

PATHWAYS



Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters

Duluth, Minnesota Vol. 21, No. 1 • Fall 2009



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

Produced by
Monastery Development /
Public Relations Office

Editorial Board
Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress
Vicky Siders, director
Sister Almira Randall
Sister Estelle Charron
Sister Linda Wiggins
Sister Margaret Clarke
Sister Margaret James Laughlin
Sister Mary E. Penrose
Andy Therrien

Contributors
Sisters of the Community

Cover Photo by
Sister Edith Bogue

Pathways is published
quarterly and is distributed
among friends, relatives,
associates and benefactors of
the Sisters of St. Scholastica
Monastery.

St. Scholastica Monastery
1001 Kenwood Avenue
Duluth, MN 55811 - 2300

Telephone:
218.723.6555

Fax
218.723.5963

Visit our website
www.DuluthBenedictines.org



A Letter From The Prioress

Dear Friends,

In one of her poems Mary Oliver makes a declaration that is woven, both as a theme and a commitment, throughout her hundreds of writings. She writes, "My work is loving the world." As I reflect on that simple yet profound thought, a myriad of images come to mind: the beauty and grandeur of creation, its exquisite and irrefutable unity of which we are a marvelous part; children who bless us with their delight in life and invite our hearts to wonder; women and men of all ages whose vision and courage challenge us to participate in the sacred work of justice and peace, the work of the Gospel; human and Divine encounters embedded in the stories featured in this issue of *Pathways*. Indeed, loving the world is our work! Concretizing that love in the reverence, the compassion, the gratitude with which we embrace life and share our gifts is truly the great work to which we are called. It is a dynamic work modeled for us by Christ who empowers us to love as He loved, tenderly and fiercely, even as God holds and loves us.



As we journey together, engaged in the holy work of loving the world, I surround you with these blessings to protect, heal, and strengthen you:

- *May you remember that you have come forth from the Heart of God, marvelously made, protectingly kept, and gloriously loved in every moment of your life.
- *May you give thanks for the small and wondrous miracles of each day that seek no attention, yet illuminate the dark times with their pure and simple light.
- *May you live your life with penetrating clarity and blossom in the light of God's immeasurable love, convinced that in certainty or confusion and everywhere in between, God is with us.

Lovingly yours in Christ,
with grateful prayer for the work of God's love you are.

Sister Lois Eckes

Sister Lois Eckes

Autumn: A Season for the Seasoned

By Sister Mary E. Penrose

Autumn has different meanings for different people. Farmers know it is the time for harvesting crops, the fruit of their labors. For some of us Halloween, Oktoberfest, and Thanksgiving might come to mind. Those who love sports, naturally and eagerly look forward in anticipation of Homecoming and football. Children see it as the time for going back to school or having fun playing in the fallen leaves. And for those who notice the first telltale chill in the air, autumn is a portent of the inevitable onslaught of forbidding dark and cold wintry days. Nature itself belies this last view, however. Instead, she proudly and profusely displays brilliant colors—golds, ambers, reds—to let us know that gloomy bleakness does not have the last word.

Still, there is a certain seriousness about autumn for it reminds us of the impermanence of things. Things pass away. In this season the trees shed their leaves and leave them stark and bare to take on a somberness of their own. At the same time, even as we see the fallen leaves on the ground looking dark and ominous, we are suddenly surprised one day to see a blazing orange color peeking through them, shining out of the darkness. Again, we see the promise that brighter and better things are to come, for the leaves, following their usual cycle, eventually become mulch from which new life comes forth.

This pattern found in nature finds similarities in our own lives and, as we begin to age, we are made to become more acutely aware of these similarities. The lush, green richness of our younger days gives way to disappointments and sadness as we experience losses along the way. A dear friend or relative dies or a project or assignment we have been working on with great satisfaction for years has been denied or rejected without explanation. Perhaps someone we trusted to be of impeccable integrity proves to be otherwise. The darkness of these losses takes its toll, and we, like the leaves, must necessarily let go of some of our precious beliefs and dreams that have been digging deep roots in our psyches over the years. However, these passings or diminishments do not tell the whole story either. They simply do not have the last word.

As our options in life become fewer and fewer, they become more precious. One day another kind of blazing orange might enter the picture. We get a telephone call from a childhood friend or we find a treasured object we thought we had lost forever. Maybe someone surprises us with an invitation to go on a cruise to New Zealand or a trip to Switzerland. These surprises, whether subtle or bold, are “God’s serendipities.” All of the dark moments of disappointment, misunderstanding, and other sufferings become mulch. Then, somehow, they begin to intertwine with our lighter and more colorful moments and the resulting shades and hues add depth and beauty to our lives. Unlike the vigorous but more superficial joys of our youth, we find that, in the autumn of our lives, our hearts have expanded and we experience great gratitude for what is and for all that has gone before. We have become warmly and pleasantly seasoned. Truly, we elders have lived a colorful life!



Three Women in Formation

By Sister Donna Schroeder

The Community at St. Scholastica Monastery experienced two joyful events in late August of this year. On August 22, Sister Lisa Maurer made a three-year commitment of obedience, stability, and fidelity to monastic life according to the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Postulants Carla Flood and Gretchen Johnston became novices on August 27. This is a special time of prayer, study, and work to allow them to discern whether God is calling them to the monastic life in this Community.

