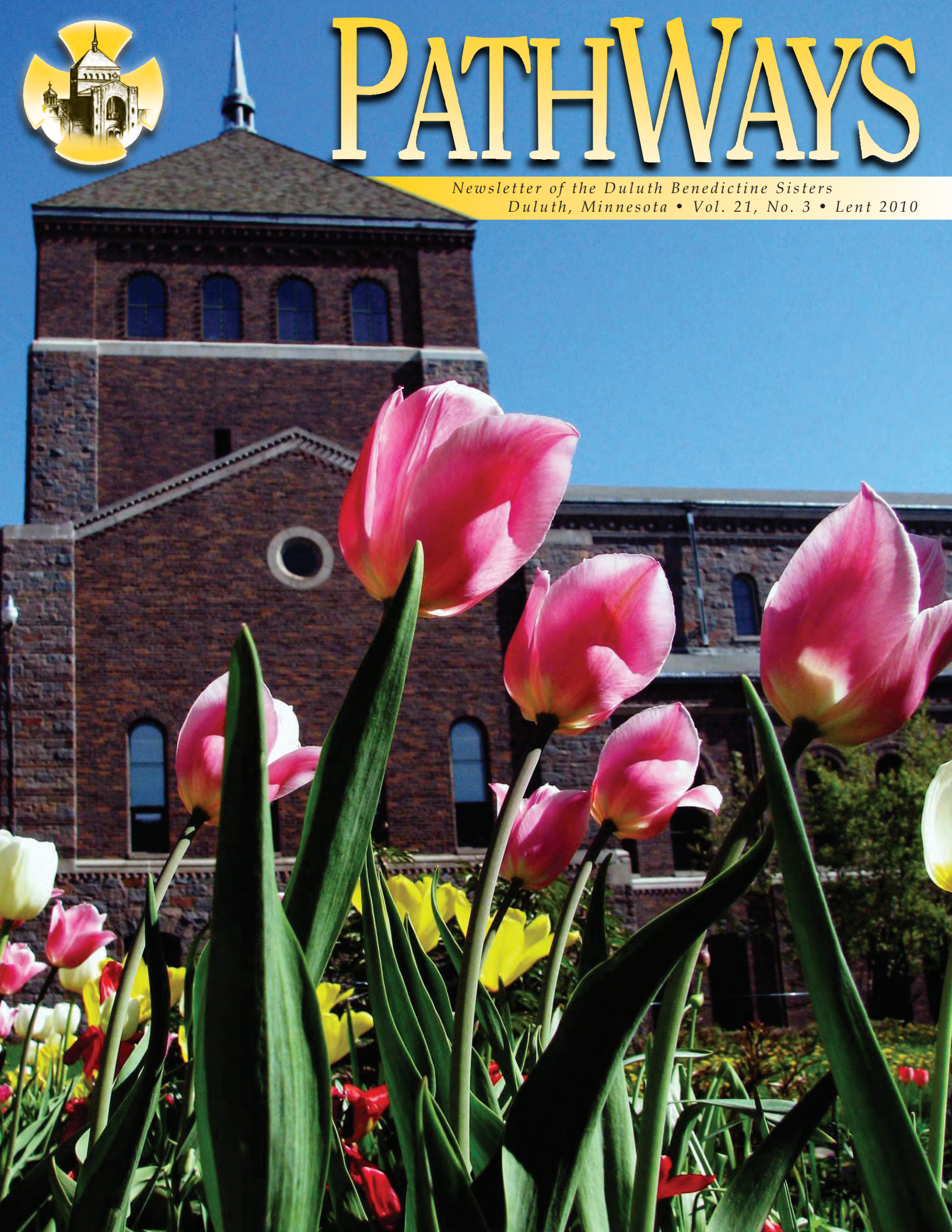




# PATHWAYS

*Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters*

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## Letter From The Prioress

Dear Friends,

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because God has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.  
God has sent me to proclaim  
release to captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to proclaim  
a year acceptable to the Lord."*

*(Luke 4:18-21)*



With these words from the Prophet Isaiah, Jesus declared his mission. He came to reveal the inner heart of God who desires healing, wholeness, and jubilee justice for all people and all creation. Jesus came as God emptied out in our humanity so that we might become the very life of God.

By grace we, too, are God's anointed ones, filled with the power of the Spirit, called to embrace the mission of Jesus and make it our own. We, too, are called to bring and to be the Good News of God's saving love for our world in shambles. From Haiti to Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Palestine, to every place and every heart where everything is lost and there seems to be no way out, we are called to be the heart and hands and feet of Christ. We, too, are called to proclaim by our actions that all life, all creation is sacred, and that those who are most vulnerable must receive our steadfast care and advocacy. What Jesus was in essence we are given as gift. His mission revealed God inside out. Our mission is the same.

May we open ourselves fully to the power of the Spirit and let God stretch and deepen our capacity to make visible the Christ who lives hidden within each of us.

Lovingly yours in Christ with deep gratitude  
and fervent prayer,

*Sister Lois Eckes*

Sister Lois Eckes

# Lenten Reflection

By Sister Barbara Higgins

May I have your attention, please? I think I'm confused. Already we are entering the season of Lent? Didn't we just put away our Christmas tree, wreaths, gifts, and all other reminders of the Christmas season? However, many of us are still reflecting on the awesome celebration of Jesus' birth among us. That is the Incarnation . . . God's revelation of His Son, Jesus Christ, born of a Virgin in humble surroundings, living among us to reflect the love of God The Father. This bears ongoing quiet reflection and a heart full of gratitude, right?

When my friends ask "where does time go?" my response is always "into eternity!" This is a "for sure" thing in my mind, or living this life may just have no meaning at all. However, the Church in her wisdom invites us into the liturgical year, allowing us the privilege to walk into the mysteries of Jesus' life as we live out our every day existence.

Perhaps it is a happy thing that Christmas and all its allurements are still fresh in our hearts and minds. With this solid framework of Jesus' birth, let us reflect on Lent's meaning with the great awareness of God's love for each one of us. Lent, you know, is a holy four-letter word: forty days of Fast, Abstinence and Almsgiving, not only a penitential season but a growing season. What this really means is this season provides us with an awesome opportunity to grow closer to Jesus Christ whom we celebrated at Christmas. The very same one! And just how may I go about this arduous and seemingly impossible task of viewing the Lenten season as opportunity?

