery.

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*The love of God has been poured into
our hearts through the Spirit of God
dwelling in us. Alleluia!”*

Romans 5:5

Join us for Sunday Eucharist at 11:00 a.m.
in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel
Celebrating 125 years

