



PATHWAYS

Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters

Duluth, Minnesota • Vol. 22, No. 1 • Fall 2010



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

Produced by
Monastery Development /
Public Relations Office

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

Dear Friends,

In Psalm 33 the Psalmist proclaims, "The Earth is full of the goodness of God!" How lavishly have we been immersed in the goodness of God as we relished the beauty and bounty of gardens and fields here in the Northland these past summer and early autumn days.

The goodness of God surrounding us in nature has filled our monastic community in a marvelous way as well. We have rejoiced with our Sisters who celebrated their Jubilees of monastic profession: 50, 60, 70 and 75 years. We have welcomed five new members to the next step on their Initial Formation journey. (See stories and photos in this issue of *Pathways*.) These joyous celebrations have been graced moments for our entire community, occasions for us all to give thanks for God's great love, gifting us with new life, growth, and the fruits of enduring commitment and fidelity.

What is the life commitment for which we prepare and to which we give ourselves totally and unconditionally? As we seek God and the reign of God together in community, we are committed to living our baptismal covenant through the threefold promise of stability, fidelity to the monastic life, and obedience. Our monastic tradition holds that celibate chastity and monastic poverty are an indispensable part of this threefold promise.

By stability we promise to stay rooted in this monastic community where we will persevere with our Sisters in living the ideals of the *Rule of Benedict* and cherish the traditions and customs of our community.

By fidelity to the monastic life we promise to open ourselves to God's transforming grace day by day through our steadfast dedication to living the monastic life in this community.

By obedience we promise to listen with the ear of our heart to God's voice in Scripture, in the Prioress, in one another, in the Church and in society today.

This threefold commitment is the covenant we make with God and one another so that we might give ourselves personally and as a community to growing in likeness to Christ and embracing his mission. Described in the Gospel of Luke (4:18-21), the heart of Jesus' mission is to bring God's saving love to all people, with preferential option for those who are poor or who have been marginalized or suffer injustice of any kind.

Our vowed commitment as monastic women in the Church and our world is interwoven with your lives as well, whatever your life commitment might be. Together we form the community of God's People, a part of the ever-widening, all-encompassing Circle of Life and Earth for which we are called to care deeply, passionately, wisely and compassionately.

Gathered together within the mantle of God's magnificent love for us, may the earth of our lives be filled with the goodness of God as we give ourselves in courageous and compassionate service to all who need our advocacy and love.

Lovingly yours in Christ with deep gratitude, and fervent prayer,

Sister Lois Eckes

Sister Lois Eckes



Reflection for a Fall Journey

By Sister Pauline Micke

The colored leaves were crunching under my feet as I walked in the woods. A light breeze flitted through the trees where hardy leaves still clung to the branches. All of a sudden the silence was blown away by a flock of Canada geese noisily winging their way south.

I stood still, experiencing these harbingers of change. This season of Fall has so much to say to us about change, surrendering, letting go, dying and coming to new life. We associate Fall with these processes. It is important to grow in understanding that, like nature, this is a natural part of life and does not have to be something fearful for us.

In his book *Forgotten Among the Lilies: Learning to Love Beyond Our Fears*, Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, states, “As Christians we need to distinguish between two kinds of death, paschal and terminal. Terminal death is a death that ends life, ends possibilities. It brings dreams, health, honeymoons, and happiness to final closure. Paschal death is real death. Something precious dies. However in this kind of death there is an opening to new life and new spirit.”

The Fall season speaks to us through many images of this paschal death—the letting go, the surrendering that takes place in nature in the Fall so there is new life in the Spring. The same process takes place in each of our lives. Fall is a good time for us to take a walk through our own lives—to look deeper into our spirituality in terms of Fall’s images: letting go, surrendering, and the dying that new life may be birthed.

As you take your walk (physically or reflectively), ask yourself—what and where in my life do I need to “let go”? We seem to accept Fall’s image of surrender very reluctantly. We perceive surrendering as “weakness.” Rather, surrender takes strength, a great deal of courage. It is in surrendering that we are formed and transformed just as nature is around us. It is precisely this process of surrendering that brings us to new life. We need to “let go,” to be emptied so that new life can be birthed in us.

Lastly, the image of dying is also not a favorite one. We live in a culture that would rather deny death, call it something else, or avoid it at all costs. Yet nature, particularly in the Fall season, tells and shows us that death, like birth, is a part of life. What we need to do is always see death as “paschal death” as Rolheiser names it—leading to new life. As Rolheiser states, “God always gives us new life. We never die.” Enjoy your walk this Fall and continue to journey through crunching, falling leaves, light breezes, and harsher winds to the song of geese journeying south—all of these experiences on this journey lead us to new life!

May your journey this Fall lead you to more colors, invigorating walks in the wind, and the courage to let go, to surrender, to die where you need to—so that you will be filled with the birthing of new life! God bless you.



Sister Devota is 100

By Sister Lois Ann Glaudel
Mary Derocher Hudson
Sister Arlene Kleemann

Photo by Andi Therrien



Sister Devota at her 100th birthday party

the last 83 years as an elementary school teacher; the founding principal of St. Thomas school in Phoenix (1953), a catechetical instructor, where she and Sister Antonia Erchul trained other Sisters to set up programs throughout the Diocese; and working with special needs patients at the Brainerd State Hospital and being a member of St. Joseph's Hospital Board. Presently, Sister is assigned to her new ministry at St. Scholastica Monastery, where she helps write letters for Sisters, sits with the sick and dying, and runs the weekly Bingo for those who look forward to playing.



Sister Devota visited with St. James School students in May, 2009.