Photo by Andy Therrien



Sister Lisa Maurer's First Monastic Profession. Pictured left to right: Witnesses Sister Mary Christa Kroening and Sister Bertille Goblirsch; Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress; Sister Lisa Maurer; Sister Donna Schroeder and Sister Michelle Dosch, Directors of Initial Formation

Sister Lisa had a variety of experiences before coming to St. Scholastica Monastery. She grew up in a close-knit family in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. Her parents are Diane and Gene Maurer, and her younger brothers are Scott and Dan. Sister Lisa had the good fortune to be a member of a vibrant parish, St. Mary's, and she attended the parish school from first grade through high school. After graduating from college, she served as a coach for sports such as basketball, softball, and volleyball and taught elementary school children. These were all activities she loved. However, she recognized a call to follow Christ more closely and became an affiliate at St. Scholastica Monastery March 20, 2007. On September 1, 2007, she became a postulant and entered the novitiate on August 15, 2008.

Sister Lisa says of her period of formation, "I have come to understand more deeply and come to appreciate more fully what God is spreading out before me." She expresses thankfulness for this time by sharing these thoughts: "I am grateful for the chance to study, for the encouragement to discover, and the time and space to discern God's action in my life. I am filled with excitement for what has yet to unfold. I am eager to step closer to all God has for me as I reach forward to what lies ahead, confident in His loving providence."

Carla Flood, now Sister Mary Carla, was born in Cornwall, New York. Her family moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where her younger brother was born, and they later moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where she spent most of her adult life. Among her many accomplishments is a Master's degree in social work. Sister Mary Carla was active in the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Cursillo movement. As a postulant she attended classes both in the Monastery and at The College of St. Scholastica. In addition to various jobs at the Monastery, she volunteered as a Eucharistic Minister at St. Mary's Medical Center. Her leisure activities include needlework and jigsaw puzzles. Sister Mary Carla says of her experience in monastic formation, "I'm being stretched—but in a good way—to grow in my spiritual life, and to look at things differently, and sometimes consider things I never really thought of before." She also says, "I've been very happy here from the beginning, and have always felt at home."



Photo by Andy Therrien

Sister Gretchen Johnston (left) and Sister Mary Carla Flood receive copies of the Rule of Benedict from Sister Lois Eckes (right).

Gretchen Johnston, now Sister Gretchen, grew up on a small farm near Cotton, Minnesota. Sister Gretchen's parents are both volunteer firefighters and first responders, and she has three younger sisters. Her special talents include bread baking and other kitchen creations. She has degrees in Music Performance and Education from The College of St. Scholastica and a Master's in Music Performance from the University of Missouri—Columbia. Her work experience included two years of teaching at Cathedral School in Superior. She was also the organist/pianist at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Superior during that time and has taught independent piano lessons for 14 years as well as performing in recitals and concerts. As she describes her insights from her first year in formation, she quotes C.S. Lewis, "Come further in, come higher up!" She also says that it is important to "Look at things from many perspectives, including upside down and inside out. They change! This has been a richer process than I could have imagined."

All of our lives in Community are enriched by the women who come to discern whether they have a call to monastic life.



Photo by Andy Therrien

Sister Pauline Micke, Sponsor; Sister Michelle Dosch, Director of Initial Formation; Sister Mary Carla Flood, Sister Lois Eckes, Sister Gretchen Johnston, and Sister Linda Wiggins, Sponsor

Sister Profile: Sister Ramona Ewen

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Sister Ramona Ewen began her teaching career at Duluth Cathedral Senior High School when Father Michael Hogan was its deeply respected and beloved principal. She had graduated from The College of St. Scholastica and earned her Master's degree at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. While her teaching assignments were primarily bookkeeping, typing, and office machines, she also taught a class in sophomore English. For a few years she served as advisor for the school newspaper, *The Hilltopper*, but then became the advisor for the Girls' Athletic Association.

A major project of the G.A.A. was the funding, selection, and procurement of a statue of Our Blessed Mother for the school, which contained no statues of any kind at the time. Mr. and Mrs. Anton Braun, parents of Sisters Joan, Mary Carol, and Grace Marie, while traveling in Europe visited Oberammagau to purchase a statue, which was then shipped to the School and installed on first floor. When Duluth Cathedral High School moved to Rice Lake Road in 1963 and became

Cathedral High School, the statue went too. At the time Cathedral High School became Marshall School, the statue moved to St. Scholastica Monastery where it currently resides in Rockhurst dining room.

Sister Ramona moved from Cathedral High to The College of St. Scholastica as an assistant professor in the Management Department and began teaching accounting and serving as an advisor for CSS students in the Brainerd area. Three of her former students have established CSS scholarships in her name: The Sister Ramona Ewen Scholarship by David Kuefler; the Sister Ramona Ewen/Thomas Wedige Scholarship by Thomas Wedige; and Dan Seeler Family Scholarship in honor of Sister Ramona Ewen and +Sister Janelle Cahoon. She treasures too her long years of friendship with co-faculty member David Anstett and his wife, Bonni.

