



PATHWAYS

Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters

Duluth, Minnesota

Vol. 22, No. 2 • Advent 2010

Published by
Sisters of St. Scholastica
Monastery, Duluth, MN

Produced by
Monastery Development /
Public Relations Office

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Pathways is published
quarterly and is distributed
among friends, relatives,
associates and benefactors of
the Sisters of St. Scholastica
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Letter From The Prioress

Dear Friends,

As we enter into the darkness of Earth time once again and immerse ourselves in the spirit of the Advent/Christmas Season, I invite us all to carry in our hearts these comforting words from the writing of Julian of Norwich:

*“There is no creature that
is made that can know how
much and how tenderly
our Creator loves us.”*



Julian of Norwich was a mystic who lived in 14th century England during very turbulent times. War, famine, plagues, peasant uprisings, and deep religious divisions characterized her world. Her writings, inspired by the Holy Spirit after a miraculous recovery from the brink of death, continually remind us of the intimate, abiding love God has for each of us. “God delights without end in us,” she writes, “and wishes us to be mightily comforted and strengthened.”

During the graced time of the Advent/Christmas Season we are drawn into the stillness deep within, where we are invited to prepare our hearts for a new birth of Christ, a new birth of compassion, a new birth of Divine Love to light our way in the daunting, challenging times of our personal, communal, and global lives. In this holy darkness Julian of Norwich urges us to keep our focus on “our good Lord” who “enwraps us, holds us and encloses us in His tender love.”

May you be filled with the wonder of God’s loving goodness amid all that is painful and confusing in your life. Enwrapped in God’s love, may you give birth to Christ in new and empowering ways so that God’s Reign will flourish in our world. May you and all your loved ones know the peace and joy of this Holy Season and rejoice in God’s abundant blessings throughout the New Year.

Lovingly yours in Christ with deep gratitude and prayer,

Sister Lois Eckes

Sister Lois Eckes

Advent Reflection: WATCH BY NIGHT

By Sister Linda Wiggins

Late on a winter night during the last week of Advent 2002, I left my bedroom and ventured out into the dim lights of the Monastery hallway; I walked as quietly as I could and descended the stairs to the next floor. Another long hallway loomed ahead of me with an occasional blinking of a call light leading me to Sister Alicia's room. Her door was ajar, and I quietly entered. I nodded to the Sister who was leaving and began my watch. Sister Alicia was dying.

The room was small and simply furnished; her bed was in the center of the room and her small figure under white bedding. A desk chair was close to the head of her bed, waiting for the next visitor. I leaned over the bed rail and whispered: *It's Sister Linda, Sister Alicia. May I sit with you for a while?* A pungent aroma wafted from a cart close to her bed—lip salve for her dry lips.

Although she did not open her eyes, I continued to speak softly to her and slipped my finger into her half-open hand. She felt cool; I placed her hand under the blanket for warmth. Her soft short breaths were the only sound in the room. Her eyes fluttered occasionally, and I wanted so to see her beautiful deep brown eyes. When Sister looked at you, she really looked at you. I missed this connection.

Sitting back in the chair, I glanced around the room; shadings of light and darkness hovered over the small space, and my eye was drawn to a diminutive crèche made visible under a tiny decorative light. Silent Night echoed in my head, and I began to sing some carols for Sister. As the night deepened, the winter wind blew forcefully against the windowpane, howling in occasional blasts that rattled the window. Sister stirred her head upon the pillow. With quick, louder gasps of breath, she pursed her lips. I reached over for the salve and gently moistened them. Speaking in low tones to ease her discomfort, I adjusted her pillow slightly and smoothed her mound of covers.

Her breathing became less labored, and I rose to wash the pungent odor off my hands. Walking across the room, I noticed a picture of Sister Alicia with Mother Teresa. Such compassionate hearts were given these women in their ministry to the poor. I felt this compassion, this love surrounding Sister this night as I returned to her bedside.

Out of the silence came the bleating of a call light down the hall. I glanced up toward the door and once more caught sight of the crèche. Then I looked down again at Sister as she lay sleeping. The stable and this room became one; the infant and Sister Alicia became one. Advent burst forth into epiphany. I was not awaiting death, but birth—Sister was entering a new life, and this incredible gift of love is, verily, a living legacy lying in a manger:

*O come, thou day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadow put to flight.*

Sister Profile - Sister Mary Felten

An Interview with Andi Therrien

I was born on a dairy farm near Greenleaf, Wisconsin, to Eleanore and Henry Felten. The proximity of our farm to Green Bay infected me with the chronic condition of Packerphilia. Yes, and I still have it! My German parents were Catholic and very strict. In those days the man was the head of the house. My brothers and sisters and I never argued my father's pronouncements.

