

# PATHWAYS



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# Pathways

NEWSLETTER

of the Benedictine Sisters

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## Dear Friends of the Monastery,

Lent begins this year with Ash Wednesday on March 2.

A year ago, during Lent and in the midst of the pandemic, we thought surely we would be seeing the downside of the news about illness, death, and loss. I suspect by now that there are very few of us who have not experienced the impact of the pandemic, perhaps personally or through the illness or death of a family member or friend. This is true for our monastic community and my family. We have experienced the death of one Sister and the illness of two others related to Covid. And a year ago in January, though not from Covid, my family grieved but also celebrated the life of our mother as she moved on to her heavenly home.



I know that since the death of my mother I have pondered often what my own death would be like, not in a morbid way... but hoping I would know, as I believe my mother did, that I had lived a good life, contributing the gifts given to me to share in the best way I could, and ready to leave this world to those who come after me. Pondering in this way, I think I understand better now what St. Benedict means when he says, in Chapter 4 on *The Tools of the Monastery*, "Keep death daily before your eyes" (Rule of Benedict 4:47). And I think now is a good time to reflect on this text as we follow Jesus through the Lenten journey. Many authors have offered commentary on this advice, and I liked what two of them had to say.

Tracy Rittmueller, a poet who spent some time at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, says there are "three things that nuns, monks, and poets know about why we should keep death always before our eyes." They are that the knowledge of death "reminds us that life is fragile" ... "changes the way we think and live" ... and "mysteriously heightens and intensifies our capacity for joy." When we know that life is fragile, we begin to focus on the beauty of each day, treasure every moment of it, and recognize what is important. As we come closer to death, we are motivated to live differently. This is the message of Benedict. He says, it is "high time to rise from sleep (Prologue), to wake up, to take stock of our priorities and what needs to change, to do something extra in Lent (Chapter 49), the season of renewal and transformation.

And what about death and joy? Those who have faced the reality of their death, a diagnosis that includes the months or days of life remaining, report an inner freedom, a recognition that each day is gift, a time to reach out in love, to reconcile, to cherish those around us, to appreciate the beauty of simple things and the wonder of each breath. Mark Thamert, OSB, a monk of Saint John's Abbey, when he knew his own death was imminent wrote, "Looking at this process in a simple, head-on way can release the hidden anxieties and help us to surrender to the mystery that Christ has promised us. It is a time to feel deep gratitude for the life we have been given, for the friends and family we love and who extend their love so freely." "Live life to the max," he says. "Respect the uniqueness of each person's journey. Don't assume an early funeral! Celebrate life!"

The persistent themes of Lent, Holy Week, and the paschal mystery will spread before us soon. Then most of all, we can listen to Benedict's admonition to keep death daily before our eyes, but also Christ's unconditional loving message, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20).

Blessed Lent and Easter,

*Sister Beverly*

Sister Beverly Raway, OSB

Tracy Rittmueller. October 15, 2020. [3 things nuns, monks and poets know about why you should "keep death daily before your eyes"](https://tracyrittmueller.com/transformation/)

Mark Thamert. April 3, 2017. [Keep death Daily before your eyes. Pray Tell Blog](https://www.praytelligblog.com/index.php/2017/04/03/keep-death-before-your-eyes-daily/)



# The Tangled Spirit: Buckthorn and Sin

by Sister Therese Carson

Three years ago, it dawned on me that those shrubs lining our woodland trails that I thought of as ‘Minnesota holly’ were buckthorn. This European native was imported in the 1880s for use as a hedge plant. With its flexible, tightly branching stems it excelled at filling a volume with compact growth. Unfortunately, the diseases or animals that kept it under control were not imported with it. Because all parts of the plant are bitter and contain a powerful laxative, most mammals leave it alone. Birds, however, are unaffected by the toxin and spread their seeds freely. A mature female tree is soon surrounded by a tangled growth of her progeny that twist their way through the canopy toward sunlight. The shadows underneath become an ecological desert.



A few years ago, Sister Josephine Krulc and I began removing buckthorn and digging out the root masses to prevent new sprouts. Slow walks in the woods became search-and-destroy missions. We learned to sense, with a gentle tug a plant’s root system, whether it was new with shallow roots or was attached to a massive crown that would need shovels, a steel lever, and much sweaty exertion to remove.

As I work in the woods, I ponder on the similarities between buckthorn and sin. Buckthorn is ruthless; it chokes out life-giving plants and fills the woods. The same thing happens to our spirits when we let sin grow unchecked. Self-centered greed, arrogant pride, uncontrolled anger – sin takes over and sinks its roots deep into our soul. Gradually it strangles our relationships with others and with God. It crowds out healthy impulses, smothers the protests of the conscience, feeds the ego, and embitters the spirit. We refuse to apologize because we no longer see that our words and actions hurt others, while we ascribe evil intent to others’ innocent words and feel justified in ending friendships. As we isolate ourselves from human connections, we turn to addictions for solace. When problems arise – unemployment, marital stress, illness – we become angry and bitter, saying God has let us down. Without spiritual depth, we see life through a warped lens, and it looks ugly.

The spirit has become a tangle of knots, unable to break free and return to God by its own power. What once gave joy – for all God’s gifts are good in their proper measure – becomes “an ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure,” as C. S. Lewis described it in his *Screwtape Letters*. We have surrendered our soul to evil and in return find only loneliness and misery – a spiritual death.

This tires me even to write about it. But thank God that sin and death do not have the last word! In contrast to this image of despair is that of Mary, Undoer of Knots. Our Mother knows how to untangle the mess we make and let God’s healing light shine in. The inspiration for this piety may be a homily of St. Irenaeus in the second century, who compared the disobedience of Eve that tied the knot of disgrace with Mary who by her obedience undid it. Pope Francis encouraged this piety while he was Bishop in Argentina and continues to support it today.

