

# PATHWAYS



*Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters*

*Duluth, Minnesota*

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Monastery, Duluth, MN

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## Letter from the Prioress



Some time ago I read of a precocious child who, standing before an apple tree in magnificent bloom, exclaimed, "When I go outside and look around, God is always right in front of me!" Recently I thought of that child's profound awareness and experience of God's presence as I gazed upon a maple tree, the last to be still adorned with its autumn splendor in our monastery Garden Court. There it stood, stately, strong, and serene, seeming to glow with a luminous inner light that filled its expansive branches (see photograph). I thought of

Moses and his encounter with God in the burning bush and in that moment I too experienced God "right in front of me."

The luminous maple tree is also for me a wonderful metaphor for the human person, fully alive with God, radiating the love and light of the Divine Presence that fills all creation. It brings to mind an article by Dr. Eben Alexander that I recently read in the October 15, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*. There he describes a life-changing, near-death experience he had when he suddenly found himself in a coma caused by a very rare bacterial meningitis. In the "inky darkness" of this journey "brimming with light," Dr. Alexander experienced the universe as a unity, a unity defined by love. The message that lay at the very heart of his incredible near-death experience, writes Alexander, was this: "that we are loved and accepted unconditionally by a God even more grand and unfathomably glorious than the one I'd learned of as a child in Sunday school."



As we journey once again into and through another Advent Christmas Season, we are invited to ground ourselves more fully and deeply in that incredible Love that lies at the heart of the universe. We are invited to open ourselves, as Mary did, to the God of love beyond our imagining. In that spacious inner place the miracle of Divine birth happens anew. We become luminous with the inner beauty of Christ's compassionate heart. Through our lives Christ lays His gentle hand on what is wounded and broken, bringing healing and hope to hearts that are sad and radiating the light of His peace into hearts that are frightened and closed.

May we be filled with the wonder of the precocious child and the inner light of the maple tree as we give birth anew to the God of fathomless love this Holy Season and throughout the New Year.

Lovingly yours in Christ, with prayer  
ever grateful and abiding,

*Sister Lois Eckes*

Prioress

*Tree photo above by Sister Edith Bogue*

# Advent Grace: Preparing a Space for Christ

By Postulant Kathleen Del Monte

I recall coming out of the post office one early December, to be stopped by a reporter and a television camera. Would I mind answering a few questions about the holiday season? Why not, I thought, although I warned the interviewer before the camera started rolling that I wasn't exactly in the "holiday spirit." I think she asked me something about what Christmas means to me. Being a person who likes to take one thing at a time, I responded that for me, it was not yet Christmas, but Advent. Not quite the response she expected, the reporter gave me a somewhat quizzical look and paused, indicating for me to continue. And so I did. I explained the two traditional meanings of Advent: preparing for our commemoration of the birth event of Jesus in history and preparing ourselves for His ultimate return in glory. And then I shared a third meaning. Particularly important to me at that difficult time in my life was the Advent of Christ's coming into my heart—an opportunity to prepare yet again a place within myself for Christ to be reborn in me and through me. As Demetrius Dumm, OSB, has said, "God is always coming and we are constantly being asked to welcome him."

Advent tends to pass by so quickly, we can be in the final weeks before we realize it's mostly passed us by. Fortunately, it's never too late to prepare our hearts, to make a space for Jesus. But when Christ does come to me in my neighbor, for example, will I recognize Him? Will I be mindful of Him in the co-worker who stops by my office—again—mostly to pontificate about the many things bothering him? In the acquaintance who has professed enduring friendship but has again hurt me deeply? And as importantly as *recognizing* Christ in these, how will I *respond*? Mary is a wonderful model for us as we strive to bear Christ to others. In her watching, her waiting, her suffering, her unknowing, she teaches us how we can open ourselves up to Christ, allow Him to transform us, and, in turn, present Jesus to others in their everyday needs. Caryl Houselander, the 20<sup>th</sup> century mystic and visionary, refers to this as the "Reed of God." Using Mary as our model of active, prayerful, everyday humanity, Houselander reminds us that we are asked

...to be made one with Christ, to allow Him to abide in us, to make His home in us, and gradually, through the oneness that results from living one life, and through the miracles of His Love, consummated again and again in Communion with Him, to become Christs, to live in Him as Our Lady did. When we are changed into Him as the bread into the Host, then with His power we can follow His example (*The Reed of God* 123-4).



Woodcut by +Sister Mary Charles McGough

So this Advent, amidst the shopping, the wrapping, the partying, the myriad preparations of the holiday celebration, let us make one more preparation—let us make space for Christ to be born anew in our hearts and in our lives, and through this Advent grace, let us bear Christ to one another. May Advent be a time of special grace for you and those who love you!

# BENEDICTINE CENTER OF SPIRITUALITY

By Sister Pauline Micke

In this issue of *Pathways* I'd like to tell you a little bit about our Ministry of Spirituality and its Advisory Board. The Advisory Board's purpose is to help St. Scholastica Monastery to "more intentionally address our commitment to foster spirituality in our region." Currently we are focused on how, through the McCabe Renewal Center, the Benedictine Center of Spirituality, and the Shalom Spiritual Direction Program, we can grow and better serve people who are seeking to be nurtured as they seek to become all God is calling them to be. We have seven laypersons and five Sisters plus the ex-officio positions filled by Sister Jean Maher from McCabe and me from the Benedictine Center of Spirituality. Other members of the Board are Dave Ackerson, Kathleen Kelly, Lezlie Oachs, Joe Perfetti, Jim Perrault, Sharon Rolle, Steve Wlosinski, Sister Danile Lynch, Sister Dorene King, Sister Judith Oland, Sister Mary Josephine Torborg, and Sister Renata Liegey. Next issue we'll share more about their wonderful work.