After school we had chores—mucking out the barn, “slopping” the pigs, feeding the chickens. We kept huge vegetable gardens. We made the most of anything we had. What we didn't use, we sold or traded for items we needed. My father bought a CASE tractor in 1932. It was the first rubber-tired tractor shipped to Green Bay. It is still being used because my father and then my brothers have taken such good care of it.

After graduation from high school, I found jobs to pay for my first few college courses. Then one day two Benedictines came recruiting Catholic girls for their college, The College of St. Scholastica, in Duluth. I'd never been so far from home before.

I lived in the dormitory, and there were electric lights, indoor running water, and indoor toilets! One night I gazed out the window, enjoying the beauty of the trees, the lake, the starry sky, and the lovely full moon which seemed there just for me. I felt such a feeling! The next morning what embarrassment I felt to learn that my beautiful moon was an electric globe lamp up the front drive. I endured much teasing in adjusting to modern life in the College.

After a time I felt the call to the Benedictine monastic life. In my extended family there were many Franciscan priests and religious. My father had three dear sisters who were Franciscans. So I went to talk to my mother but she said, “See your dad.” So I went to him and informed him I wanted to become a nun. “That's wonderful,” he told me, “as long as you become a Franciscan.” Well! After some difficult discussions, he reconciled himself to the Benedictines, and I entered this Monastery.

The Community needed elementary teachers then, so after my first vows I was sent out to a mission to teach. For years I taught different grades in various schools across Wisconsin and Minnesota while I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees with specialties in education, administrative counseling, and psychology. I served as elementary school principal, K-12 counselor, or school psychologist for many years.

The strictness, self-discipline, and hard work throughout my life has made me who I am. I wear the habit, but it's the modified habit.

Now retired, I like reading, listening to classical music and operas, and being active and outdoors. I enjoy caring for the shrines and gardens on our grounds. I love the woods and wildlife— especially the rabbits!



The 1932 CASE tractor—and brother Walter.



Sister Mary Felten tends the Sacred Heart Shrine

Photo by Andi Therrien

My Parish Ministry

By Sister Lisa Maurer

The spirit of St. Benedict's *Rule* is summed up in the traditional motto *ora et labora* ("pray and work"). As Benedictines we believe that prayer is our primary work, and all other work flows from the centrality of prayer in our lives. In my ministry as a Pastoral Associate at the parishes of St. Lawrence and St. Joseph in Duluth, I find that to be very true.

I am blessed to be involved in a ministry that enables me to live my vocation as a Benedictine Sister. As monastic women we serve the Church and society. We strive to serve God in all things—that in all things, God may be glorified! These are our goals, and as Benedictines we spend our lives working toward them.

In parish ministry I am able to use my gifts and talents to pursue my passions and interests and serve God in a way that is true to my Benedictine vocation. My work at St. Lawrence and St. Joseph can be put into three categories: education, homebound outreach, and parish duties (or as I like to call it "whatever Father needs").

My ministry in parish education allows me to work with people of all ages. As a former elementary teacher and high school coach, I love the work I do with the youth. I am grateful for the opportunities I have to work with religious education classes and youth groups. I find it to be very rewarding to be involved in the faith lives of the young. Working with families is especially rewarding. It is wonderful to empower parents in their call to pass on the faith. I have discovered that working with adults in workshops, classes, and retreats usually ends with me gaining much more than I ever give.

One aspect of my job at St. Lawrence and St. Joseph that I am grateful for is homebound outreach. Each day I am welcomed into people's homes to share the Word of God and distribute Holy Communion. It is a privilege to be a link between the parish and the homebound. Each week I lead Word and Communion services at Edgewood Vista, Primrose, and other senior living facilities. I absolutely love being a part of the faith communities that have been built among the people living in these places.



Sister Lisa and a parishioner.



Sister Lisa arranging flowers for St. Lawrence Church's sanctuary

Day-to-day parish work is filled with routine and common things. Any day could find me counseling a parishioner, helping with a funeral, or cleaning out a closet. Other days I am busy caring for plants and flowers, preparing for Masses, and training servers. But every now and again something special pops up, and I find myself organizing a Sunday brunch, planning for the Pastor's birthday, or arranging a parish golf outing. Whatever needs to be done to keep these parishes responsive to God and growing in grace is part of my job description. And it is never boring!

I am blessed to be a Benedictine Sister who is able to live the motto *ora et labora* by ministering at the parish level. It is beautiful and rewarding to see God at work in people's lives. I am humbled and honored to be a part of it. God is good!