Sister Ramona served as trustee of Hibbing General Hospital and as a trustee of Benedictine Health System members in North/South Dakota and Idaho as well as in Minnesota at St. Joseph Medical Center, Brainerd; Benedictine Health Center, Duluth (and on its Foundation Committee); and Madonna Towers and Madonna Meadows in Rochester.

Sister Ramona has not, however, spent all her time teaching or serving as a hospital trustee. Her travels have taken her to Chile in South America, Ireland, Scotland, England, and Quebec, Canada. She is an avid fan of the Minnesota Twins and the Minnesota Vikings, and has now added the CSS Saints football team to her interests.

Sister Monica Retires as Director of the Schola

A Reflection by Sister Timothy Kirby on the retirement of Sister Monica Laughlin from the position of director of the Monastery's Schola—a position she has held since 1950 (with a three-year hiatus when she was in graduate school).

Photo by Andy Therrien



Photo by Andy Therrien

Left and above: Sister Monica directed the Schola Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2009.

“She never runs out of patience!” That would likely be the comment you would hear from most of the members of St. Scholastica Monastery *Schola* about Sister Monica Laughlin. They would have other things to say too, of course. They would say she is not only patient, but kind, compassionate, understanding, accepting, always willing to help, hospitable, concerned about the lonely and marginalized people. And they would say she is an ultimate musician.

It seems that many of these qualities she found in her own family. Sister Monica was the youngest child of four—that is, until her parents took in six cousins who needed a home. As part of the extended family, they were raised as her brothers and sisters. Monica grew up in a little town in Michigan called Iron Mountain. It was there she first began her interest in music. She came to St. Scholastica for her freshman year in college, then transferred to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where she completed her bachelor's degree in music. Monica tells the story of her interest in the marching band at Michigan, but she was not admitted to the band—not because she was lacking in skill, but because she was a woman! No women in the band! When the war was declared and many of the men went off to fight, the band became desperate for members and finally admitted women. Monica became first chair in the clarinet section of the band.

After her graduation from Michigan, Monica taught high school students in a small town called Fowlerville. But God's call to religious life persisted, and she chose to come back to Scholastica to join the Sisters of St. Benedict and her sister, Sister Margaret James. She began her religious life and her life-long career in music teaching at Stanbrook Hall where she directed the orchestra and gave private lessons. Her talent was such that it seemed advisable that she further her education, so she departed for the Eastman School of Music where she received her Master's degree and then went on to the University of Southern California to study for her doctorate. From that time on she was a valued member of the faculty at The College of St. Scholastica where she taught a variety of music courses, gave music lessons to students interested in the woodwind instruments, was often the chair of the music department, served on the Board of the Duluth-Superior Symphony, and played in the Symphony when they needed her—sometimes in the clarinet section, other times as a percussionist. Students who have been fortunate to study with Sister Monica have the highest regard for what she gave them as musicians and as human beings. Her musicianship and her willingness to share her talents have endeared her to the community of musicians in Duluth and in a special way to the Benedictine Musicians of the Americas. She is truly a “pearl of great price,” and it will be a long time before we see her equal.

Sister Profile: Sister Mary Sarto Sadler

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



I was born in Duluth, Minnesota, the youngest of eight children born to Joseph and Frances (Vertin) Sadler. Six brothers and one sister completed the family.

I entered St. Scholastica Monastery in the fall of 1946 and pronounced final vows in 1951.

Having attended Business College before entering the Community, most of my ministry has been in the business field. Working in this position provided many opportunities for creative possibilities such as producing colorful announcements regarding upcoming events and the use of calligraphy, which has always been one of my favorite and relaxing hobbies.

While still in formation I spent some time at St. Mary's Medical Center, assisting in the Business Office. I also taught catechism at St. Elizabeth's Church, my home parish, in Duluth. This was particularly enjoyable as I was familiar with most of the children whose

families were well known to me. During the summer months I was frequently assigned to teach catechism at several other parishes in the vicinity. This was a wonderful learning experience.

I was then assigned to Miner's Hospital in Crosby, Minnesota, and served as Office Manager. From there I joined the staff at St. Joseph's Hospital in Brainerd as Secretary to the Director of Nursing. Returning to Duluth, I began my duties in the business office at The College of St. Scholastica and later was assigned a position in the Monastery administrative office, where I continue to work at the present time.

Please Pray for the Following Deceased Friends and Benefactors:

Donald Ditter

Marie Holecek 9/2008

Katherine J. Gibson 6/7/2009

Gretchen Eldien 7/20/2009

Dr. Peter Bartzen 7/27/2009

Fr. Stanley Dolsina 7/27/2009

Helen LaBud 7/29/09

Laetitia Olsen 8/10/2009

Elizabeth Lukovsky 8/14/2009

+Sister Ann Marie Cheslak's sister

Margaret Ann Strand 8/17/2009

Willard J. Gustafson 8/17/2009

Lucille C. Hood 8/26/2009

A Place for Renewal

by Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, Director

The Benedictine Center of Spirituality at St. Scholastica Monastery is a place for renewal and refreshment in the Spirit. Some retreatants come for a scheduled program such as our July retreat entitled *The Return of the Prodigal Son*: Christ told the story, Rembrandt painted the story, Henri Nouwen wrote the story, and we were invited to step into the story. It was a retreat of discovery and reflection on grief, forgiveness, and generosity. Sister Sarah O'Malley meaningfully facilitated the experience.