**Advent Retreat:** Saturday, November 17, 2012, twenty-two people attended the Advent Retreat, "Advent: Companions On Our Journey," that found us walking with the prophets Jeremiah, Baruch, Zephaniah, and Micah as well as with John the Baptist and Mary the Mother of Jesus, as we discovered the message and meaning for our lives of Emmanuel—God with us! We received many positive evaluations and affirmations on the retreat.

**Sabbath Day(s)**—continues to serve a definite need for those people who wish to "come apart" from their everyday lives for a day, several days—even a week or so—to "rest," (which the word Sabbath means) in prayer, solitude, and in finding renewal and nurturing for their lives. Call 218-723-7086 or email [pauline.m@duluthosb.org](mailto:pauline.m@duluthosb.org).

Blessings on you and your families!

# REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: UP ON THE FARM

By Sister Margaret Clarke

When the Sisters purchased the 80-acre Weller-Hulett farm in 1900, it had been uncultivated for several years due to a dispute over title between Messrs. Weller and Hulett. At that time there was no great need for the Community to start building a new motherhouse, so the Sisters decided to revive the farm, hoping that it could supply milk and vegetables to their Duluth missions. The property included a farmhouse, hay barn (used by Mr. Weller as a school) and a few outbuildings.



*Cutting hay with the four-horse team.  
Kenwood is in the background.*



*Digging potatoes*

Initially, Sister Amata Mackett was designated the farm manager, and four or five farm laborers were employed. By 1902 it became necessary to build an additional dairy barn, a house for the farm laborers who chose to live on site, and some additional structures. The creek was dammed to produce a pond for watering livestock (and later on for winter skating). Of all of these structures, only a couple of stone ruins remain: a spring house near the creek, a storehouse near the current community gardens, and bits and pieces of the dam near the north property line. The actual locations of the main buildings remain rather fuzzy in the minds of those who recall them, but the consensus is that they were relatively close to Kenwood Avenue. The farm laborers' house was moved uphill in 1941 to become the College post office and store. The original 1870s farmhouse was purchased at some time, probably in the late 1930s, and moved to a location at the corner of Kenwood Avenue and Toledo St. where it is currently undergoing major renovation. The wooden barns were eventually demolished.

The remaining 80 acres on the Kenwood site were purchased in 1907-08, making it possible to enlarge the vegetable garden. Adam Cismowski, brother of Sister Jerome, was hired as farm manager, and Frank Beyenka, father of Sister Eustacia as head gardener. By 1908 separate records of the farm began to be kept. Early inventories provide lists of impressive numbers of livestock: in 1910, 22 cows, 1 steer, 1 calf, 9 big pigs, 15 smaller pigs, 8 small pigs, and 2 very small pigs, 4 teams of two horses, 250 chickens, 6 turkeys, 6 geese, 4 rabbits and. . . 1 dog that was valued at \$25.00! That must have been one pretty good dog! There were 19 vehicles of various kinds including 5 carriages.

Continued →

## REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: UP ON THE FARM, *Continued*



*The chicken yard with the dairy barn and farm laborers' house in background.*



*The dam on Chester Creek*

The pigsties were located just below where Somers Hall is today. When the Somers Suites were added in 1993, excavation laid open the former pig yard, which still reeked of its previous inhabitants. In 1912-13 there had been an outbreak of hog cholera in the herd. The Sisters bought hog cholera vaccine from the University of Minnesota, and the pigs were vaccinated by a vet with moderate success, followed later by a further outbreak and more veterinary services. The results seemed to show that well pigs remained well after the vaccination, so it would be reasonable to vaccinate all newly-purchased pigs. However, to save on vet bills, one Sister writes “there were plenty of persons on hand who had done hospital work and for whom inoculation with vaccine was an ordinary thing.” Obviously, the medically-trained Sisters were assigned to pig vaccination duty.



*The cows had free run of the farm property.*

During the early years of its operation, the farm was a money-making concern, even though the money was coming from the Sisters' Duluth houses—going from one pocket into another, so to speak. Major expenses each year were for animal feed and hay (some hay was grown on the property, but most had to be purchased and brought in by train). The other major expense was salaries for the farm laborers. Milk, potatoes, vegetables, and poultry were sold to St. Mary's Hospital, Cathedral school and convent, and other school missions in Duluth. For the first ten years, the profit averaged \$2,500 per year.

## REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: UP ON THE FARM, *Continued*



*A hand-colored print of the vegetable garden near the creek showing dill, lettuce, and cabbage.*

At the onset of the Depression, expenses began to outpace the returns. After March 1931 there is no longer any record of milk sales, so the dairy herd must have been sold off about then. Produce was still supplied to Duluth missions through 1932, but it was in that year that the decision was made to discontinue the farm enterprise.

The farm was an important but little-remembered part of the early history of the Community. There are no records of the years in which the various houses, barns, and outbuildings were removed or demolished. One of the construction workers on the 2012 Science addition recalled a fire in “a barn” when his father was working on the construction of Stanbrook Hall in 1937. If anyone with a long memory can provide any information on the disposal of any of the farm buildings, we would be happy to hear it! Please contact Sister Margaret at [mclarke@css.edu](mailto:mclarke@css.edu).