A September Day with Kathleen Norris

By Sister Sarah Smedman

Photo by Sister Patricia Anne Williams



Thursday, September 16, was a picture-perfect fall day in Duluth, enriched by the presence of renowned essayist and poet, Kathleen Norris. Norris avows her love for Benedictines, having spent significant periods at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville and Assumption Abbey in Richardton, North Dakota; she is an Oblate. At 10 a.m. Norris closed the Benedictine Health System's three-day Leadership Conference, United in Peace, at the DECC with a moving reflection, "Peace, False and True," drawing upon her personal experience. She lauded the leaders and laborers of the BHS for their compassionate care of the elderly.

After an autograph session with devoted readers, Norris spent a leisurely afternoon on the North Shore of Lake Superior—that day truly "the shining big sea waters"—followed by evening prayer, dinner, and a presentation to the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery. Norris shied

from titling her talk, but spoke of thoughts she has come to after the publication of her latest book *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (2008), a book that took her 13 years to write.

Acedia, an ancient Greek word simply translated as the absence or lack of care, is virtually impossible to explain in English, and has been out of use for centuries. Common among the early desert monastics, it was often called "the noonday devil." It has variously been described as "spiritual torpor and apathy," "the deadly sin of sloth," "listlessness, apathy, and melancholia." Frequently but inaccurately according to Norris, *acedia* had been confused with depression. Norris's work on the book helped her to understand much of her life and resonates as well with many of her readers. She spoke eloquently of the need to discover the light in that darkness and also to be aware of the darkness in the light.

Interspersed with her reflections, Norris read a selection of short, pithy poems, her own as well as others. Beginning with her remembrance of angels turning their backs to her during a near-death experience at six months old, her reflections and readings took her listeners through a roller-coaster of emotions—sadness, fear, joy, laughter, and awe—and ended with a quiet poem on serenity.

Well received by her Benedictine audience, she closed the evening by talking individually with many Sisters, sharing with some memories of common experiences in the past. Because she said she never refuses an opportunity to spend time with Benedictines, we look forward to future visits with Kathleen Norris.

Selected Works by Kathleen Norris: *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (1993), *The Cloister Walk* (1997), *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith* (1999), *Journey: New and Selected Poems* (2001), *Acedia* (2008)

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING DECEASED FRIENDS AND RELATIVES:

James Holland 4/29/2010

Jeanette Kliejunnas 6/29/2020

Edward Brice 8/10/2010

+Sister Thomas Marie Brice's brother

Marian LaVigne 9/2/2010

Dorothy Smithson 9/10/2010

Clifford Curtis 9/14/2010

Agatina Ciurleo 9/26/2010

Marge Mathison 9/28/2010

Magdalen (Lynn) Maciej 10/7/2010

+Sister Bertrand Reiser's sister

Frances Holland 10/16/2010

+Sister Maureen Harney's sister

Susan Betty Havdal 10/17/2010

“Lord, Open My Lips”: The Psalms in Benedictine Life

By Sister Ann Marie Wainright

As fall gives way to winter and the nights become longer, Morning Prayer begins in darkness. On my way to Chapel one morning to serve as prayer leader I gazed out the cloister walk windows at the darkness. The sky, chilled by the long night, would soon pull the warm sun around itself like a woman pulls a shawl around her shoulders.

As the Sisters arrived and took their seats, we sat in silence that was pregnant with God’s presence. When my watch read 6:45 a.m., I struck the chime that began our prayer. As we rose and stood together to lift our hearts and dedicate our day to God, I intoned the opening verse: “Lord, open my lips.” My voice cracked, betraying its need for God’s grace to chant even that one short phrase. In choirs, we called back and forth Psalms of praise, thanksgiving, lament, and trust. The words, prayers, and stories of the ancient Hebrews became our own in the here-and-now.

St. Benedict refers to the Liturgy of the Hours as the “Work of God.” In his *Rule* St. Benedict writes, “Nothing should be put ahead of the Work of God” (RB 43.3). When the bells of the Chapel ring, we set aside our tasks to come together and pray the Psalms. For Benedictines prayer is not an interruption of the flow of work. Prayer serves as a crucial reminder of why we work and for Whom. Praying the Psalms creates a community of peoples both past and present. With the ancient Israelites we reflect on God’s action in human history; we are led to transform our world with acts of justice and peace; we look to a future filled with hope.

For
Benedict,
prayer in
community is
the
culmination
of the—
Cenobitic
Life and its
main symbolic
event.



In Hebrew, the Book of Psalms is called *tehillim*, or “Praises.” The 150 prayer-poems of the Psalter range from sorrow and distress to joy and thanksgiving. The Psalms were part of the daily community prayers of the temple or synagogue for the ancient Israelites. Jesus, as a faithful Jew, would also have prayed the Psalms. The Psalms comprise the Liturgy of the Hours, which unite our prayers with those of Jesus, praising and presenting to God both our needs and those of the whole world.