Photo by Sister Dorene King



Sister Devota and her birthday cake

Photo by Andi Therrien

Sister Devota's indefatigable sense of doing the Lord's will in any situation, as well as her wonderful sense of humor, have contributed to her being the joy she is today in our midst.

So we congratulate Sister Devota on her 100th birthday with our prayers, love, and best wishes for many more.

Sister Profile: “Gardener of the Heart—Sister Judith Oland”

By Sister Sue Fortier

Year after year she kneels on Mother Earth, contemplating the rich possibility of empty land. Working the soil, planting the seeds, she patiently waits for a small plot of land to be transformed into beauty and life. She first discovered her love for gardening as a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Chaplain at Willmar State Hospital. Little did she know that in the future she would garden the terrain of the human heart.

A native Duluthian with Norweigan and Croatian roots, blue-eyed, blond haired Sister Judith Oland was first planted in her family garden with her brother, Tom, her sister, Wanda, and their parents Rhoda (Maras) and Norman Oland. From early childhood, music played an important part in her life. Little Judy would sing Sunday school songs with gusto in her Pentecostal Church. Having attended Ensign Lincoln Elementary and Lincoln Junior High schools, she went on to become a proud graduate of Denfeld High School. Throughout her teenage years Judith was active in music and drama. Today, the creative arts and her love for music continue to enrich her life.

Her deep faith and search for God led her to the Catholic Church where she was received as a convert during her junior year in high school. My earliest memory of Judith goes back to 1961 when the two of us, in search of our first pair of “nun shoes,” met at Dayton’s Department Store in downtown Minneapolis. Being young women, embarrassed with our purchase, we hoped to escape incognito. In September of that year Judith entered St. Scholastica Monastery. She professed final vows in 1966 and for ten years was known as Sister Justin before returning to her baptismal name.

She received her B.A. degree in Elementary Education from The College of St. Scholastica. After teaching in the Duluth Catholic Schools for nine years, she pursued Pastoral Ministry. In 1977 she participated in a CPE program at Willmar Regional Treatment Center and was certified as a CPE Supervisor in 1980. There, for nine years, she served as a CPE Supervisor and chaplain, ministering to the mentally challenged and adult psychiatric residents, while at the same time serving as Pastoral Associate at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Kandiyohi, Minnesota. In 1988 she received her M.A. degree in Theology from St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota. She returned to Duluth a year later and served her Benedictine Community as Formation Director. From 1991 to the present she has been a CPE Supervisor at St. Mary’s Medical Center, Duluth, and since 1999 has also been the Program Director of the CPE Program.



Judith has dedicated herself to CPE, a transformational process wherein the potential of the human spirit is unleashed. Over the past 30 years men and women of all faith traditions are now sharing the fruits of that experience in a rich diversity of ministries. Through her students, the seed of Judith’s life is being scattered within families, parishes, prisons, nursing homes, businesses, and medical centers, transforming the landscape of the wider community. Her students hold her in high esteem with heartfelt gratitude, appreciating her gentle presence and her delightful sense of humor. They speak of her as a sentinel of courage, creativity, compassion, and integrity. She has challenged and encouraged them to spread their wings beyond the familiar and to embrace their own fertile land, rich with the possibility for new growth. With her newly discovered gift of watercolor, Judith creates beauty in a world of shadow and light and knows, in the words of May Sarton, “that without darkness nothing comes to birth as without light nothing flowers.” She has, indeed, become a gardener of the human spirit, and many lives are forever changed because of her.

REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: THE SACRED HEART SHRINE

By Sister Margaret Clarke

Once upon a time, about a thousand million years ago, the earth's crust developed a large crack extending roughly from where Kansas is now, making a sharp right turn at the "forehead" of the Lake Superior "wolf" and continuing down into Michigan. Uncountable tons of hot melted rock flooded up into that crack, eventually solidifying into the rock formations now known as the Duluth Gabbro and North Shore Volcanics. This heavy, dark rock underlies not only the Duluth area, but a significant portion of northeastern Minnesota.

Somewhat more recently, a bit more than a hundred years ago in 1900, a group of Benedictine Sisters purchased eighty acres of land lying on this ancient rock on the outskirts of Duluth, intending to build a school and motherhouse. Within a few years they had added an additional forty acres, and then another forty. The last parcel of land purchased turned out to have a rock quarry capable of furnishing enough of the gabbro—locally known as "blue trap"—to construct the entire building that was completed in 1909. In 1920 and 1928 additions to this building, now known as Tower Hall, were also faced with the gabbro quarried on site. By this time, the amount of usable stone was depleted, leaving a sheer cliff backing a space like an amphitheater on the "back forty."

Meanwhile, back in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, the Sisters were operating St. Benedict's Hospital, which they had opened in 1898. A member of the local clergy, Father Louis Beuchler, gave the Sisters two large outdoor statues for their property: one of St. Scholastica and the other of the Sacred Heart. When the hospital was closed in 1912, he indicated that the statues should go to the site of the new motherhouse in Duluth. St. Scholastica was installed in front of the recently completed Villa Sancta Scholastica, and the statue of the Sacred Heart was moved to the Sisters' cemetery.



The original location of the statue in front of St. Benedict's Hospital, Grand Rapids, Minnesota about 1910



The Sacred Heart statue in Gethsemane Cemetery, its location from 1913 to 1946

In 1946 the Sacred Heart statue was moved to the former quarry. A stone pedestal was constructed by stonemason Mr. Louis Lenta, father of Sister Petra. Using chunks of a concrete slab, Mr. Lenta built steps to connect the floor of the quarry with the top of the cliff. An elaborate system of gardens was laid out and given into the care of the novices. The gardens eventually extended from the foot of the statue itself down a winding path bordered by flower beds to the south end of Stanbrook Hall.