This Lent, write your problems on a ribbon, tie it in knots, and ask our Blessed Mother to help you untangle the knots that sin has made in your soul. Walk into spring with a lighter spirit, liberated from bondage to sin.

*Mary, Untangler of Knots, pray for me.  
You see the snarl of knots that exists in  
my life. You know my despair, my pain;  
how I am bound by these knots. I entrust  
into your hands the ribbon of my life.  
No one, not even the evil one himself,  
can take it away from your precious care.  
Take into your hands today this knot and  
free me from its influence. Amen.*



# Keep On Learning

by Sister Lisa Maurer

*“There are those who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge; that is Curiosity. There are those who seek knowledge to be known by others; that is Vanity. There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve; that is Love.”*

~ St. Bernard of Clairvaux

On-going formation is a term that religious men and women use to describe the notion that we are all life-long learners. We are always in formation, constantly striving to enrich our lives, strengthen our vocations, and grow in faith. The learning doesn't stop because you are a perpetually professed sister or an ordained priest. None of us stop gaining knowledge or growing in understanding just because we are no longer in school. We keep learning.

Continuing education and on-going formation are often used to describe the same thing, but something to keep in mind is that formation anticipates transformation in a way that education usually does not. Yes, you will learn things in on-going formation but there are also formative changes and personal transformations that take place; changes in attitude, outlook, and understanding. Bernard Lonergan, a Jesuit priest and philosopher, said that at the heart of our spiritual journey is a threefold conversion: a religious conversion, a moral conversion and an intellectual conversion. Looking at on-going formation in terms of these three conversations helps us to realize that we are in a continual process of conversion and growth all the days of our lives.



*Sisters Donna Schroeder and Pauline Micke review materials for on-going formation for the Community.*

When Saint Pope John Paul II spoke about a “New Evangelization” he said that the Church needed to renew her spiritual energies, using new methods and a new vocabulary. For the Church as the Body of Christ to do these things, each of us as members of the Body need to embrace the call to on-going formation. We need to keep on learning through reading and study. Formative learning can come through listening to the events of daily life and our encounters with others. By being attentive to the Church's ongoing dialogue with the world, we can grow in love and faith.

In today's world there is a deluge of information constantly coming our way. It can sometimes be like drinking from a firehose. How can we learn from it when it comes that fast? It calls for a habit of on-going formation, of critical reflection, and discernment. To sort out the trivial and the misleading takes a disciplined effort. The Holy Spirit has a decisive role to play in growing in truth and love!

All members of the Body of Christ have a vocation or calling from God to contribute in a particular way to the life of the world. To live out our vocation, whatever it is, we need to keep growing and learning. You can take a class, even find one on-line. Get involved in a Bible study or join a faith-sharing group. Look for opportunities at your parish or go to page 9-10 of this *Pathways* and see what the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment has to offer. Whatever you do, keep on learning!



*If you or someone you know wants more information about Being Benedictine, email [vocations@duluthosb.org](mailto:vocations@duluthosb.org) or visit [www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations](http://www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations).*



# A Prayer Ministry to the Alumni of The College of St. Scholastica

by Theresa Butler, Development/Public Relations Administrative Assistant



+Sister Timothy Kirby

Prayer has been and is a hallmark of the Duluth Benedictine Community. People continue to look to the Sisters for prayer and support throughout life's joys and sorrows. Friends, family, and people across the world call and write with prayer requests as well as post them on the Monastery website. In addition, a special way that the Sisters pray for the alumni of their sponsored ministry, The College of St. Scholastica (CSS), is by offering an opportunity to pray for their intentions each Lent. This prayer ministry outreach was started by Sister Timothy Kirby in 1992, and the Sisters are blessed to continue it today in its 31st year. One alumnus says about the prayer ministry, "We love and are so thankful for this tradition."

The prayer card ministry idea was sparked when former CSS alumni director Cindy McCullough heard about an alumni prayer request program at another faith-based college. She mentioned it to Sister Timothy, who was serving on the College Alumni Board. Sister Timothy loved the idea and began it in 1992. Each year a letter is sent to alumni of the College and includes a postage paid card with the heading, "Please remember the following in your prayers."

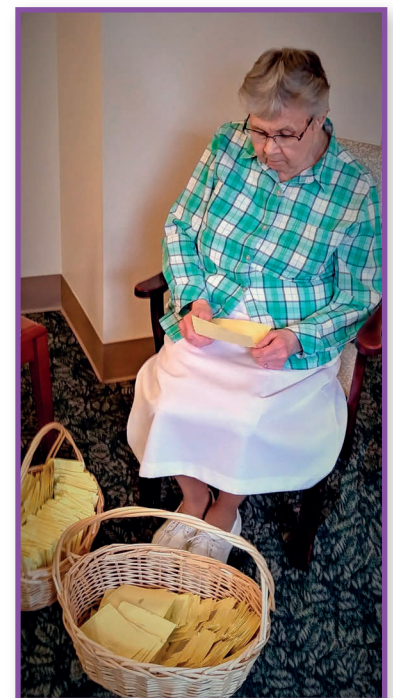
The letter, which today comes from Sister Kathleen Del Monte, CSS Associate Vice President for Mission Integration, says, "As we enter into the holy season of Lent, we, the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, are especially mindful of you, our wonderful alumni, who through your life and your work continue to spread the Gospel values and build up the communities of which you are a part." Sister Kathleen invites alumni to write down their prayer requests and then mail the card to the Monastery. Alumni may choose to be anonymous or list their name and graduation year.

Alumni respond with prayers of intercession, thanksgiving, and blessing. Each year we receive 1500 to 2000 cards, which are placed into a basket in the chapel on Benet Hall. At this ministry's inception, it was given to the Sisters who are mostly retired from active ministry and spend much time in prayer, and this continues today. During Lent and Easter they read and re-read the cards and pray for the intentions of the alumni. Last year, one alumnus wrote "Sisters, thank you so much for your continued prayers for my family. I feel blessed to be a member of the CSS Alumni."