Suggestion: here's another way of fasting rather than from your favorite food or TV program (not bad you understand). How about living in the NOW where you are more apt to embrace a complaint-free Lent and are able to refocus your attention on gratitude. I have been known to remind myself and others to "make haste slowly!"

That, my friends, takes discipline and a new type of fasting. Instead of focusing on what is lacking or negative in our lives, we find something to appreciate. Writer Joseph F. Sica so aptly states:

"Gratitude turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, and a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

My friends, we must slow our lives down to encounter our God in the everyday moments of our lives. This is our call to holiness by the very fact of our Baptism. What better time than this holy season of Lent to respond more fully to our God by living in this present moment in gratitude? That is my heart's prayer for each one of you, and I would appreciate your prayers on my behalf.



# Liturgy – the Heart of our Monastic Way of Life

By Sister Jeanne Ann Weber

Liturgy refers to the prayer and work of the Church, the assembly of people whom God has called to gather. Liturgy draws us ever deeper into the very death and resurrection of Christ, into the very holiness of God. The primary work of Benedictine monastics is prayer – the *Work of God* as the *Rule of St. Benedict* calls it. It is the daily rhythm of public and personal prayer that provides the structure and the defining character of Benedictine life. It is central in our lives as we gather together for the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

We mark the hours of the day through prayer called the Liturgy of the Hours. Our Community meets for the Hours of Morning, Midday, and Evening Prayer. This ancient form of Christian prayer consists of hymns, psalms, other passages from scripture and Christian writings and prayers, interspersed with periods of silent reflection. We are connected not only with the Trinity and one another, but with the whole global community as we praise and give thanks to God, and intercede for the needs of the world.



Sister Luella Wegscheid as lector

The centrality of Liturgy is seen by the commitment of the Community to participate in the *Work of God* and to serve in one of the many needed ministries. At our weekday Eucharistic celebration, ten Community ministers are needed, including a sacristan and organist. On Sundays, seventeen ministers are needed for the Eucharist. If the *Schola* sings, almost thirty members participate in that ministry, and if the Monastery Contemporary Group sings, up to eleven members may participate. The latter two groups include some lay people who share their talents with us.

The reason I know these statistics is that one of my duties as Community liturgist is to monthly assign Sisters for these ministries. Sisters let me know days and times that they are unavailable to serve. Sometimes it seems like I'm putting a jigsaw puzzle together, but it all does come together, and Sisters are willing to substitute for one another if something unforeseen happens.

However, before we arrive at each of the liturgical celebrations, much planning has already been completed. Sister Marguerite Baxter, assistant in the liturgy office, with the help of Sister Gretchen Johnston, novice, has compiled a six-week liturgical calendar for a particular section of the liturgical year that gives the readings for Liturgy of the Hours and for the Eucharist. Many Sisters use this calendar, with its readings, as the basis for their personal prayer, their *lectio divina*. This calendar also includes the nameday of each Sister and death dates of our Sisters. There is remembrance of them at our Liturgy.

This calendar is also used by the Sisters who plan our weekly liturgy schema. There are about eleven Sisters who do this important ministry of praying over the readings of the Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours, and then choosing hymns that will enhance the theme for that day.



Standing left to right: Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, Sister Gretchen Johnston  
Seated: Sister Marguerite Baxter





Seasonal planners left to right: Sister Marie Therese Poliquin, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, Regina Roemhildt, Sister Theresa Spinler, Sister Timothy Kirby.

Seasonal planners gather twice a month and do a similar undertaking for Sunday and major feasts. After the ministry of the seasonal planners is completed, Sister Marguerite compiles the data for the final copy for use at the Eucharist. Sister Gretchen and Sister Marie Therese use the Finale software program, which incorporates both a keyboard and computer for preparing hymns and responses for Community worship. Folders are then compiled for those involved with specific music ministries, including cantors.

For Liturgy of the Hours a leader, lector, and two solos are needed. At the Vigil of Sunday, and Sundays as well as feast days, the leader includes antiphons that relate to the readings of the day. She also includes special prayer intentions. The Prioress always closes with a prayer for the day and a special final blessing.

We also have ministers of participation aids. They make sure the correct hymnals or sheets are available for Morning and Evening Prayer and our Eucharistic celebrations. We have several different hymnals that can be used throughout the day. This is an important and responsible ministry. Ministers also change daily the vigil lights at our Marian and Benedictine devotional areas. Environment is very important, and we have Sisters who care for the flourishing plants and in the summer pick and arrange the beautiful fresh flowers from our gardens. During the various seasons, the environment is changed, which entails a variety of gifts and skills, such as climbing a ladder. Our sacristans have the important duties of preparing the vessels for our Eucharistic celebrations. They also care for the candles, vessels, vestments, etc.

Liturgy is included in all our lives as Benedictine monastics. We have many rituals that mark the passage of time in our lives such as welcoming a new Community member, remembering Jubilees, celebrating a Sister's passage from this life to the next through our meaningful Christian Funeral Rites. We have other rites, prayer services, blessings for ourselves, as Community, as well as times of joining with the College and other lay friends and groups.

Indeed, Liturgy is the heart of our lives together as Benedictine monastics. We are carrying on a deep and rich heritage. The Liturgy is ever old and ever new as we celebrate our unity in the Redemptive Love and Mystery of Christ. We are continuing to respond to God who always first searches for us and desires our engagement. In Liturgy we discover how God manifests and discloses his ever-mysterious presence to us, in all of life and the relationship between human life and Christian life in unity with our sisters and brothers throughout the world. The Liturgy mediates God's presence, which stretches us, transforms, and renews us personally, communally, and globally, for what we do—is the *Work of God*.



Sisters at prayer

# Sister Profile: Sister Luella Wegscheid

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



I was the fourth daughter born to Louie and Luella Wegscheid. Two more sisters and a brother followed. My oldest sister, Susan, died at the age of five, a couple of months before I was born. My siblings are Vera, Regina, Carolyn, Marcy, and Marty.

Our family was raised on a 160-acre farm just north of Bluffton, Minnesota, where we all assisted with daily chores whether in the house, in the barn, or at multiple jobs around the farm. We learned good work skills and responsibility.

For grades 1-8 I attended St. John the Baptist Catholic School in Bluffton. High school found me attending an all-girls boarding school at St. Francis High School in Little Falls. During my senior year I was seriously considering entering the convent and made my decision during a retreat that year. When

I told my parents, they were not surprised as they said they knew I had been struggling with that decision for some time. Sister Prudentia, the Vocation Director in Duluth, kept up regular correspondence with me. That resulted in a visit to the community in Duluth where the gracious reception I received helped finalize my decision. Of course, I felt that I was brought to Duluth by many prayers, especially from my aunt, Sister Mary Martin Beringer, who is also a member of the Community, even though I received no pressure from her.