*Photos from Monastery Archives*

### **Please Pray for the Following Deceased Friends and Relatives:**

Raymond Freund 8/15/2011  
Janice Morzinski 12/2/2011  
Jean Michela Lepore 4/28/2012  
Eileen Fedo 10/8/2012  
Gail Jablonski Wickman 10/8/2012  
Barbara Riccio Kukich 10/14/2012  
Lorene Wegscheid 10/15/2012  
*Sister Mary Martin Beringer's sister*  
George S. Kamp 10/15/2012  
Joan Marsh 11/5/2012  
*+Sister Mary Daniel O'Neill's sister*  
Eleanor Heaney 11/10/2012

# Sister Profile and Happy 90th Birthday—Sister Monica Laughlin

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

*Photos courtesy of Monastery and CSS archives*



Mary Monica Laughlin grew up in Iron Mountain, Michigan, the youngest of a melded family consisting of five boys and six girls. She loved to draw—but the subject was always a famous musician. Most of her time during teen years was spent on piano lessons and/or practicing the clarinet and snare drum to participate in the local high school band and orchestra. (Her father later referred to her as “our one-girl band.”) After her freshman year of college at CSS to fulfill the family mandate of “at least one year in a Catholic school,” she transferred to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and she graduated in 1944 with a Bachelor of Music Education degree and selection to Phi Beta Kappa. Employment during the war years was readily available; Monica chose to become the band/orchestra director in the small town of Fowlerville, Michigan, where she could maintain contact with the university.

But after two school years she decided to become a member of the Duluth Benedictine Community and returned to Duluth to further prepare for what would eventually become a sixty-year career in the Music Department of The College of St. Scholastica. Many years later she wrote, “The opportunity to do all day long what I most love to do—share the gift of music with students—is a privilege few people have in their work-life, and I sometimes wonder whether I ought to be paid for it at all. Further, music becomes the means of getting to know (rather more intimately in a small department like ours than is possible in larger ones) generations of students. It is a source of deep satisfaction for me when I can be of assistance to them in being an ‘ear’ as they struggle for authenticity, maturity, and professional growth. I marvel often at their commitment, sometimes in the face of overwhelming problems, and, especially with the Encore students, at the way in which they manage to juggle work, home, and study.



*Sister Monica (Donalda) and students 1957*



*Sister Monica received the Lavine Award for Teaching Excellence from (then) Academic Dean Larry Goodwin in 1987.*

“Colleagues, too, in the faculty, administration, and staff, comprise a ‘work-force’ which, by and large, shares the same value system, is supportive rather than competitive, and, in sum, which I don’t think could be equaled, not only in other professions, but even on other campuses.

“For me the center and source of all this is precisely membership in the Benedictine Order which originated and perpetuated this particular manifestation of Christian values. In addition to those noted above, Benedictines have long been known for their celebration of the liturgy, the public prayer which both celebrates our redemption and intercedes for the human family. True liturgy is necessarily an outgrowth of a rich interior prayer life lived by the participants. It is this central focus which nourishes the life of the institution and all its works.”

On Saturday, September 8, the Music Department sponsored a celebration of Sister Monica’s 90th birthday and 60th anniversary of teaching at The College of St. Scholastica.

# A Week in Paris with Jane Bertani, Benet Hall Occupational Therapist

By Andi Therrien



As tour guide and trip director, Jane Bertani concentrates on the decorations, videos, music, specially chosen foods, and attention to detail. Her delight in all she does and in all the Sisters for whom she arranges these trips, makes her virtual group flights and vacations a great time for everyone.

Jane is an Occupational Therapist (OTR), aka Activities Director. She began work in Benet Hall in May, 2006, when she was hired to run an activities program for the Sisters. Jane was quickly able to get an idea of what was needed and what could be enjoyed.

Her first goal was to get the Sisters out of Benet Hall on excursions or picnics in the Garden Court. This proved to be so popular with the Sisters it was hard to get them to return to their rooms. They've since celebrated other outings such as Cinco de Mayo with tacos and Mexican pinwheels and a Hawaiian afternoon when they all wore flowers in their hair and enjoyed fruit skewers. And another summer day they lounged in the garden wearing wide-brimmed hats and drinking mint julips (sort of).

But the best trips are the virtual week-long vacation trips to foreign countries. The first trip required passports which the Sisters made and which had to be stamped at each activity along the way. Another time they made purses that kept their tickets. These served as souvenirs to help them recall all they did. Their trip to Paris was taken August 6-10, 2012. Previous trips included Rome, 2009; Vienna, 2010; and Athens, 2011.

Jane also encourages individual Sisters to pursue their own interests. One Sister likes to do readings of articles she saved in her "file" and discuss them. And another Sister likes to play jazz music and work jigsaw puzzles.

In many ways these activities serve to enhance the health and happiness of the Sisters for whom Jane Bertani is an endless source of delightful stimulation and creative entertainment.