A favorite psalm of mine is Psalm 139. Even though I have spent much time with this psalm during past retreats, I never tire of this beautiful prayer-poem. Each time I pray with it, some new word or phrase speaks “to the ear of my heart” and makes me more fully aware of God’s intimate presence. Through the wisdom, poignancy, and transformative power of the Psalms, God continually reaches out to all people of all times and places. When Benedictines pray the Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours, we return to God the steadfast love we have received by opening our hearts and our lips in prayer.

REMEMBERING THINGS PAST

The Last Pioneer: Sister Leona Michlitch (1869-1966)

By Sister Margaret Clarke



Sister Leona in 1890 at the time of her first monastic profession at St. Benedict's Convent.

In 1891 Sister Leona was sent to Duluth as housekeeper at Sacred Heart Convent, and when the Duluth community became independent in 1892, she was one of the volunteers. Mother Scholastica assigned her to St. Mary's Hospital to be the bookkeeper. She prepared by taking a correspondence course in bookkeeping from Scranton, Pennsylvania. However, as she later said, "In those days we had so little money that it hardly took a bookkeeper to take care of it." She occupied her spare time by working in the pharmacy and the laundry and by selling "hospital tickets" to the lumberjacks in camps along the Missabe Railroad line. In the new century she was busy securing funds for the construction of the new St. Mary's Hospital, which was opened in 1911, and then the addition in 1922.

Aloysia Michlitch was born in Wallen-Burgenland, Austria, the youngest of ten children, to a farm family that spoke both German and Magyar in the home. In 1881 the family moved to the United States, to a farm in Stearns County, Minnesota, where she continued her education and learned English. When she was seventeen and living with her sister in St. Cloud, she delivered milk to the Benedictine Sisters' convent and told the Sisters that it was her dream to become a Sister as well. It was then that she met Mother Scholastica, prioress of St. Benedict's Convent at that time, who invited her to come to enter the community. Aloysia received her religious name, Leona, in 1889 and made first vows in 1890. She was sent to St. Cloud Hospital for nurses' training where she also worked in the pharmacy and did housekeeping duties.



Sister Leona in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel in the 1940s.



Sister Leona at the time of her Diamond Jubilee (60th anniversary) in 1950.

In 1924, at the request of Mother Agnes Somers, she came to the Villa as treasurer of the Benedictine community, an office that she would hold until 1954. In those days the community was struggling with low income and high debt, and that debt increased with the extension of Tower Hall in 1927. Under her leadership, and with careful planning and borrowing, the debt was paid down until 1936 when construction began on the Chapel/Library and Stanbrook Hall, and eventually that was paid off as well. It is amazing to think that all of this was done by a woman who learned everything about business and finance through reading and independent study—typing, budgeting, insurance, accounting—and who was instrumental in bringing the community to the financial stability that it enjoys today. She was known throughout the business community of Duluth as a woman wise in the ways of finance.

Sister Leona retired as Treasurer in 1954 but continued in the business office as a bookkeeper until 1960, when she moved to the infirmary at St. Mary's. She died in 1966 at the age of 96, having celebrated 75 years of monastic profession. She was the last remaining member of the group of Sisters who founded the Duluth Benedictine community in 1892. Mother Athanasius commented in her obituary: "Her interest in the welfare of every Sister of the community had made her beloved by all."



Sister Leona and Sister Anselma Mahowald making their daily pilgrimage to the Sisters' cemetery in 1960.

Photos courtesy of Monastery Archives

Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program

Sister Claudia Riehl has served as Director of Mission Integration at the Benedictine Health System (BHS) for nearly twenty years. On September 14, as part of the 25th anniversary year celebration of the founding of the BHS, Sister Claudia was honored for her work as the Benedictine Health System Foundation (BHSF) established the Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program. This program will recognize the work of others at each of the facilities in the System who model Sister Claudia's dedication and commitment to the BHS Mission and Core Values. The announcement of the Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program was made at the beginning of the BHS Leadership Conference at the DECC, where more than 350 friends, family, and BHS staff from around the System gathered.

Sister Claudia says of her work, "My goal was to keep alive the healing ministry of Jesus." She said she was asked by the Prioress to assume the new position of Director of Mission Integration at the BHS in 1991. She prayed about the job and the new opening and finally said to herself, "I believe I could do that." As part of her work Sister Claudia has traveled to some 40+ health-care facilities that are members or affiliates of the BHS and has given presentations on the organization's mission and core values: Hospitality, Stewardship, Respect, and Justice. Each year one of the values is emphasized in these presentations and group discussions. Sister Claudia says that every fifth year, "we emphasize and explore the Benedictine motto of Peace."