Three months after graduating from high school, I entered St. Scholastica, received the habit and the name Sister Luella nine months later, and made first monastic profession in 1963. During the postulancy and the years in temporary vows, I attended The College of St. Scholastica, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education in 1966. That was a momentous year with college graduation in May and my perpetual commitment at St. Scholastica Monastery in July. Several years later I received a Masters of Arts degree in Nonpublic Administration from the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul by attending summer sessions and evening classes while serving at St. Mary's School in Pine City.

My ministry took me to several Catholic schools in Minnesota: Aitkin, Minneapolis, Duluth, Brainerd, and Pine City. Administrative responsibilities were added in Pine City and at Our Lady of Victory School in Minneapolis. In 1990 I was asked to serve as the accounts payable clerk in our Business Office, serving the Sisters for two years.

A rather unique opportunity presented itself in 1992. I interviewed for the position of Administrative Assistant to the Rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Duluth. I was offered the job the day after the interview. This offer took much discerning and discussion as it was so different from our ordinary ministries. With the blessing of the Prioress, I was able to accept the position that lasted seven years. It was a wonderful experience.

The administrative work at St. Paul's was excellent training for my next ministry. In 1999 Sister Kathleen Hofer was elected Prioress and asked me to serve as her Administrative Assistant and the Corporate Secretary. In 2005 Sister Lois asked me to continue in this position, which I still do. In addition to this ministry, I serve on the Board of Directors for St. Mary's Innovis Health in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. A bonus to serving on this board is being able to share a breakfast gathering with my family before returning to Duluth. At times it is rather challenging to weave the extra hours of board service into an already busy schedule.

For relaxation, I enjoy reading, embroidering, and assembling jigsaw puzzles.

# Sister Luce Marie Makes First Monastic Profession

By Sister Donna Schroeder

Photo by Andi Therrien



*Sister Grace Marie Braun, witness;  
Sister Michelle Dosch, Director of Postulants and Novices;  
Sister Luce Marie Dionne; Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress;  
Sister Donna Schroeder, Director of Sisters in First Monastic  
Profession; Sister Monica Laughlin, witness.*

Sister Luce Marie Dionne made her First Monastic Profession on December 27, 2009. First Profession entails making a three-year commitment to live a life of stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience within our community. It is an important transition from the preparation and discernment periods of Affiliate, Postulant, and Novice in which prayer, study, and work deepen the understanding of monastic life and its challenges and blessings. Within the monastic community, First Monastic Profession is something like a birth. As such it is a significant and joyful event.

Sister Luce Marie was born in Edmonston, Canada, and was raised in the French community of Grand Isle, Maine. Her parents are Jean Francois and Marguerite Dionne.

She and her twin brother, Luc, are the middle children of eight. Sister Luce Marie went to high school in Van Buren, Maine. The school was fifteen miles from Grand Isle, and so she knows the rigors of waiting for a school bus in substantially below zero weather, an experience shared by many Minnesotans.

Her love of the arts and architecture led her to degrees in Theater Arts from Emerson College in Boston, three years in architecture at Montana State University in Bozeman, and a Masters degree in architecture from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Her experience as a working artist and architect was in Boston where she spent most of her adult life before coming to St. Scholastica Monastery. Sister Luce Marie has a fondness for cities because of the cultural and architectural experiences easily available to those who live in them.

She says that she was attracted to monastic life by her familiarity with the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and conversation with a spiritual advisor. Sister Luce Marie came to St. Scholastica to “see what it was all about.” She adds that “curiosity led me here” and that she was helped “by some good-humored and wise women in the Monastery.”

In reflecting on her vocation, Sister Luce Marie reports that “God has always been with me, even when I didn’t know it. At some point I decided to risk again in Christ” by taking up the monastic journey. “What I have learned most of all is in the first words of the Prologue: Listen with the ear of your heart, a daily seeking of God in prayer, in every person I meet, in events.” In her view, since God is love, “formation is a process to understanding ourselves, our neighbor . . . and transcending that love for each other, for all who are in need, and for the world, thus learning to serve in Christ.” This is by no means an easy task but one journey that Sister Luce Marie takes very seriously.

Sister Luce Marie is very interested in the intersection of Benedictine monastic life and architecture. She hopes eventually to be able to use her skills in ways that will enhance monastic experience in Benedictine monasteries, which have ordinarily fostered simplicity in architectural design and beauty in its execution.



# Happy 90th Birthdays

## Sister Renee Cormier

By Sister Mary Paul Ludwig

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Sister Renee was born February 25, 1920, in Charleston, South Carolina, the first child of Nelida and Felix Cormier. They named her Marie Frances, the oldest of four girls and twin brothers. Why South Carolina? Her father was a carpenter and repaired ships used in WWI. Her mother was an R.N., having graduated from St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth. The Cormiers returned to Cloquet and later moved to West Duluth where Marie completed eight grades at St. James School, taught by Benedictine Sisters from St. Scholastica. In 1934 Marie's mother learned that Mother Agnes Somers was making her annual visitation to the Sisters in Cloquet. Marie and her mother went to Cloquet, hoping to speak with the Reverend Mother. Marie's mother visited with Mother Agnes and then told Marie that she would go to 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Villa Sancta Scholastica as an aspirant under the care of Sister Monica Simon. When Marie realized that being an aspirant could lead to becoming a Sister, she was

overjoyed with the arrangement, as she had often expressed her wish to become a Sister and teacher. Marie's aunt was Sister Marie Mailhot, so Marie knew the life well, as she had often visited Sister Marie.

After completing high school at Stanbrook Hall, Marie entered the convent on August 30, 1938. When she completed her postulancy and novitiate, Sister Renee's first assignment in 1940 was as first grade teacher at St. Thomas School in International Falls. From there she continued to teach in Minneapolis, Chicago, Duluth, Virginia, Crosby, and Wayzata, and finally ended up where she had begun to teach—in International Falls in 1978. Sister Renee has a black book containing each student's name—1,126 total. Her winning smile and pleasing personality, together with individual interest in each student, endeared her to the little tots. Her creativity was not overlooked as she wrote stories in book form for each student who had difficulty in reading—personal stories to which each could relate.

