



PATHWAYS

Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters

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Letter from the Prioress

There are many images used to describe our Lenten journey toward the joy of Holy Easter. The gorgeous cover of this issue of *Pathways* evokes one of them. Just as new life persistently breaks through the crust of earth hardened by layers of winter and bursts forth into brilliant and delicate bloom, so Christ in His persistent love breaks open our hearts, loosening the bond of whatever enslaves us. Through our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we let God's grace work the earth of our hearts so that Easter life can burst forth anew within us. This wondrous movement of Divine grace is beautifully described in the following poem by Edwina Gateley (from *Whispers*, used with permission).



Persistent God

Persistent God!
What is it with you
that you are ever
hovering near,
unseen presence
like the air
we breathe – so unthinkingly?

Persistent God!
What is it with you,
that you so believe
we can become
as angels
shimmering with holy grace
and powerful tenderness?

Persistent God!
What is it with you
that still,
against all our small dark doings
you wait around
in ridiculous longing
to raise us
to the stars?

Persistent God!
Persistent God!
What is it with you
that you never cease
to be suffused
with great hot desire
to scoop us up
and love us?



May we let God “scoop us up and love us” into the fullness of all we are called to be, “shimmering with holy grace and powerful tenderness” for the full-flowering of all our human family and the care of our precious Earth.

Lovingly, with deep gratitude and prayer in Christ who Eastered in us,

Sister Lois Eckes

Sister Lois Eckes

Going Home

By Sister Linda Wiggins

When I received a phone call that my oldest brother Fred, who lived in Akron, Ohio, had died this past New Year's Eve, I was stunned. I could not even cry for over a week because his death was so unexpected; even though he was eighty-six years old, he still lived in his own home, still drove wherever he wanted to go, and still controlled all of his affairs in the organized manner he approached any life circumstance.

Fred was a World War II vet, a civil engineer, a proud father of four children, a successful businessman, an avid golfer, a steak lover. Witty, intelligent, impatient, and intensely private, he believed in his own capabilities to handle life situations—even beyond the grave. Since he was not religious, he left written instructions that he did not want a funeral service. Again, I was stunned. No formal service, no chance to see him “one more time,” no opportunity to share grief with my family. My brother, a constant in my life for sixty-seven years was, simply put, gone.

Living in relationship with one another is a “given” in being human. No human life exists without being in relationship with numerous other lives. Usually our thoughts of “what heaven will be like” include the assumption we will be with others. We live in communities; we work in communities; we die in communities—from familial to global to universal. Henri Nouwen wrote about his mother's death in his book *In Memoriam* and observed: “It is precisely in the moments when we are most human, most in touch with what binds us together, that we discover the hidden depths of life.”

How true Nouwen's observation has become for me. In walking through my brother's life, remembering numerous discussions we had, even more numerous those we did not have, events that brought us closer together, his deep pride in his children, his wonderful smile and infectious laugh, his accomplishments, his mistakes, his insistence on having the last word (which by the way he had), I realized not only how much I loved him, but how much he loved me despite our age difference of nineteen years. How enriched my life was because he was my brother.

Being “most human” in the sense Nouwen speaks of in the above passage, consists of being the most present to others we can be in mind, soul, and spirit. Then we can begin to “be” with that person. We can begin to “know” this person in the deepest sense. Only when we are willing to practice this deep knowing will we be able to acknowledge how dear the other person is, how precious is life itself.

Certainly, Christ is *present* to us in this deep knowing. For the first time I understand in an entirely different way why we need the season of Lent in our lives. We need to be *present* to Christ in order to *know* him. Lent is not just a time of self-denial, often in the form of banishing chocolate from your life for forty days; it is not just faithfully saying Lenten prayers each day at a certain time; it is not just suffering through very disciplined exercises physical or mental. In fact, Lent is not about our suffering at all. What Lent offers is the opportunity to walk intimately with Christ through reading the Gospels with the mind of Christ. We need to live with Him by being *present* to Him, by being there when he leaves his human family and stays at the temple; when he struggles to be both human and divine at the same time; when he arrives too late to keep a dear one from dying; when he walks through crowd after crowd of people who beg for his attention, or ignore him entirely, or mock him and scold him.

In his poem *Seven Stanzas At Easter*, John Updike writes:

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping, transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the
faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door.

Lenten days are necessary for us to know Christ—his suffering, his enormous love for us. As Thomas Merton wrote in *To Know The Cross*, to know Christ's love “is not merely to know the story of his love, but to experience in our spirit that we are loved by him.” Lenten days keep renewing each year our need to be present to Christ, to be present to the sacredness of life. Is Fred, then, lost to eternal life because he did not know Christ? I cannot believe that to be the case. Mysterious are God's ways, but in the end I believe it will be many prayers of his family and his Sister sister and the enormous love God showers on us through Christ that will have the last word: *welcome*.

REMEMBERING THINGS PAST—THE BEST OF TIMES, THE WORST OF TIMES

By Sister Margaret Clarke

The year 1918, particularly its last quarter, was a period of both good and bad times for Duluth and its Benedictine community. Under the capable leadership of Mother Celestine Sullivan, nearly \$200,000 of corporation debt had been paid off by raising the rates at the hospitals and community-owned schools, asking for increased salaries for Sisters teaching in the parish schools, and selling the Kerst property near downtown St. Paul. Community membership was increasing steadily as well as enrollment at the Academy and College, and with the end of the “war to end all wars” in November and the easing of government restrictions on building, the Sisters were ready to think about enlarging both the Villa and St. Mary’s Hospital. Good times, indeed!



