

PATHWAYS



Newsletter of the Duluth Benedictine Sisters, Duluth, Minnesota

Vol 34, No. 3

Summer 2023



We wait to welcome you at the new entrance to the Monastery.

PATHWAYS

NEWSLETTER
of the Benedictine Sisters

Published by:

Sisters of St. Scholastica
Monastery, Duluth, MN

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Cover:

Visual rendering of new entrance
to Monastery.

*Unless otherwise attributed, photos were
taken by our Sisters or employees.*

PATHWAYS is published three times a
year and is distributed among friends,
relatives, associates, and benefactors of
the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery.

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We are working to capture email addresses from our friends and donors, to communicate timely information via email. We will never share your address with others. Please send your name and email to monastery@duluthosb.org

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As I write this letter, Mother Nature has teased us with a week of unusually warm days, bright sunshine, blooming crocuses, and then another blast of cold air and snow. A mallard pair that nested in the Angelus Garden last summer found their way back to us; confused by the cold and snow they are exploring our new entrance and garden space looking for a place to nest. The abrupt weather changes prompted a friend to ask, "Did you enjoy your summer?" and we laughed uproariously. So, I hope when you receive this issue of *Pathways* that summer will truly be here.

In the meantime, we are enjoying our fresh start and cozy days in our new rooms and offices. We had outstanding help from the Environmental Services crew and volunteers and are very grateful for all they did to make the transition smooth and comfortable for the Sisters and staff. However, an often-heard comment now that we're moved in is, "I can't find X, where did they put it?" It's all good fun though, discovering. We now make our own breakfasts every day and, on my wing, I've tried out a few family recipes for popovers and pancakes on Saturday mornings. It's fun to gather and linger for conversation and coffee in a more casual atmosphere and to compare notes.

Watch for an announcement inviting our friends and donors to an open house to introduce our new Monastery space and the renovated ministry space in Stanbrook Hall this fall. We will welcome you with joy to our new front entrance, as seen in an architectural rendering on the cover.

Our renovation made room for another transition that is moving along well. In past issues I have described the process of transferring the sponsorship of our ministries to Duluth Benedictine Ministries (DBM). This organization, approved by the Vatican, will officially begin operations on July 1 on the first floor in my former office. Lori Collard is the Chair of the canonical Governing Body of DBM and Sister Danile Lynch is the President of the corresponding civil organization, Duluth Benedictine Corporation. Becky Urbanski is serving as the Interim Executive Director, preparing and paving the way for that transition to the permanent positions of leadership.

With all the transitions we are experiencing, I'm reminded of a reflection by collaborative authors George M. Smiga and Ferdinand Okorie in the 2023 edition of *Daily Reflections for Easter to Pentecost* (Liturgical Press). They write, "The Spirit of God is always leading us forward, preparing us for the next good gift. If we are to receive it, we must at times be willing to leave the gift we already possess behind. . . . When we remain thankful and open-minded, we are most likely to recognize God's gifts and the renewal they offer." Let us pray that we remain, open, and eager to receive each day with its gifts and challenges, that we may be renewed with the joy and beauty that God offers when we are receptive and grateful.

As the summer and fall progress, we look forward to the "good gift" of seeing you at our campus for our open house, and other events to come. The Scholastica grounds and lake view are always an inviting destination, and our guest rooms will be refreshed and available for retreats and more.

Blessed summer days,

Sister Beverly

Sister Beverly Raway, OSB



Thy Will Be Done?

by Sister Josine Krausnick

In the Monastery, we say these words of the “Our Father” three or more times each day in the Divine Office and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But do we live as though we believe them?

My formal Catholic religious instruction was limited beyond fourth grade, except what I received at home through the example of

my parents and other family members.

As a teenager, I was encouraged to seek out what God wanted me to do. I prayed frequently for this aspect of my life and listened to know what God had in mind for me.



The Benedictine ring symbolizes our dedication to the service of God. 'IHS' are the first three Greek letters of the name of Jesus. It also stands for Iesus Hominum Salvator (Jesus Savior of Mankind). And again, In hoc signo [vinces]: In This Sign, Conquer, which dates from the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine I.

The teaching of young children became my greatest desire, so that part of my life seemed clear to me. But what about the rest? I knew very little about religious life, as I had no contact or experience with religious communities. They did not make their way to the Nebraska Panhandle until after my high school years.

I had a few options for college, so I chose to attend the community college just a block from my home. When it was time for us sophomores to find a teaching job or further our education, our supervisor kept us apprised of the possibilities. Among the flyers he shared was a college in a place called Duluth named after St. Scholastica – both complete strangers to me. I saved the information about their lay teacher program and, after a happy year of teaching second grade in a small town near my home, I applied to and was accepted by The College of St. Scholastica. A new adventure was beginning! During these years of growing,

learning, and seeking, I was aware that decisions I was making had to be part of God's plan.

Getting settled into this program was filled with changes and adjustments, as I grew more flexible in accepting the many changes that came with a commitment. That commitment kept changing also. My first was to a second-grade class of 54 wonderful children and a staff of Benedictine sisters. This was my first experience of teaching in a Catholic school. The sisters were a blessing: kind and helpful.