*Sister Renee will celebrate a Diamond Jubilee (70 years) this coming summer, and another article about her later years will be included in the 2010 Annual Report. Happy 90<sup>th</sup>, Sister Renee!*

## Sister Ethel Radtke

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Sister Ethel (Emilene) Radtke celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Monastery on January 17, an event which reminded us that she had celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, and 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays at her favorite place of ministry, Squaw Lake, Minnesota. "Originally Sister Ethel had come to that Scandinavian community, about 35 miles north of Deer River, to work in senior advocacy and youth programs on Native American reservations. But the role she actually played in Squaw Lake has been likened to that of a direct line from that gentle community to the Greater Power of these northern environs. References made to Sister Ethel by Squaw Lake citizens include 'instigator,' the 'glue,' the 'go-getter,' not to mention president of the Squaw Lake Seniors and their newsletter editor." "She opens the business meetings, checks the turkey in the oven at the potluck dinner of the seniors' club, passes the milk at the community table, initiates the hand clasp around the main room of the Squaw Lake Community Center, leads the 'Our Father' before lunch—and closes with the last 'Amen' at the end of the Pledge of Allegiance." (Kathleen Preece in *The Senior Reporter*). *Ad multos annos*, Sister Ethel!



# Sister Mary Paul Ludwig

By Sister Almira Randall

Ninety years ago on February 20, 1920, a baby girl came into the world in the old St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth, Minnesota. She was the fourth child of Carl and Verena Ludwig. They named her Collette Barbara. Carl worked as a carpenter for Anderson and Gow as an accomplished cabinetmaker, while Verena stayed home to care for little Collette and her eight siblings.

In 1934 Collette began high school as an aspirant at Villa Sancta Scholastica and after graduation entered the Benedictine community there. She subsequently became Sister Mary Paul, and after making final vows in 1943, was sent out to teach.

Among her many other varied assignments over the years, she served as Executive Director of Pastoral Area Councils under Bishop Paul Anderson and Pastoral Administrator of Our Lady of Mercy Church on Park Point. But her favorite assignment, she says, was in Chile—the years she spent in Chile as principal of Colegio San Jose—a grade school and girls' high school.

And today? She sews caps, mittens, and quilts for the poor and makes up kits for newborns. On Mondays she volunteers in the hospice unit at St. Mary's Medical Center, and on Thursdays at Solvay Hospice House. And should you chance to walk by the kitchenette on the floor where she lives, you would be met by the delicious aroma of some sort of sweet bread or jelly being made for one charity or another.

Asked for a word of wisdom, Sister Mary Paul said, "I have lived these ninety years accepting whatever came my way. I refused to give in or give up because whatever the circumstances, it was yet another expression of God's love for me." Words of wisdom, indeed!

*Sister Mary Paul will celebrate a Diamond Jubilee (70 years) this coming summer, and another article will be included in the 2010 Annual Report. Happy 90th, Sister Mary Paul.*



Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier

## CONGRATULATIONS, SISTER PARACLETA!

By Sister Mary E. Penrose

Photo by Sister Patricia Anne Williams



*Celebrating Sister Paracleta's graduation, left to right: Sister Martha Bechtold, Sister Beverly Raway, Sister Lois Eckes, Sister Paracleta Ezema, and Sister Vitalis Iwuoha, mother superior of the HFSN convent of St. Rose of Lima, Newark, New Jersey*

Sister Paracleta Ezema, a member of the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy in Nigeria, graduated from The College of St. Scholastica December 19, 2009, with a B.S. degree in Nursing. As a student, she has appreciated the subject content in her chosen field as well as the approach given to teaching. She said students are taught in such a way that they are given an idea of what they will meet up with in the workplace after graduation.

Living with the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery while pursuing her education has proven to be a wonderful opportunity for her also. Because of the Sisters' love for one another, their eagerness to help her grow as a person, and the help they have given her with her studies, Sister Paracleta feels her spiritual life has been enriched. She knows she will be able to implement whatever she has learned from them when she leaves.

Sister Paracleta joined the Holy Family Sisters because she wanted to help them in their ministry of taking care of unwed pregnant girls and their babies. She was chosen to come to Duluth after her superior contacted the Prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery inquiring about the possibility of one of their Sisters being educated at The College of St. Scholastica. Sister Paracleta has just recently passed her nursing licensure exam. When she returns to Nigeria, she hopes to work in her community's St. Joseph Orphanage Home or in a hospital.

# REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: THE CASE

By Sister Margaret Clarke

In the last half of the nineteenth century, floods of immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and eastern Europe arrived in the United States, bringing with them their Catholic faith and traditions. This led to a great uneasiness among the Protestant inhabitants of the country, and the formation of a number of anti-Catholic movements. These were the days of the “nativists,” the Know-Nothings, the American Protective Association and *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. At the turn of the century Duluth had its own anti-Catholic sentiments, and the young Benedictine community encountered these in a number of ways. As soon as St. Mary’s Hospital opened in 1888, a group of businessmen arrived, ready to deliver the Sisters from their involuntary servitude, but were enlightened gently by Sister Alexia as to the nature of a religious vocation. In 1896, as the new St. Mary’s was being built, another group gave tours of the “cells and dungeons” in the building’s basement foundations, inspiring a blast from Bishop McGolrick in the *Duluth News-Tribune*.

Individual sisters who were converts to Catholicism also experienced problems with their families, ranging from being disinherited to what was probably the most notorious nine-days-wonder for the local press, the abduction of Minnie Digne, a.k.a. Sister Borromeo. Emily (Minnie) Digne was the daughter of a prominent railroad man and, in 1899 at the age of 16, was enrolled by her family (who at that time were living in Superior) at Sacred Heart Institute. In 1901, much to their dismay, she became a Catholic, and even more disturbing to them, in 1903 decided to become a Benedictine Sister. She spent her early years in community teaching in parish grade schools and was looking forward to taking perpetual vows on July 11, 1907. Her family, by then living in St. Paul, mistakenly thought that this was to be June 11 and decided to take action to prevent it.

DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1907

## TWO MEN KIDNAP NUN FROM SCHOOL AT WEST END, OUTFRAN MOB AND ESCAPE

**Abductors Boldly Enter Room Where  
Sister Borromeo Is Teaching  
and Carry Her Away.**

### PUPILS SPELLBOUND BY TERROR

They Stand Mute While Abductors Drag Shrieking Woman to the Street and Thrust Her Into Hack, But Recover in Time to Give Chase—Are Joined by Hundreds of People in the Neighborhood, But the Team Is Fast and Outfoots Them—No Clue to Where the Outlaws Have Secreted Their Victim—Relatives of the Sister, Who Is a Daughter of Edward Digne, Formerly of Itasca, Are Suspected of Being Responsible for the Desperate Act.