*"Dear Sister Timothy Kirby, pray with us!" (An alum of Class of 1981)*



Prayer cards in the Benet Hall Chapel.



Sister Annella Wagner holds a card as she prays for the intentions of the sender.

# Jane Dolter, Benedictine Oblate

by Theresa Butler, Development/Public Relations Administrative Assistant



Meet our Oblate Co-Director and 41-year Oblate, Jane Dolter. As a long-time Oblate and former administrator of the Girl Scouts, Jane sees the similarities between the Girl Scout Law, which talks about taking care of the earth, and St. Benedict's Rule, which talks about taking care of the vessels on the earth. Jane remarks, "The Rule of St Benedict and the Girl Scout Law are very similar. They both are guides for a life well lived."

Jane was raised Catholic, and her family upbringing had a large impact on her faith in Christ. She was born and grew up in Duluth where she and her older sister went to the former St. Margaret Mary Catholic School for first through eighth grades. Her introduction to the Duluth Benedictine Sisters was having them as teachers. She remembers Sister Benet Robertson who taught first and second grade in her long black habit; "Sister moved so fast that we kids were convinced she was on roller skates."

The Church was central to Jane's family. Her mother's brother was a Franciscan priest and witnessed to them how to live for God. Her family seldom missed Sunday Mass. Jane recalls walking to church in a variety of weather conditions when her father was working the weekend shift at the steel mill. Volunteerism was very important to her mother; there was not a school function

where she wasn't busy in the kitchen. Jane reflects that her mother's witness greatly influenced her own desire to volunteer and serve in the community.

In 1978, the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery decided to revive their Oblate program. Jane saw an article in the diocesan newspaper inviting people to an event at McCabe Renewal Center to learn more about becoming an Oblate. Her father had died the year before and she felt called to become more connected to the Sisters and to other like-minded people who wanted to grow in their faith. Twelve people came to the event, including Jane, and all went on to become Oblates. "I still keep in regular touch with four of these people. It has made a huge impact on my life and who I am."

An Oblate is an individual, male or female, Catholic or non-Catholic, who tries to incorporate and live the rule of St. Benedict in his/her life. The steps include inquiry, enrollment, becoming a candidate, and making final oblation. Oblates are affiliated with a particular monastery but may transfer to a different one if their location changes. Oblates meet monthly and also commit to praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily.

Up until two years ago, the Oblate Director for the Duluth Benedictines had been a Sister. In 2019, Jane felt called by God to take on a leadership role with the Oblates. She says of her call from God, "I have a Benedictine heart." After talking to the Oblate director and Prioress, Jane was called forth and blessed to become the Oblate Co-Director with Sister Pauline Micke.

In Fall 2019, Sister Pauline and Jane went to an Oblate conference where they learned about the national and international movement of Oblates in Benedictine Communities. The number of people becoming Oblates is surging, even while the number of Benedictine Sisters is diminishing. Everywhere, Oblates are stepping into those ministries previously staffed by Sisters.

Sister Pauline Micke observed, "When Jane and I went to the meeting in Idaho, it was strongly emphasized to help Oblates grow as a Community in their own calling. We have been working on this and Jane has been a key part of the Oblate Community's growing and thriving, becoming full grown in their Call to be Oblates and grow in the Benedictine life. She has been and is a blessing."





*In December 2019, Sister Beverly Raway blessed Jane Dolter to be Co-Director of the Oblate Community.*

Jane's biggest ministry at present is being the Co-Director of the Oblates. Each year the Oblates have a different focus for their meetings. In 2020-2021 they read and studied the chapters of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. For 2021-2022 they are reading a book and having monthly discussions. The discussions, as well as the opening and closing prayers, are led by the Oblates. They also write and share Advent and Lent reflections for Saturday Evening Prayer during the liturgical seasons.

Prior to the pandemic, Jane was involved with community-building with the older Sisters who live on Benet Hall and would come many Friday afternoons to bake cookies there. She and Sister Annella Wagner worked together to help bring Sisters out of their rooms for the 2:00 coffee hour. The yummy smell of the cookies brought not only Sisters from Benet Hall but also Sisters from other floors. She has a warm memory of +Sister Mary Martin Beringer watching through the windows as she baked the cookies. She also would take requests from Sisters for favorite varieties to bake.

In addition to ministry at the Monastery, Jane is a member of St. Lawrence in Duluth and of St. Anthony in Lake Nebagamon, where her family has a cabin. She also is an active community volunteer and group facilitator with the Alzheimer's Association, co-facilitating two support groups for caregivers of people with Alzheimer's.

Before Covid, the Oblates were able to take part in Community events. Jane and her sister used to celebrate Christmas dinner with the Sisters. "It is like coming home when I visit the Monastery. I miss it and all of the Sisters since Covid changed things." Her mother became an Oblate about ten years after Jane, and her sister Joan Lindstrom has been a volunteer at the Monastery.

Jane said, "If you are considering becoming an Oblate, I encourage you to pursue it and see if it is a good fit. If God is calling you to it, there is a place for you to be connected."

We are blessed to have Jane's strong faith and caring heart in the Oblate Community.



*Jane Dolter and Sister Pauline Micke review books together in the Oblate Library at the Monastery.*

# Oblate Update: My Lenten Journey

by Jane Dolter, Oblate Co-Director

In early January, I had an opportunity to participate in a mini-retreat on Zoom. The title was "Writing the Prologue to Your New Year."

As a pre-retreat assignment, we were instructed to review our 2021 calendar, being mindful of themes and events. After this review, we were asked to select a word to guide us for the new year.

In the early centuries, travelers who visited monasteries would often ask the Abbot for a word to take with them as they travelled on to their next stop.

What better time than Lent to pause, review, and select a word to help us on our journey toward Easter? Select a word that challenges you; a word that reveals a silent goal; or even a word of encouragement. Select a word that will remind you to fully participate in Lent. I invite you to travel with us as we journey toward the greatest celebration: Easter.