*Photos by Jane Bertani and Andi Therrien*

## ITINERARY: A Week in Paris France

<b>Monday</b>	Flight on Benedictine Air: leaves 1:00 pm. Travelogue and history of France Snack: fresh croissants with selection of jams
<b>Tuesday</b>	Tour the Louvre Museum (a la video) Snack: French imported paté and French champagne
<b>Wednesday</b>	Dinner at the fine restaurant "Le Petit Poisson" (The Little Fish) Dress is formal Menu: <i>Salmon au jus</i> (salmon in its own juice) <i>Asperges au beurre et sauce au vin blanc</i> (asparagus with butter and white wine sauce) <i>Crème Brûlée</i> (caramelized custard) French wine
<b>Thursday</b>	Presentation of the movie "Moulin Rouge", the original with Zsa Zsa Gabor and Jose Ferrer! Snack: Crepes Suzette (briefly lit on fire to reduce the alcohol) served with warm sauce.
<b>Friday</b>	A Seine River Cruise (via video) Paris at night: the "City of Lights!" (Strictly chaperoned, of course) Snack: French imported cheese and crackers with fresh fruit



*Sisters Victorine and Agnes Sitter, Paris fashionistas*



*Sister Rebecca Burggraff*

# Sister Profile: Sister Mary Henry Landsteiner

By Sister Marie Therese Poliquin

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Born in Fairfax, Minnesota, on October 13, 1914, to Henry John and Anna Mary (Buchtl) Landsteiner and baptized October 18, Henrietta Ann was the oldest of six (Joseph, Delores, Katherine, Lucille, and Angela followed), all of whom have predeceased her. Because her grandmother lived across the street from the school, Henrietta spent her kindergarten year in New Ulm with her grandmother. Schooling was in German. The shock came when she enrolled at St. Joseph School in Minneapolis for Grades 1 and 2 and not only had to master the subjects but had to learn English. She graduated from Grade 8 at St. Bridget School, completed Grade 9 at Jordan Junior High and went on to North High School for Grade 10 and part of Grade 11.

She heard from the Benedictine Sisters at St. Bridget School that she could enroll as a boarder, aspirant, or day student in their Catholic high school in Duluth. Since going to a Catholic High School appealed to her and being an aspirant to the religious life appealed even more, she came to Duluth for the second semester of Grade 11 and graduated from Villa Sancta Scholastica Academy in 1932.

On August 28, 1932, Henrietta entered the Benedictine sisterhood in search of a life devoted to God. After the novitiate she made her First Profession of vows July 11, 1934, receiving the name Sister Mary Henry. She made her final profession July 11, 1937.

She said of her career in education that she seemed to be a long-term teacher wherever she was sent. At St. Francis School in Brainerd, Minnesota, from 1934 to 1940, she taught Grades 2, 3 or 4. Returning to Duluth to Sacred Heart School for 1940 to 1945 she honed her skills in Grade 2, which was usually the First Communion year for the children. From 1945 to 1955 she taught at Our Mother of Sorrows School in Cincinnati, Ohio. Returning to Minnesota she taught at St. Joseph School, Grand Rapids, from 1955 to 1960. By then her organizational skills were well documented and she became the opening principal and first grade teacher at St. Leo School in Hibbing, Minnesota, from 1960 to 1974.

During the summers and on Saturdays during the academic year she attended college classes and workshops to complete her Bachelor of Science degree at The College of St. Scholastica. Prior to that she had received her Life Certificate to teach in Minnesota through Duluth State Teachers College, the forerunner of the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD). In Ohio she attended The Athenaeum of Ohio where she became accredited to teach in the Catholic Schools of Ohio.

Community life under Saint Benedict's motto, *Ora et Labora* (Pray and Work) found Sister Mary Henry celebrating her Silver Jubilee on August 15, 1959, and her Golden Jubilee August 12, 1984. The Jubilees continued with her 60th celebration August 15, 1994, 70th in 2004, and 75th in 2009.

The crown jewel of Sister Mary Henry's teaching ministry came with her assignment to return to her roots, St. Bridget, where she taught one year in Grade 4 and then became a superstar teacher in Grade 1. Between 1974 and 1985 the first graders passed national tests, and her whole class would score in the 90 to 99 percentile range.

This powerhouse of energy had to start slowing down, and the slowing process began at St. Bridget when she taught half days in Grades 1 and 3 from 1985 to 1987. The second half of the day found her bringing communion to North Memorial Hospital, visiting the homebound, and serving as relief for caretakers. Still in good health of mind and body, Sister Mary Henry was called home to be a co-director of Benet Hall from 1987-2005. She became a resident of Benet Hall on January 20, 2005.

If she has any leisure, Sister Mary Henry works in crafts, plays Bingo or cards, and prays, prays, prays. Thank God if you are in her home-made prayer book! She enjoys visitors but has trouble hearing. Her joyful positive attitude brings out the best in everyone. May we all live to be 98 and follow in her footsteps. Community life has its ups and downs and congratulations to Sister Mary Henry for being a master at it.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## BHS Leadership Conference

By Sister Lisa Maurer

The Benedictine Health System held its annual Leadership Conference September 25 – 27, 2012. Once again this year's conference offered the opportunity for leaders, including administrators/CEOs, department heads, and board members throughout the Benedictine Health System to come together as a group to learn and to share common experiences. In total there were nearly 400 people in attendance, including many of the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery who serve as facility board members throughout the BHS.



Sister Lois Eckes addresses the BHS Leadership Conference. Photo by Sister Pauline Micke

the Sisters' health-care ministry. The mission of the BHS is to witness to God's love by providing compassionate, quality care with special concern for the underserved and those in need.

The conference agenda was full of educational opportunities to grow and to learn from expert speakers and one another. Some of the featured speakers were John Izzo, best-selling author of *Awakening Corporate Soul* and *Stepping Up: How taking Responsibility Changes Everything*; Ira Byock, M.D., the director of palliative medicine at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center; and Kay Sprinkel Grace, author of *The AAA Way to Fundraising Success* and *New Strategies for Non-profit Innovation and Investment*. Sister Mary Christa Kroening, OSB, and Sister Lisa Maurer, OSB, of St. Scholastica Monastery presented a program that introduced the Mission-driven foundation document *BHS' Catholic and Benedictine Distinguishing Characteristics*.