Photo by Andy Therrien



The Return of the Prodigal Son retreat/workshop July 2009.
Standing: Sister Sarah O'Malley, Presenter (at the podium)
and Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, Director of the Benedictine
Center of Spirituality



Photo by Andy Therrien

Sister Sarah O'Malley, Presenter

Some retreatants come for a private or directed retreat. Recently a woman from Texas came for a week of renewal in our cool, beautiful part of the world. She also experienced our prayer, hospitality, silence, and peace.

Our Advent Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, November 21, from 9:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and is entitled *The Wonder of Advent: Listening to Hope's Whisperings*. In this season of expectant longing and anticipation, retreatants will explore ways to awaken and recognize glimmers of hope in ordinary life experiences. The facilitator is Sister Mary Josephine Torborg. Lunch is included, and there is a freewill offering. Preregister by Wednesday, November 18 by calling 218-723-6555 or e-mailing jaweber@css.edu.

If you would like to have a retreat or workshop at your parish, contact Sister Pauline Micke at 723-7086 or pmlittlemick@gmail.com.

Our website can be found at www.duluthbenedictines.org. If you would like to be on the Center mailing list, call 218-723-7074 or e-mail: jaweber@css.edu.

Varmints in My Vinegar Cup

By Sister Lucille Geisinger

It has been said that everyone has a basic need to tell their story. That's why we have anniversaries, centennials, and history books. It's why Grandpa's face lights up when the little ones say, "Grandpa, tell us again about when. . . ."

My story began in 1945 when a strange pain in my right leg refused to go away. I soon found my eight-year-old self flat in bed at Gillette State Hospital for Crippled Children in St. Paul. It was tuberculosis of the hip joint, they said. The long and the short of it was that I spent the next five years in that hospital.

When I finally did return home, Gillette was seldom mentioned. But I needed to tell my story, to have others hear how my hip survived TB, how Gillette saved my life, and how the doctors enabled me to walk again. It was hard to talk about it, though. Instead, I dreamed of someday writing a book about it. Everything I needed for that was in my closet: childhood diaries, photo albums, and hospital records. How hard would it be to turn that into a memoir?

Well, it turned out to be a long, difficult process. And it didn't begin until I was 56 years old and wrote a rough draft. It was a disaster, so I committed myself to whatever it took to write my story well. I visited the public library and read everything they had on how to write, publish, and sell a book. I enrolled in writing courses at a local college and joined their writers' group. I lost myself in reliving those long-ago Gillette days, recalling details, bringing my old friends back to life. Slowly my manuscript took shape. I polished it until it was perfect. I gave it a name: *Varmints in My Vinegar Cup*. I sent it to publishers, but one after another, they rejected it. No market, they said. Then I'll publish it myself, I said. So I learned to format text, scan photos, and design covers. It took years before my creation was ready for printing. I took it to various printing companies. Each said they could make it into a lovely book—but the photos would not print well. Leave them out, they said. No way! I said. They're part of my story.

I was pondering what to do next when the Monastery's very own publishing entity, Duluth Benedictine Books, was born. They accepted my story and hired Tony Dierckins, book designer, to add a professional touch. Then away it all went to Bang Printing in Brainerd. On July 17, 2009, a truck carrying 1,500 beautiful, top-quality copies of my book arrived at the Monastery. My dream had come true.

All in all, it took sixteen years to get my story published. Would I do it again? Go through all of that for a book? Of course. It satisfied a basic need. And it's *my* book—*my* story. And it's out there!



Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress, and Sister Lucille at the Community's blessing of the new book Saturday, July 18, 2009

Photo by Sister Patricia Anne Williams

REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: THE CABIN IN MARYGLADE

By Sister Margaret Clarke

The final parcel of land purchased by the Sisters in 1907 which completed the quarter-section on the Kenwood site was the southwest corner of the campus, containing the quarry and the woods known as Maryglade. The origin of the cabin there was described by Sister Scholastica Bush in her Community annals of 1945. She reports: "I was talking with Sister Leona [Michlitch], treasurer of the Community for over twenty years. She told me that for some years we paid taxes on the sections of the campus on which there was neither a building nor a landscaped park nor a physical education lay-out. This came to a few thousand dollars. So to get Maryglade tax-exempt, we put the log cabin there. That cabin had been on a piece of property we inherited from Sister Gerard [Nolan]'s parents out a mile and a half beyond the Catholic cemetery. Our men took the cabin down and brought it here and set it up, St. Mary's [Hospital] standing the expense of the building and equipping of it. With that building erected there, that forty was tax exempt."



Above left: The cabin in its prime.

Above Right: Maryglade woods

Right: Postulants on a picnic at the cabin in 1946.

*Photos courtesy of
Monastery Archives*



The cabin was a woodsy retreat for both Sisters and college students. In the beginning it had glassed and screened windows, comfortable wicker furniture, drapes, rugs, and tableware for outdoor picnics. The earliest dated photo is from 1931, but the actual construction of the cabin may have been a few years earlier. As time passed, the cabin became a magnet for neighborhood adolescent boys, and the furnishings had to be removed as windows were broken. For several years it stood as an empty shelter, then one night it was set on fire and burned to the ground, and for several more years only the stone fireplace and cement slab remained. Now even the fireplace is gone.