Then one morning, it happened. I found myself at Mass with my class, and did not receive Communion because I usually received earlier with the school Sisters before class. As I was paging through my prayer book, I came upon a small brochure with the photo of an aspirant and the question: “A Benedictine Sister – should I be one?”

I read through the requirements – good health, desire to serve God, and so on – and saw I met them, but still wasn't comfortable with this idea. So, I boldly looked at the Cross and asked, “Is this what you want me to do?” I knew that I was talking to the One who loved me beyond my knowledge, but my question was sincere as well as desperate. And I listened and heard the voice in my heart, “This is how I will make you happy.”

It is an understatement to say that I was very shaken up. But I knew this was God answering my prayer and I was comfortable with that.

God always keeps promises. God has kept this one for over sixty years, even when I have not. God is loving, forgiving, and waiting for us to take seriously that oft-repeated cry: “Thy will be done.”

Back to the Basics

by Sister Lisa Maurer

As followers of Christ and children of God, one of the biggest questions we ask is, "What does God want me to do?" We can get wrapped up into thinking that there is some great hush-hush master plan out there, some clandestine mission. And we worry that we do not know what that is. Yet, we can rest assured that God is not holding us to some unknown standard. God does not operate that way.

Every day, thousands of choices present themselves to us. We can do this, or we can do that. In an ever-growing barrage of options, things become convoluted and confusing. How can we be sure we are doing God's will? How do we know what is pleasing to God?

When we get lost in the complexities of finding our way; when discerning our future is causing us angst, perhaps we need to go back to the basics.

We can look to the prophet Micah for these basics. He ministered during a very bleak and confusing time in Israel's history. The people were lost and afraid. The Assyrian empire had just risen against them and had destroyed the northern tribes of Israel. This left the people of God with an uncertain future. What were they to do? How were they to be?

Against this background, Micah tells the people to go back to the basics. He speaks a concise and powerful message. Through Micah, God reveals exactly what God wants from the people: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with Him. This is what God still wants from us today. No matter who you are or how you are living your particular vocation – if you are young or old, married or single, religious or priest – "you have been told what is good,

and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). There you have it. Those are the basics.

Do Justice. It's not enough to be sad about injustice. God wants people who care enough to *do justice*, in other words to act honorably. Doing what you are supposed to be doing in the way you're supposed to be doing it, with and for others.

Love Goodness. Goodness is not a quality we can manufacture on our own. Goodness comes from God. We need to love what God loves and let the Holy Spirit move in us so that we can be blessed with the fruit of goodness.

Walk Humbly. Be not proud or self-reliant. Continually seek strength from God and do all for God's glory. Trust the Lord and acknowledge him as the source of your life as you walk through each day.

So, when life gets so complex that we feel we have lost our way and are no longer being who and how God dreams us to be, we need to go back to the basics. God's desires for us are not an arcane mystery nor hidden secret, but simple and basic. We are people who should do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly before God. By focusing on these basics, we find what will enable us to be all God dreams us to be.

If you or someone you know wants more information about vocations, email vocations@duluthosb.org or visit www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations



In their exploration of the world, children are good at going back to the basics.

Oblate Update for Summer

by Jane Dolter, Oblate Director, and Thom Chartier, Oblate Candidate



Sister Pauline Micke.

The Benedictine Oblates of St. Scholastica Monastery are embarking on a major change to their leadership model. Like many monasteries worldwide, St. Scholastica is transitioning to lay leadership for their Oblate Program. Sister Pauline Micke recently announced her retirement as Oblate Director effective in May. After working alongside Sister Pauline since 2018, Jane Dolter will now lead the new Oblate Team with the assistance of two Sisters as liaison and assistant liaison.

Many thanks to Sister Pauline for her years of dedication to our Oblate Community. Looking back on his long friendship with Sister Pauline, Thom Chartier recalls, "As a newer Oblate candidate, I would like to thank Sister Pauline personally. I have known her since I graduated in 1973 from Duluth Cathedral. I always boasted that I was her favorite student, but I now know that isn't true. Sister Pauline's favorite is simply everyone. She loves from the heart because she listens with the ear of her heart. When God called her to Monastic Life, I think He was telling her, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." Well done, Sister Pauline, but you aren't done yet.

In researching Sister Pauline's ministries, I learned she has worn many hats: Parish Director of Faith Formation, Mission Integration Director for Benedictine (formerly Benedictine Health System), Outreach Director for the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment, counselor at Lake Superior Family Services, a teacher for junior and senior high school

students and college students, board member for Women's Community Development Organization, and of course, Director of the Oblates. I may have missed some, but holy cow! That sure sounds like James 2:18: 'Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'

Finally, how fitting that Sister Pauline has a devotion to St. Gertrude, the patron saint of cats and gardens. When trying to get the Oblates together it must have felt like herding cats but look at her result: a beautiful garden. Thank you for all you have accomplished and many blessings on your future endeavors. May God be with you every step of the way. I'd like to close with a quote from Jeremiah 29:11-13: *I know well the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare, not for harm, to give you a future with hope. When you call upon me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me if you seek me with all your heart.*

As the Oblates begin this transition, we want to thank and remember our long time Oblate Director Sister Martha Bechtold, who was buried at the Monastery on May 8, 2023. Peace be with you Sister Martha.