*For information on the Oblate program please contact Co-Directors:  
Sister Pauline Micke at 218.723.7086      Jane Dolter at 218.391.4516.*

## Please Pray for Our Deceased Family and Friends

Mary McKenna Dwan	6/28/2020	Mark Jeffrey Mayerle	11/29/2021
Gisela L. Cismowski	10/21/2020	(brother of Sister Judine Mayerle)	
Marcella Matze	10/29/2020	Ben Boo	12/1/2021
Leonard Stephen Rabatin	7/29/2021	(cousin of +Sister Mary Richard Boo)	
Linda Marie Lemert	9/7/2021	Mary Anglesburg	12/10/2021
Catherine E. Miller	9/19/2021	Geraldine L. Blunk	12/19/2021
Patricia Maher Vidmar	10/8/2021	Rev. David Tushar	12/23/2021
(sister of Sr. Johnetta Maher)		Sharon Butorac Bredeson	12/25/2021
Mary Lou Jameson	10/23/2021	(niece of +Sister Martina Hughes)	
Judith French Sarvela	11/18/2021	Junella Tarnowski	12/28/2021
Ione Rosalind Collins	11/21/2021	Rev. Jon Wild	12/28/2021
(sister of +Sister Mary Rochefort)		Margaret Hodnik	1/10/2022
Trish Jaeb	11/23/2021	Beverly Harries	1/13/2022
(niece of +Sister Melanie Gagne)		Jim Soderberg	1/14/2022
Stephen Poupore	11/29/2021	Leonard J. Bauman	1/24/2022



# Greetings from the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment!

by Dawn Carrillo, Director

Greetings from the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment! As we enter the holy season of Lent, know you are in our thoughts and prayers as our community, our country and our world continue to move toward healing and hope. Please join us for any of the online opportunities below!

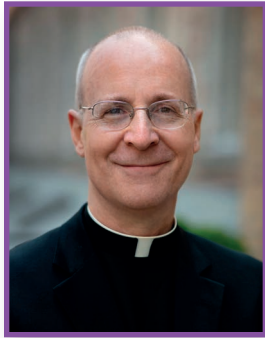
*(Read more and register for the following opportunities at [retreatduluth.org](http://retreatduluth.org) or call 320.260.8233.)*



## Benedictine Conversations

We continue to offer our popular Benedictine Conversations series this year, focusing on the concepts of beauty and justice. We invite you to these interactive, monthly Zoom gatherings featuring guests who help us explore the Benedictine legacy in our world today!

**Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 7:00 pm via Zoom**



### ***"Learning to Pray" with Fr. James Martin, SJ***

In this interactive Benedictine Conversation, we will reflect on prayer with Fr. James Martin, exploring the invitation that is there for each of us to encounter God in a new way.

**James Martin, SJ**, is a Jesuit priest, editor at large of America, consultant to the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication and author of many books including, most recently, *Learning to Pray*, now out in paperback.

## ***\*Other upcoming Benedictine Conversations***

- Tuesday, March 22 at 7:00 pm featuring Jim Smith, Director of Mission Integration for Benedictine
- Tuesday, April 19 at 7:00 pm featuring Dr. Leah Prussia, Associate Professor of Social Work at the College of St. Scholastica
- Tuesday, May 17 at 7:00 pm featuring Lois Eckes, OSB and Meridith Schifsky

## Ongoing Opportunities

### ***Visio Divina***

**Thursday, February 24, March 31, April 28, and June 2, 2022 at 7 pm via Zoom**

Our *Visio Divina* prayer services are offered monthly. Join us for an evening of contemplative prayer through the use of images, music, and sacred writings. No prior experience is needed. All are welcome to this hour of peace and communal hope.

### **Sunday SoulCollage® Circle**

**Second Sunday, monthly, 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm via Zoom**

The spiritual journey is the process of learning to know oneself and becoming self-aware. We learn to love ourselves as sacred beings that we are, and discover in that love that we are connected to all that exists; thus we develop compassion and strength. The journey is a process of letting go of old interpretations of self and others that no longer serve us, to make room for the new. <https://retreatduluth.org/soul-collage/> for more information and to sign up!

## Feminist Theologies Committee offerings:

Mini-retreats on Thursday, February 3, “*Love Takes Us Beyond the Rules*”, April 7, and May 26 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm via Zoom

In each of these mini-retreats we will focus on two different women, one from earlier history and one who is more contemporary, reflecting on their contributions to the world, their sources of strength, and their legacy for us today.

## Lenten Retreats

### “Wisdom for Today: Psalms and Proverbs”

Saturday, March 5, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. to Noon via Zoom



The books of psalms and proverbs are sometimes called wisdom books since they focus on wise sayings and revealing songs. This Lenten workshop will explore the various forms in which proverbs and psalms are written. We will listen to and study examples of several types of each form from the Hebrew Scriptures. Each participant will choose two or three forms to use as the basis for writing their own psalms or proverbs. You don't have to be “a writer” to express yourself in a contemporary proverb or psalm.

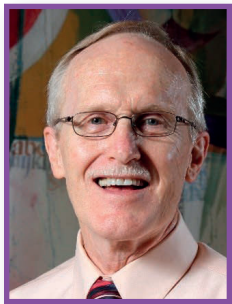
**Facilitator: Gary Boelhower, PhD** is Professor Emeritus in Theology and Religious Studies at The College of St. Scholastica. He continues to teach courses in health humanities and living, dying and grieving. He is a poet and writer and has consulted with a broad range of organizations on values, mission, and respect in the workplace. His recent books include *Step*

*Close In: Poems From the Path*, the children's book *A Common Thirst*, *Naming Rites: Poems*, *Choose Wisely: Practical Insights from Spiritual Traditions*, *Mountain 10: Climbing the Labyrinth Within*, and *Marrow, Muscle, Flight: Poems* which won the Midwest Book Award.