*Duluth & Northeastern Railroad yards after fire.
Photo from the Minnesota Historical Society*

In mid-October the bad times began. On October 10, a spark from the engine of a train kindled a fire in a drought-ridden wooded area near Cloquet, and by October 12 fire was raging through the area, eventually covering 1,500 square miles and coming very close to the Duluth city limits. More than 11,000 people lost their homes, and 450 died. The fire was visible from the Villa grounds. Refugees flooded into St. Mary’s Hospital, and all unused bedding and mattresses were taken from the Villa to St. Mary’s. Sisters Devota LaVoie and Estelle Panger are among those still living whose families were affected by this disaster.

In January of 1918 the much-loved first Bishop of Duluth, James McGolrick, had died. His successor, Right Rev. John T. McNicholas, O.P., was to arrive in Duluth

for his installation on October 15. Much to his surprise, he was greeted at the depot not by an enthusiastic crowd, but by only a few clergy and laymen. Immediately following the Cloquet fire, a rapidly-spreading epidemic of Spanish Influenza had broken out in Duluth. The City Council had ordered the closing of all meeting halls, schools, and many public buildings. On October 18, a private installation ceremony was held at Sacred Heart Cathedral for Bishop McNicholas. One of his first acts was to approve the request of the Benedictine Sisters to care for the fire and influenza victims, and suggested that it be done without expectation of pay.

Many teaching Sisters who were free due to the closing of the schools were sent to serve in improvised hospitals set up by the Board of Health. Sisters Bede Raetz, Blanche Salget, and Antonia LeBlanc were sent to the Shrine Auditorium on October 16. By the end of their third day they had 89 patients, and Sisters Rosalia Friedsam and Imelda Cousin joined the caregivers. The Health Department provided food, medicines, and nursing materials, and as the cases multiplied, more Sisters—Julia Quesnell, Cleopha Milette, Dionysia Bachand, Pierre Robillard and Humilitas Benoit—came to help. All but Sister Blanche were elementary school teachers.

When St. Mary's Hospital was filled to capacity, the Community opened a section of Sacred Heart Institute for patients, including two of the diocesan clergy. Sisters Jane Reilly (a nurse) and Thomas O'Grady with other Sisters served there. At the end of October, the Moose Hall in the West End was opened, and teaching Sisters from the west end schools, Sisters Ursula Kocianchich, Gregory Mannheim, Blaise Fortier, and Pauline Dunphy among others were on the staff.



Refugees and relief workers sort through stacks of donated clothes at the Duluth Armory. Photo by Hugh McKenzie from the collection of the Carlton County Historical Society.

"The work was toilsome, extending from twelve to fourteen hours a day. But it was a good work, and we did it gladly."

Sister Blanche wrote: "The work was toilsome, extending from twelve to fourteen hours a day. But it was a good work, and we did it gladly. I know several of the sick who were brought back to the practice of their religion, and I believe that all those who died were well prepared. We deeply appreciated the kindness of the Duluth Health Department. Every morning a police car came to take us to the nearest church for Mass." The epidemic continued through December and into January, and by the time that it had abated, over 150 persons had died. Sister Gregory remembered that Christmas: "Many of our patients were elderly, and when the disease hung on, they became discouraged. I went around several times a day trying to cheer them up. Mr. Orchard of the Health Department was wonderful. He gave us money to throw a party with all the trimmings at Christmas. All patients received funny presents which made them happy for a week."

The Community did not escape its personal bereavement. Sister Angela Toben, age 32, a talented young artist, died in November, and Sister Eugene Neddeau, a cook at St. Ann's home, over a year later.

The makeshift hospital/shelters remained open until the end of May 1919, by which time most of the Sisters had returned to their school duties, and Community life had returned to "normal." The Sisters approved the construction of the first Tower Hall tower, a wing which would provide space for a new chapel, a gymnasium-theater, and an addition to St. Mary's Hospital. The "bad times" in Duluth were over. . . at least for the time being.

--Much of this information comes from an unpublished history of the Community by Sister Agnes Somers.

The Shalom Program for Spiritual Direction

By Sister Michelle Dosch

The Shalom Program is designed to prepare persons for a ministry of spiritual direction within the diverse contexts of contemporary life.

- It asks of its candidates a readiness to reflect on their own spiritual journey in community with others, and against the background of a long, varied, and evolving religious tradition. Readings, discussions, workshops, and retreats will assist participants to become conscious of the spiritual dimensions of all of life. The participants are assisted by the staff in developing the basic skills currently recognized in “spiritual direction.”
- It offers a two-year formal apprentice program of study, prayer, and reflection undertaken in a community of faith. The program focuses on both transformation and information. It is designed to enable participants to become more attentive to the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The program seeks to develop a heightened awareness of the many ways God is present in and to the world.

Program Description:

The Shalom Training Program for Spiritual Direction is now in its sixth year. We began in the fall of 2007 with 33 applicants. In the spring of 2013 we will have graduated 75 people with certificates for Spiritual Direction.

Since this is an ecumenical program, we have had a great diversity of people from different traditions. The program incorporates the Benedictine spirituality, Western spiritual classics, forms of prayers, contemporary spiritual writers, and psychology. It is firmly grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition of spirituality, incorporating insights and practices from the arts and other traditions within the culture.

Participants will be asked to fulfill the following requirements:

- Regular and active participation in all the sessions.
- Undertaking a personal program of spiritual direction with a qualified guide.
- Verbatims, reflection papers, and attendance at workshop retreats sponsored by the Shalom Program.
- A culminating project that encompasses learning, experience, and overall growth in the spirituality of the participant.
- A readiness to listen to and be transformed according to God’s call.

Certificate, Fees, and Contact:

A certificate is awarded at the completion of the requirements of the program. This award assumes a commitment to further prayer, study, and service. Presently the fee for the Shalom Program is \$600 per year. This covers tuition, retreats, workshops, and sessions with a mentor. If you are interested in discerning whether or not this program might be appropriate for you, please contact Sister Michelle Dosch at (218) 723-6581 or michelledosch@yahoo.com.