The Sacred Heart Shrine in the 1950s

The Sacred Heart shrine became a popular destination for Sisters, students, and retreatants, both for private devotions and public worship services. As the number of novices has decreased over the years, the scope of the gardens has also diminished. With the construction of Stanbrook West and the BHC, access has become a bit more difficult, but for those who seek a quiet place for prayer and reflection, the statue still stands, as Sister Scholastica Bush noted in 1946, “with arms extended in benediction above the buildings.”



Novices visit the shrine in 1949

Photos from Monastery Archives



Sister Petra enjoys her father's stonework.



Over 135 historical photographs from the archives of the Monastery and the College are now available online on the Minnesota Reflections website, <http://reflections.mndigital.org>. On the Minnesota Reflections homepage, under Browse click “by collection” and scroll down to College of St. Scholastica or St. Scholastica Monastery, and click “view the collection.” In the Monastery collection, you will find pre-1950 photos of the Sisters at work and play, and all of the buildings we have constructed, plus a few historical photos from St. Mary’s Hospital.

Tanzania, 2010

By Sister Martha Bechtold

(Sister Martha Bechtold visited Tanzania earlier this year, from May 20-June 11th. She accompanied Sister Valentina Pilla, who recently completed her undergraduate and master's degrees at The College of St. Scholastica. Sister Valentina is a member of St. Gertrude Convent Imiliwaha in southwestern Tanzania, and is recovering from hip replacement surgery.)

I celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi (the Body and Blood of Christ) this June 6 with the African Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes in their home country. It was an event to remember.

During the week before the feast, I was at St. Gertrude Convent Imiliwaha, where they were making preparations. Early in the week, holes were dug on the roadside along the nearly mile-long procession route. Later, five-foot poles were placed into the holes, and on Saturday afternoon greens and fresh flowers were tied to the poles with grasses. In the cemetery the Sisters built a small shelter of bamboo poles and leaves under which Benediction would be held. I left Imiliwaha before the celebration and observed the feast itself further south at St. Agnes Convent, Chipole.

There, at the Sunday morning Mass, a choir of girls from the residential primary school (grades 5-7), all dressed in identical dresses and hats, sang many songs for the Mass, all from memory, many of them accompanied with well-choreographed body movements.

At the end of Mass, we exited the chapel and began the long procession past the cemetery, the gardens and workshops, the nursery school and the orphanage. The preschool-age orphans and, further on, the small children at their residential nursery school, sat on the grassy slopes outside their buildings "to greet Jesus" as he came by.

The procession moved slowly with small steps. The students from the primary, secondary, and trade schools led the procession, singing all the way. Then came the priest and altar servers. Immediately in front of them was a young Sister "bonging" a big bass drum, announcing the approach of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. It resounded in my heart.

I walked with a group of Sisters directly behind the priest. They too sang along the entire route. (My Swahili deficiency kept me from joining them.) To my right, on uneven ground, walked an older member of the Chipole community, limping with two hand-canes the whole distance. Her infirmity didn't prevent her from taking part in the long procession.

We returned to chapel for Benediction and the conclusion of the festive celebration. What a glorious event. It drew into one experience the celebrative, faith-filled lives that the Sisters lead despite the lack of many of the conveniences that we in our country couldn't live without.

I needed a two-hour nap in mid-afternoon!



Representatives of five different Benedictine communities present in the guest dining room at St. Gertrude Convent Imiliwaha: Sister Martha Bechtold; Mother Clothilde Sanyika of St. Gertrude Convent Imiliwaha; Brother Stanislaus Mwinyuka, St. Maurus Abbey Hanya; Aubrey O'Connell, alum of the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minnesota; and Paul Conroy, alum of St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota;



Sister Martha with two orphans, each named Martha. The orphanages at both Chipole and Imiliwaha are filled to capacity. When the children are school-age, they will live at and attend a boarding primary school that is operated by the Sisters.

Sister Dorene King Makes Perpetual Monastic Profession

August 22, 2010, was a momentous and memorable day for me. It was the day when the various threads of my life and the years of initial formation in the Benedictine way of life merged as I made my perpetual monastic profession.

Perpetual monastic profession means that I made the promise of stability, fidelity, and obedience. This three-fold promise merges into a flowing stream called “Seeking God.” The stream meanders this way and that but ultimately settles into an ever-deepening unity with God. What gives that stream a homeward direction toward God is our Community’s thirst to know God through prayer, study, and seeing Christ in one another.

Stability draws me back to the essence of our life with all its dimensions—seeking God amidst our diversity. What other than prayer can give stability to our life? Kathleen Norris (2010 Monastic Institute) referred to this “Stability of Prayer” as a gift not only within Community but as gift to the Church and world. In that respect stability means not a static, unchanging way but a dynamic movement toward God.

Fidelity flows with stability and calls me to a Christ-like love which will transform me. In growing in my love and compassion for those in Community, I am becoming increasingly dedicated to this particular monastery. I am growing in my sensitivity to see Christ in all, and in all sorts of manifestations around me.

As I read and listen to God’s word through Community and personal prayer, I have the potential (not always evident to me) to see “God connections.” So, an essential part of fidelity to this monastic way of life is faithfulness to prayer—being there at prayer and joining with my Community around the Eucharistic table.