### “Practicing Hope”

Saturday, April 2, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to Noon via Zoom

Lent calls us to a renewed appreciation of the transforming power of grace as witnessed in Jesus's profound testimony to the truth. In that sacrificial act, we are called to turn from despair and to live as people of hope. Hope can seem like an illusion as we assess the host of issues that confront us in this country and globally, but hope is the sweet burden of those who believe that in Jesus, grace always wins out. In this retreat, we reflect on the dynamics of hope and explore six practices that can be helpful in managing our fear and anger so that we can see the work of God in our midst despite the gathering clouds. There will be time for small group conversations, individual reflection and writing, and sharing the wisdom that emerges in the group.



**Facilitator: Victor Klimoski** is a writer, adult educator, and consultant whose poetry practice has evolved over the past 30 years as he has explored the meanderings of his mind and heart. After a career in educational administration, Vic has the luxury now to write and to offer support and encouragement to other writers through retreats and workshops. To develop as a writer, he periodically creates collections of poems winnowed from his daily writing. A number of those collections are available on Amazon: *Revisited: A Month in Kilcar* and *Poems of Other Places*, *Perspective*, *Lamentation for the Written Word*, *Matters of Life and Death*, *Margin Notes*, and *Natural Wonder*. Vic was also contributing editor of a collection produced by his writing group under the title, *Gleanings*.

### We Were There: A Way of the Cross

Monday, April 11 (Part One) and Wednesday, April 13 (Part Two) at 7:00 pm via Zoom

As we begin the holiest week of the Church year, join us for an interactive Stations of the Cross using icons written by Mary Charles McGough, OSB and reflections by Sarah O'Malley, OSB and Robert Elmer, OMI.



# St. Mary's Medical Center Holds Traditional Topping Out Ceremony

by Sister Kathleen Hofer

In celebrating the construction of a new St. Mary's Medical Center in the Central Hillside neighborhood of Duluth, it is good to pause and remember the 134 years that the Benedictine Sisters have been providing and sponsoring care for the sick and injured in the Duluth area.

In February 1888, St. Mary's Hospital was opened in a building on Third Street and 20th Avenue West. For ten years the hospital provided state of the art care at that location for those living in Duluth.

In 1894 land was purchased on Third Street at 5th Avenue East. A new hospital was built at that location which opened in 1898. Since that time numerous additions to the building have been made, including the large east wing in 1969 when the 1898 original building on that site was razed. St. Mary's, now St. Mary's Medical Center, covering a complete city block, has continued caring for the people of our region as it grew over the years. It has become a leading tertiary care referral center for northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Over two years ago, Essentia Health moved forward with its Vision Northland project, which included construction of a new St. Mary's Medical Center. Construction began with ground-breaking in September 2019. The new St. Mary's will be one block down the hill from the current medical center.

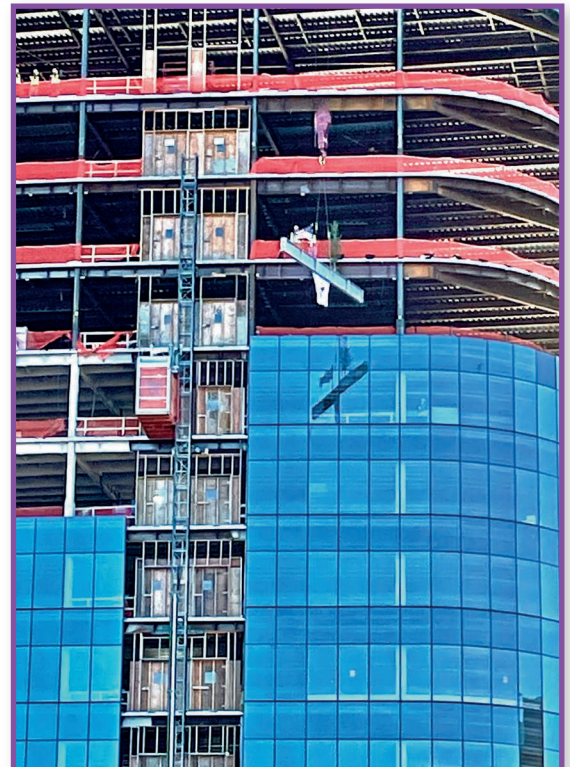
On November 9, 2021, a "topping out" ceremony was held to celebrate the raising of the final steel beam in the construction of the top floor. Over 100 steel and trade workers, a number of Benedictine Sisters, Essentia Health and St. Mary's colleagues, and elected officials watched as the final steel beam was hoisted eighteen floors to the top floor of the new facility. The construction workers have surpassed a milestone of more than one million work hours safely building the new St. Mary's.

Topping out ceremonies have a long history. They began in ancient Scandinavia where the practice involved placing a tree atop a new building to appease the tree-dwelling spirits displaced in its construction. On the steel beam raised at the topping out ceremony for St. Mary's, a large Benedictine medal was welded on one end of the beam. The medal serves as a symbol of the proud heritage and continuing support of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery. On the face of the medal is the image of St. Benedict. The reverse side shows a cross and a series of initials that stand for an ancient exorcism as well as a prayer for guidance.

At the ceremony, Sister Beverly Raway, Prioress, held up a duplicate of the medal and presented the following prayer:



*Above, first and second sites of St. Mary's Hospital.  
Below, the current SMMC rises beyond the Duluth Clinic.*



*The final steel beam rises into place,  
suspended from a crane.*



*“Compassionate and sheltering God, as we mark a milestone in the construction of St. Mary’s, may we remember the words of Your faithful servant Benedict that “Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ” (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 36). May we be blessed in gratitude as we remember our founders, Mother Scholastica and Mother Alexia Kerst. Through their vision and courage, the first St. Mary’s was established in Duluth.*

*“We remember and ask your blessing on all who have selflessly served in times of deep tragedy in our city and region, during outbreaks of polio, influenza, fire, and pandemic.*

*“Raise up and energize those you call to serve the sick with courage and patience, with renewed and joyful spirits. May they know our deep gratitude and continuous support.*

*“We offer this medal, a symbol of your protection, and ask you to shelter all those who serve and all who come for healing in the welcoming environment of this building.*

*“Continue to bless those who carry out the construction of this building, keep them healthy and safe from all harm.*

*“We pray in the power of your Holy Name, now and forever. Amen.”*

As in 1888, when St. Mary’s Hospital was established by a small group of Benedictine Sisters, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery continue as the official Catholic sponsor of the new St. Mary’s Medical Center. When it opens in 2023, it will be ready to serve ill and injured patients with holistic healing and cutting-edge technology and care for generations to come.