Shalom Program Facilitators: Sister Jeanne Ann Weber; Pastor Al Hendrickson; Sister Michelle Dosch; Father John Welsh, O.Carm.; and Sister Jean Maher



Quotes from Participants in the Shalom Program

"Throughout the Shalom Program I feel I have grown in faith and understanding. It has been a trail of opening, deepening, clarifying, and learning."

"It has been a rich spiritual journey with other pilgrims who bring a spirit of joy and nurturing to all of us. They both challenge and encourage spiritual development."

"The Shalom Program offers a great learning experience. Its speakers, books, group exercises, writing and reflection open up a whole new way of looking at the spiritual life."

"The threads of God's healing come together here at Shalom as compassion and love flow from Creator God in, through, and in the midst of each of us."

"The Shalom Program has allowed me to strengthen my desire to serve in a layperson ministry within my church community. It has strengthened my ability to maintain a kind heart."

"It is the listening, discovering, the holiness and oneness we share with each other."

"Shalom has been a meaningful and blessed experience in my 80 years of life. I have met many friends, benefitted from the gifts and expertise of the leaders."

"The Shalom Program has been like an oasis in the desert for my spirit. Growing to love each person in our group has been a gift."

"Shalom has invited and guided me to journey deeper into my soul. I have learned skills of holy listening of others."

Photos by Sister Lisa Maurer



Catholic and Benedictine Identity: Distinguishing Characteristics for the Benedictine Health System

By Becky Urbanski, Ed.D., Senior Vice President, Mission, Marketing and Education, Benedictine Health System

Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as **Christ**

As a health care ministry sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, the Benedictine Health System (BHS) is charged with advancing the Sisters' long-term care mission. Each day, the Benedictine Health System cares for thousands of individuals—mostly seniors but also others—on nearly 40 campuses in six states. The System employs more than six thousand skilled professionals all dedicated to keeping the System running smoothly and efficiently while delivering quality health care to all those we serve.

At the Benedictine Health System, our commitment to mission is the foundation of all we do. We work to integrate, communicate, and celebrate the rich history, values, and charisms of our sponsor. Our work at BHS is about the nurse dedicated to deliver the very best care to each resident, the wellness director who strives to develop and adapt programs and activities for each person's needs, and the facility engineer who keeps the building safe, warm, and clean. Mission is all-encompassing at BHS and is a defining element to our culture. It is what our residents, family members, staff, and others remember about their experience at BHS.

While we have a mature and successful mission integration program at BHS, for several years we wanted to further explore and define what makes the System unique in its Catholic and Benedictine heritage. We wanted to more fully examine what it means to be a Catholic and Benedictine long-term care organization. In the past, discussions had been held at several governance levels, but it was at a spring 2011 meeting of the BHS Mission Committee of the BHS Board of Directors when the idea was more clearly embraced and took hold.

Following this meeting a small work group was appointed to discuss and discern the topic and to complete a process that would identify these unique elements for BHS. This work group consisted of BHS Mission Committee member Mary Frances Skala and committee chair Sister Lois Eckes, OSB, as well as Bill Hall, director of mission integration, Sister Mary Christa Kroening, OSB, senior consultant for liturgical and ritual services, and Becky Urbanski, senior vice president for mission, marketing and education at BHS. The work group was also supported by BHS mission integration administrative assistant, Key Leland. Using an earlier Catholic identity document as discussion background, the group met several times over the summer and fall of 2011.

The work group had three main objectives for the task. They were:

- To inspire and educate senior leaders at BHS on the Catholic and Benedictine identity elements unique to BHS,
- To provide a foundational guide for use by BHS and its Participating Organizations as well as for education to prospective and new organizations joining the System,
- To provide representative examples that demonstrate the special characteristics that are alive within the System.



*From the Illustrated Rule of St. Benedict, Meredith Schifsky, calligrapher, and
+Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB, illuminator.*

From discussion and background reading, the work group developed a framework that focused on eight main elements or what we now call “Catholic and Benedictine Identity: Distinguishing Characteristics for the Benedictine Health System.” Within each characteristic are a set of examples of how this characteristic is lived at BHS.

The eight distinguishing characteristics are:

- BHS identifies itself with the healing ministry of Jesus through our Benedictine heritage and the Catholic Church.
- BHS is faithful to the charism of the Benedictine tradition.
- BHS is faithful to the ethical and social teachings of the Catholic Church.
- BHS is committed to being a socially responsible employer.
- BHS understands and supports health care as a basic human right with special concern for the underserved and those in need.
- BHS seeks to foster communities to promote the common good leading to justice and peace.
- BHS embraces health care in a holistic way.
- BHS honors the Paschal Mystery in which suffering and death are understood as leading to fullness of life.

These distinguishing characteristics and their examples were presented to the BHS Board of Directors for approval in November of 2011, then approved by the Benedictine Sisters Benevolent Association, and finally were published in booklet form for use within the System.

The story does not end here. Once the document was published, it was important to communicate and educate BHS leaders and staff members about the distinguishing characteristics. A major presentation was scheduled as part of the annual onsite BHS Unified Leadership Team (ULT) meeting in March of 2012 in Minneapolis.