Since daily I am (and we all are) called to be Christ for one another, mutual obedience or a listening heart is key to navigating the stream of Community life. As the Spirit speaks through each Sister, whether Prioress or the youngest member of Community, I am called to listen with the ear of the heart.

May I continue to be immersed in the three-fold promise of stability, fidelity, and obedience at St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth, Minnesota. May our particular stream of Benedictine life move us to search for God and carry us all to eternal life.



Sister Dorene (left) entering the Chapel with her Formation Director, Sister Donna Schroeder



Sister Lois Eckes blesses Sister Dorene in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel.

Sister Gretchen Johnston and Sister Mary Carla Flood Make Their First Monastic Professions

Sister Gretchen Johnston

“Abide in me. Unless you remain in me, you cannot bear fruit. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.”—a collage of verses from John:15.

First Monastic Profession is my way of abiding in God’s love. I have made a profession to becoming committed to God alone and God’s grace as being all-sufficient for me. I have no idea what that will mean in the future. I can hope, but not know. God knows all my desires; indeed, made them, and God will work out how they will be fulfilled. God dreams for me bigger than ever I could.

Profession is a three-fold promise of stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience that I have made not only on August 29, but that I will grow into in the next three years and beyond. I have promised, and continue to promise by my life, this profession to God as a response to God’s promise to me. I commit to seeking God with the other Sisters in this Community, and they commit to seeking God with me. We don’t know all that lies before us, but what matters is that I, and we, have made a commitment to seek God and be in God’s will in the unknown together.

Stability means that I am growing into being single-hearted, seeking God through all the distractions. At least it means that I want to do it, and living fidelity to the monastic life will help toward this goal. Obedience to the voice of God through the guidance of our Prioress, my other Sisters, and to life circumstances is the means for all this. Actually, these three promises are so intertwined that each is the means for the others.

In the upcoming years I will be able to become involved in ministry, seeking God and helping others seek as well with the gifts and talents that are given to me and that I have honed through my degrees in music. Music is an expression of the being of God, and I get to share this with others!

Sister Mary Carla Flood

I have been called to be a Sister since very early adulthood, so my First Monastic Profession is something I have looked forward to for a very long time. My confirmation as a teenager and then my involvement in the Charismatic Renewal and the Cursillo Movement beginning in my early 20’s awakened my spiritual life, and drew me to discernment of a possible vocation to religious life. As I read and prayed, I came to believe that living in Community with other like-minded women would allow me to use more fully the gifts God has given me and would help me to realize my true self. By making my First Profession, I am promising to fulfill my baptismal call, doing my part to serve the Church and society as a whole. I am saying I need the help and the grace of God, as well as the support of my Sisters first of all, in order to do this.

My vowed monastic commitment is a continuation of my conversion, so that as I live out my vows each day I am becoming more the witness I am pledging to be to the world. My formation continues, and at the same time I am anticipating professional ministry outside the Monastery that will give me the opportunity to use my previous work skills, my educational background, my personal experience, and who I am as a person to be of service to others. Challenges will sometimes present themselves, but my Profession is a reminder to me of perseverance. I am promising God that no matter what, I will stick with my Community, will continue to be faithful and to grow as a Christian and as a monastic, and will listen for and to and follow God’s voice in all its different forms.

Photo by Andi Therrien



Prioress Lois Eckes pins the Benedictine medal on Sister Mary Carla Flood as a sign of her First Monastic Profession.

Photo by Andi Therrien



Sister Gretchen Johnston signs her First Monastic Profession document.



Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer

Sister Lois Eckes blesses the newly professed Community members, Sister Gretchen Johnston and Sister Mary Carla Flood as Sister Pauline Micke, sponsor, looks on.

Please Pray for the Following Deceased Friends and Relatives

Father James Scheuer 7/6/2010
Edward Anderson 7/20/2010
David Youngberg 7/29/2010
Agnes Liebmann 8/12/2010
+Sister Victoria Nemanich's sister

Marie Greco 8/26/2010
Sister Devota LaVoie's sister
Penny Nauman Haladay 8/29/2010

Sister Ann Marie Wainright—Novice

Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer



Sister Ann Marie (left) with Sister Michelle Dosch, formation director (center) and Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress (right).

In the days preceding and following my reception into the novitiate of St. Scholastica Monastery, I had the opportunity to see Sister Dorene make her perpetual monastic profession, Sisters Gretchen and Mary Carla make their first monastic professions, and Leilani become a postulant.

The symbolism of each Rite was rich and beautiful. As an affiliate I stood outside the doors of the Monastery, knocking for entry. As a postulant, I advanced to the doorway of the Gathering Place to the Chapel, asking for admission into the Community as a Postulant. As a Novice, I moved forward into the Gathering Place, standing at the baptismal font for my naming. When I make my first profession, I will proceed past the baptismal font into the Chapel and near the altar, where I will place my offering of triennial vows. At perpetual profession, after prostrating before the altar, I will stand behind it with arms upraised, singing the *Suscipe*.

It is a journey of dying to myself and rising to new life in Christ in the

Community. The farther I go on my vocation journey, the more deeply united with God I become.

I was delighted to receive my Sister-name. That someone cherishes me and knows my name is comforting and familiar; that it is God Who calls me by my name is pure joy. Standing at the baptismal font and receiving my sister-name reminded me that during my novitiate year, I will live my baptismal calling to seek, to know, to love, and to serve God through a life of focused prayer, study, and ministry. During this time I will also remember I am preparing to make a gift of my whole being to God.