Starting in October, the Oblate meetings will return to meeting in person on the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm at the Monastery. The meetings will also be available via Zoom. Please contact Jane Dolter for more information or with any questions: janedolter@msn.com or 218.391.4516.

Please Pray for Our Deceased Family and Friends

Ardeth Dreshfield 7/28/2020
Christina Antonia LaVigne .. 8/30/2022
Joan Gullickson 11/14/2022
James G. Boulger 1/14/2023
Arthur Dreshfield 1/24/2023
Sharon Joann Wahman 1/29/2023
Georgia Ann Pomroy 1/30/2023
Robert Pavlatos 2/1/2023

Robert John DeSanto 2/12/2023
Nick Schneider 2/13/2023
Regina Marie Dalbec 2/21/2023
Donna Maas 2/22/2023
Phyllis Anne Kaven 2/25/2023
Theresa J. Doherty 2/28/2023
Kathleen Marie LeVasseur .. 3/2/2023
Joel Koemptgen 3/3/2023

Mary Kay Swanson 3/13/2023
Kathleen Kelly 3/28/2023
Charles Kollasch 4/6/2023
Nancy M. Gottfried 4/18/2023
Debra Peterson-DeRocher .. 5/11/2023
Rose Mary Perrault 5/13/2023
Annette Ruth Ulrich 5/13/2023



Summer Greetings

by Dawn Carrillo

In her poem "Spring," Mary Oliver says, "There is only one question: how to love this world." It is clarifying to think of our lives as Christians in this way. Perhaps the Scripture stories, guidance of the church, and the wisdom of saints and sages through the centuries can all be distilled into this one line: *there is only one question... how to love this world.*



Dawn Carrillo.

This world, filled with *bodies* — human bodies, all sorts of creaturely bodies, the *body* of the Earth and its trees, rivers, mountains — and then the body of our incredible universe in its magnificence and indescribable beauty — all of this wonder is here for us to *be* in, to *delight* in, and to *love* it all, just as Jesus did in his earthly life. Indeed, theologian Sallie McFague speaks of the world/universe as God's *body*. What we do, how we walk in this precious universe, and how we love it truly matters, because God is here in our midst, incarnate in the world and universe and all that they contain. For me, there is no season that highlights these truths so vividly as that of our glorious springtime!

At the Center, we offer programming and sacred spaces to explore how we can more deeply love one another and our world. During the Spring/Summer of 2023, we will be offering something for everyone! Please visit our website at retreatduluth.org for more information and to register for these programs and offerings, and to sign up for our weekly program email:

- Children's programming:
Celebrating Creativity
- Our ongoing Christophany Discussion Group (New members always welcome!)
- *Visio Divina* prayer services
- *Dreams: The Secret Language of the Soul* — a summer retreat
- Taizé prayer service
- *Reflecting in Our Hearts with Mary:*
A Day of Rest and Renewal
- Private retreats
- Spiritual Direction

We would love to walk with you on your journey of love.

Dawn Carrillo

Director, Center for Spirituality and Enrichment
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Lisa Askelson: 35 Years at St. Scholastica Monastery

by Theresa Butler, Development/Public Relations Administrative Assistant



As Environmental Services Supervisor, 1999.

Pride, Sisters, and History – these are three words that Lisa Askelson uses to describe St. Scholastica Monastery, the beloved home to the Duluth Benedictine Sisters, where she has served as an employee for 35 years. Lisa is proud of the Sisters for their many years of making financially

smart decisions, so that now they can enjoy a comfortable life in their new renovated space. She is proud of the Sisters' long history in Duluth and of the legacy they created, including their sponsored institutions of St. Mary's Medical Center, The College of St. Scholastica, and Benedictine (formerly Benedictine Health Systems). She is proud to be the Director of Facilities at the Monastery.

Lisa grew up in Duluth, the fifth of six children born to loving parents, who taught their children how to work hard to achieve their hopes and dreams. Her first job was at age 15, at the Family Tree Restaurant in Duluth's Woodland neighborhood. She graduated from Duluth Central High School in the class of 1984. After high school she had several housekeeping and painting jobs, including cleaning dental offices and the Kolar Buick dealership. She also worked in a temporary position as a painter on the historic William A. Irvin lake freighter, preparing it to be a popular tourist attraction.

During the summer as she painted the *Irvin*, Lisa was looking for permanent employment. She saw a small advertisement in the Duluth News Tribune: "Laundry worker wanted for St. Scholastica Priory." Although she had

heard of The College of St. Scholastica and The Benedictine Health Center, she had never heard of the Priory or met a Sister. She decided to apply, was invited for an interview, and the rest is history.