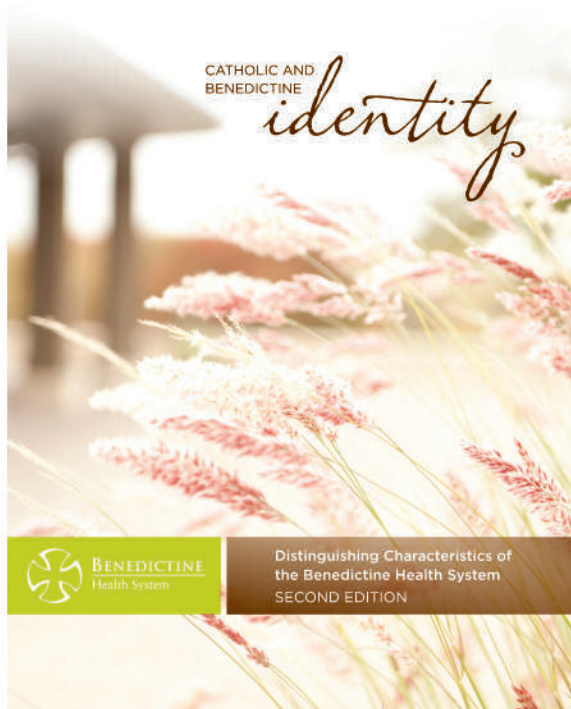
The Unified Leadership Team consists of the administrator of each BHS Participating Organization as well as other key corporate leaders and totals about 85 members. The work group that developed the distinguishing characteristics led this presentation that included comments from both Sister Lois and Mary Frances Skala. In her introduction, Sister Lois stated “This is a historical moment in Catholic health care when so many other organizations are changing their identity, BHS is steadfast in its commitment to our Catholic and Benedictine heritage.” The presentation included a thorough review of how the distinguishing characteristics were developed, a BHS board perspective as well as small group discussion by the ULT members. It is safe to say that this important document and tool was enthusiastically received by the System leadership.

For organizational growth as well as performance improvement and excellence, a logical next step was to develop an assessment tool based on the distinguishing characteristics to determine strengths and areas for improvement at each facility. Leading this effort is BHS mission director, Bill Hall. This assessment tool is currently being pilot tested at a small number of BHS facilities and will be rolled out to all facilities in 2013.

The development, education, and adoption of the *Catholic and Benedictine Identity: Distinguishing Characteristics of the Benedictine Health System* has been completely embraced by leadership and staff members in a very short amount of time. The supply of the original document was exhausted within three months resulting in a second edition being printed less than six months later. With this reprint, supplies of the document were distributed to each facility and were made available on the BHS intranet site.

It is important to note that the distinguishing characteristics are considered a dynamic work and will evolve over time as the System matures. It will continue to be adapted as needed as we carry on Jesus’ healing ministry and the mission of our sponsor, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery.

To receive a copy of the *Catholic and Benedictine Identity: Distinguishing Characteristics of the Benedictine Health System*, please call 218-786-2370.



Benedictine Friends Across Campus

By Sister Mary Rochefort

Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount can balance their worth (Sirach 6:15). The Sisters and students who are part of the Benedictine Friends Across Campus know well the truth of these words. They are about developing lifelong friendships.

Benedictine Friends Across Campus Program began several years ago when students at The College of St. Scholastica expressed a desire to become more acquainted with the Sisters at St. Scholastica Monastery. The program is coordinated by Campus Ministry and the Mission Integration office. Currently, there are approximately 20 Sisters and 50 students involved.

The group meets three times during each academic semester and engages in a variety of activities. In between the large group gatherings, Sisters and their individual friend(s) get together to share one-on-one. The group ends the year with a brunch at which the graduating students are honored and everyone else says, "See you in the fall!"

It is a joy to witness the enthusiasm of the group. It is definitely a relationship-building program. Both Sisters and students look forward to the events. Some quotes from participants include the following:



Sister Mary Josephine Torborg (center) with Benedictine Friends Across Campus and the daisy blanket

"I have been involved in Benedictine Friends since the program began. I have been very fortunate to journey with a number of students for their entire four years at The College of St. Scholastica. It has been a blessing to see them embrace the Benedictine values more and more as part of their daily life."

(Sister Mary Josephine Torborg)

"My experience with the Benedictine Friends has been energizing. Their youth, their enthusiasm for life, their hopes for the future are inspiring."

(Sister Mary Rae Higgins)



Sister Marie Therese Poliquin (left), Sister Luella Wegscheid (third from left), and students

"Benedictine Friends has been a great opportunity for me to build community at St. Scholastica. The Sisters in the Monastery are a joy to be around, and I am truly blessed to be a part of this great program that bridges student life and the Monastery. This is one group that has helped me to further the sense of home that I feel at St. Scholastica."

(Kenzie Meagher, Student Coordinator)

"My eight years in Friends Across Campus have brought me into contact with girls I am proud to call friends. What a great program this is!"

(Sister Marie Therese Poliquin)

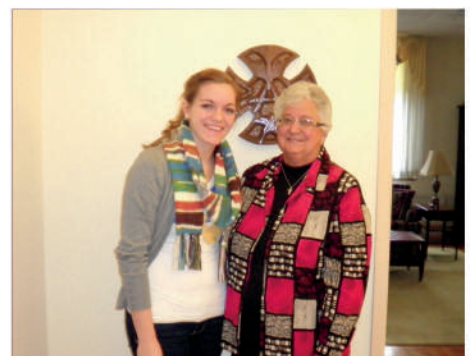
Photos by Sister Mary Rochefort and Benedictine Friends



L to R: Benedictine Friend, Sister Mary Catherine Shambour, Sister Martha Bechtold, and Postulant Kathleen Del Monte



Sister Luella Wegscheid with students and blanket (Blankets are given to the Life House for teens.)



Kenzie Meagher, Benedictine Friends Across Campus Student Coordinator, and Sister Mary Rochefort, Vice President of Mission Integration at CSS

Benedictine Center of Spirituality

By Sister Pauline Micke, Director

“Let the Holy Spirit . . . “

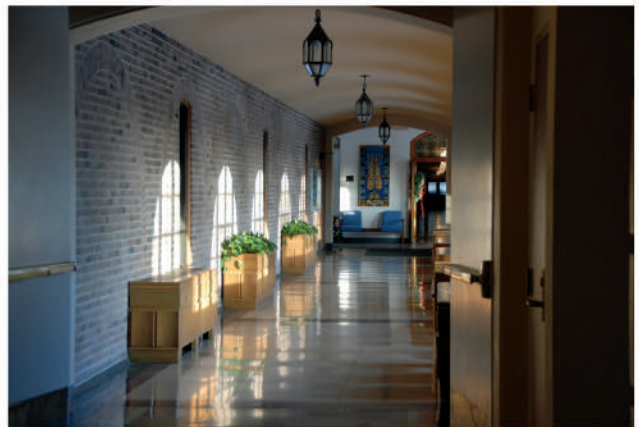
About two years ago a woman named Jennifer came to St. Scholastica Monastery hoping to do an article on the Benedictine Center of Spirituality. Since I was away from the Monastery at a meeting, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber met with her. Her article was about retreat centers and other opportunities for people to renew themselves. Time went on and this meeting passed from our memory until last October/November when I began to receive phone calls and emails from all over the United States. When I asked callers how they had heard of us, the reply was, “Oh, I saw it in the article in the October/November issue of AARP.”