Sometimes people think religious life is one of sacrifice and deprivation. They think the loss of money, cars, homes, and relationships is a loss of freedom. This is not so. The journey I am on is one of surrender to a faithful God who surrendered all for me. Seeking God wholeheartedly as a Benedictine monastic leads me to true and lasting freedom.

Leilani Linton—Postulant

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

On September 1, in the special Rite of Entry preceding Evening Prayer, Leilani Linton from St. Stephen's Parish in Anoka, Minnesota, was welcomed by the Sisters of the Monastery as a Postulant, the first step in Initial Formation preparing one for vowed membership. During the ceremony, Leilani received a Benedictine cross symbolic of the life she has chosen, a set of the Community's prayer books, and an apron—representing the Benedictine motto of "Prayer and Work."

In her earlier years, Postulant Leilani traveled extensively in Europe as a military dependent and more recently has worked in Colorado and the Twin Cities as an administrative assistant in health care, transferring medical data to electronic records.

Raised in a family of eight in Minneapolis, Leilani was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church and later participated in mission trips with the Assemblies of God to Mexico and Argentina. Still she longed for a community that believed in the real presence of God in the Eucharist. While working in Fort Collins, Colorado, she frequently dropped in to a Catholic Church to pray on her lunch break and felt that presence. At the death of Pope John Paul II, she was struck by the unity of spirit she felt in the Catholic Church. A year later she entered the R.C.I.A. program and became a member of the Catholic Church.

On noting her devotion to the Eucharist—she soon participated in the 24-hour adoration program and became a Eucharistic minister—a deacon suggested to her the possibility of a religious vocation. Upon investigating religious communities and making a retreat and visits to St. Scholastica Monastery, she and the Community felt that she was being called to the monastic way of life. Leilani now looks on her entrance into the Community as being "one step closer to the dream of my heart, which is union with God."

We welcome you, Postulant Leilani, to seek God together with us.



Leilani Linton (left) and Sister Mary Catherine Shambour, Director of Vocation Ministry

Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer

Sister Profile: Sister Renata Liegey

By Sister Judith Oland

When I interviewed Sister Renata for this article, we met in her room at the Monastery. I noticed many lovely pieces of art and a beautiful picture of a garden and path. I asked her to tell me about the picture and later requested she write down her thoughts. Here is what she wrote:

During my ministry in Washington, D.C., I was introduced to the exquisite azalea gardens at Brighton Dam in nearby Maryland. When my mother visited me, I took her there. Since walking was difficult for her, she sat on one of the benches in the midst of blossoms while I explored.

Our Sister Joyce took numerous photographs of these lovely gardens. I fell in love with this one and had it enlarged and framed. The appealing pathway into such tranquil beauty, this resting place nestled within the flowers and lake in the distance reminded me of my dear Mom, now deceased. It also struck me as the perfect image to display in my massage/bodywork room. It hung there throughout my healing ministry and now graces my room at the Monastery.

How did Sister Renata journey to Washington, D.C. and evolve into healing ministry? Her story begins in Karthaus, Pennsylvania, where she was born to Gladys and Hilary Liegey and named Margaret Louise (Peggy Lou). She was the youngest of six and grew up with her older sister Dolores and brother Joe, her parents' first three children having died in infancy.

Renata attended grade school at a three-room school just down the street from her home and high school, which was twenty miles away. Following graduation from Cooper Township High School, she went to New York where she had several jobs. Her love was art, and she wanted to go to art school. She took night classes at Art Students League in Manhattan but was unable to attend art school full-time.

While working as a water analyst in New York, illness sent her to Arizona for the winter. She fell in love with Arizona and spent ten years in Phoenix where she pursued x-ray technology at St. Joseph's Hospital, earned national certification and was employed in that field until entering St. Scholastica Monastery in 1961. She was drawn primarily by the Benedictine devotion to the Divine Office and the Eucharist. Sister Renata professed first vows in 1963 and final vows in 1966 while earning a BA in art from The College of St. Scholastica.



Sister Renata (left) and Sister Josephine (from Pakistan) in front of Women Well, St. Paul, Minnesota

Sister Renata was sent to Phoenix to teach art at Gerard High School and attended Notre Dame University in the summers. After two years she returned to Minnesota and helped found an ecumenical house of prayer, House of Peace. Several years later Sister Renata was assigned to St. Gertrude's in Washington, D.C. There she taught arts and crafts to developmentally challenged girls ages 6 to 18 while being housemother to the intermediate-age girls. Sister Renata said of her ministry, "This precious ministry, the memory of which I'll always cherish, lasted some 18 years."

Sister Renata then spent one and a half years at Franciscan Center of Wholistic Living in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was there that she began studies in both Massage Therapy and Tai Chi Chih. Having earned certification in both disciplines she maintained a private practice for about seventeen and a half years. Ten of those years she provided services in both ministries at Franciscan Center, now called Woman Well which serviced primarily Religious women from all parts of the globe in sabbatical programs. Of this ministry she said, "This was most enriching for me as well as gratifying to be a part of so many women's healing."

Sister Renata lived in Shoreview, Minnesota, for about twenty years and became a part of a very vibrant worshipping group at St. Odelia's Parish. The last two years of her residency in the Twin Cities Sister Renata participated in the Spiritual Leadership and Guidance Program from which she earned certification just two months before moving to St. Scholastica Monastery.

New Web Site “Look” at DuluthBenedictines.org

Our web site has a new face. We are adopting new technologies in order to speak more clearly and directly to our friends, to families, to those who are interested in what we do, to those who want to join in our ministries, and to women who may be seeking information about joining our monastic Community.