Above, Sister Beverly Raway holds a replica of the Benedictine Medal while offering a prayer for those who will work in the new Medical Center. Below, the final beam signed by Vision Northland leaders and civic leaders.



Left, the future Medical Center. Right, Sisters Kathleen Hofer, Therese Carson, Danile Lynch, and Beverly Raway at the ceremony.



# Highlights

## All Souls' Day

Each November on All Souls' Day we remember those Sisters who have gone home since the last November 2. For 2021 we remembered (from left to right) Sisters Barbara Higgins, Agnes Sitter, Marilyn Micke, and Mary Clare Hall, all of whom passed from the infirmities of old age in December 2020. We recalled their stories and prayed for all who have left this life over the past year. It is a healing and comforting thing, to remember ones who are missed, and to celebrate their lives.



## Give Minnesota

In November 2021, a generous and anonymous donor gifted the Sisters \$5,000.00 for a matching gift campaign. In collaboration with Give to the Max Day and Giving Tuesday, we conducted our first “Matching Donations Campaign”. Our expectations were exceeded and the campaign yielded \$16,192.50! We are humbled and grateful over the success and generosity our donors have afforded to us.



## Pen Pals with students at Stella Maris

The Sisters have teamed up with the First Graders from Stella Maris' Holy Rosary Campus to form Pen Pals. Twenty-one First Graders from Liz Allen's class wrote to the Sisters and we wrote back. Ms. Allen said, “This is one small way to teach that our faith goes beyond the walls of our school building and school community. It's about building relationships with strong Christian leaders, while also building vocational awareness. In the very least it is a way to spread joy among the students and the Sisters. Who doesn't love to receive a handwritten letter? I hope the students' letters bring the Sisters just as much joy and excitement as the Sisters' letters bring the students!”



*Sister Marie Therese Poliquin writes to her pen pal.*

## Highlights Continued

### Prayer Partners with Caregivers at St. Mary's Medical Center

The pandemic has been traumatic for everyone, but especially hard for those who care for the sick. A sad development during this pandemic has been violence, both verbal and physical, against doctors, nurses, therapists, and other caregivers. This has added to the trauma they experience in caring for an unprecedented number of people, and many begin to rethink their commitment to healthcare.

The Sisters have become prayer partners for those at St. Mary's Medical Center who provide the whole spectrum of care. It includes doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, medical imaging techs, pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists, chaplains, laboratory technologists, and nutritionists, as well as those who support them: security guards, sterile processing technicians, maintenance, and environmental workers. One thing this pandemic has shown is that there are no 'non-essential' workers in health care.

Each day, the Sisters hold up those in their chosen work group whom, as they provide care and support for the sick, are ministering to them as Christ. Prayer partners also write messages of prayer, hope, and encouragement.

Please keep in your prayers everyone who works in healthcare and reach out to support them in word and deed.



### Advent Vespers and *Lighting a Tradition*

Each year on Tuesday evening of the first week of Advent, the Sisters and the students, faculty, and staff of the College of St. Scholastica come together for Advent Vespers. In 2020 it was held virtually, but last November 30 we met in Chapel, well-masked, to read Scripture, chant the Psalms, and listen to the music of this time of waiting. We were blessed to have Bishop Daniel Felton give an Advent reflection. Then we gathered in the cold night to stand in front of the College's Tower Hall, holding candles and listening to the College President's Christmas message, then cheering as the Hall's towers were lit with a projected video of falling snow. The illumination continued every night through Advent and Christmas.



*Above: Bishop Daniel Felton gives an Advent reflection.*

*Right: after Vespers, Sister Mary Josephine Torborg distributes lit candles before the Lighting a Tradition.*

*Far right: the front of Tower Hall at the College is illuminated with falling snow.*





# Highlights Continued

## Sister Beverly Raway celebrates her birthday

Sister Beverly celebrated her birthday on December 15 with the Community, a nice dinner, birthday cake, and an evening of recreation in the Community room that ended with Compline, the night prayer of the Church that creates a sense of peace and of completion of the work of the day.

The Sisters have returned to the tradition of monthly Wednesday Community nights. After dinner, we gather to play Mexican Train with dominoes – few know the rules, but we laugh all the way through it – board games, or cards, especially Five Hundred. Others sit and share stories or work on communal jigsaw puzzles.

Life during the pandemic has been stressful, and it is healing to let go for a while and rest among friends.



## Christmas in a time of renovation

The Sisters had another quiet Christmas, with only a few guests at Mass. Because of Covid precautions, we were unable to invite friends to our meals, and look forward to next Christmas when, we hope, we can again share some Christmas hospitality with others.

It is always a pleasure to bring out Christmas decorations. The balsam fir in Chapel was beautiful, its lights echoing that of the sanctuary light and the night sky. Especially beloved are the hand-carved figures of the Holy Family from Oberammergau, Germany, which welcome us in the Gathering Space. The hammered copper backdrop is by Sister Constantina Kakonyi from Hungary who was an artist in residence here; it depicts the Prophet Isaiah and St. John the Baptist with prophetic texts in Latin.