The Holy Spirit does work in mysterious ways.

To date I have had 55 inquiries (45 phone calls and 10 emails) from people in 25 states. The pictures here were taken by one of the retreatants during his time here at the end of December. These photos capture his time of quiet reflection at the Monastery. Our God continues to lead us along varied paths—and we are blessed!



Morning photo of Chapel



Cloister walk in morning sunlight



5:30 a.m. photo of Gethsemane cemetery

THANKS, AUNT ROSE!

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour



A very long time ago when I had just finished college and informed my parents that I wished to enter religious life, my dear godmother Aunt Rose came to see me. I will always remember the ecstatic look of joy on her face, her eyes and voice beaming with pride as she strongly embraced me exclaiming, “You will be receiving Holy Communion every day? You will *have* to become a saint!” My mother’s initial response had also come from the heart but with a different twist, “We’re not that kind of people.” Both reactions display two fundamental truths about a religious vocation: it is an inexpressible gift for which no one can ever be sufficiently worthy.

As the years pass by, I often recall those initial reactions and wonder how I’m fulfilling them (and can also chuckle at Mom’s additional comment, “You’ll be home in two weeks!”). Unlike the earthly food we eat that becomes a part of us, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ has the purpose and the power to transform us into what we consume: an *alter Christus*. Reflecting on this tremendous mystery and the realization that the God whom we so casually receive daily is the same God before whom angels fall prostrate and before whom we will one day also have to appear can be a terrifying thought. Though we believe the sacraments act *ex opere operato*, their full effect depends also upon the disposition of the recipient and we—especially religious—must wonder if we have been squandering God’s grace and not become what God intends us to be. And what does God intend us to be? Aunt Rose knew: a saint.

In previous issues this writer pointed out some of the signs by which a woman comes to discern that God is inviting her to leave all behind and embrace a religious vocation so that she can return God’s great love for her and help carry out His plan for the world. Once she has responded to that call, she will through the freedom, blessings, and sorrows of religious life learn to know what “putting on Christ” really means.

But aren’t all Christians called to spread the Gospel by their lives and actions? I can certainly name scores of people whose lives of selfless actions for others would put my life to shame, and I reflect on the growing number of Christians being persecuted and martyred for their faith today. My comfortable life seems insignificant in comparison. Of what value is there for a woman in America to give her life to God? The simple answer is that the hearts of many have grown cold and indifferent towards God, and our nation is reaping the sad results. Therefore some are called to demonstrate that God is still worth giving one’s life for just as some are called to give their lives for their country.

One might say that all the evils in our society are the result of the lack of love, the unconditional kind of love that puts the good of others before one’s own benefit. The main purpose of religious life is to teach us how far we still have to go in order to be fully transformed into Christ so that others may experience His love through us. Therefore, we need to be immersed in prayer and obedience to the Father just as Christ was before we can become such ministers of His unselfish love. Only then can we effectively minister to the needs of others.

In recent history, the ministries of religious women met the needs of the Church in America by caring for the sick and instructing others in the faith. While these needs still exist, today’s needs are far more challenging: bringing a self-sufficient and self-seeking people back to God and healing the wounds caused by our lack of selfless love. In this Year of Faith, each of us is called to examine how we are living our great gift of faith. Fortunately, the graces and tools are all there, and if we respond, in love, we will *have* to become saints.

Sister Profile: Sister Mary Carol Braun

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



The Benedictine motto “ora et labora” (pray and work) has governed the lives of thousands of monks and nuns throughout the world for more than fifteen hundred years. Neither the amount of time nor the manner of prayer and work are specified, thereby permitting (even encouraging?) great latitude. While “ora” has always been a daily activity shared by all, “labora” has often been highly individualized. The preceding issue of *Pathways* (Advent, 2012) described Sister Monica Laughlin’s 60 years of teaching music at The College of St. Scholastica, a complete contrast to the following varied “labora” of Sister Mary Carol Braun during the same years.

Sister Mary Carol graduated from high school in Kohler, Wisconsin, and followed her older sister Joan to The College of St. Scholastica in 1941. Two years later she followed Joan to the Duluth Benedictine Sisters and in 1946 was sent to Chicago to teach.