Lisa began working at the Priory (now called Monastery) in 1988. For the first 11 years she worked in the main laundry. In 1999 she began as the Environmental Services Supervisor overseeing the work of eight women who did housekeeping duties for the Sisters, under the leadership of Sister Martha Bechtold, the Director of Temporalities. Lisa smiled, recalling that she started in her first office with a typewriter, even though it was 1999. Over the years, she earned the trust of the Sisters and her Environmental Services staff members. In 2014, Lisa received a call from Sister Lois Eckes, who was Prioress at the time. Sister Lois asked if she would consider taking on Sister Martha's role as Director of Facilities and overseeing a larger team. Within a year after stepping into that position, she was officially Director of Facilities, a modern term for what St. Benedict called Cellarer in his Holy Rule. She is a living model of his description in Chapter 31:

As cellarer of the monastery let there be chosen from the community one who is wise, of mature character, sober, not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable, not offensive, not slow, not wasteful, but a God-fearing person who may be like a mother to the whole community. ... If anyone happens to make some unreasonable demand of her, instead of vexing the Sister with a contemptuous refusal she should humbly give the reason for denying the improper request. Let her keep guard over her own soul, mindful always of the Apostle's saying that "she who has ministered well acquires for herself a good standing."

... Let her regard all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar. Let her not think that she may neglect anything. She should be neither a miser nor a prodigal and squanderer of the monastery's substance but should do all things with measure and in accordance with the Prioress's instructions.

The biggest change that Lisa has seen in her 35 years is the number of lay people who work for the Sisters. When she started, Sisters worked in culinary and nursing, and in all the offices. Today, the Sisters' home is staffed by many people who are not vowed religious. Another big change is in where the Sisters live. Before construction of the Stanbrook West residence, which opened in 1991, the Sisters lived in Tower Hall at the College, as well as throughout Duluth and in other states – wherever they were fulfilling their ministries.

Lisa's proudest moments in her work have been earning the trust of the Sisters and hiring several of the great women who still work here today. Her greatest accomplishment has been in her growth in knowledge of building operations and functions. This helped her turn the Stanbrook Hall Fourth Floor rooms into guest rooms. She recalls that when Sister Martha was Director of Facilities, she began taking Lisa to various businesses to teach her how they support our facilities. Later Lisa looked back at this experience and realized it was Sister Martha training her in advance.

The most challenging part of her role came in the final steps of the Stanbrook West renovation project: ensuring that all parts of the renovated space are up to code, safe, and adequate before the Sisters moved back. Issues range from the WiFi to heating/cooling control to light switch placement to towel racks to new phones – all the fine details necessary for turning a building into a home.

Lisa has been a huge asset in the renovation and moving process, but then she was not new to moving the Community from one building to another. She has moved many Sisters over the years, including from living quarters

in Tower Hall to Stanbrook West in 1991. In 2000 she coordinated the move of thirty Sisters from Benet Hall to Westwood First Floor at the Benedictine Living Community, while Benet Hall was being renovated.

When Lisa thinks about those who have been the biggest inspirations to her, many Sisters come to mind, but she has learned the most from Sister Annella Wagner. Sister Annella taught Lisa the value of stewardship and taking care of all their resources – their home and their money. Record keeping was very important to Sister Annella. Lisa watched her sit with Sisters who were dying and show them kindness and compassion. Sister also taught her patience and tolerance. One of Lisa's favorite duties was to help put on Benet Hall parties under the direction of Sister Annella. Lisa recalls fondly having celebrations and parties for just about every occasion: employees' retirements, Sisters' birthdays, and Nurses Week, to name a few.

Lisa advises newly hired employees to learn the history of the Sisters, not only from reading about it but also by asking thoughtful questions and listening intently. Becoming familiar with the Community's history helps develop a sense of pride in their work here, that they are an important part of its ongoing life.

Lisa's hope for the Sisters is that they will be comfortable, safe, and happy in their new renovated space. She also hopes their newly developed Duluth Benedictine Ministries grows even beyond their hopes and dreams. She is grateful to tell her story in *Pathways* and hopes the Sisters know she genuinely cares about each of them and their Community as a whole.

And we do! We thank you, Lisa, for your work, your organizing talents, and your pleasant demeanor that calms the anxious, and empowers us to be our best selves. As you are!



Lisa and Sr. Annella Wagner, 2018.



Lisa and +Sr. Martha Bechtold, 2018.

The Journey Home

by Sister Therese Carson



Sister Claudia Cherro (in black) sits at table with (clockwise left to right) Sisters Maria Volk, Mary Christa Kroening, and Katie Doyle, who wait for their rooms to be ready.



Pushing carts are Sister Elizabeth Farias (left) and Christine Etchison, Environmental Services Manager.



Sunflowers.



Sunflowers.



Mickey display.

Our Journey Home began in mid-February with a parade of carts, which continued for almost three months. Sisters packed their belongings and loaded them onto every kind of cart, including the wheeled steel baskets from the basement laundry. College and Monastery employees and a few hardy volunteers moved furniture, room by room, three rooms per day.

For the Sisters on Benet Hall and their caregivers, the move took one exhausting day.

Once we moved in there was a steep learning curve: how to turn on and off adjustable

lights, raise and lower motorized shades, and adjust the state-of-the-art thermostats. We were relieved to find the stove and coffee makers are low-tech and easy to use.