The Benedictine Health System is sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery and is entrusted with advancing

## Who's That Knocking at My Door?

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour



Photo by Andi Therrien

Therese Marie Carson

On August 14, Therese Marie Carson from Harbor Springs, Michigan, began her official affiliation with St. Scholastica Monastery, the first step for a woman who is seeking membership in the monastic Community.

The Affiliate stage begins when a woman who feels God is calling her to religious life and who has discerned through prayer and guidance that St. Scholastica would be the best possible choice for her to fulfill her desire makes a formal request to continue her discernment with the Community.

The rite begins with the candidate's knocking on the Monastery door where, after several persistent knocks, it is opened for her and she is met by the Prioress and gathered Community. Here she states her request and after a brief ceremony of acceptance and blessing is led into Midday Prayer. For the next six months she maintains contact with the Community as both she and they deepen their relationship with one another. At the end of the period, with the Community's approval, she may request membership as a Postulant.

Therese, who was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, in a family including four brothers, holds a degree in Medical Technology from Mercy College in Detroit and a B.A. in Art History from the University of Michigan. Currently she works in Petoskey, Michigan, as supervisor of a hospital microbiology lab while pursuing her many other interests and being actively involved in her parish and volunteer work. She looks forward to beginning her Postulancy with the Community in spring. Welcome, Therese!

Continued →

# Highlights, *Continued*

## CSS 100 Years for the Love of Learning

By Sister Joan Marie Stelman

On September 10 The College of St. Scholastica celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. On that day in 1912 the Sisters welcomed the first students to what was then a junior college. We have been celebrating this Centennial all year long with various events, but our actual birthday was a day to remember. We had all been working to make sure that the campus looked its best—Tower Hall, Somers Hall, and the Science Building had been spruced up; the new Science addition was completed, landscaping was immaculate, the bridge washed out by the June flood was restored—and we were blessed with a beautiful, sunny day.

The entire campus community—students, faculty, staff, and Sisters—participated in a special birthday lunch at Somers Hall. After lunch, a Centennial worship service was held in Mitchell Auditorium. The service included music, readings, reflections, and prayers provided by members of the College and monastic communities, and congratulations from the Diocese of Duluth and Mayor Don Ness, who in a mayoral proclamation declared September 10, 2012, “The College of St. Scholastica Day in Duluth.” At the close of the ceremony, after the College song, “Vivat, Vivat, St. Scholastica,” our mascot, Storm, wheeled out a giant birthday cake as we sang “Happy Birthday.” After the service, we were treated to birthday cupcakes at stations around the campus.

Later in the afternoon the public birthday party began with an academic procession from Tower Hall to the door of the new Science Addition accompanied by CSS drummers and trumpeters. President Goodwin presided over the official ribbon-cutting for the new Science Addition, and everyone processed in while our chapel bell, Benedict, rang 101 times, ushering us into our next century.

Sister Lois presided over the blessing of the new addition, which was followed by more cake and Tower Hall cookies. As one of the Sisters said, the day was truly “magical.”

Photos courtesy of CSS



## Winnipeg, Monastery's Daughter House, Celebrates Centennial

By Sister Dorene King

In the early morning of Sunday, August 19, we left Duluth to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of our daughter house in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Eight and a half hours later we arrived at St. Benedict's Monastery and were greeted by the current prioress, Sister Virginia Evard. She graciously escorted us to our rooms. A short while later, we made our way to the celebration which was held outdoors under a large tent. Sister Teri Spinler, Sister Chisom Azuogu, DMMM, (a CSS student who lives with us), and I were escorted to seats near the speaker's platform—convenient since Sister Lois, our prioress, was to give a greeting at the celebration. The program began with a Eucharist celebrated by the Most Reverend James Weisgerber, Archbishop of Winnipeg. The attendance was overwhelming, estimated at 700, which included the Sisters and guests. A program followed Eucharist with many speakers sharing their cherished connection with the Benedictine Sisters of Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Sisters were touched deeply when Sister Lois, Sister Teri, Sister Chisom, and I sang a blessing upon them. The celebration ended with a feast of salads, sandwiches, and dessert.

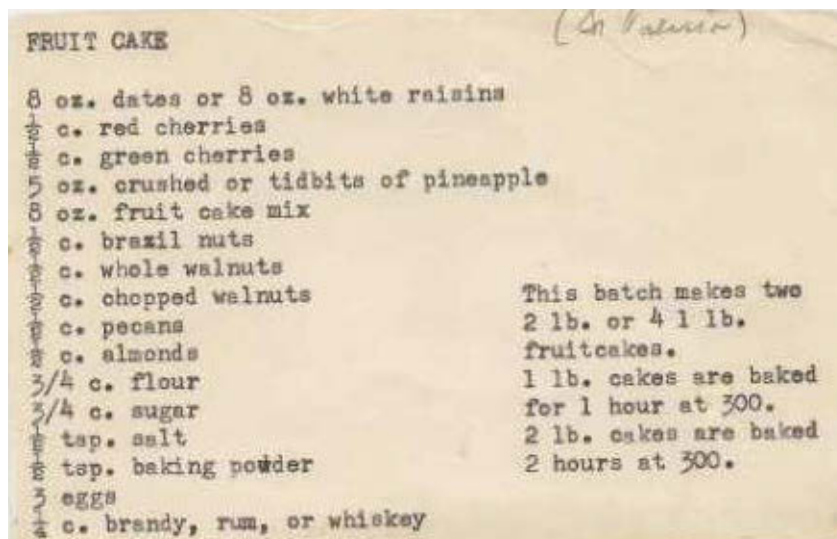
## Monastery Open House

The Monastery held an Open House September 30, 2012. We were pleased to see so many dear friends and family.