Sister Carol Keehan, DC, President of the National Catholic Health Association, Sister Claudia Riehl, Senior Consultant/Benedictine Heritage and Values, and Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery.

"I affirm BHS staff members in their work," says Sister Claudia. "I try to show them how they are our co-workers in caring for the residents." Sister Claudia says she realizes that some day there may be no Sisters who serve on boards or in the health-care facilities, but "we can be sure that the ministry is entrusted to others and that they will continue it." Funds raised at the BHSF silent auction seeded the Sister Claudia Legacy Fund, which will support the Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program and provide resources for nominated staff to improve themselves—perhaps through a course or a conference—as they continue the ministry of the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery.

The Sister Claudia Riehl Living a Legacy Program is a wonderful honor, Sister Claudia says. "It was very humbling and overwhelming and amazing and affirming." "But," she says, "I didn't get to be successful at this ministry without the help of everybody else. My goal was to make a difference. I had help from my family who were so affirming of my work and from the BHS staff and from the leaders and staff who work in all the facilities." Then Sister Claudia spoke of her family. Of the seven children in her family, six attended the celebration, coming from as far away as North Dakota and Indiana. "Sister Agatha and the rest of my family and all in my religious community were so supportive of all I did. Each time I went to give a presentation, Sister Agatha (Sister Agatha Riehl, Sister Claudia's sister) prayed that I would touch hearts. My whole family has always been so supportive."

Dale Thompson, BHS president/CEO, said of Sister Claudia, "During (Sister Claudia's) tenure, she has had a profound impact on the integration of our Mission and Core Values throughout the System as well as the development of our unique and special culture at BHS. There is something special about Sister Claudia and the way she connects with people from all walks of life. Everyone has a 'Sister Claudia' story and how she has touched so many lives in such a positive way."

Benedictine Health System Celebrates 25th Anniversary: *United in Peace*

The year 2010 is a year of celebration and peace for the Benedictine Health System. Twenty-five years ago the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, Duluth, established the Benedictine Health System with three Member Organizations to further the Benedictine health care mission, efficiently and effectively manage the Sisters' health care resources, increase coordination among its health care organizations and increase the involvement and participation of the laity in the expanding Benedictine health care ministry.

From those seed facilities evolved a Benedictine health care ministry with more than 60 Participating Organizations – hospitals, nursing homes, assisted and independent living facilities – that provided health care in 40 communities across nine states. Later, BHS partnered with SMDC Health System to form Essentia Health, a Duluth-based health system.

Changes in health care again prompted change, and in 2008 a new structure was created, the BHS acute care operations forming a new organization under Essentia Health and the long-term care organizations becoming the focus of BHS. St. Scholastica Monastery continued to provide the Catholic sponsorship for both entities.

Sister Claudia Riehl and Sister Mary Christa Kroening have ministries at the BHS corporate office in Duluth, and many other Sisters serve on the boards of BHS health-care facilities. Sister Claudia was, for nearly 20 years, responsible for mission integration at the BHS and is now Senior Consultant, Benedictine Heritage and Values (see *Pathways* article, p.10). Sister Mary Christa has been with the System for 13 years, currently serving as Senior Consultant, Liturgical and Ritual Services. She has encouraged prayer at the facilities by creating two prayer books and a guide book for worship services. Sister Mary Christa also consults with BHS facilities on the planning and construction of worship spaces. To date, 22 chapels have been constructed, and she is currently working on three others. She also prepares and coordinates blessing rituals for groundbreakings and openings of new facilities and chapels.

BHS continues to flourish due to its commitment to its Mission and Core Values and the prayers of the Sisters, who pray every day for those who provide and receive care in BHS facilities. Throughout 2010 the Benedictine Health System and its now 40-plus Participating Organizations have come together in peace to celebrate the past 25 years and look forward to the future and continuing this mission. This year of 2010 we focus on the 1500-year-old Benedictine motto of PAX (or peace). The focus, united in peace, is a basic message that encourages all to seek peace within ourselves, with others, and with all people. It is a message for our world that speaks to all.



Sister Mary Christa Kroening (center) presiding at a BHS new employee commissioning ritual.



Sister Claudia Riehl at BHS Customer Service training.

Photos and text courtesy of the BHS

Benedictine Center of Spirituality

By Sister Pauline Micke

The Benedictine Center of Spirituality has had a busy fall, which included individual and group retreats, outreach presentations, groups coming on pilgrimage to the Monastery, and spiritual direction. A few highlights were:

September 18, 2010—"The Gentle Journey: 12 Step Retreat" was held at the Monastery. As one participant stated, "This day is just what I needed." Lynn and Steve Dosch facilitated this very fruitful day.