We have worked with H.T. Klatzky and Associates, Inc. this past year to redesign the home page and to initiate communication with people who visit our web site. We have also worked with Marty Weintraub at AimClear to improve the many ways that seekers find our web site and interact with us. We are grateful for their expertise and kindnesses.

We invite you to go to our web site at www.duluthbenedictines.org and interact with us. Add our tweets to your Twitter reads. Visit us on Facebook! Sign up for an RSS feed, an automatic way to be informed by e-mail when a new story or blog or reflection is available. Send us a comment. E-mail the vocations director, archivist, Benedictine Center of Spirituality, or McCabe Renewal Center. Sign up for a retreat or seminar. Or send us a prayer request.



We are constantly putting fresh content on the home page in order to build relationships with our visitors. Read our Sisters’ blogs and reflections, listen to the podcasts, and (soon) view our videos. Several Sisters are now regularly writing blogs – Sister Lisa Maurer, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, and Sister Mary Catherine Shambour. Sister Mary E. Penrose writes a weekly reflection. There is also a slideshow section that gives tours of the Monastery, Chapel, grounds, and McCabe Renewal Center.

The Web Site Task Force has worked tirelessly on the changes over the past 16 months, and Andi Therrien, our webmaster in the Development/ Public Relations Office, devotes many hours of each day to the upkeep of the site.

Who are the forward-looking women who have worked hard to make these improvements? They are the Web Site Task Force members.

Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer



Andi Therrien, Webmaster, takes photos for the web site.

Photo by Andi Therrien



Web Site Task Force members left to right: (front row) Vicky Siders, Sister Lois Eckes, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber; (back row) Sister Lisa Maurer, Sister Luella Wegscheid, Sister Jean Maher, and Sister Mary Catherine Shambour. Not pictured: Andi Therrien.

We sincerely hope you enjoy our updated and interactive web site!

Re-Membering “Visitation”

By Sister Beverly Raway

The halls of the Monastery rang with laughter and the excited sounds of storytelling on Saturday, July 17 when the Monastic Community hosted Re-Membering Friends 2010. Re-Membering was the name chosen in 1995 when the first weekend event was held to bring together current and former members of the Community for a time of healing, sharing, and recognition of the ways in which God continues to journey with us who share a common Benedictine heritage.

The day began with a welcome to our “sisters from the diaspora” by Sister Lois Eckes, Prioress, at the opening of the Eucharist. “Visitation,” the theme chosen for the day, was carried throughout the readings and illustrated in the lovely print called the “Windsock Visitation” situated near the Baptismal Font. Monsignor Bernard Popesh, Presider, shared memories of his 15 years as chaplain at St. Scholastica Monastery including his recollection that Sisters were once required to travel by twos, a practice he thought ought to be continued because it provided an opportunity for other Sisters to get out and see something new. After communion, Barb (Novack) West and Sally Lofte shared a reflection on the “Visitation” theme of the day. They said to us, “Mary and Elizabeth invite us to spend time with each other with joyful hearts. We come together pregnant with the presence of God within each other and that presence causes us to rejoice. . . . We are inspired by one another’s lives and the diverse ways, sometimes unexpected and surprising ways, in which our search for God continues to bear fruit in prayer, work, and service to people all over the country. The Word of God that we each are will not return to God empty but will achieve the purpose for which it was sent.”

Committee members who planned the event were delighted with the turn-out of 30 guests. Perfect weather allowed some to take walks around the grounds and to visit the graves of our Sisters in Gethsemane Cemetery. Bulletin boards were set up to share photos and messages from those who could not attend and to acquaint our returning friends with our Sisters in formation and newer members of the Community.

An indoor “picnic lunch,” at tables with pots of blooming flowers, was followed by informal visiting in the dining room and meeting room. A highlight of the afternoon was a coffee hour with the Sisters living in Benet Hall. There all of us were able to share stories with these women who have shaped our lives in powerful and grace-filled ways. It was a joy to have so many of our “sisters of the diaspora” back with us sharing what God has done for them in the intervening years.



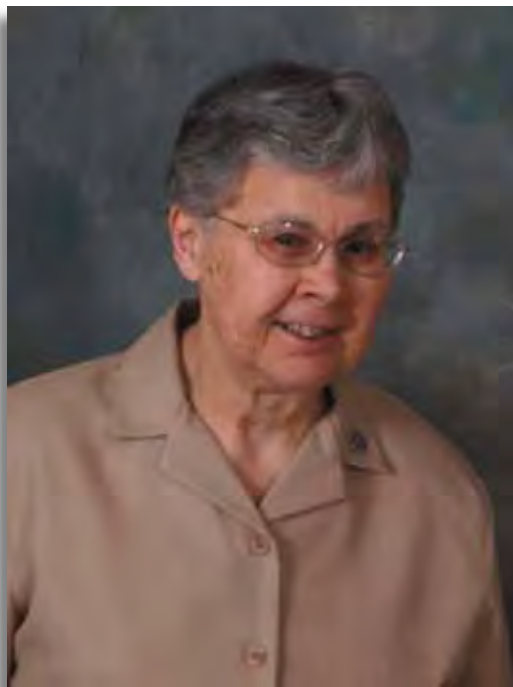
Photos by Sister Patricia Anne Williams



Sister Profile: Sister Annella (Leonore) Wagner

By Sister Barbara Ann Vierzba

Photo by Sister Joyce Fournier



Sister Annella is one of five children, three girls and two boys, born to Ted and Amelia Wagner. Sister Annella and her four siblings were all born in the same house where their father was born in Lastrup, Minnesota. She attended a two-room public school (without electricity, water, plumbing, or furnace) through grade eight. After working on the farm for a year, she got a job at St. Joseph's Hospital in Brainerd, Minnesota. As early as her first communion, Sister Annella felt called to religious life. She attended Stanbrook Hall in Duluth, Minnesota, and received her high school diploma. With the support and encouragement of family and the Benedictine Sisters at St. Joseph's Hospital, she entered the Duluth Community September 8, 1947.