*Photos by Catherine Wright*



## +Sister Valeria Lessard's Recipe for Fruitcake



+Sister Valeria Lessard  
Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier

According to Sister Mary Felten, Sister Valeria's dear friend, Sister Valeria had the following tips:

1. Begin in early October to have time to age the fruitcake in time for Christmas.
2. Reserve some fruit to decorate the tops.
3. Use old dishtowels and wet with the whiskey, rum, or brandy—wrap loaves and keep in a sealed container.
4. Use waxed paper on the bottom of the aluminum pans to keep the cake from sticking.
5. Aging should take 2 to 3 months. After aging, the loaves can be frozen.
6. When cutting to serve, wet the knife after each slice.

# ***OLD AGE—A BASKET OF BLESSINGS***

Sister Linda Wiggins

Readers may scan the title of this article and shake their heads and groan, “Yeah, right.” Then crossing their eyes, they readjust their vision and decide to read on anyway—maybe it will be good for a few laughs. In our society “old” is good for priceless antique furniture, vintage automobiles, and baseball cards. For the most part, however, most of us aging humans do not find ourselves in a society that cherishes the wisdom of our elders, the beauty of a wrinkled face, or even grandma’s apple pie—too much fat in the pie crust and sugar in the filling. Nevertheless, sometimes dimmer vision may provide much sharper insight; slower pacing might enable one to move with a dignity well-earned; slight trembling in one’s hands might just provide the steadiest friend in times of need. It’s all a matter of perception, as the following “over age eighty-five” Sisters share with us the wonder of life at any age, even those elderly years, when they answer the question: “What do you think a blessing of aging might be”?

***Sister Almira:***

**--You don’t have to go to all those meetings.**

**--You don’t have to help run the world (you’ve done your share).**

**--You do have more time to follow your interests—reading, outside walking, praying, swinging, enjoying nature.**

**--You can help keep your little corner of the world happier by passing out smiles, candy, songs, stories, and giving a listening ear.**

***Sister Armella:***

**You have more time for the Lord.**

***Sister Mary E.:***

**--Now that I’m in the diminishment period of my life, I think I see it in better perspective; I realize what a long good life I’ve had.**

**--I find that others don’t lay as many expectations on me now and I, too, have let go of all the great expectations I have had of myself. I no longer have to keep the world from falling apart.**

**--I can take more time to smell the flowers along the way in this last part of the journey.**

***Sister Devota:***

**Now that I am old (102), I have less responsibility and it is easier on the nerves—more naps.☺**

***Sister Elizabeth Ann:***

**My growing old has made me understand much about this time of life. I accept old age as a gift from God through which I have learned more, given more, and loved more. I thank God for giving me these added blessings.**

***Sister Johnetta:***

**You’re only as old as you feel. If you feel like doing things you did when you were fifty, you can pick up where you left off.**

***Sister Margaret James:***

**You can say, “No, Thank you” without any need to explain.**

***Sister Marguerite:***

**The Lord gives us gifts and we have to use them to the best of our ability—there is no retirement. Like cycles of life, we should make use of the gifts of the season in the service of God and others.**

***Sister Rebecca:* More time to rest!**

***Sister Mary Hope:* Arthritis is a blessing—if you take it right.**



***Sister Petra:***  
The joy of faithful friends.

*Photos by Sister Joyce Fournier and from Monastery Archives*

***Sister Thea (104):***  
Life is a blessing.

***Sister Marilyn:***  
I don't know if we look forward to it. I'm the youngest and all my immediate family are gone. When one is older, you are more apt to let things happen as they happen and not worry. I do enjoy my age and what I am doing.

***Sister Mary Henry:***  
You can still do things you didn't do before because you now have time and opportunity to do them.

***Sister Mary Martin:***  
It is a blessing to be able to keep on working even at age 90, and to still be able to walk. It is a blessing to have made so many wonderful friends through the years that I can still appreciate, especially Richard Quigley.

***Sister Cecile:***  
You can relax with less responsibility.

***Sister Melanie:***  
I love the saying, "Every saint has a past, every sinner has a future." Some of the finest people I know have been transformed over time and grown as a result of personal struggles and suffering. In their retirement years they share their wisdom and become beacons of hope to others. God has given me the gift of years for which I am very grateful. I identify with the psalmist in Psalm 92 when he says, "Still full of sap; still green." I keep trying to be productive by bringing Eucharist to the sick, visiting and praying with them. I can't control the length of my life but quoting from *Apples of Gold*, "I can control its width and depth."

## Sister Victorine's 90th Birthday

By Andi Therrien

On October 10, 2012, in Rockhurst Dining Room, the St. Scholastica Monastery Community celebrated with Sister Victorine Sitter her 90th birthday.