On the afternoon of June 7, as reported by both Duluth newspapers, a hired hack drove up to St. Clement’s school and two men leaped out and entered Sister Borromeo’s classroom, seized the screaming Sister, and bodily carried her into the hack. The children rushed screaming into the street, bystanders gave chase, but the horses were whipped up, and the carriage disappeared.



# OF THE KIDNAPPED NUN

Later information revealed that the abductors were her father and brother, and her mother waited in the carriage. She was taken first to her brother's house in Superior and then by train to the family home in St. Paul. When contacted by the press, she stated "I was kidnapped, pure and simple. I'm over age and have a right to do as I please. As soon as I can run away from home, I'm going back to the nunnery. I want to be a nun." In the next few days, there was an exchange of letters between her and Mother Scholastica, who encouraged her to return by any means possible. Her father took her to Omaha for a few days, but on June 21 she wrote to Mother Scholastica, "I ran away from home this morning and went to the detective's home and stayed there all day and they brought me in disguise to Sister Helen's sister's home and here I am safe and sound and will be with you soon. I got your letter yesterday and I made up my mind right away to go the first chance I got. . . . They have every convent in St. Paul watched to see if they can't find me, but nobody knows where I am but the chief of police and a detective." On June 23 Mother Scholastica wrote, sending a check for expenses to Mr. Vervais (Sister Helen Quirk's brother-in-law) and Mr. Eugene Villaume who was to accompany her by train to Duluth. Mother Scholastica suggested that she wear something colored, put a thick veil over her head, and don a pair of smoked glasses. Sister Borromeo returned to Duluth shortly thereafter, and did indeed make final profession on July 11.

It would be nice to complete this with "and they all lived happily ever after." However, exactly a year later, she called her sister in Superior and told her to come and get her, "she was through with the convent." She told a news reporter through her father that "she had tired of convent life and would not return." She eventually settled in Superior, Wisconsin, where she worked in a bank for many years.

The extensive press coverage of the kidnapping can be found in the *Duluth News-Tribune* and the *Duluth Evening Herald* beginning on June 8, 1907, and continuing for several days following.

## Sister Miriam Therese Winter To Speak at CSS

By Sister Sarah Smedman



On April 20, 2010, Miriam Therese Winter, a Medical Mission Sister, will deliver two talks at St. Scholastica Monastery: "Celebrating the Liturgy of Life" at 10:00 a.m. in Rockhurst Meeting Room for the Sisters and a select group of College faculty and students; and "Spirituality in a Quantum Universe" at 7:00 in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel for the general public.

Miriam Therese Winter is professor of liturgy, worship, spirituality and feminist studies at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. She has produced 16 recordings of original songs and hymns and has published a number of books on biblical women, ritual, and spirituality, most recently *Paradoxology in a Quantum Universe* (2009). She is perhaps best known for her first recording, *Joy Is Like the Rain* (1966) and for "Mass of a Pilgrim People," recorded live at Carnegie Hall (1967).

Winter has been an advocate nationally and internationally for an emerging feminist spirituality and for the full liberation of women, which she considers essential to ensuring the well-being of our planet and a necessary first step toward the liberation of all people. She is deeply committed to a vision of one world rooted in an understanding of the interconnectedness of all creation.

Sponsored by the Feminist Theologies Committee of St. Scholastica Monastery, Winter will be the Monastery's guest during her stay.

# A Century Well Lived—Sister Lea Pocta is 100!

By Sister Sue Fortier

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



She first graced our world with her presence when Pius X was pope, William Taft was president, and Mother Scholastica Kerst was prioress. Embracing a century of change, she has allowed herself to be transformed into a woman of wisdom and peaceful presence. Those privileged to know her have learned the lesson of gracious surrender. A lifelong learner, delightfully human and full of gratitude, she remains interested in current affairs...and the Minnesota Twins! These past 100 years have carved a treasure chest of memories within her.

Sister Lea, daughter of Frank and Mary (Lukes) Pocta, the sixth of eight children, was born in Mason City, Iowa, on December 31, 1909, in the family home. Baptized Helen, she was affectionately called Helly by her mother. When she was five years old, the family moved to a farm in Beroun, Minnesota. She vividly remembers her father raising geese. "My mother would pluck feathers, and we children would gather around the table to strip them so she could make pillows. Afterwards, we were rewarded with a Feather Picking Party and mother would provide bismarks and milk," recalls Lea. Going to school at the age of six is one of her fondest

memories. On most days she would walk, but when winter became unbearable her father would take the children to school by horse and sleigh. Little Helly loved learning and dreamed one day she would become a teacher.

St. Joseph's Church was the center of life for the family and, seemingly, they had ownership of the front pew that continues to hold symbolic memory for Sister Lea. In this pew, after hearing a sermon from her pastor, Father Leo Laskowski, she believes the seed of her vocation was planted. At fifteen years of age, she became an aspirant. Two years later, she entered the Postulancy, followed by the Novitiate. Father Leo wanted her to have his name, but Mother Agnes wouldn't hear of a masculine name for Helen. Instead, she gave her the name, Lea. Sister Lea made her final profession July 11, 1931, and on August 23, 2008, she celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> Jubilee.

She received her B.S. degree from The College of St. Scholastica in 1945. In 1967 she graduated with a Master's degree in Counseling from UMD. As educator, principal and mentor, she drew out the best in her students in schools too numerous to count within the Duluth Diocese. Modeling what she taught, she also inspired many lives at Mother of Sorrows in Cincinnati and at St. Bridget's in Minneapolis.

After her teaching career, she pursued CPE at St. Joseph's Hospital, St. Paul, before beginning a new ministry as chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital, Duluth. For nine years she ministered to the sick and dying with utmost compassion. Dreaming of possible retirement, she was shocked when Mother Grace Marie Braun asked her to serve the community as subprioress. Feeling she was too old, she couldn't believe the request but accepted graciously. Following three years as subprioress, she ended her active ministry by providing pastoral care at the BHC. With a laugh, she says, "After that, I retired and was tired."