The enjoyable aftermath of a move is making a new space your home. Sister Elizabeth's room shows her love of the Iowa prairie.

In one room is a realistic sunflower stalk, held against a narrow wall by a potted spider plant. Another Sister celebrates her love for sunflowers in a display outside her door.

It is easy to pick out the room of the Sister with a passion for Mickey, and of the proud Norwegian with flag.

Our move took place towards the end of a winter with a record total snowfall of 140 inches. But the landscape of plowed and drifted snow in our new front garden was stunning, especially on clear evenings with Venus shining.



Architectural drawing of new west entrance.

We are settling into our living spaces and offices, and orienting to a Monastery that faces west, up the hill towards the cemetery. It was a stressful time that tried our tempers, but we emerged a stronger Community. The Belgian theologian Henri Nouwen spoke wisely about communal life:

"Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other as a gesture of hope."

"In community we say: Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs — but we do not have to live it alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate the truth that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of a fellowship of mutual care."

As we adjust after our journey home, may we continue to strengthen our shared life and become the persons God knows us to be.



Kitchenette.



Sr. Elizabeth's room.



Tribute to Norway.



Winter view at dusk.



Care for the Sick:

Bringing Communion to the Sick



Sisters Therese Carson and Claudia Cherro as Eucharistic ministers.

Sisters Therese Carson (left) and Claudia Cherro distribute Holy Communion to Catholic patients at St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth. They find it a humbling experience to be able to bring God to the sick in a very real way.

"I don't think I've ever done anything that brings me so close to Our Lord and, through Him, to the person who is sick," says Sister Therese. "The connection we make is real and lasting and is transformative for them as well as for us."

Sister Claudia says, "I have been carrying Eucharist to the sick at the hospital for nearly a year. When I enter a room I meet people at their most vulnerable in health and spirit. I see the sadness and fear that some have with illness that is serious and long-term. Even if they have been away from the Church for years, they are receptive to a spiritual visit. When they are not able to receive Communion physically, I offer them a prayer of Spiritual Communion with Jesus, which they deeply appreciate. There is nothing that makes me happier than to literally bring Christ to those who are suffering and in need of solace."

Elder Care at Benedictine



Sister Joan Marie Stelman.

A little history about one of our cherished sponsored institutions: In the 1970s, Sisters were retiring from ministry and returning in large numbers to Duluth. The Benedictine Health Center was founded in 1980 partly to provide living quarters for them and also to expand our healthcare ministry to serve those needing compassionate care as they aged. It opened in 1980, with +Sister Armella Oblak as its first administrator. She established a daycare center on site so the residents could listen to children at play, the first in America. The Benedictine Health System was formed in 1985 with St. Mary's Medical Center, St. Joseph's Medical Center, and the Benedictine Health Center as the original members and grew over time.

In 2004, as part of a focus to ensure Catholic sponsorship, longevity and success for the health care ministries, BHS joined with St. Mary's Duluth Clinic to form a parent organization called Essentia Health. In 2008, Essentia Health reorganized and BHS and its long-term care facilities left to form a ministry focused on the delivery of long-term care. The BHS hospitals remained with Essentia Health. Today, Benedictine operates 31 senior living communities in

Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Two years ago, the name was changed to Benedictine but the mission remains the same: to "witness to God's love by creating inclusive communities, supporting those we serve to live well and with purpose, with special concern for the underserved." Every Benedictine Living Community embraces the core values of hospitality, stewardship, respect, and justice. As Senior Vice President of Mission Integration, Sister Joan Marie Stelman educates administrators and caregivers on how to integrate these values into their work.

Other Sisters serve on boards for the individual Living Communities. For the Benedictine Parent Board, Sisters Beverly Raway, Danile Lynch, and Clare Marie Trettel. For the Benedictine Foundation, Sister Dorene King. For the Benedictine Living Community - Duluth, Sisters Dorene King, Lois Eckes, and Theresa Spinler. For Benedictine Living Communities, Inc. of North Dakota, Sister Mary Susan Dewitt. For Benedictine Living Community - Winona, Sister Joan Marie Stelman. For Benedictine Living Community - Shakopee, Sisters Kathleen Hofer and Kathleen Del Monte.



Internal Ministry:

Leadership

Sister Beverly Raway attended the annual Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, held February 1 - 6 at Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Alabama. Present were the prioresses and presidents of the Monastic Congregations of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica and of the Federation of St. Gertrude. 'Monastic Congregation' is replacing the term 'Federation' in America, to conform with terminology used by the Vatican. Individual communities have formed alliances to share ideas and support each other.

At this year's conference, the leaders discussed the continued autonomy of monasteries and their mutual collaboration, as well as the need for individual communities to come to completion. They also joined with abbots who were meeting at nearby St. Bernard Abbey, to share ideas about providing healthcare for sick or elderly members, mental health concerns, and care for the dying.