1946-1948	Sister Mary Carol taught piano at St. Timothy’s School in Chicago, Illinois.
1948-1954	She became secretary to the Academic Dean at The College of St. Scholastica and served as assistant to the Registrar. She also taught typing and shorthand. Whenever Sister Mary Carol was assigned to a ministry in Duluth, she also served as organist for the Community.
1954-1962	At Cathedral Senior High School in Duluth, Sister Mary Carol taught typing, shorthand, transcription, and office practice. She was also in charge of the cheerleaders.
1962-1963	For six months Sister Mary Carol participated in the Catholic Hospital Association pilot program in Religious Personnel Management and then
1963-1966	became Religious Personnel Director at St. Scholastica Monastery (then Priory).
1966-1969	Sister Mary Carol next served as Secretary General of the Congregation of St. Benedict
1969-1973	and then, Academic Dean at CSS
1973-1976	and then, Assistant to the President of the College.
1976-1981	After many years in Duluth, Sister Mary Carol moved to Washington, D.C. to be the Assistant Director and Housemother at St. Gertrude’s School, a residential school for girls with disabilities.
1981-1990	It was, therefore, no surprise that she became Director of St. Gertrude’s for the next nine years.
1990-1991	One year of sabbatical followed her St. Gertrude years.
1991-1992	Sister Mary Carol served as Assistant to the Librarian at Xavier College Preparatory High School, in Phoenix,
1992-1994	and returned to Duluth to become the Secretary to the Prioress and a Community organist.
1995-	Since 1995, Sister Mary Carol has been clerical assistant to the archivist as needed. One of these assigned tasks was the preparation and display of first-year anniversary picture boards for the thirty-nine Sisters who died between September 1, 1995, and September 1, 2012.
Today	Sister Mary Carol had a bad fall and is now a resident in Benet Hall.

Pray Without Ceasing: Prayer in a Benedictine Monastic Community

By Sister Ann Marie Wainright

Introduction: The role of prayer in a Benedictine monastic community

Prayer is central to monastic life, so much so that fourteen chapters of the *Rule of St. Benedict* are devoted to the “what, when, where, how, and why” of communal monastic prayer. This emphasis on prayer was the result of the scriptural admonition to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). In structuring his way of life, St. Benedict ensured that all activities, work, holy leisure, and prayer would create awareness of God’s constant presence and loving gaze. Over a lifetime of following the *Rule*, one’s mind and heart would become continuously focused on God. As his awareness of God’s constant presence increased, so did the cenobite’s relationship with God deepen and become more intimate. In essence, every mundane aspect of the monastic daily life transforms into a living prayer.

Our threefold monastic promise of stability, obedience, and *conversatio morum*, or fidelity to the monastic way of life, calls for adoption of Christ’s personal way of life – a life that was centered on praying to the Father. Benedictine monastic life permits the freedom to search for God while also offering to the world a profound witness of the Church at prayer. The Church’s love for Christ is demonstrated through a way of life that is intentional, scripturally-based, communal, and Christocentric. Through faithfulness and perseverance, our way of life imparts a vision to the world that strangers can live, work, and pray together in love for one another and for God, becoming a spiritual wellspring that helps the entire human community grow closer to God.



Photo by Andi Therrien



Fresco of St. Benedict by +Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB

Desert fathers and mothers: purity of heart through prayer

The wisdom and practices of the ancient desert fathers and mothers contributed to the form monastic life would eventually take, as well as the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Longing for pure prayer but prone to distraction and self-absorption, they found solace in intimate conversation with God through praying with sacred scripture. In time and with perseverance, they fell in love with, and became preoccupied by, God. In the solitude and silence of the desert, these abbas and ammas learned to focus every breath and thought on God, whether they were weaving palm branches into baskets, gardening, baking loaves of bread, or memorizing scripture.

John Cassian noted explicitly that the purpose of a monastic’s vocation is constant and uninterrupted perseverance in prayer. He felt that the best way to pray was briefly, silently, and frequently, withdrawing the heart from the clatter of everyday life to pray secretly and intimately to the searcher of hearts (Conf. 9). This finds its echo in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, when he writes: “We must know that God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words. Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace” (RB 20.3-4).

“Ora et labora” and the Rule of St. Benedict

Benedictine life is guided by prayer, informing what we do, or don’t do, and why. In the sixth century work was seen as the purview of slaves and the poor. St. Benedict saw work as redemptive, creative, and a way of praying by using one’s God-given talents. The ministries our Sisters perform are discerned prayerfully based upon the Sister’s gifts, experience and background, and what God is calling her to do. When she sets her hands, mind, and heart to a task, the work becomes her prayer because it is an offering of herself.



Photo by Andi Therrien

Before beginning a work or ministry task, a Sister asks for the Prioress’s blessing. According to the *Rule*, when a monk began a new assignment for the week, he prayed before beginning the task and while he worked that Christ would bless his efforts, and in thanksgiving at the week’s end (e.g., RB 35, 38, 49). Every Saturday before Evening Prayer, our Sisters receive a blessing for a weekly ministry assignment. When a Sister returns home to the Monastery after being away on mission, she is received with a blessing, and the Community prays for and with her as she discerns what God is calling her to next.

St. Benedict did not want his monks’ leisure time spent in idleness, drunken carousing, gossip, or inane laughter at off-color humor (e.g., RB 6; 7.56-61; 39.7-9; 40.2-6). Instead, he required reading and studying of sacred scripture and the writings of the saints and desert fathers and mothers. During Lent St. Benedict prescribed additional prayer or sacred reading, but only with the abbot’s permission (e.g., RB 49). Our Community sanctifies leisure time by such sacred reading and also by building relationships. Each Lent, we receive our Prioress’s blessing to undertake extra reading that will enhance our Lenten journey and our seeking of God as monastic women.

Communal prayer

The Liturgy of the Hours is an ancient form of prayer with primary place in Benedictine monastic communities. Rooted historically in the ancient Jewish practice of reciting prayers at set times of the day, Psalm 119:164 tells of the Jewish people’s way of sanctifying God’s gift of time: “Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous law.” Handed down through the ages beginning with the Apostles, St. Benedict refined and standardized it in his *Rule*, making it the norm for monastic life and of central importance: “Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God” (R.B. 43.3). The Liturgy of the Hours creates and expresses a personal relationship with a personal God, bonding us together as community.

Our Liturgy of the Hours is filled with beauty, symbolism, and ritual as we pray the Psalms and sacred scripture: standing and bowing in reverence at the doxology; marking ourselves with the Sign of the Cross at the opening antiphon and on chanting the Canticle near the end; reciting or chanting the Psalms and Canticles slowly and reverently, savoring every God-inspired, grace-filled word; praying in one unified voice; pausing for silent, periodic reflection. We begin and end each day this way, and again at midday to remind ourselves why we work, and for Whom. We pray in the tradition of our *Rule* and with our ancestors, standing on the shoulders of giants to praise the God who has shown merciful love to us all throughout time and history.