October 4, 2010—Sister Pauline Micke and Father Steve Ulrick, Pastor of Nativity Parish in Bloomington, Minnesota, and a licensed social worker, presented "Stepping Through Fear Into Healing and Recovery" at the St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference in Duluth. This outreach presentation spoke to the process whereby the 12 Steps and one's personal spirituality can bring healing and recovery. The 125 participants spoke to the benefit they received from this session.



Photo by Sister Jeanne Ann Weber

October 20, 2010—We hosted a women's group from the Brainerd area who came to Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel as part of their Marian Pilgrimage. They had a tour of the Chapel and part of the Monastery and spent time in prayer and reflection before closing their pilgrimage and journeying home.



Photo by Andi Therrien

Upcoming Events

Lenten Workshop—Saturday, March 19, 2011—"Healing Life's Hurts II." This session will look at how life's hurts affect us and the varied ways of healing that are available to us. Sister Michelle Dosch and Sister Jeanne Ann Weber will facilitate the day.

If you, your church group, or your organization would like us to come to do a presentation for you, please contact Sister Pauline Micke at 218-723-7086 or e-mail her at pauline.m@duluthosb.org.

The Benedictine Associate Program: Together We Serve

By Sister Martha Bechtold

Our Monastery, this Benedictine house on the spacious hill overlooking Duluth's grand lake, is more than a monolithic Community of Sisters and its new members who are in our Initial Formation Program. It also houses the Benedictine Associate Program in the renovated fifth floor apartment. This "penthouse" offers private rooms and living space for four women. All rooms are occupied this year, and the women who have come to be Associates enhance and extend our ministry and influence. It is our hope that their own lives will also be enhanced and enriched by sharing an apartment with one another and living side-by-side with the Sisters.

The Associate program is not for everyone. But it is for those who want to be of service to the greater world beyond themselves, for those who value the spirituality of the Sisters and their lifestyle, for those who are on a spiritual journey to determine what lies ahead for them. It is also for those who are self-giving and want to share the treasures of their own life experiences; or those who see the needs of others in this world and hope to serve. It is for those who want more out of life than self-satisfaction.

In return for room and board Associates assist the Sisters in their ministries for a designated number of hours per week. They perform tasks such as reading to the elderly Sisters on Benet Hall, staffing the Information Desk evening and weekend hours, clerking in the Monastery Books and Gifts, and gardening. They give time to individual Sisters with special projects such as sewing. Recently, two Associates helped with the uncommon task of "redressing" the floor loom that is used to weave throw rugs. That may have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them.

They also reach out to our ministries away from the Monastery at McCabe Renewal Center and to other local groups dependent on volunteer services such as the Damiano Center where meals are prepared for those in need, and the Adult Learning Center for new English-language learners.

As a bonus to us, college-age Associates help us to keep in touch with a younger generation at a time when the membership in our Community is heavily weighted toward older adults, and Associates who come after a lifetime of job experience bring their own experiences and extend the opportunities we would like to participate in. The dinner table provides a time and place to get to know one another and to explore new topics of conversations, to share the joys of our lives and its sorrows.

Our current Associates are:

Yodit Gidey, a third year college student from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and a biology major. An Honors' Program student, Yodit hopes to attend medical school in this country and return home to practice.

Elizabeth Farias from Early, Iowa, is a retired Spanish teacher with over thirty years of high school Spanish teaching experience, primarily at Apollo High School in St. Cloud.

Photo by Andi Therrien



Left to right: Yodit Gidey, Elizabeth Farias, Crystal Bockoven, and Danielle Poualeu

Crystal Bockoven, a fourth-year college student from Milaca, Minnesota, with a major in biology. After a visit last year to Senegal in West Africa, Crystal would love to go on to medical school and return there to practice medicine.

Danielle Poualeu, a recent graduate in nursing, and currently taking classes in preparation for admission to a medical school. Danielle is from Cameroon, and her goal is to practice medicine somewhere on her home continent of Africa.

Sister Profile: Sister Marie Therese Poliquin

Devout Pilgrim, Passionate Pioneer—Always on the Journey

By Sister Linda Wiggins

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Sister Marie Therese's maternal grandparents arrived in Duluth while on their honeymoon in the 1870's. French Canadian, Louis and Emilie (Chabot) Beaurivage were pioneers looking for a new life and certainly finding it in Duluth. They started out in the hotel business and continued in some aspect of this profession for many years. Their love of adventure and gifts of hospitality and civic responsibility clearly have been passed on to their granddaughter.

Born in a bilingual family where both English and French were spoken fluently and daily, Sister was acutely aware of multiple cultures from an early age and saw the world as a source of diversity and adventure—and still does. She loves traveling, communicating with the foreign students at The College of St. Scholastica, and reading her email correspondence that would probably rival that of most professional journalists.