In the days when there were large numbers of young Sisters, the surrounding area was carefully tended: a stone "bridge" was constructed over a (mostly nonexistent) stream, native plants were transplanted into garden beds, and the shrine to Our Lady of Victory was built. Remnants of all of these can still be seen by anyone who takes the path through the woods to the Valley overlook.

Highlights

Sisters Agnes Alich and Margaret Clarke Awarded Emerita Status at The College of St. Scholastica

Photo by Andy Therrien



At the end of the 2008-2009 academic year, after forty-one and forty years respectively of teaching science at the College, Sisters Agnes Alich (Chemistry) and Margaret Clarke (Physical Science) were designated Professors Emeritae in honor of their noteworthy contributions to the institution. Both Sisters continue to teach a reduced load of courses at the College. When asked what benefits this status conferred, Sister Margaret explained: "When I was in Ireland with our students in 2000, [rock star] Bono was given 'Freedom of the City of Dublin.' When TV reporters asked him the advantages, he replied, 'Now I can drive my cattle over the O'Connell Street Bridge, and

pasture my sheep on Stephen's Green.' I guess for us it would mean that we can sunbathe on the Science Lawn, go to most events at the Mitchell free, and use College stationery. And, because both of us have also achieved '800-pound gorilla' status, we are also both able to keep our offices in Science." Among Community members, Sisters Marguerite Baxter, Mary Richard Boo, Joan Braun, Mary Odile Cahoon, Monica Laughlin, Johnetta Maher, and Agatha Riehl are also faculty emeritae.

Msgr. Popesh Honored

By Sister Claudia Cherro

Sunday, June 14, on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Monsignor Bernard Popesh was our honored guest at a dinner in honor of his 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. A special table was set up at which sat some of his former pupils from among the Sisters.

Monsignor Popesh served many years as the Chaplain of the Sisters at the Monastery and as a teacher of religion at Stanbrook Hall. We had many a laugh over the days he had to discipline all of us high school girls

when he taught us. A lot of great memories were shared throughout the meal, among them how he edified the Sisters by his gentle, solicitous care of an aging Msgr. Lydon, who also served as Chaplain with Msgr. Popesh.

Msgr. Popesh expressed his deep appreciation for all the work of the Benedictine Sisters for the Diocese of Duluth, and told us he always makes sure to tell every new bishop that comes here of our history and contributions to this diocese.

After the meal a copy of the *Holy Rule*, illuminated by Sister Mary Charles McGough with calligraphy by Meredith Schifsky, was presented to Monsignor. It was an evening of happy laughs, warm memories, and deep gratitude.

Photo by Sister Patricia Anne Williams



Left to right: Sister Claudia Cherro, Sister Lois Eckes, Sister Pauline Micke, Msgr. Bernard Popesh, Sister Cabrini Beauvais, and Sister Claudia Riehl

Sister Devota LaVoie at St. James School

By Sister Dorene King

Photo by Sister Dorene King



There are not many people who can hold the attention of 3rd and 4th graders for a whole hour. Yet that is exactly what Sister Devota is able to do. Sister Devota was a guest speaker at St. James School, Duluth, on May 28. She shared with the children her memories of the Cloquet, Minnesota, fire and her vocation story.

Sister Devota was an eyewitness to the 1918 fire. The fire had left a vivid impression on her, as this frightening experience happened when she was eight years old.

The sharing concerning the Cloquet fire was a remarkable experience for all the listeners. She related, with dramatic flair, how the terrific winds lifted embers

and transported them throughout the city of Cloquet. Her family found shelter in the brick pump house in town. The fire did not follow them to the pump house but did manage to burn down the entire town of Cloquet. Even Sister Devota's home was destroyed, and the family lived in a barn until a new home could be built. Sister Devota did not live in the barn, but went to live with relatives whose house was located across from the Cloquet school. The fire of the Spirit burned in Devota, and four years later she became an aspirant at St. Scholastica.

The time with the students at St. James was a treat for the students and an opportunity for Sister Devota to return to a school where she had taught.

At the close of our time with the students, a third grader approached me and said, "I want to be a Sister." Perhaps in the future a young woman will ask to enter our Community and relate how Sister Devota's story fired her desire to become a Sister.

Beech Grove Retreat: *Suscipe*: "Receive Me O Lord"

By Sister Michelle Dosch

Every year Our Lady of Grace Monastery invites other monasteries to share in its yearly retreat. This year in June Sister Donna Schroeder and I went to Beech Grove, Indiana, to participate in the retreat on Monastic Profession given by Ephrem Hollerman, OSB, from St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota.

The beginning conference was on the *Suscipe*, which is deeply meaningful to every monastic who makes the Promises of Monastic Life. Augusta Raabe, OSB, states, "The words of the *Suscipe* have echoed as song in Benedictine hearts through the centuries. They express at once the lived reality and the mystery of Christian Monasticism." The entire phrase is "Receive me, O Lord, according to your Word, and I shall live. Do not fail me in my hope." This phrase is repeated three times by the Sisters who are pronouncing their promises or commitment.