With a lifetime spanning a century, Sister Lea is a living history book of St. Scholastica Monastery. Relying on her faith, she has courageously faced challenges, weathered storms, and suffered the loss of family, friends and her treasured gift of eyesight. "Through it all I've had a good life," she says, "and it's still a good life!" With longing in her voice she makes it known that her next adventure will be heaven, as she passionately exclaims, "I look forward to the day when I will see the face of my God." An exemplary woman, she has indeed made a difference in our lives! Congratulations, Sister Lea! We, your Sisters, love you and rejoice with you for a century well lived!



# Benedictine Center of Spirituality

## Advent 2009 Retreat:



The Advent Retreat at the Monastery was entitled *The Wonder of Advent: Listening to Hope's Whisperings*. Retreatants explored ways to awaken and recognize glimmers of hope in ordinary life experiences. Sister Mary Josephine Torborg facilitated the retreat. *(Photo by Sister Jeanne Ann Weber)*

## January 9th Shalom Spiritual Direction Gathering:



Above left: Pastor Al Hendrickson teaching on Forgiveness. Center: Sister Pauline Micke teaching on Addiction: Building a Life for Recovery. Right: Sister Michelle Dosch practicing Healing Touch, a process that brings a certain amount of peace, restfulness and tranquility to the recipient. Earlier she taught about Healing the Family Tree. Left: Sister Jean Maher and participants gathering for lunch. *(Photos by Mary Ann Koth)*

## Outreach - Sister Pauline's Presentations:

"The O Antiphons: the Story of Our Salvation"  
"Forgiveness and Reconciliation"  
"Spirituality in Healing and Living in Recovery"

Sister Pauline is also available for spiritual direction. If you would like a retreat or a workshop, contact Sister Pauline Micke, OSB, at 218-723-7086 or [pmicke27@yahoo.com](mailto:pmicke27@yahoo.com).

## Looking Ahead: Lenten Retreat: Healing Life's Hurts

**Saturday, March 13, 2010**, 9 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Lunch included, freewill offering

This workshop will address the ways that life hurts and affects us, and the varied ways of healing.

**Facilitators:** Michelle Dosch, OSB, MA Counseling and Guidance, Nationally Certified Counselor, Certified Spiritual Director. Jeanne Ann Weber, OSB, MA Spirituality, Certified Spiritual Director.

Our Center **web site** can be found at [www.duluthbenedictines.org](http://www.duluthbenedictines.org). If you would like to be on the Center mailing list, call: 218-723-7074 or e-mail: [jaweber@css.edu](mailto:jaweber@css.edu).

# Welcome Bishop Paul Sirba!

By Sister Lisa Maurer

The Sisters of St. Scholastica, along with all the faithful in Northeastern Minnesota, rejoiced and gave thanks to God at the appointment and subsequent ordination of Rev. Paul Sirba as the Ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth. On December 14 close to fifty Sisters attended the Ordination at the DECC while many others watched the special event on television. “For me, witnessing the ordination was a wonderful experience,” remarked Sister Barbara Ann Vierzba. “It filled me with hope and excitement for the future.”

On January 24 the Community had the privilege of welcoming Bishop Sirba to their home, starting out by visiting the Sisters in Benet Hall. He appreciated the fact each of the Sisters pray for a particular parish in the Diocese, and the Sisters in turn enjoyed his warmth and humor. Upon meeting her new Bishop, Sister Renee Cormier said, with a smile, “My, you are a young and handsome Bishop!”

Later that evening Bishop Sirba joined the Community at prayer. It was a grace-filled time of being united as the family of God. Bishop Sirba was then welcomed to Rockhurst Dining Room for dinner and conversation. After the meal the Sisters prayed a blessing over the Bishop. Then, with words of gratitude for his presence among the faithful and with words of encouragement and promised prayers, Sister Lois presented Bishop Sirba with a copy of the *Rule of St. Benedict* whose artistry was done by +Sister Mary Charles McGough. The calligraphy was done by Meredith Schifsky, an Oblate of this Community. He also received Sister Joan Chittister’s commentary on *The Rule*.

Bishop Sirba thanked the Community for all it has done, from the beginning, for the Diocese of Duluth and stated that he is eager to be working with the Sisters in ministering to the people of the Diocese of Duluth. Then he prayed a special blessing over them. Before he left, each Sister then had a chance to greet the new Bishop. “I was impressed with the kindness of his face and how approachable he seemed,” commented Sister Claudia Cherro.



Above and then clockwise: Bishop Paul Sirba and Sister Lois Eckes January 24; the Bishop with Sister Mary Catherine Shambour, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, and Sister Lois Eckes at his ordination, December 14, 2009; Bishop Sirba being introduced to Sister Joan Braun (left) and Sister Mary Martin Beringer; the Bishop and Sisters at dinner in Rockhurst Dining Room at the Monastery, January 24. (Photo above center taken at the Ordination December 14, 2009, by Father John Petrich. Others by Sister Edith Bogue.)

*May Bishop Sirba be strengthened and blessed with a future filled with great hopes and great things as he leads the faithful in the Diocese of Duluth!*





# Sister Danile Lynch



*Sister Danile—On the Road Again!*

In my senior year of high school our English teacher asked us to write an essay on “What I Want to be When I Grow Up.” Growing up in a small town in northern Illinois (Mundelein) I remember how I used to stand and wait each day to see the train and hear the whistle of the steam engine as it slowly wound its way through town. I wondered where it had come from and where it was heading. My imagination took me to many places. I chose to write my essay about being a “Hobo” – one who would jump on and off the train’s different “box cars” as the train moved through the USA. Over the years I have “jumped on and off” the train in places such as Minnesota, Arizona, and California. Ten years ago as the train (no longer with a steam engine!) slowly moved near the U.S. Capitol, the White House, the Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson monuments, I decided it was a good place to jump off the edge of the boxcar.

I have been working as the Chief Operating Officer at Saint Luke Institute (SLI) in Silver Spring, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC. SLI ministers to priests, deacons, seminarians and consecrated religious

women and men. SLI is a Catholic, long-term residential, behavioral healthcare facility that provides services for a wide range of mental health issues: depression, compulsive behaviors, alcoholism, drug abuse, cybersex addictions, sexual disorders, and relational problems. No two days during my time here have ever been the same. Continuing to listen to our residents tell their stories and witnessing to their growth and conversion experiences has been most rewarding for me. **God’s grace is ever present here!**

It is for these residents that I continue to face the daily challenges (and learning opportunities) of leaky roofs, breaking pipes, immigration laws and visa regulations, JCAHO accreditation standards, reviewing contracts, working with lawyers, cars/vans breaking down, replacing furniture and equipment, hoping the computers and telephone systems are working, checking to be sure the food is hot, being aware that the grass gets cut in the summer and the snow shoveled in the winter, making certain that all bills are paid timely, speaking with bishops, keeping the clinical, nursing, and administrative staff members working together and being sure the employees receive their payroll checks every two weeks...just to mention some of my duties, but enough to keep me busy for many hours each day!