Sister Annella was able to attend many workshops and conferences that helped her in her ministries of Director of Food Service both at St. Joseph's Hospital and at the Monastery, as well as in her position of Resident Assistant on Benet Hall. One of her big accomplishments was planning, organizing, and implementing 5 Meals Per Day Plan for hospital patients. St. Joseph's was the first Minnesota hospital to adopt the plan.

Nearly 40 years of Sister Annella's religious life have been in food service, including 21 years at St. Joseph's Hospital in Brainerd. She also worked at Our Lady of Victory School in Minneapolis as the librarian and at The College of St. Scholastica as a post office assistant. In August of 1980 Sister Annella became the Monastery food service director. In 1991 she was commissioned to serve our Sisters in Benet Hall where she continues to do so. She has a special gift of seeing the needs of the Sisters and also remembering and celebrating special occasions. She has the gift of detail—she knows when, how, and why.

My life connected with Sister Annella's when I turned sweet 16 and went to St. Joseph's Hospital seeking employment in food service. I became a dishwasher and was thrilled. Sister Annella was very helpful in keeping me employed during my breaks when I attended Stanbrook Hall in Duluth during my junior and senior years.

I asked Sister Annella if there was anything in her life that was out of the ordinary. Right away she said she had won a cow! I needed to hear more about that. One of the food vendors was Upper Lakes in Cloquet, Minnesota. They had several drawings and Sister Annella won a trip for two to Orlando, Florida, in 1987. In lieu of a trip, she received a \$500 check, which she gave for the Chapel renovation. In 1988 she won a 750 lb. Larsen Beef—a \$1,120 value. The first portion of the meat was served on May 31 of that year. And in December, 1988, she won a trip for two to Houston, Texas. Again, in lieu of the trip, she gave a check for \$700 to the Sisters' Retirement Fund.

Rome Renewal Program

By Sister Edith Bogue

In May, Sister Mary Catherine Shambour and I joined 30 Benedictines from six nations for the fifteenth—and final—Rome Renewal Program of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses; several other Duluth Benedictines participated in previous years. For five weeks we explored Benedictine life within its original context, traced its development, and grew in appreciation for the varied ways that the monastic instinct bears fruit for the Church today.

We traveled as pilgrims, venturing into underground scavi to see, on dimly lit ruins, images of Benedict painted at his parish church of San Crisogano shortly after his death; and up winding mountain roads to Benedict's hometown of Norcia, famous for rugged independence and delicious wild boars. In Subiaco we prayed at Sacro Speco and renewed our monastic profession at the Church of Santa Scholastica. We pondered the cell where Benedict finalized his *Rule* on the heights of Montecassino and venerated the grave he shares with his twin sister, Scholastica.



Rome Renewal group at Santa Prasseda

On our three-day free weekend, Sister Mary Catherine traveled to Assisi, nestled on a protective mountainside, to experience the spirituality of Saint Francis in the small church he rebuilt and the plaza where he renounced his wealth, and to Siena where her namesake, St. Catherine, was such a powerful figure.

I went to Ravenna, where Theodoric—an Ostrogoth who followed the Arian heresy—reigned as King during Benedict's lifetime. Famous for its glorious Byzantine mosaics in both the Arian and orthodox styles, the city also helped me understand the conflicted and uncertain times in which Benedict lived.

We were also students. Sister Aquinata Bockmann presented her research on community in Benedict's *Rule*. Sister Manuela Scheiba, another Missionary Benedictine, interpreted Chapter 4, The Instruments of Good Works, and led us in dancing our new understanding. Sister Karen Joseph's presentations (The Monastic Instinct and Being Benedictine: Being a Blessing) provided a spiritual framework, while Sister Kym Harris described monastic life before and after Benedict, demonstrating the social and cultural influences between monastery and society. Fr. Daniel McCarthy opened our eyes, through lecture and explanation in two basilicas, to the impact of church architecture on the experience of worship.

Sister Mary Catherine and I returned with insights and knowledge that enrich our ministries and with immense enthusiasm and appreciation for the Benedictine way of life. We hope to share the fruit of this pilgrimage with all our Benedictine sisters.

Stanbrook Reunion 2010

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

On Saturday, July 24, approximately sixty graduates from Stanbrook Hall High School gathered to enjoy an All-Class Reunion tea in Rockhurst Dining Room.

Stanbrook Hall, successor to Villa Sancta Scholastica Academy (1909-1937), graduated young women from 1938 through 1967. This year is the 50th anniversary of the graduation class of 1960. They and graduates from various other years between 1939 and 1967 reestablished friendships and caught up with each other. Some of the Sisters who taught at Stanbrook Hall attended. A special treat, especially for the Class of 1960, was the attendance of Sister Jeanne Marie Lortie. One graduate came from as far away as Florida, another from Arizona, and another from California. As they chatted with each other, enjoyed the buffet, and laughed or sighed at the memories, it was apparent that their years as Stanbrook students had not been forgotten.



Sister Jeanne Marie Lortie (seated) and Sister Lois Eckes (standing, right) visit with Stanbrook Hall alums.