A group of Benedictine prioresses was touring the monasteries of Europe when they came to Monte Carlo, a monastery founded by St. Benedict. They were gathered in prayer in the crypt of St. Benedict where his bones are buried and they spontaneously broke into singing the *Suscipe*—a very moving moment. Christopher Vuillaume, OSB, states "Monastic Profession is the act by which the monastic wants to seal the love of God, acknowledged in its full strength and unity. It is a covenant sealed in love, assumed because of love and in order to achieve union more and more identified, personal, and incarnate."

The rest of the retreat spelled out the different elements of our monastic life. These included: the Sacramentality of Monastic Commitment, the Kenosis of Christ, Humility—the Heart of Monastic Profession, Celebrating *Conversatio*, Stability, and Offering Obedience. The retreat ended by offering Preferred Ways of Relating to God, Self, and Others and the World. The retreat gave a renewed fervor and awareness of the profound meaning and lived experience of the *Suscipe* in the life of a monastic.

Hospitality Through Cleanliness

By Sister Martha Bechtold

“Everything is so clean and so beautiful,” is a remark that is commonly made by first-time guests as they arrive at the information desk of the Monastery. It is not by chance that the building which they have entered can impress visitors in that way. Credit for the cleanliness goes to the staff of our Environmental Services Department, a dedicated group of workers who do not leave a speck of dust in its place or a wall smudge intact. Their contribution to our value of hospitality is immediately evident.

It is the people, their pride in the work they accomplish, and the products they use, that bring success to the Environmental Services Department. Longevity in their work at the Monastery is a key factor to their success. Full-time employees’ years’ of service range from thirty-four to four. Their on-the-job training has been so thorough that they have confidence in the methods they use to clean public spaces or private rooms, do heavy-duty laundry, or answer emergency needs that arise in any household. Each employee has her own routine, but, as a department, they have also been cross-trained to step into any position in the event of an absence of any member.

Job satisfaction comes with the cleanliness they can provide in their work area and the trust they have earned from the residents of the private rooms by their consistent good work. They have learned to keep confidentiality where it is needed and to respect the many different needs of the infirm residents. They stopped counting compliments received for their good quality of work long ago but nevertheless are pleased with the results of their jobs done well.

Photo by Andy Therrien



Environmental Services left to right, front row: Liane Valentine, Christine Tezak, Mirjana Hietala, Janice Martin, and Kathleen Elden. Back Row: Susan Pearson, Environmental Services Manager Lisa Askelson, Mary Lowney, and Bozena Hellem.

Typically, environmental service workers use many chemical-based cleaning products in their daily routines. In recent years our Environmental Services Department has transitioned to all green cleaning products. It is to the benefit of all our workers that they now use products that do not jeopardize their health or the environment.

It has taken time for green products to be developed that perform as effectively as the standard chemical cleaning products. The first trials by our department were with glass-cleaning products that were not ammonia-based but performed as well. That product is now on the market. So, gone are the spray bottles which contained chemicals, the mist that was breathed in by the workers, and the residue that was left on adjacent surfaces. Soon other effective green products came on the market. Today, all the cleaning products used by our Environmental Services Department have a health hazard rating of zero. Happily, they are also more cost-effective.

Our environmental service workers also work magic—with “Magic Erasers,” that is! With a little wetting of this new across-the-counter sponge and a swipe across a wall smudge, walls and other surfaces are kept unmarked, keeping walls cleaner and making repainting less frequent.

At the Monastery’s pre-Christmas, “make-your-own banana split” party, environmental service workers are honored for their years of service. But we try to extend our appreciation for the excellent quality of the work they perform to each work day, even when banana splits aren’t served!

Highlights, *Continued*

BSWR: Benedictine Sisters Workshop and Retreat

By Sister Dorene King

What is BSWR? The initials and the spelling out of those initials cannot capture the depth of the experience. It is designed to help prepare Benedictine Sisters for their final profession.

I had the privilege and opportunity to attend BSWR this summer in Yankton, South Dakota. Joining me in Yankton were other women from Benedictine communities in Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

I was impressed by the well-prepared and diverse presentations. The topics covered all the monastic promises, values, and even the life-long practice of discernment.

The presentation on discernment gifted me with several helpful statements. The statements reinforced the need to listen with the ear of the heart and to pay attention to the data which my mind receives. I was intrigued by the speaker’s insistence that God has a preference for my life. How open and free am I to listen to that loving preference as it is revealed through others, scripture, life circumstances, and inner movements?

In addition to the presentations there were opportunities for developing our creativity and nurturing new friendships. We had opportunities to sculpt with clay and to let our light shine by working with stained glass. We were encouraged to recreate with one another, so one evening we went on a group walk to savor ice cream and discovered that we savored being together.

The experience of BSWR reinforced my gratefulness to be a member of St. Scholastica Monastery. In this deeply rooted Benedictine community the nutrients of love, prayer, and enrichment will continue to form and sustain me.



Sister Dorene King, far right, and other attendees

TANZANIAN JOURNAL

By Sister Beverly Raway

This summer 14 travelers responded to the call to journey to Tanzania to be part of the service-learning experience with the Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes in Chipole and Imiliwaha. The journey helped all of us to increase our awareness of the needs of others, to grow personally, and to forge friendships with people we had never met before. Coming from a variety of backgrounds, we learned to use our talents to support each other and to challenge each other to try new things as we experienced the ups and downs of travel together.