At the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, from left to right are Sisters Angela Hoffmann of Saint Placid Priory in Lacey, WA; Nicole Kunze of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck, ND; Susan Rudolph of St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN; Beverly Raway of St. Scholastica Monastery; Marva Coakley of Saint Martin Monastery in Nassau, Bahamas; Susan Hutchens of Saint Mary Monastery in Rock Island, IL; Catherine Nehotte of St. Paul's Monastery in St. Paul, MN; and Nancy Bauer, president of the Benedictine Congregation of St. Benedict.

Supporting Education:

Philanthropy for Duluth Public Library

On February 26, at the Olga Walker Awards and Author Event, the Duluth Library Foundation recognized the Sisters for their long financial support. Receiving the award were Sisters Beverly Raway, Beverly Horn, Danile Lynch, and Elizabeth Farias. Sister Elizabeth is the Community librarian and keeps our Spiritual Resource Center current with new releases.

Donations allow the library to expand their services, remove barriers and expand access to readers who are unhoused or disabled, eliminate overdue fines, and provide curbside pickup service. Those without internet access are welcome to the computer center where they can access critical resources. It has grown beyond the traditional concept of a library, becoming a true resource center and a place for community gathering where all are welcomed.



Sr. Elizabeth Farias, Sr. Beverly Raway (Prioress), Duluth Library Foundation Executive Director Erin Kreeger, Sr. Danile Lynch (Treasurer), and Sr. Beverly Horn attended the ceremony.

Restoration of the College's Gold Parlor in Tower Hall



Heidi Johnson
(CSS Librarian and Archivist), **Sr. Beverly Raway**, **Sr. Mary Josephine Torborg**, and **Lisa Roseth**
(Director of Alumni Engagement).

On Thursday, March 30, the Sisters and friends at The College of St. Scholastica blessed the restored Gold Parlor and Lobby Parlor in Tower Hall. At one time these parlors near the entry were used for receptions and to entertain guests.

The furnishings were from the 18th through 20th centuries, treasures in their own right. When the College became co-educational in 1969, these rooms were divided to provide more office space. The furniture and artifacts were stored for fifty years in a climate-controlled Heritage Room at the Monastery under the loving care of Sister Johnetta Maher and then Sister Mary Josephine Torborg.

As the Sisters withdrew from Stanbrook Hall and prepared to turn the building over to house offices of our sponsored institutions, these parlors were restored to their former beauty with their original furnishings, some with new upholstery, to be used for entertaining special guests and to help connect the present with our past. Furniture, after all, is made to be used, cared for, and enjoyed.

Spiritual Support for College Athletes

In March, Sister Lisa Maurer accompanied The College of St. Scholastica Softball Team on their spring trip to Orlando. During the week long trip, the team played ten games, had time to enjoy the good weather, and visit with family and friends who also made the trip south.

She helped drive the team to and from their practices and games and, as always, shared prayer with them, offered them support, and cheered really loud.



Sister Lisa (at far right) kneels with team members to pray before a game.



The team takes the field.

Supporting the Missions:

Sister Lisa Maurer Visits Guatemala with a Parish Mission

This spring, Sister Lisa Maurer was again part of a mission trip sponsored by A'KALA Family Foundation, a Christian charity committed to "embracing hope for children and families by providing and sustaining basic life needs including: food, pure water, clothing, housing, health care, education, and employment skills in San Lucas, Tolimán, Guatemala." Fourteen people built homes and distributed food and household goods, among other activities.

These trips bring Sister Lisa back to the way of life to which Christ calls us. "Each time I go to San Lucas, I think I am going to be of service and give to the people. I should know better. My humble works of painting houses, delivering items, or singing with the children is no match for what I receive. I am ever thankful that spending time in San Lucas gives me a chance to refresh my spirit and recommit myself to living out the love of God and love of neighbor."



Sister Lisa and another volunteer paint a home for residents in San Lucas, Guatemala.



Residents of San Lucas.

Sponsorship:

Sisters Bless New DBM Interim Director

At Eucharist on April 4, the Community prayed a blessing over Becky Urbanski, who is the interim executive director for our new canonical sponsorship organization, Duluth Benedictine Ministries (DBM) and its companion civil organization, Duluth Benedictine Corporation (DBC).

Becky will provide a foundation for the structure and operations of DBM/DBC while we continue to search for a permanent executive director. We are blessed to have Becky as part of the team.



Sister Beverly Raway leads Fr. Seamus Walsh and the Community in blessing Becky Urbanski.





**Father Bill Fider
blesses the candles
before Mass.**

Feast of the Presentation

Under the Mosaic Law, as recorded in the Book of Leviticus, a woman is considered ritually unclean after childbirth. Blood symbolizes the mystery of life and one who had brushed against mystery in birth is excluded for a period from Jewish worship. If the child is a boy, her uncleanness is forty days, after which she brings a sacrifice to a priest – two doves or pigeons, for people in poverty. Because Jesus is her firstborn son, he must also be dedicated to God and his life redeemed through sacrifice.

Thus, the Feast of the Presentation on February 2 commemorates two rituals: one to purify Mary after her encounter with mystery and one to dedicate her Son to God. An every-day event, but this time Simeon and Anna are there to recognize the extraordinary within the routine and give thanks to God for letting them live to see it.