Photo by Andi Therrien

(Continued, p.16)

Pray Without Ceasing (continued)

Our communal prayer life also includes celebrating the Eucharist. Six days a week our Community gathers for Mass near midday. By entering into the saving events of Christ's life through Word and Sacrament, we strengthen ourselves with grace to speak and perform prophetic works of hope, and to become bread for a world hungry for love and mercy.

Private prayer and devotions

Every Benedictine monastic is expected to nurture his or her relationship with God through private prayer as well. Scripture is valued as the primary source for *lectio divina* and reflective prayer within monastic communities. As the central form of private prayer, *lectio divina* opens us to the Spirit who ceaselessly prays for us and in us, and who guides us. *Lectio divina* (Latin for "divine reading") is different from scriptural study, exegesis, or memorization in that it flows from an attitude of the heart, not from the intellect. It is an ancient practice that allows us to move beyond elementary thoughts to discover the higher wisdom hidden within the Word. It generally proceeds in four phases: we read the scripture passage slowly and prayerfully ("lectio"); we meditate on a particular word or phrase of interest ("meditatio"); based on that understanding and reflection, we offer spontaneous prayer flowing from the heart ("oratio"); we sit in profound silence before God who has spoken to the ear of our heart ("contemplatio").

Our Sisters nurture their private prayer life and their intimate relationship with God in other ways as well. On the last Sunday of the month, our Day of Recollection, silence falls on the Monastery as we spend the day in prayer and renewal with God. In the summer we have a weeklong, silent Community Retreat. In the Marian devotional chapel some Sisters pray the Rosary, and in the Benedictine devotional chapel some ponder the wisdom of the *Holy Rule*. Others like to arrive early for morning and evening prayer, or to stay afterwards, so that they can pray silently or contemplatively before the Blessed Sacrament in our Eucharistic Chapel. During Fridays of Lent some Sisters walk and pray before the outdoor Stations of the Cross. Many of us walk the trails in the woods behind the Monastery, marveling at God's presence in every tiny leaf, in every lovely flower.



Photo by Andi Therrien

Conclusion: Listening with the ear of the heart

The *Rule of St. Benedict* begins with, "Listen carefully...with the ear of your heart" (R.B. Prol.1). Our prayer life as a monastic community is about listening deeply – and about the intimate relationship with God and one another that results – "so that in all things God may be glorified (1 Pet 4:11)" (R.B. 5.9).



From the Illustrated Rule of St. Benedict, Meredith Schifsky calligrapher and +Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB, illuminator, Copyright 1990 St. Scholastica Monastery

Sister Profile: Sister Joan Marie Stelman



Photo by Andi Therrien

Unlike many of the Sisters in the Community, I didn't come to the Monastery until I was older, in my late thirties. I was born here in Duluth, at St. Mary's Hospital, where my parents, Eugene and Beverley Stelman, had met. My mother was a nurse, a graduate of The College of St. Scholastica, and my father, an old "Cathedral boy," was working his way through college at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Eventually we settled in Richfield, where I and my three younger brothers graduated from high school. Since I went primarily to public schools, my experience of Sisters of any order was very limited. When I graduated, I began to study at the University of Minnesota, but I was interested in so many subjects that I found it difficult to decide upon a major. So I left school to join the Federal Government, serving almost sixteen years in the U.S. Forest Service at the North Central Forest Experiment Station.

Our office was located on the University campus, which allowed me to continue to take classes in a wide variety of subjects including literature, history, Latin, biology, writing and editing, art, and computer science. I learned to work with computers as they developed from the old main-frames through early Macs to the first PC's – a skill which has been very useful. On the side, I studied and became an apprentice Iyengar Yoga teacher. My goal was to double major in English and plant biology in order to prepare myself to be an editor of research publications for the Forest Service. Although I was involved in the Befriender Ministry program at my parish, the idea of a religious vocation never entered my head.

A peculiar thing happened, however. I had become interested in Medieval Studies and received a research grant to do a project at the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library at St. John's Abbey. While I was there, I joined the monastic community for the Liturgy of the Hours, and I fell in love with the beauty of Benedictine prayer. Then I read *The Rule of St. Benedict*, and I knew that I had found what I had been searching for in my spiritual journey – a way of life centered on Christ and balanced between prayer and work. My vocation journey began, and after finishing my BA in English at the University of Minnesota, I entered St. Scholastica Monastery in February, 1995.

In my formation time at the Monastery I studied, and I worked in Liturgy and the Development Office. My greatest joy was (and is) to be with our infirm Sisters who live in Benet Hall. They have taught me so much – sometimes the richness of it all takes my breath away. In 1999 I made my final profession of vows, and four days later I was off to the University of Toronto. I continued my work in Medieval Studies and received my MA. I had the opportunity in Toronto to teach and to work as a research assistant in that field.

Now I work at The College of St. Scholastica as the Assistant Director of Alumni Relations. I am privileged to work with our alumni and with the staff and faculty of the College as they carry forward the work we began 100 years ago. I am also able to use my knowledge of medieval studies by lecturing on medieval history and spirituality and on our Community history, at the College, UMD, St. Mary's, and elsewhere. I serve on the Board of Directors of Essentia St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth and St. Mary's Hospital in Superior, a role which is dear to me as well, because, as I tell the employees during my talk on our history for their mission training, "I owe my very existence to St. Mary's."

I find a delightful irony in the result of all the wanderings of my journey – all roads have led me back home where I started, to the Sisters who did so much to shape my parents and the city where I was born. I give thanks for God's humor – and patience!