As a preparation for this trip, co-leaders Sister Beverly Raway and Dave Schuettler offered a spring course and invited speakers who shared expertise on cultural competence, Tanzanian history, global economics, health issues, and African drumming. Each class was concluded with a lesson in conversational Swahili. All participants were encouraged to keep a journal and to share reflections based on the book *The Way of the Traveler* by Joseph Dispenza. Thanks to generous donors we packed 15 duffle bags, each with 50 pounds of medical and teaching supplies (including 100 pounds of medicines), clothing for the orphans, two microscopes, equipment for monitoring blood sugar and blood pressure, and 14 shoe boxes full of toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Excerpts from our group journals chronicled our experiences and memories. Karrli identified that expectations were high as we began our journey. She wrote, "My hope and prayer for everyone is that we are able to seize every moment and opportunity that comes our way that is unique to each of us...May [we] be one another's strong shoulder through every obstacle."

Our senses were overwhelmed by first-time sights and sounds of our new home. For some, the ocean was a first-time experience. Joe recorded, "The tide was out and hundreds of sand crabs were hard at work burrowing themselves homes before the tide returned. It was a beautiful and interesting sight."

Traveling south by bus from Dar es Salaam to join the Sisters, we experienced both physical stress and overwhelming beauty. A traveler noted, "We spent about 12 very uncomfortable hours on this bus. After about 3 hours the bus stopped for the first bathroom break...Some found the nearest bush, while others were less modest and used the nearest patch of ground." We passed through a breathtaking array of ever-changing landscapes; dry savannah gave way to hillsides of massive baobab trees, followed by towering mountainsides with lush growth.

Group members were awed by the welcome they received and amazed by what the Sisters have accomplished as the members found their niche in the working phase of our journey. "Everything you can imagine is done here. [The Sisters] are basically self-sufficient. There [are] gardens...farms, candle-making and shoe-making [shops], a dress shop, a dispensary, schools, orphanage, and much more." Ashley wrote, "I am extremely excited for the opportunity to spend more time here and can't wait to discover what else occurs here."

Holly described the delight of meeting the orphans for the first time: "As the five of us walked back to our sleeping quarters, the children from the orphanage came running out of the playground. I like to think they were chanting, 'They're here! They're here!' because their shouts were so joyous. One of the children bounded into my arms, and I instantly felt a connection to this place."

At Chipole, Corrine and Jacqui summarized the group experiences this way. "We are really getting into the swing of things here We have done many different activities during our time and are still trying new things... teaching in the primary school. . .taking blood pressures for the Sisters. . .[making] peanut butter for the group. We've been helping the children with their baths every night and in the morning as well. . .and we gave a toothbrushing lesson, which was very entertaining."



Above left: The Tanzania 2009 group near waterfalls: Mt. Kilimanjaro. Left to right front row: Corrine Schraufnagel, Mary Kitterman, Holly Thompson, Chris Chapman, Karli Franke, Sue Wilkinson, Annamarie Dinyer. Back Row: Sister Beverly Raway, Joe Woehrle, Jacqueline Wicklund, Porsche Peak, Ashley Cummings, Dave Schuettler, Maurita McKay. Above: Toothbrushing lessons in a classroom at the orphanage—Imiliwaha. Sister Beverly, JoeWoehrle, Sister Afra and children. Left: Annamarie and Karli with contented little ones after their baths in the orphanage at Chipole.

Maurita McKay, nurse practitioner and graduate of CSS, carried out her Master's degree project in the secondary schools at both Chipole and Imiliwaha. Porsche noted the enthusiasm of the group: "Teaching the girls about HIV/AIDS turned out to be a successful project. Maurita was working so very hard on [it]. I have to say that after both classes today. . . I am proud to be a part of such a great group."

Joe, a second year nursing student, summarized his experience of the birth of a child: "3.3 kg – that is the weight of the first child I helped to bring into this world. At four o'clock on the dot, just as Sister Regnada said, a healthy baby boy fell into my hands." After the delivery "we opened the doors to leave the room....waiting for us was the baby's grandmother. I heard her say "Asante Sana...Asante [Thank you very much]. She wrapped her arms around me and there we stood both overwhelmed by the extraordinary moment we had just experienced."

The children in particular stole our hearts and made our anticipated leave-taking difficult. Dave wrote, "On Wednesday we'll leave and I can imagine that my time. . . had some (I hope) positive impact on [this child's] life, while knowing full well that he will not remember me, yet he will in some way impact me."

After heartfelt farewells and exchange of gifts and hugs, the final phase of our journey took us back north for the safari part of our trip. On our last day Jacqui wrote, "The past few days have gone by in a blur. Returning...we have had some time to reflect on our amazing trip and the glory of the past few days on beautiful safari...I know none of us are leaving the same person; we are coming home changed for the better. I know that part of us will remain, and so much we will take with us.... I have learned so much about a rich culture and also about myself.... We have all had the time of our lives and become close to each other in the transformation of our hearts."

The 2009 group extends thanks to all who supported us. We also send warmest greetings, prayers and thanks from Mother Asante, Mother Clothilde and the Sisters of St. Agnes' and St. Gertrude's Convents, Tanzania, to all of you.