Another name for the Feast is Candlemas Day, when candles are blessed to be used during Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Since the following day is the Feast of St. Blaise, the Sisters also have their throats blessed against diseases of the throat and lungs, a wise action while the Covid virus lingers.



Feast of St Scholastica 2023.

Feast of St. Scholastica

On February 10 we celebrated the feast with Rev. John Petrich and the faculty, staff, and students of The College of St. Scholastica. The Concert Choir led the singing and we added our voices to theirs.

Dr. Richard Carrick leads the Concert Choir as Sister Donna Schroeder and Sister Charity Nkwera listen.

As a Communion reflection, they sang *Blessing* by David Evan Thomas:

*Sorrow will come
May there also be kindness and grace
May there be silence in the place beyond words
and words to warm the silences
A channel that guards the passage
of your small and battered boat,
then opens again, wide.*



Srs. Donna Schroeder, Mary Susan Dewitt, and Lois Eckes.

Mardi Gras

The night before Lent begins, we celebrate *Mardi Gras* with employees of our ministry partner Benedictine (formerly Benedictine Health System). This tradition has lasted for 38 years. Pizza, soft drinks, beer, music, camaraderie, and fellowship — what better way to prepare for the silent solemnity of Ash Wednesday? Kevin Buck, a local acoustic guitarist and singer, led an enthusiastic singalong.

Lent, Triduum, and Easter

After the revelry of Mardi Gras, Lent begins in silence. At Eucharist, the priest, prioress, and liturgist distribute blessed ashes. *Remember you are dust and to dust you will return.*

On Palm Sunday we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem and being greeted by the crowds with wild joy, and then his betrayal, arrest, rejection by the crowds, and death.

The Triduum also opens in silence. Non-essential work is set aside for days of solemn communal prayer.

On **Holy Thursday** we place the sacred oils, blessed earlier at the Diocesan Chrism Mass, in their places in the glass repository. Each oil is recognized for its special purpose in the rites of the Church. For the Oil of the Sick, we pray,

"We touch each other's lives of pain, illness, and affliction with compassion, trying to grasp the mystery of suffering. Our gentle care and kind words support the soothing ointment for health of body, mind, and spirit."

Good Friday We read the Passion and recall the times we, too, deny Christ: when we assume the worst of others; when we keep silent when they are mistreated; when we fear change or death or the silence that reveals to us our pettiness.



These feet, immobilized by nails, carried Jesus during his public ministry to feed the hungry, comfort the afflicted, heal the sick, and bring hope to the despairing. We are now the hands and feet of Christ.

Holy Saturday is empty; the tabernacle door stands ajar, the chapel scrubbed bare. As Michael Conner wrote, on this day "we are free to question the world that allowed us to fall. ... Saturday is a land where idols lay shattered and strewn about. It is a place to lean toward one another and name the things we fear."

At the **Easter Vigil** the light returns. Time's wheel groans and moves backward, and Christ is resurrected into life. On Easter, Christ redeems every squandered day and broken friendship. Let us hold onto that reality when life becomes tangled and we cannot find the way. Go back to this Night and begin again.



Sisters Jeanne Ann Weber, Jayne Erickson, and Beverly Raway receive ashes from Fr. Bill Fider before distributing them to the Sisters.



Sister Danile Lynch presents the Oil of the Sick as Prioress Beverly Raway leads the prayers.



This is the night that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin...

+Sister Sarah Smedman, OSB

Sister Sarah Smedman, OSB, age 91, was called home on March 19, 2023 in her 68th year of consecrated life. Born on June 18, 1931 to Leonard and Ida Lenore (Bourg) Smedman in Norway, Michigan, she moved at age 10 with her family to Hibbing, Minnesota when her father was transferred by his mining company to the Iron Range. There she was taught by the Benedictine Sisters at Assumption Hall and first became acquainted with religious life.



+Sister Sarah Smedman, OSB

After high school she studied at The College of St. Scholastica, became friends with many of the Sisters and, after graduating with a B.A. in English in 1953, entered St. Scholastica Priory. She made her triennial vows in 1955 and her perpetual vows in 1958. Recalling her college years, she said, "At St. Scholastica I was encouraged to think for myself. I became a risk-taker, voicing my thoughts freely, and discovering that others did not always think as I did."

As a much-loved teacher, Sister Sarah spent her first ten years in local schools. She taught English and History at Stanbrook Hall High School and was also the school librarian. Moving to Virginia, Minnesota, she taught seventh grade and some music classes at Marquette School. In 1962 she returned to Duluth to teach English at Cathedral High School for a year, then at The College of St. Scholastica as instructor and later as Associate Professor. After completing her Ph.D. in English at the University of Indiana, she became one of the first Duluth Benedictines to teach in a state university, accepting a faculty position at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. She recalled, "Welcomed into a diverse community of educators, scholars, and colleagues, I became ever more aware of my responsibility to be a true Benedictine."

At UNCC she developed a specialty program in Children's and Young Adult Literature. This subject became her passion, and she published many scholarly

articles and book reviews. She served the International Children's Literature Association as board member, committee chair, and president, earning an international reputation in the field. In recent years, she wrote a series of articles in Pathways on books for young readers.