I don’t know when I will be ready to jump (oh, these aching bones!) back on the train and head off to the next segment of my journey or where the journey will take me, but the world is open to one who dreams!

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

**Ella Mae Bleier 12/22/08**

**Alma Audette-Wilson 1/20/09**

**Dick Traxler 10/15/09**

**Charles Kazda 11/13/09**

**Irene Quinn Norman 12/4/09**

**Patricia Hufford 12/2/09**

*+Sister Sheila Gilbertsen’s sister*

**Michael Vierzba 12/16/09**

*Sister Barbara Ann Vierzba’s brother*

**Fern Dosch 12/29/09**

*Sister Michelle Dosch’s mother*

**Gertrude Hoolihan 12/26/09**

**Eunice Potvien 12/26/09**

**Veikko Dalbacka 12/31/09**

# Interreligious Dialogue: A Path to Peace

By Sister Sarah Smedman

*Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique*/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (DIMMID) is an organization of Christian monastic men and women who promote religious dialogue between themselves and monastics of other religions. DIMMID was established by the Benedictine Confederation in 1978 in response to the Vatican's request that Catholic monks and nuns assume a leadership role in the dialogue between Christianity and the great religions of the East.

An international organization, DIMMID has regional commissions in North America, Europe (12 countries), Australia, India, and Sri Lanka. The work of these commissions is coordinated by a General Secretariat in Rome, established in 1994, and currently headed by Fr. William Skudlarek of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota.

In the North American commission (MID), Catholic monastic women and men "bring their charism of listening and hospitality to interreligious dialogue. Dialogue is conducted at the level of spiritual practice and experience for the purpose of mutual spiritual benefit and communion" (Mission Statement). MID is governed by a Board of Directors, with a president (Abbott Mark Serna of Glastonbury Abbey, Massachusetts), a secretary (Sister Helene Mercier of St. Benedict Monastery, Minnesota) and a treasurer (Sister Katherine Ann Smolik of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Indiana). The MID Board, which meets annually, has an international group of advisors, notable scholars in the field of religions.



Photo by Rev. Kusala Bhikshu

*Sister Sarah Smedman and other monastics crafting "Simple and Sufficient."*

My involvement with MID came as a fortuitous result of my service on the Advisory Board of the Interreligious Forum of The College of St. Scholastica. At the 2007 Monastic Institute of St. John's School of Theology, Collegeville, I spoke briefly of the interreligious events/programs the CSS Forum had sponsored in Duluth. Impressed by the Forum's interaction with our local Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, the Chairman of the MID Board invited me to the Board.

My first experience as a MID Board member was participation in "Gethsemani III." In May 2008, as one of forty invited men and women, the majority Benedictine and Buddhist monastics, I participated in a conference/retreat focused on "Monasticism and the Environment" at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky. This was the third

such gathering of Benedictine and Buddhist monastics: the first in 1996, "The Gethsemani Encounter," on the theme of "The Spiritual Life"; in 2002, "Gethsemani II," on the theme of "Suffering and Transformation." Appropriately, these gatherings convened at Gethsemani Abbey, the monastery of Thomas Merton, a pioneer in open conversation between Christians and Buddhists.

"Gethsemani III" proved for me an intellectual, social, and spiritual watershed. In addition to scientific examinations of modern technology's and current life-style's destructive effects on the environment, the group compared what Benedictine and Buddhist rules had to say about our responsibilities for all God's creation, including the natural world. In large and small groups we crafted our manifesto, "Simple and Sufficient," our pledge to the earth and its peoples. The conference closed with a pilgrimage to Merton's hermitage, where, in an outdoor ritual, Buddhists and Benedictines proclaimed with one voice "Simple and Sufficient." (This manifesto is available on the MID web site at [monasticinterreligiousdialogue.com](http://monasticinterreligiousdialogue.com))

While we were at Gethsemani, we prayed with the monks in their choir stalls—women too! Meals were wholesome, vegetarian, not vegan. Gethsemani fruitcake and fudge were often desserts or treats. Evenings were devoted to music, films, talks by participants about their own monasteries, and walks through the lush green hills in Kentucky's spring air.





Photo by Rev. Kusala Bhikkhu

*Bhuddhists and Benedictine monastics at Gethsemani Abbey*

MID has also sponsored three “Nuns in the West,” with plans for a fourth in Atchison, Kansas, Labor Day weekend in 2011, and two “Monks in the West,” with tentative plans for a third in 2011. NITW and MITW are smaller gatherings—eight to ten Buddhist monastics from a variety of traditions and a similar number of Benedictines—for prayer and discussion focused on a specific theme. NITW III in 2008, for example, centered on “Meditation and Prayer.” Describing these gatherings as “blessed encounters,” participants agree they deepen bonds among monastics following different paths.

MID’s web site has multiple links, including one to its on-line *MID Bulletin* and *International Bulletin*, which, published semi-annually since 1978, include articles, book reviews, interviews, and reflections that reveal the depth and breadth of the monastic interreligious community. In January 2011, DIMMID plans to launch *Dilatato Corde*, an international, multilingual, peer-reviewed, online journal, more “weighty” than the *International Bulletin*. *Dilatato Corde* will focus on the dialogue of spiritual practice and experience and is likely to attract university scholars as well as religious practitioners. Eventually *Dilatato Corde* will replace the *Bulletins*, but their archives will remain available.

During the last months as Secretary General, Fr. William Skudlarek has traveled to Australia where, with Rev. Heng Sure, an American Buddhist monk closely associated with MID, he made two presentations at the Parliament for the World’s Religions; he also visited five Australian Benedictine and Cistercian communities to promote the work of DIMMID. From Australia, Fr. William traveled to Viet Nam and Thailand as an apostle for interreligious dialogue, then on to Shantivanam Ashram, India, for a symposium celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abhishiktananda, a French Benedictine who co-founded the Ashram. Back in Rome, Fr. William is currently planning future conferences/meetings in England, Norway, Paris, Brussels, and Rome as well as writing, translating, and editing.