In loving memory

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Photo by Sister Edith Bogue



*Sister Bernadette Bergeron and
Sister Charlene Schoen*



*Sister Bernadette and
Sister Rebecca Burggraff*

Sister Bernadette (Rita) Bergeron OSB (December 2, 1915 — June 19, 2009)

Sister Bernadette (Rita) Bergeron, OSB, 93, St. Scholastica Monastery, died at the Monastery on Friday, June 19, 2009. She entered the Duluth Benedictine community on August 30, 1941, and professed monastic vows on July 11, 1943. She was in the 66th year of her monastic profession. She celebrated her Silver Jubilee of monastic profession August 15, 1968; her Golden Jubilee July 11, 1993; and her Diamond Jubilee August 15, 2003.

Sister Bernadette was born December 2, 1915, in Cloquet, Minnesota. She received her elementary schooling at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School in Cloquet, attended Stanbrook Hall in Duluth, and finished her high school education in Cloquet. She received an elementary teacher's certificate from St. Cloud State College in 1935 and a B.S. degree from The College of St. Scholastica in 1956.

Sister Bernadette taught elementary grades at Cathedral Grade School and St. John the Evangelist School in Duluth; St. Francis School, Brainerd; Holy Name School, Wayzata; St. Timothy School, Chicago; and St. Thomas the Apostle School, Phoenix. She taught for 23 years at St. Bridget's School, Minneapolis, and then served as school librarian. Later, she was the school librarian at Our Lady of Victory School, Minneapolis. She also taught summer religious education in several locations throughout the Duluth Diocese. In 1996 Sister Bernadette returned to the Monastery where she did volunteer services—assisting at the information desk, working in the transportation office and spiritual resource center, and being a companion to Sisters.

Sister Bernadette expressed gratitude for her parents who were excellent models of Christian living. They, her parish priest, and the Sisters who taught her all nurtured her vocation to the religious life. Religion was her favorite subject to teach, and she enjoyed going through literature books in order to find good stories for her students. The Franciscan homilist at her funeral compared her to St. Francis of Assisi because of her love for nature and animals. It was said she sometimes picked up pennies on the sidewalks and used them to buy seed for birds. The Gospel reading for the funeral seemed appropriate because she, too, like the vigilant virgins who kept their lamps burning, kept her lamp burning in order to give to others light, clarity and warmth.

Sister Bernadette was preceded in death by her parents, Ernest and Hermina; her stepmother, Marie; her sisters, Helen Bergeron and Beatrice Benson; and her brother Theodore. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, she is survived by an extended family and many good friends.

Counting Our Blessings

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Everyone loves to hear good news! And so I'm happy to share with you the joy that my Community experienced this August as three of our young members advanced to the next stage of formation in their preparation for becoming professed members of St. Scholastica Monastery—as detailed in this issue. The joy radiated by the new members themselves was mirrored in the profound sense of gratitude and new burst of hope felt deeply by Community members who have long waited for such a day. Just as persons rejoicing at the birth of a new child or the happiness of a newly married couple may also ponder what lies in their future, our monastic family too can reflect on the significance of this event for our future and for our place within the American Catholic Church.

Coinciding with our August ceremonies, came publication of the long-awaited report on *Recent Vocations to Religious Life in the U.S.* conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The comprehensive survey conducted by the National Religious Vocation Conference aimed to clarify and assess what is happening in the area of religious vocations in all communities (outside of vocations to diocesan priesthood) and to gather statistics and basic information from the multitudinous religious institutes concerning their vocational promotion efforts as well as the characteristics of their new members. Questionnaires were sent to nearly 4,000 men and women currently in formation and those who professed final commitment since 1993, seeking to identify what attracted them to religious life and to their particular community. This major study shatters a number of myths concerning the vocation scene, contains a few surprises, and will be an invaluable tool in guiding our vocational efforts. Space limitations here allow for only a few highlights from the report which can be accessed in its entirety at www.nrvn.net.

In summary, most U.S. religious communities report diminishing numbers with aging populations and few vocations (about 59,000 religious Sisters and nuns in 2009 as compared to 180,000 in the 1960s, and 91% of current members are over age 60) but some communities are experiencing significant growth. While 66% of women's communities report having at least one or two women in formation, St. Scholastica is among the 20% who have five or more members in formation. But the best news of the report is that more young people are showing an interest in religious life than in the past few years and are seeking it primarily by a sense of call, a desire for prayer, spiritual growth, and community. More than anything else what attracts them to a religious community is the example of its members, their sense of joy, down-to-earth nature, community life and prayer life—all of which were cited by our candidates as their reasons for choosing St. Scholastica Monastery.

While we rejoice in the remarkable women God has led to our Community, we know we cannot rest on our laurels. We need to increase our prayers for God's continued guidance that we remain true to our calling and thus attract other women to seek God with us in the monastic way of life. This is a graced moment in our history and for the Church. We will need to continue to read the signs of the times and respond to the spiritual needs of *this* generation. The brave women who have found in our Community what their hearts are seeking have given us new hope and confidence for the future. With them may we "prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life."

St. Scholastica Monastery
Office of Development
1001 Kenwood Avenue
Duluth, MN 55811-2300

Address Service Requested

Auto
Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Duluth, MN
Permit No. 708



*“In the autumn of our lives...
we experience great gratitude
for what is and for all
that has gone before”*

Sister Mary E. Penrose
(Reflection page 3)