Sister Victorine (Katherine) is the oldest of four children of Frank and Theresa Sitter. She and her siblings Elizabeth, Agnes, and Frank (deceased) grew up in Berwick, North Dakota. After graduating from Stanbrook Hall, Sister Victorine joined our Benedictine Community on September 8, 1940. Sister Victorine attended The College of St. Scholastica and Superior State College. She taught primary grades in several of the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Duluth as well as in the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Sister Victorine's ministries have included the Monastery Transportation Office and Benet Hall. In 2008 she accepted an invitation from The College of St. Scholastica to assist with tutoring in Academic Support Services. When asked about her work at the College, Sister Victorine proclaimed, "I love it!"



Photo by Sister Patricia Anne Williams

Sister Victorine (left) and Sister Agnes

Sister Victorine's sister Agnes joined the Benedictine Community five years after Sister Victorine. Sister Agnes also taught first grade for a number of years but never in the same school as Sister Victorine. Now they are both living at the Monastery and enjoying being together. They are best friends as well as sisters.

Sister Victorine is grateful for her vocation and all the blessings God has given to her. When asked to what she attributed her longevity, she replied readily and emphatically, "Belonging to a caring Community and daily prayer!"

## Sister Johnetta Maher Celebrates 90



Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer

Sister Johnetta Maher celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday November 7, 2012, with a party in Rockhurst Dining Room. Sister Johnetta says this was the "second" party—her family gathered a month earlier on October 7 so that members from Wisconsin and Maryland could attend.

Sister Johnetta grew up in Watersmeet, Michigan, the second oldest of four—one older brother and two younger sisters. She came to Duluth to attend The College of St. Scholastica and says that her association with the teachers and prefects there changed her life. She decided to enter the Benedictine Community her sophomore year.

After graduating from college and obtaining a master's degree in education from St. Louis University, Sister Johnetta began teaching Home Economics at Stanbrook Hall and Cathedral Senior High School before joining the College faculty (1964-1997) as an Associate Professor in the Home Economics Department. Since retiring from the College, Sister has served as coordinator of Monastery Dining Room events and as overseer of the Heritage Room, which contains antique furniture and works of art. She is also in charge of the Trading Post, a second-hand shop for Sisters and a means of supplying the Damiano Center with useable clothing and household supplies.

In her spare time, Sister Johnetta enjoys crocheting baby afghans and yarn cats for the Monastery Christmas sale and the gift shop.

On turning 90, Sister Johnetta is grateful for her health and her friends and family. "You're only as old as you feel," she says.



# Garden Court Project

By Sister Martha Bechtold

September was a happy month. The weather was late-summer perfect, the chipmunks were actively preparing for their long winter retreat, and our Garden Court project, thanks to generous donations from our friends and benefactors, was in full swing. We had been delaying the replacement of the cement walks in the Garden Court for several years, but the time had come. There were too many danger spots, too many cracks, too many raised sections of concrete, too many places that had to be avoided for fear of stumbling or falling.

Finally it was time to begin. The work crew came in with all their “man-sized toys,” their forklift flexing its muscles, digging under, loading and carrying away a seven-foot slab of old concrete as if it were Atlas. Then forms were placed around the edges; straight forms edged some of the walkways, curved ones in others. The site for the new concrete was leveled off, a squared-off corner became a curve, but the steps could remain.

*Photos by Andi Therrien*



How do we know all these things? The Garden Court is in the center of the Monastery buildings between Stanbrook and Stanbrook West. Both buildings are lined with windows on all the floors which became great front-row viewing areas nearly all the time. The workers sensed their audience and gave us a great show of craftsmanship from start to finish. Especially impressive was their role when the motorized wheelbarrow moved in and the wet concrete was poured. Five workers immediately reached in with their hand-held implements, each one knowing precisely the function he was to perform to get the concrete spread before it hardened, a perfect model of teamwork.



All this while, the seven doors leading to the Garden Court had been blocked off with the warning, “Do not exit.” But chipmunks can’t read. When the project was finished and we were finally able to use the new walks, we discovered chipmunk footprints permanently etched in the new cement. That cheered our hearts. They were as curious as we were from behind our windows. However, unlike us, they didn’t stay away!

But there is more to tell. Several weeks before the sidewalk replacement, a friend appeared one day to volunteer to refinish our two weather-worn Garden Court swings. She had been here for a weekend retreat and enjoyed sitting on the swings in the warm sun. They wouldn’t have to have the weather-worn look, she thought, and offered to refinish them. “I can do that,” she said. In a few weeks, the two swings were refinished, took their places in the Garden Court and added an unexpected enhancement to the new look.

Now the installation of a fence and gate at the narrow entrance to our Garden Court near the Chapel has also been completed. Not everyone is welcome, namely deer and skunks!

# Back to Basics

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Photo by Jeff Frey; courtesy of CSS



I never cared much for math; higher algebra and statistics proved a challenge. But there was a simple mathematical principle I latched onto from an early age that proved to be an important life lesson: to solve difficult problems, reduce everything to the lowest common denominator.

We poor human beings have a way of making life so complex. It wasn't always so, yet from the beginning of the human race, God has had to intervene to get us back on track, finally sending His only Son to prove that God is unconditional love calling us back to Himself by showing us the way. Jesus kept telling us what is really important in life by reminding us of the two great commandments upon which everything else is based, but we still manage to botch that message by making everything in life so complex. Look at all the versions of Christianity for an example or at all the concerns and struggles we go through to find our place in society, often ignoring why we are really here.

Granted we can't change the fact that we were born at this time of history, but we are responsible for how we direct our lives in it. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and those who seek to follow Him must apply His message to the world in which they live whether the message is popular or not. This requires stripping away all the non-essentials and getting down to basics. It will always involve sacrifice in return for rewards both temporal and eternal.