For Americans, the Secretary General’s most exciting and influential achievement may be partnering DIMMID with a Coalition to support the United Nations’ initiative to declare 2011-2020 a “Decade for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Peace.” The Coalition’s “Terms of Engagement” pledge commitment to “a just and durable peace and security, for participatory and sustainable development, and for life and living in the fullness of human rights and dignity” for all peoples. While at the United Nations, DIMMID also applied for NGO status.

Together with other worldwide efforts to achieve collaboration among the religions and faith traditions, DIMMID offers hope that morality and spirituality will become an integral dimension of a world order which prizes and practices peace through the eradication of war, poverty, and discrimination.

Please add your prayerful support for continued success of DIMMID’s labors.

# HUNTING FOR A HAIR SHIRT

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Recently I was stunned when a well-educated young woman convert asked, enthusiastically, if our Sisters in formation wore a hair shirt and practiced self-flagellation. My knee-jerk negative response was that I considered the trials and sufferings of this life sufficient without adding artificial ones! While in no way denying that our affluent first-world life style has pretty well ignored the need for penance and fasting – especially in regard to the Biblical definition of fasting that the Lord desires: “...setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke, sheltering the homeless,”...etc., her question left me long pondering the vision of religious life it espoused.

These are not easy times for the world, for the Church, for religious communities. The rapid disintegration of institutions on which we once prided ourselves, the endless chain of wars, global destruction and injustices, dizzying pace of technology, staggering indebtedness—all leave us mistrustful, uncertain, and often despairing. Because the “children of this world” continue to be “more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light,” large numbers of faithful in western societies now consider the Church irrelevant to their needs and aspirations, whereas the Church in third-world nations continues to grow at a phenomenal rate. Religious communities follow the same pattern: those in the western world continue to decline at alarming rates, while those in third-world nations can hardly contain all their young applicants. What do the statistics bode for our future? Is there a future for religious life in the West?

While historians point out the cyclic rise and fall of various religious movements and communities, the secret to their revival seems to lie in the way they look at their demise: a necessary death in order for new life and opportunities to emerge, or an unsung end to their usefulness and meaning. Even in the relatively short history of our Benedictine community, we have seen the cycle unfold. In what was certainly a death to the security of their cloistered way of life, the handful of Benedictine women and men who left monasteries of nineteenth-century Europe to minister to the thousands of Catholic immigrants flooding the Midwest experienced new life and a phenomenal growth never again to be repeated. But shortly after attaining the high peak of membership in the 1960’s, the Duluth community, like most others, began feeling the effects of massive cultural shifts in society and the questioning of religion’s role within it. The cycle began its downward trend.

During times of diminishment, hope is spurred on by witnessing seeds of new life. As we welcome new members into our Community at this time of uncertainty, we cannot close our eyes to the needs of our world. The courageous few who embrace religious life in our country at this time will face world challenges on a scale that we cannot begin to imagine. Lest they be discouraged that their lives will make little difference, we need to focus on the beginning of the cycle when a small group of followers turned their backs on the values which led to the decline of the Roman empire and began anew to focus their attention on Christ and his teachings as interpreted for them by Benedict. In their quiet, God-centered lives, they modeled a way of life that took root and helped preserve not only Christianity but western civilization itself.

We would do well to encourage today’s disillusioned young adults who long to become part of something bigger than themselves to consider giving their lives to God in a monastic community where they will “seek after peace and pursue it.” The values of work, prayer, reverencing God and all creation, respecting the dignity of every human being, sharing all things in common, welcoming strangers, and caring for the sick are all values for which the world cries. Bringing these values to our consumer-oriented society fearful for its survival will prove difficult enough. Learning to give up one’s own will—and credit card; to live according to a prescribed schedule; to move from self-centeredness and competitiveness to genuine humility; to live the common life in peace with others of varied backgrounds and temperaments all provide sufficient enough pricks to one’s pride that we won’t have to issue hair shirts.



Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



# In Loving Memory

Photo by Sister Judine Mayerle



*Sister Magdalen working on her crafts.*

Photo courtesy of Monastery Archives



*Sister Thea Sandusky (left) and Sister Magdalen on her Golden Jubilee in 1982.*

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



*Sister Magdalen*

## Sister Magdalen Dooper, OSB

*November 23, 1912 – December 27, 2009*

Sister Magdalen (formerly Magdella) Dooper, OSB, 97, of St. Scholastica Monastery, died December 27, 2009. She entered the Duluth Benedictine community on February 24, 1931, and was admitted to the novitiate November 13, 1931, when she received the name “Magdella.” Many years later she returned to her baptismal name. Sister made her first profession December 30, 1932, and professed final monastic vows July 11, 1936. She observed the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her profession July 28, 2002, and at the time of her death was in the 77<sup>th</sup> year of her monastic profession.

Sister Magdalen was born in Amery, Wisconsin, November 23, 1912, the first of eight children born to Bernard and Catherine (Dosch) Dooper. Her early life was spent in the Amery area where she attended the public elementary and secondary schools. In 1930 she enrolled at The College of St. Scholastica where she earned a B.S. in elementary education after which she began her teaching ministry. Sister Magdalen taught at St. James, St. John’s, and St. Clement’s in Duluth; Assumption Hall in Hibbing; Marquette in Virginia; and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Cloquet. Later Sister earned Executive Housekeeper Certification through the National Executive Housekeepers Association. As a member of this association, Sister Magdalen held offices in both the Head of the Lakes Chapter and the Upper Midwest District. She was a member of the Council on Aging of the Duluth Community Fund.

Sister Magdalen served as prefect of nurses at St. Mary’s School of Nursing in Duluth and as sacristan at Hibbing General Hospital in Hibbing. For the last forty years of her active career Sister Magdalen worked with the elderly at St. Ann’s in Duluth. In this work she served in various capacities: bookkeeper, administrator, executive housekeeper, house director, and supervisor of linen and housekeeping. In 1996 Sister Magdalen retired and returned to the Monastery where she continued to provide craft items for the Monastery gift shop and participated in prayer ministry.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers Edward, Bernard, and August; her sisters Irene, Elizabeth, and Marie; a step-sister, Florence, and a step-brother, Francis. Besides the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery she is survived by her sister, Dorothy O’Meara, and by many other relatives, including Sister Michelle Dosch, OSB, of St. Scholastica Monastery.

*By Sister Mary E. Penrose*

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*We must slow our lives down  
to encounter our God  
in the everyday moments.*

*(Sister Barbara Higgins' Reflection, page 3)*