This was the first Christmas in our transitional housing; we are staying in Stanbrook Hall while Stanbrook West is renovated to bring our offices, meeting rooms, and living quarters under one roof. Up on fourth floor, the long hallway is lined with small tables for which there was no storage space elsewhere. In mid-December, the Sisters began to set their Nativity sets and other Christmas decorations on them, and our floor took on a proper splendor with a lovely Christmas tree at the north end.



*Clockwise from above: Spruce in Chapel; Mary and the Child from Oberammergau; shepherd and lamb from a Nativity set.*



# Highlights Continued

## Renovation Update

Across the central courtyard from Stanbrook, the renovation of Stanbrook West (SW) continues.



Its interior is kept lit for safety, and occasionally we glimpse workers removing water pipes and utilities, tearing down interior walls, and removing debris. We periodically vacate the Monastery garage below the second floor of SW, so that pipes and other items can be removed through its ceiling. Nearly everything is being reused or recycled, with very little going to landfill.



From the college's Saints Field, individuals willing to brave the cold and snow can watch cranes lifting steel into place for the new entrance addition. The concrete tower on the right holds an elevator shaft, while the shorter blue-green poles will become the frame for the glass entry.



On the north end of SW, a link will connect the first floor with the Chapel, saving Sisters a long walk through Stanbrook around the central courtyard in the winter. As this is being written in late January, the link foundations are ready for installation of the steel framework. A new concrete block retaining wall above it complements the blue-grey walls of the College's theater.



Sister Lisa Maurer, who heads the Sisters' building committee, keeps us apprised as work goes on out of sight. She dons reflective vest and hardhat to take photos and posts them on a bulletin board, along with updates and explanations of technical terms.



## Highlights Continued

### Sister Donna Schroeder at Mater Dei Apostolate

Last summer a note was posted on the Sisters' bulletin board, asking for a volunteer to be a teaching assistant at Mater Dei Apostolate, a Catholic hybrid high school in Duluth. Sister Donna investigated and decided to take this on. Since September she has spent Monday and Thursday afternoons with two literature classes at Holy Family Parish in Duluth's Lincoln Park neighborhood while the instructor conducts class from her home in North Carolina. Sister Donna explains, "I am there to make sure the young people stay in their seats and participate in the class." She loves being with the students and gave them prayer cards for the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus.



Sister Donna taught Biology to college students for many years and now is enjoying an immersion in literature. With the students, she prepares for each class by reading the assigned books. With the sophomore students in Literature of Christendom, she has read *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius from the 6th century, the Scandinavian epic *Beowulf* (pre-1000 AD), the French epic poem *Song of Roland* from the 11th century, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* from 14th century England, and *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri from 14th century Italy.

With the Junior students in Modern Literature, she has read Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and is beginning F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. "This has been a wonderful opportunity to read classics that I somehow missed in my youth, and to reread books that are part of my personal 'ancient history' and to which I return with the fresh perspective of mature years." She recommends these classics for a taste of good literature.

As stated on their website, the Apostolate's vision is to create an oasis of Catholic culture in our society, where high school students can receive high-quality intellectual and spiritual formation, regardless of where they live or what they can pay. They operate a flexible hybrid education model to serve families from conventional school and homeschool backgrounds, with a remote component to serve families in distant, rural communities. They educate students with a classical curriculum rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition, while recognizing the role of parents as primary educators. Their mission is to provide higher education prep that is affordable, accessible and authentically Catholic.

Students are encouraged to begin the day with Mass and take regular time-outs for prayer in the school's Adoration chapel. Prayer keeps the day's flow anchored in the presence of God and shows us that, whatever society may teach, we find true peace only at the feet of the Cross.



## +Sister Melanie Gagne



Sister Melanie Gagne, OSB, age 96, died on December 11, 2021, in her 77th year of vowed monastic life. She was born May 7, 1925, to French Canadian immigrants Andre and Lumina (Laviolette) Gagne in Proctor, Minnesota, a railroad town west of Duluth. The third of eight children, she was named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

Therese grew up in a warm and loving family where she learned strong moral and religious values and a sturdy common sense. At St. Rose Elementary, her Benedictine teachers introduced her to religious life and encouraged the slow flowering of her vocation. After graduating from Proctor High School in 1943, she spent that wartime summer working in the trainyards as hostler's helper, operating the railroad turntable, and cleaning and refueling the engines. In September, she entered St. Scholastica Priory as a postulant. She became a novice in 1944 and was given the name Sister Melanie. She made her triennial vows the next year and her perpetual vows in 1948. In 2020, she celebrated her jubilee of 75 years.

Sister Melanie gave her students the love she had been shown by her teachers. From 1946 until 1990, she taught in elementary schools and is remembered as a kind, loving, and inspiring teacher. She served at St. John's School in Duluth's Woodland neighborhood, St. Timothy's School in Chicago, and for ten years at St. Thomas the Apostle in sunny Phoenix. Returning home, she served as principal and teacher at St. Jean and St. Lawrence schools in Duluth and at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Cloquet, then as a full-time teacher at Assumption and St. Leo schools in Hibbing. She loved being part of parish life: singing in choirs, working on liturgy committees and parish councils, and serving the lonely through St. Leo Parish's Befriender Program.

Sister Melanie attended summer college classes and earned a BS in Elementary Education from The College of St. Scholastica (1959) and a Master's in Religious Education from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles (1966). A lifelong learner, she loved God, her family and Benedictine family, and her students. She enjoyed camping and gardening, relishing the gifts of God's creation, and sharing them with others.

In 1990, Sister Melanie turned 65 and was ready for a new challenge for, as she said, "I was still green and full of sap." She completed the Clinical Pastoral Education program at St. Mary's Medical Center and became a certified Catholic chaplain. For ten years she served the residents of the Benedictine Health Center (now Benedictine Living Community-Duluth) with deep compassion and kindness, just by being herself. She saw pastoral ministry as "a presence of care, compassion, and support in the painful broken moments of the human condition, when we meet the One who is our hope of eternal life." Retiring again at age 76, she continued to volunteer at the Benedictine Living Community-Duluth and Miller Dwan Medical Center, and was the Community's sacristan.