In a previous article this writer identified some of the signs and stages through which a woman discerns, even in our day, that she is being called to leave all and follow Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she has done her math and concludes that the highest gift she can offer God in response to the highest invitation God has given her is to give her very self.

The next step is to determine *how* she is to do this. Typical of the complexity of today's life, when she *Googles* "religious life" on her computer, 400 various forms of it are presented her. How is she to choose? Searching for the lowest common denominator, she must ask herself seriously what she is really seeking. If her deepest desire is to care for orphans, to assist cancer patients, to carry the Gospel to remote regions of the earth, to work to prevent abortions, etc., there are communities dedicated to such specific ministries that build up the Body of Christ on earth.

However, if she knows only that she yearns for a deeper union with God that trumps all the distractions of modern society; if she desires to use whatever talents and gifts God has given her to show God's loving presence and action in *THIS* world at *THIS* time and knows that she cannot do this alone without the support of a reliable guide and others with the same goal, she can fulfill these aspirations by pursuing a monastic vocation as it is lived in "active/contemplative" communities of American Benedictine Sisters today.

Some may conclude that this is being selfish, or concerned only about one's own salvation or too out of touch with the needs of the real world. Why go to a monastery when one could work for the Church alone or "join the convent?" Why this special emphasis on and revived interest in monasteries and the monastic way of life? Is this just a current fad for an elite few? Do monasteries serve any role in our contemporary society?

To do justice in answering the question will require far more space, but in view of the principle of getting down to basics, a monastery in which all are truly striving to seek God by following the precepts of the Gospel can demonstrate to the world that the end result will be peace, something for which our world so anxiously yearns.

A few examples: for a world that has in large part disregarded God, in a monastery the entire schedule is centered around praising God together several times in the day and private prayer when not engaged in other work. In a world where many strive to achieve wealth and possessions, in a monastery all goods are shared in common as in the early apostolic communities. In a world where power, wealth, and prestige are valued, in a monastery all are treated equally and the most vulnerable with the greatest respect. In a world where barriers are built between peoples, in a monastery all are to be welcomed as Christ himself. In a world of noise, clamor and distractions, in a monastery there are times of silence and contemplation. Could our world learn anything from these values if only that they have worked for nearly 2,000 years?

To solve the problem of what one is to do with one's life, the discernor needs to reduce the complexities to a simple equation: "What does God want of me and What do I want from God?" That's about as basic as it gets.

# *In Loving Memory*



*Sister Verda Clare with Molly*



*Sister Verda Clare and Kathy Noble  
at Bayfield, WI*

## **Sister Verda Clare Eichner July 9, 1929—October 19, 2012**

Sister Verda Clare Eichner died October 19, 2012, in hospice at St. Mary's Medical Center. Sister was in her sixtieth year of Benedictine Monastic Profession. Sister Verda Clare entered St. Scholastica Monastery January 2, 1952. She professed her Triennial Vows July 11, 1953, and her Perpetual Vows July 11, 1956. She celebrated her Silver Jubilee on June 4, 1978, and her Golden Jubilee on June 15, 2003.

On July 9, 1929, June Ivon was the third child born to Frank Xavier and Clara Elizabeth Eichner in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Before she entered the Monastery, she graduated in 1950 from St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and worked subsequently as a staff nurse in Milwaukee Children's Hospital. She also worked as a staff nurse at St. Mary's Hospital, Long Beach, California, and at Milwaukee County Home for Dependent Children. After she entered St. Scholastica Monastery in 1952, she worked as School Nurse at The College of St. Scholastica during the 1953-4 school year. From 1954 to 1958 she served as Head Nurse of Pediatrics at St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth.

Sister Verda Clare had a great love for Catholic Health Care, for St. Mary's Medical Center with its Benedictine Mission of caring for the sick, and for the many children she served each day with her quiet presence and deep spirituality. As medical technologies and services became increasingly more complex, she wished to augment her training and experience with more advanced study. She attended Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. from 1958 to 1961, earning a B.S. Degree in Nursing and an M.S. in Nursing Administration.

In 1961 she returned to her Benedictine Community and to St. Mary's Medical Center to continue her dedicated ministry as Director of Nursing Service until 1964, when she was given new responsibilities as Assistant Administrator in the Division of Nursing. A natural leader, she was promoted to Vice President of Nursing in 1980, and held that position until 2000. She moved from hands-on nursing to administrative work, and, in the process, she noted, "I had to realize my service to others was not that of immediate reward but of paving the way to enable others to provide needed service. An example of this is never personally providing care to a premature newborn with respiratory distress syndrome, but contributing very directly toward establishing a program which would allow these babies not only to live but to be healthy persons." The neo-natal intensive care unit opened in April of 1982, and was a project very dear to her heart.

Sister's last administrative appointment was to Vice President of Catholic Health Care Ministry at St. Mary's in 2004. Throughout her many years of service, she belonged to numerous professional nursing associations and served on a number of Boards. She also served St. Scholastica Monastery in the role of Canonical Treasurer in 2011 for a short time.

Sister Verda Clare was preceded in death by her parents, Frank and Clara Eichner, and her brothers Bob and Tom Eichner. In addition to her Benedictine Sisters, she is survived by sisters-in-law Sylvia Eichner and Nell Eichner, many devoted nieces and nephews, friends and colleagues, and her dear friend Kathy Noble.

*Portrait photo by Jeff Frey. Others courtesy of Kathy Noble.*

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*We are invited to open ourselves,  
as Mary did, to the God of love  
beyond our imagining.*