Highlights

Blessing of our Home: Discernment of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)

By Sister Mary Christa Kroening

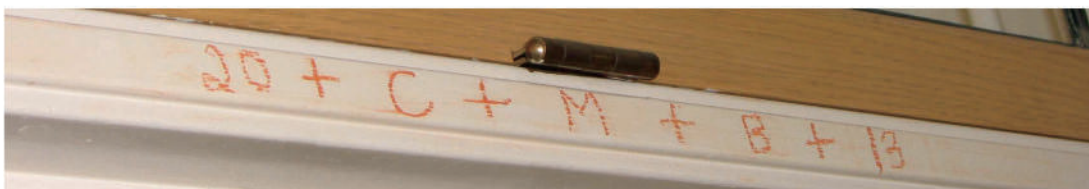


Photo by Andi Therrien

Following the Star of Faith (NM 24:17) the Magi astrologers came seeking the Promised Messiah. The Messianic prophecy had indicated that the Promised One was to be born in Bethlehem [in Hebrew, House of Bread] (Micah 5:1). The Magi went to King Herod trusting that surely he would know the events of the day. However, the Wise Magi discerned the pretense of his false ambition. Defying King Herod and his evil intentions, the Magi returned to their homes by another way. The Magi discerned the Messianic prophecy, following the Star which rested on the lowly manger home.

Continuing to follow the Star of Faith in memory of the Magi, we Benedictine Monastics celebrate the blessing of our monastery home by gathering as a Community. We assemble at the entrance before the doorway and line the cloister walkway to celebrate the Solemnity of Epiphany. Hymns and prayers unite us in spirit. Sister Martha Bechtold, Director of Temporalities, stands on a step stool and marks the entrance doorway anew. The new year of 2013 and the initials for the Magi, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, are drawn with chalk on the lintel of the doorway. [20+C+M+B+13]

Our Prioress, Sister Lois Eckes, leads the ritual and using incense, blesses the Sisters and the pathway into St. Scholastica Monastery. The Magi presented gifts of gold with their presence to the Christ Child, myrrh of their human poverty and suffering, and the frankincense of their prayerful hearts. On January 6, each year since 1987, we as a Benedictine Community gather midafternoon being present to one another, offering our human poverty and suffering with devoted, prayerful hearts of faith.

Prayer

Jesus, the Christ of God,
Be our bright Morning Star of Faith.
Awaken us to your presence among us this day.
Bless us with the Star of Faith which inspired the Magi
To seek you and discern the true and just PATHWAY in our life together.
Bless all the people who touch our lives
And those who have asked for our prayerful support.
We ask this in your Holy Name.
Amen! Alleluia!

*Sister Mary Christa Kroening, OSB
January 6, 2013*

Edwina Gateley—Save the Date!

By Sister Maria Volk

St. Scholastica Monastery will host the Pax Christi State Assembly at The College of St. Scholastica September 21, 2013, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Keynote speaker will be Edwina Gateley—poet, theologian, mystic, prophet. Her theme, “The Call of Vatican II to the people of God: From Liberation to Grief, to Resistance, to Rejoicing,” will concentrate on how this generation is called to declare God’s realm in the face of war, schism, violence, and evil; encouraged in the presence of the Holy Spirit and grace coming to new life and hope.

For reservations call Sister Maria Volk (218) 723-7058 or Sister Mary Rae Higgins at (218) 723-6600. Cost: \$35.00.

Highlights, Continued

Conference of Benedictine Prioresses

Sister Lois participated in the annual meeting of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses held this year at the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, Arizona, January 31-February 5. The purpose of the conference is to provide mutual assistance and encouragement among Benedictine Prioresses as they further the ideals of Benedictine life in response to the needs of the Church, the Benedictine Order, and contemporary society.

The meeting included business considerations, goal-setting for the next four years, election of a new president (Sister Patricia Crowley, Prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago, Illinois), and the formulation and ratification of a statement supporting the bipartisan legislative effort to create a comprehensive immigration reform.

The final days of the meeting were devoted to the topic "Self-care: A Question of Paradox." Sister Genevieve Glenn from the Abbey of St. Walburga in Virginia Dale, Colorado, was the presenter. Between sessions, ample time was provided for quiet reflection and prayer in the gorgeous setting of the Sonoran Desert populated with the tall and stately saguaro cacti and surrounded by five mountain ranges. Reflecting on self-care from the perspective of our culture, the Gospels, and the *Rule of Benedict*, the nearly fifty attending Prioresses grew in appreciation of the meaning of authentic self-care, which is always deepest care of the self for the sake of others.



Photo by Sister Patricia Crowley

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING DECEASED FRIENDS AND RELATIVES:

Bette Helps VanderBie 8/18/2012
Collette A. Cullen 10/13/2012
Frank Sklaris 11/8/2012
Mary Ann Mrak Berg 11/10/2012
Charles L. Novak 11/13/2012
George Renier 11/13/2012
Dr. Gary DeLoia 11/15/2012
Grace Deck Miller 11/17/2012
Agnes L. Miller 11/19/2012
Deborah Louisell 11/21/2012
Robert Dalbec 11/23/2012
Winnifred Ryan Arimond 12/4/2012

Orville Bergeron 12/7/2012
Betty Sprietzer 12/7/2012
Gretchen Weichbrod 12/19/2012
Deacon Philip L. Marineau 12/26/2012
Mary Ellen Trudelle Braafladt 12/27/2012
Fred Richardson 12/31/2012
Sister Linda Wiggins' brother
Fred Reker 12/31/2012
Frank Rozinka 1/10/2013
George Salstrand 1/18/2013
William Novak 1/19/2013
Sister Mary Hope Novak's brother
Louis Kachinske 2/2/2013

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“Just as new life persistently breaks through the crust of earth hardened by layers of winter and bursts forth into brilliant and delicate bloom, so Christ in His persistent love breaks open our hearts, loosening the bond of whatever enslaves us.”

Sister Lois Eckes