Sister Melanie will be remembered for her beautiful smile and for the way she lived fully in the present moment, whether playing a competitive round of Five Hundred cards or praying. Getting old held no fear for her. On her 90th birthday she said, "Aging is a time of blossoming, of transformation. There is time to spend in prayer, reading, and learning new things."

Sister Melanie was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers Rene Joseph, Robert Lee, and Alfred John; and her sisters Marie Patricia Gagne and Irene (Gagne) Graham. She is survived by the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, her brother Rev. Ronald Gagne, her sister Mary June (Gagne) Jaeb, and many beloved nieces and nephews.

Wake, Morning Prayer, and funeral Mass were held December 18 in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel at the Monastery, with her brother Rev. Ronald Gagne as Presider. Interment followed in Gethsemane Cemetery. Arrangements were made by Dougherty Funeral Home.



## **The Waiting Room**

by Sister Katie Doyle

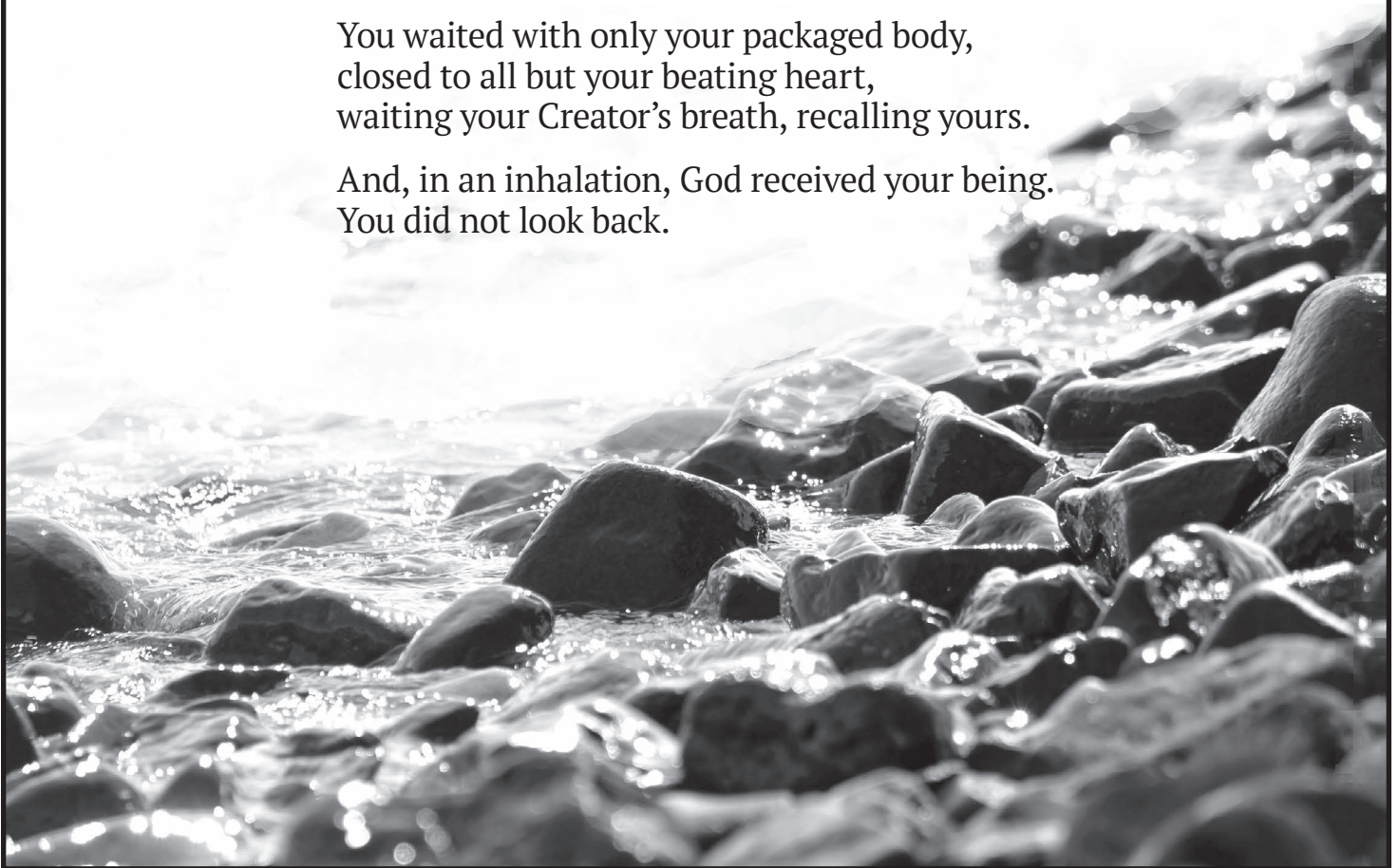
We entered the room,  
joining the expectant ones.

Earth and sky were joined in a mist of sadness.

I wondered as I stood by your bedside,  
if you were awaiting your call for citizenship  
like an Ellis Island immigrant.

You waited with only your packaged body,  
closed to all but your beating heart,  
waiting your Creator's breath, recalling yours.

And, in an inhalation, God received your being.  
You did not look back.



Sister Kathleen Doyle – Sister Katie – came to the Duluth Benedictines in 1969. A retired physical therapist, she is also a poet with a quick wit and joyful sense of humor.



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*Lenten Desert: arrangement for Chapel  
created by Sister Theresa Spinler  
Photo by Sister Therese Carson*

**“Those who have faced the reality of their death, a diagnosis that includes the months or days of life remaining, report an inner freedom, a recognition that each day is gift, a time to reach out in love, to reconcile, to cherish those around us, to appreciate the beauty of simple things and the wonder of each breath.”**

*~ Sister Beverly Raway*

*If you prefer an electronic copy of Pathways,  
please email us at [monastery@duluthosb.org](mailto:monastery@duluthosb.org).*