Monastery's History Exhibit

By Sister Margaret James Laughlin

In early November, 2006, Prioress Lois Eckes appointed a committee charged with preparing an exhibit of St. Scholastica Monastery's history that would heighten awareness of the Monastery's past, present, and future by highlighting the most important events and people. Necessary committee members could be planners, artists, researchers, or writers. Those on the committee were Sister Lois, Sister Helen Geisen, Sister Margaret Clarke, Sister Margaret James Laughlin, +Sister Mary Charles McGough, Sister Teri Spinler, Meredith Schifsky, and Vicky Siders.

Gargantuan decisions had to be made before actual research could begin. The committee discussed needs, scope, content, design, and uses as well as minute details such as which individual Sisters to feature and how many hospitals and schools to include. Changes in motherhouse locations and legal structures would need to be explained.

By late July, 2007, the committee agreed that hiring exhibit experts would better enable us to produce an attractive exhibit. A choice of experts was simplified when the committee learned that H.T. Klatzky and Associates, Inc. was already working on a historical wall panel for St. Joseph Medical Center in Brainerd. Hiring professionals to design the exhibit meant that the work done for the project could be also used for a variety of other purposes—PowerPoint presentations, traveling displays, brochures, etc. At Klatzky's suggestion, the committee decided to begin the panels in black and white and increase the number of colored photographs panel by panel concluding with nearly all colored photos in the last panel.

Sister Margaret James Laughlin began to search the archives for early pictures to show photos representative of the Sisters' ministries and mission. She was assisted in her searches and caption writing by Sister Margaret Clarke and Sister Helen Geisen. It became clear that over a hundred years' history could be well divided into periods based on changes in location or legal status. Thus the five panels are titled 1) Origins of the Duluth Benedictines (Munger Terrace Founders and Early Ministries), 2) Early Days 1892-1909 (Sacred Heart Institute), 3) Villa Sancta Scholastica 1909-1959, 4) St. Scholastica Priory 1959-1996, and 5) St. Scholastica Monastery 1996-2009.

On November 6, 2008, Marsha Hystead and Deb Salzar from H.T. Klatzky, Inc. presented the first two panels for committee review. This process—committee preparation of the panels, submission to H.T. Klatzky for design, review by committee as many times as necessary until approved, H.T. Klatzky revisions, and, finally, delivery of canvas panels on wooden frames—continued until all five panels were approved, August 30, 2010.

The first viewing location of the history boards is Stanbrook Hall's first floor hall.



The first two history panels on first floor Stanbrook Hall.



A STORY TO BE CONTINUED

By Sister Mary Catherine Shambour

Photo by Jeff Frey; courtesy of CSS



As Sister Edith relates elsewhere in this issue, together we had the remarkable privilege this summer of participating in the Rome Renewal Program for Benedictine Sisters that took us to the foundation sites of our monastic history in Italy. It was fitting, however, that the program was held in Rome, the city the young Benedict fled, but which through its role in the establishment of Christianity is still called the “Eternal City.” The two places cannot be separated, for the Benedictine *Rule* is one of the ways of living the Gospel, and thus St. Benedict merits his colossal statue in St. Peter’s Basilica and his title, Patron of Europe.

From the experience, I carried away three major impressions. First, from visiting the Colosseum, the places of execution of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and the tombs and shrines of countless martyrs, I came to appreciate that the faith I share came indeed at a great price, first of the crucified and risen Savior and then of his followers. Secondly, I learned that all the glorious accomplishments of history and art in the Eternal City give testimony to the divine-human connection that continues to sustain humankind. And, finally, I learned that Benedictine monasticism’s great charism for the Church is

to demonstrate that by following the Gospel precepts of love of God and neighbor, all persons can live together in peace and harmony.

While our lectures and pilgrimages took us primarily to shrines celebrating the triumphs of the Church, my mind kept returning to my home Monastery and the new women who have recently joined us in following a monastic vocation. They are heirs of the great tradition of Benedictine women monastics who from sixth-century Europe onward helped keep the faith alive not only on their continent but established foundations in other lands including our own. Despite the poverty and hardships of the frontier, our Benedictine foundresses succeeded in transplanting a vibrant faith that flourished like the mustard seed of the Gospel. It was monasticism focused on evangelization, for the need was there. But so too was the fertile soil.

The hardworking Catholic immigrants whom they served were as eager to preserve their faith as they were for their own survival. Often, at great sacrifice they contributed to the building of churches, schools, and hospitals. They sought a better life for their large families and were proud when some of their children entered the priesthood or religious life. Within an incredibly short time, religious communities multiplied, the faith spread, and Catholicism became the largest Christian denomination in the land.

Is this the same milieu in which our new Sisters will be living their vowed life? Hardly. While, most likely, they will not face persecution and martyrdom, they too will have to demonstrate a Christian response to the crises of our time. God does not leave humans without means to solve their problems, many of which are man-made, and religious will need to do their part in working out solutions.

However, probably the greatest challenge religious women and men face today in affluent nations is apathy and indifference. We scarcely refer to this challenge, fearing it is politically incorrect to do so, or could call attention to our own lack of faith. Evidence can clearly be seen in decline in church attendance, emphasis on consumerism, lack of strong Christian families, acceptance of superficial values, entertainment, etc. For the first time in recorded human history vast segments of the population in the most prosperous nations profess no belief or total indifference to God. What impact will this have on the future of Christianity? For solving global problems when the divine-human connection is totally absent? How are our new religious going to relate to this world and bring it to Christ? Story to be continued. Stay tuned.

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*“The Earth is full of the
goodness of God.”*

Psalms 33:5