In 1990 she returned to Minnesota to teach as professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead. From there she was able to visit her elderly mother in Hibbing and attend monthly meetings of the Monastic Council when elected. She also

served as trustee on the board of St. Mary's Hospital and nursing home in Detroit Lakes.

In 2004 she moved back to the Monastery, adjusted once more to its rhythm of communal prayer and work, and rekindled friendships with other Sisters. 'Easing into retirement,' as she once called it, she served on the Monastic Council, as trustee of the College and various medical institutions, and as archivist. She directed the program for continued education and life development for the Sisters and was a board member for the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue that brings together monastics of various faiths. Inspired by the changes of Vatican II, she helped found the Community's Feminist Theology program.

After a long life of service to God, her Community, and her students, she celebrated her 60th Jubilee in 2015, the Year of Consecrated Life. When asked why she stayed for so long when so many left the Order, she replied, "I believe it was because of God's inexorable grace, the sacredness of my vows, my willingness to take risks, and the support of my prioresses and Sisters."

Sister Sarah will be remembered for her deep love of God, her keen mind, and her love of children's literature. She was preceded in death by her parents and brother John Paul Smedman. She is survived by her sister-in-law Marlene Smedman, nieces Susan Byers (Mark) and Diane Teichman (Bill), the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, and many friends.

+Sister Martha Bechtold

Sister Martha (Jeanette) Bechtold, age 86, died on May 1, 2023 at St. Scholastica Monastery in her 65th year of consecrated life. She was born February 26, 1937 to Lawrence and Hildegard (Feneis) Bechtold in Luxemburg, Minnesota, second in a loving family of 12 children. On the farm she learned to work hard and remain calm in emergencies. She developed interests in cleanliness, order, decorating, painting, repair, and maintenance.



+Sister Martha Bechtold

She stopped attending school at age 14 to work on the farm, help raise her younger siblings, and work as a nanny. Following an employer to Duluth at age 18, she went on a retreat at the Monastery and felt, as she said, “zapped by God.” Two months later she entered as a postulant. She earned her high school degree, made her First Profession in 1957 and her Perpetual Profession in 1960. She continued her education, earning a Bachelor of Science in Education from The College of St. Scholastica in 1969 and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago. Her family was very proud of her scholarly accomplishments.

Sister Martha’s love of children and creative play suited her well for her first ministry as an elementary school teacher in Hibbing, Pine City, Chicago, Wayzata, Cloquet, and Duluth. In 1980, she moved to the McCabe Renewal Center, served as Director, and oversaw maintenance and repair. In 1994, she asked the prioress, Sister Danile Lynch, for a change in ministry. After discussing her desires, she attended summer classes at Saint John Abbey and returned home to become Director of Monastery Facilities, a modern title for the role of Cellarer as described in the Rule of St. Benedict. She described it as “caring for everything that is not eternal” and she thrived in her new role. She learned everything about maintaining the monastic buildings and their contents, building on a solid base of her time on the farm and at McCabe. Sister Martha exemplified the office of Cellarer. Whatever the emergency, she remained calm and handled it quietly and efficiently.

When Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are busy with many things,” that was our Sister Martha, always quietly working; but she also possessed the deep peace of Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus. She was a woman of profound prayer, rooted deeply in God, and so nothing could rattle her. For 35 years she was faithful to her Cursillo prayer group. She loved her family, her Benedictine Community, and everyone she met.

Sister Martha loved to cross-country ski, fly kites over the lake, and make balloon

animals to delight children, especially her nieces and nephews. She enjoyed cards, jigsaw puzzles, and Scrabble. She was outside whatever the weather. On returning from a winter walk on a fiercely cold and windy afternoon, she commented, “Well, it didn’t take me long today to get a lot of fresh air.” In bringing Gospel stories to life for her students, she was assisted by a marionette puppet named Shelby after, she told them, God: “...as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever Shelby.” Sister made several trips to our Twinning Benedictine community in Tanzania and enjoyed reciting the Lord’s Prayer in Swahili. She quietly excelled at everything she did: she could cook, clean, be spiritual director, give retreats, shovel snow, cut the grass, paint, and spin on the loom. She died, very appropriately, on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

Sister Martha was preceded in death by her parents; two brothers, Lawrence (Karen) and Benedict (Joan) Bechtold; and brothers-in-law, Fred Reker, Don Prom, and Ron Skudlarek. She is survived by her brothers Leonard (Marcia), Roger (Nell), George (Marshia), and Eugene (Kathy) Bechtold; sisters Rita Reker, Mary Prom, Hilde (Kerry) Manuel, Rose Skudlarek, and Millie (Leonard) Brunn; many beloved nieces and nephews; and her Benedictine Community.

Wake and Mass of Christian Burial were held on Monday, May 8 in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel at the Monastery, with her nephews Reverends Mitchell Bechtold and Nathan Brunn presiding. Interment was at Gethsemane Cemetery. Arrangements were made by Dougherty Funeral Home.

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