She attended school in Duluth, including Stanbrook Hall for her high school years. Entering The College of St. Scholastica in 1943, she majored in music, with a minor in French. After graduation she taught at Stanbrook Hall for one year, then went to the University of Ann Arbor, where she earned a MA in Vocal Music Education. Subsequently, she taught grades 1-12 for three years in Belding, Michigan. In 1954 she entered monastic life at St. Scholastica where she became a vowed religious in 1958.

Born on December 8, 1925, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Sister was named for St. Therese of Lisieux who was canonized in 1924. While she was devoted to her namesake, she found that the Benedictines' *Ora et Labora* illustrated much more closely her ideals of prayer and active community service rather than being focused only on contemplative prayer in a cloistered environment like that of a Carmelite. Also, with her love of music, she was drawn to the chanting of the psalms known as the Divine Office prayed three times each day by Benedictine Sisters. Praying and making music are nearly one action to her, and chanting the lovely psalms unites her to God and to her Benedictine Sisters in deeply spiritual ways. "Chanting vespers is still so beautiful to me," she exclaims.

Photo by Andi Therrien



Sister has practiced her ideals of active ministry through many years of service on various missions, including teaching 11 years at St. Francis School in Brainerd; serving as Supervisor of Music of the Diocesan Schools of Duluth from 1967-69; teaching at Cathedral Junior High School, at St. Jean Baptist School, at St. John's School, and at Cathedral Senior High School—all in Duluth. She took a sabbatical during 1970-73 and earned a major in French from classes taken at CSS and UMD. From 1977 to 1993 she taught music at St. Bridget's School in Minneapolis for all grades of students. She was also the Director of Liturgy there from 1993-1995. When the school closed in 1995, she served as a Volunteer Coordinator and Pastoral minister at St. Raphael's Parish in Crystal, Minnesota, for ten years. On July 11, 2005, she celebrated her Golden Jubilee (50 years) as a Benedictine Sister, and returned to the Monastery in Duluth permanently in August of the same year.

Sister Marie Therese continues to find adventure around every corner and, with her utterly charming smile, creates hospitality wherever she goes, while actively serving on the Monastery Liturgy committee; serving as coordinator of the Monastery Information Desk; serving as one of the Monastery organists and cantors; and singing the Divine Office with the same passion she did as a young Sister first beginning her spiritual journey fifty-five years ago.

HIGHLIGHTS

Minnesota Pax Christi Assembly

By Sister Linda Wiggins

The Minnesota Pax Christi Assembly met September 25, 2010, in Crookston, Minnesota, at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. Bishop Tom Gumbleton delivered the keynote address: “Choosing Peace in Today’s World: Nuclear Disarmament.” Bishop Gumbleton is a well-known voice for peace, justice, and civil rights in the United States and has been for the last 40 years.

Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement, strives to create a world truly reflecting the Peace of Christ by educating, speaking, and calling for Christian nonviolence in all communities of our country. It advocates primacy of conscience, economic and social justice, and respect for creation. Four Duluth Pax Christi members attended the Assembly. For information regarding Duluth Pax Christi meetings contact Sister Maria Volk at mariavolksister@gmail.com.



Five Pax Christi meeting participants: Corrine Schraufnagel, Michelle Naar Obed, Salima Swenson, Sister Linda Wiggins, and Sister Mary Rae Higgins.

Diocesan Catholic School Dinner

By Sister Lisa Maurer

On November 7, 2010, a contingent of Sisters from St. Scholastica Monastery joined Bishop Paul Sirba, administrators, teachers, parents, and benefactors for an evening in support of Catholic education. In attending the dinner for Catholic Schools, the Sisters paid honor to their legacy as educators throughout the Northland and made firm their commitment to supporting Catholic education.

Everyone in attendance enjoyed a fine dinner and joyful fellowship. In putting a capstone on the evening Bishop Paul Sirba spoke about the great gift that Catholic education is to our young and to the whole of society. “Our Catholic Schools are where children have many opportunities to combine knowledge of God, our faith, and the world around them,” said Bishop Sirba.



St. Scholastica Sisters who attended the dinner with Bishop Paul Sirba.

Photo by Jane MacDougall

Sister Dorene King at St. James School

A language known throughout the world is music. The preschool through fifth grade classes at St. James School in Duluth are immersed in discovering and developing an appreciation for the fundamentals, forms, and fun associated with the study of music.

I am pleased to be able to be the music teacher for preschool through fifth grade. I am following in the footsteps of my Duluth Benedictine Sisters who staffed St. James when it first opened in 1894-1895 and later when it reopened from 1914 to 1982.

Each music class begins with a song focused on praise or remembrance of God's love for us. In grades first through fifth we began by singing "This is the Day" and now we are singing "Rejoice in the Lord Always." In preschool through kindergarten we begin by singing "Jesus said, 'Love One Another.'" What follows this opening song varies according to how I plan to address the Diocesan music outcomes for the particular grade and what our teachers are presenting in their classrooms.

My music day begins with the fourth and then the fifth grade class. As one of the outcomes suggests a focus upon becoming acquainted with orchestral and band instruments, I began the year introducing the children to the string family. In conjunction with this introduction, I gave the children the opportunity to discover what difference the width of the string made to the pitch. After discussing the care and appropriate use of an instrument, I distributed to the children rubber bands of varying width. Our rubber band orchestra was then ready to make its debut. As conductor, I directed each group of rubber bands—widest, moderately wide, and thin—and then we banded together. The children discovered that the wider the width the lower the pitch.

In addition to the fourth and fifth graders being banded together, the first through third graders have been using long elastic bands to literally hop their way through the music staff. I select three pairs of students to replicate the five lines on the music staff. Two of the pairs each loop an elastic band around their ankles, stand facing each other about four feet apart and spread their feet apart so as to form a space wide enough to hop in. The two pairs allow an equal space to separate themselves from each other. The third pair stand facing each other and allow a space to separate them from the second pair. Altogether this forms the music staff – five lines and four spaces. Children who are not acting as lines take turns being the notes by hopping in the spaces – F A C E.

The preschool and kindergarten classes have not been hopping notes; rather they have enjoyed following Jesus. We form a parade line with the lead child carrying a crucifix. During this parade we sing, "Come on, let's follow Jesus . . . sing now and shout Amen!"

Photos by Andi Therrien



Sister Dorene with hand puppets and 4th and 5th grade classes



Sister Dorene and students with hand puppets

ADVENT PEOPLE

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Photo by Jeff Frey; courtesy of CSS



The season of Advent is a somewhat unsettling time, but for those who sincerely strive to make each Christmas their most meaningful one, it is both a necessary and grace-filled time. “Advent” itself means both a coming and an arrival and herein lies some of the tension. Thus the Church in her wisdom tries during Advent to situate us where we—and all humanity with us—now stand.

In the final days of the church year immediately preceding Advent, the liturgical readings transport us on a virtual time machine into the future end-time when the world we know is no more and Christ will victoriously present the redeemed universe to the Father. Then in the opening weeks of Advent in the new church year we are thrust backwards into the millennia preceding the Incarnation to cry out with our forebears in the faith, “Come, o come, Emmanuel” until at the culmination of Advent we come to “the fullness of time”: Christ’s Mass, when we sing out, “Joy to the world, the Lord

has come!” But if the Lord has already come, why do we remain unfulfilled and continue to pray “. . . thy kingdom come”? Why this strange interpenetration of future, past, and present ?

Maybe a simple analogy might answer our dilemma. We are all on a journey—a long journey—and like restless children we keep asking, “Aren’t we there yet?” The Church, wise mother that she is, wishes us to rejoice in knowing that we are on the right road, and the end is in sight if only we remain patient and stick with the path. But if we are still journeying, what is there to be joyful about?

That answer comes to us when we ponder the readings of Christmas and Epiphany and come to know Who has come to us. Whereas God’s unconditional love was and is always present in the unfolding of creation, that love reached its peak at the Incarnation when God “pitched His tent among us,” took on our humanity, redeemed it, and infused believers with His spirit. In the readings for the remainder of the church year we are shown the path to our own transformation through being united with Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection. And we know that because God Himself has shared our humanity, His compassion is with us all in our needs and sufferings. This is the Good News, the vision that sustains us and which we are to share with a largely skeptical world.

Thus for Christians, Christmas cannot be a one-day-only celebration because it is an on-going reality which is still becoming. We truly are Advent people always in need of God’s continued grace to live the message each day. We also need men and women, dubbed “fools for Christ” by the world, who will stake their whole lives on that vision and, in anticipation of the “new creation” that is to come, voluntarily forsake some of the passing pleasures of this world in order to further God’s plan.

Above all, let us remember we are all still “Advent people” and join with those who have gone before us in the same hope and with whom on the final day we will shout the concluding words of Revelation, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Monastery Open House in October

October 10, 2010, the Monastery hosted an Open House and Reception for family and friends in the tri-state area. It was a beautiful sunny day, and over 150 guests came to visit and tour the Monastery and grounds.

Sister Lois welcomed all, and she and other Sisters, accompanied by Sister Teri Spinler on the guitar, sang a modification of the words from Philippians: “We thank our God, each time we think of you, and when we pray for you, we pray with joy.”

Photos by Sister Lisa Maurer and Andi Therrien





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***“There is no creature
that is made that can know
how much and how tenderly
our Creator loves us.”***

Julian of Norwich