

# PATHWAYS



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# PATHWAYS

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of the Benedictine Sisters

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Cover photo: Bumble bee on pink coneflower, by Sister Theresa Spinler

## THOUGHTS FROM THE PRIORESS

### Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As we move into the warmth and brightness of summer, we do so with hearts still shaped by the graces of Lent and the joy of Easter. Those sacred seasons remind us that transformation often begins quietly — in prayer, reflection, and the steady rhythms of community life — and blossoms into renewed hope.

During Lent, we were invited to simplify our lives, listen more deeply, and return our hearts to what matters most — love of God and love of neighbor. Through prayer, compassion, and gratitude, we were reminded that God meets us in both the challenges and the ordinary moments of our days. Easter then proclaimed the joy of new life. The celebration of the Resurrection filled our chapel with light and song, and its promise of hope continues to echo in our daily life and prayer, inviting us to be instruments of justice and peace in our country and in our world.

This spring, we also celebrated the debut of the film *The Rule of Love*, a special moment for our Community. Created by producer Tom Livingston and writer/director Miles Hanon, this documentary about our life and ministries offers an opportunity to share the Benedictine spirit more broadly and to reflect on the enduring relevance of our values. The conversations that followed revealed a deep longing for wisdom, peace, and authentic community — hallmarks of Benedictine life.

Summer brings special opportunities for hospitality. We are grateful to be hosting the annual meeting of the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities, welcoming leaders who share our commitment to wisdom, learning, and community. We also look forward to gathering Sisters of age 55 and under — a joyful sign of vitality and hope for the future of Benedictine life.

Hospitality remains at the heart of our tradition — receiving each guest as Christ. Whether welcoming conference participants, retreat guests, volunteers, strangers, or friends, we are reminded that each encounter is an opportunity for grace.

We are deeply grateful for your friendship and support. As you enjoy the blessings of summer, know that you are remembered in our daily prayers.

May this season bring you rest, renewal, and quiet joy. May the light of Easter continue to shine in your heart as we give thanks for our many blessings and hold in prayer all who seek meaning, peace, and health of body, mind, and spirit—and the gift of hope.

In Christ's peace,

*Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, O.S.B.*

Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, OSB  
Prioress, St. Scholastica Monastery



Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, OSB

# The Psalms and I

by Sister Donna Schroeder

The psalms have been an integral part of my life for decades now and I have grown to love them as I never imagined I would. I remember the day I became a postulant. The group of us were asked whether we wanted to begin attending Morning Prayer immediately. The group said Yes, and I did not object, though I thought longingly about a nap. My family had dropped me off at the Monastery after a long drive from the western part of the state. I was excited to begin discerning whether or not I had a vocation but was worn from traveling and exchanging goodbyes with my family.

*"The Psalms are a bit like water forming a cave, a space for God in our lives." – Sister Donna Schroeder*

In those days, prayers were chanted monotone, on a single pitch. It was not music to my ears, but gradually I became used to Community Prayer. Then one day I came into the Chapel and realized I was glad to be there and be a part of the *Divine Office*, the term for Community Prayer. Now I think of the psalms in many ways, including as literature rich in life's lessons. They have been among my best teachers.

The way we pray has changed over the years. Some psalms are sung on different chant tones, not on a single pitch, while others are recited. Prayer also includes readings from other Books of Scripture. Here is a typical Morning Prayer: we begin with a hymn; then, after a pause, we chant Psalm 66: *Be joyful in God all the earth, glorify the name of the Holy One. We live among such good people and in such a beautiful place that the words have become a living reality. Our very existence gives glory to God. The Psalm praises God and reminds us of God's willingness to listen to us.*

Then Psalm 16 begins: *Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.* This phrase resembles one of my most frequent prayers: Help! Many of my prayers outside of the Divine Office are very short. The most frequent is Thank You. Even though it is frequent, it is less than the ways in which God sustains me.

The variety found in the psalms is great. Some of them are full of hope that God will smite one's enemies. Psalm 108 asks God to kill an enemy, orphan his children, and

drive his widow and children from their home. Such psalms are difficult to consider appropriate for the Divine Office. My own way of praying with them is to consider as enemies my own sins and shortcomings. They are plentiful enemies whom I sometimes feel outnumber me.

There are lines that are not prayed frequently but would be most true coming from the lips of the great saints. These include a line from Isaiah 25 in our Prayer:

*Your name, your memory are all my soul desires. With Psalm 62 we say, For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.* Such phrases are among the

treasures of Scripture. I like to think about the psalms as the "prayer book" that Jesus used, from a scroll he would have studied at an early age. He knew them by heart and would call on their words in prayers to his Father.

The Divine Office is not just for monastics and priests, but for the whole Church. Buy a copy (sometimes called 'Christian Prayer'), learn the rhythms, and pray it daily. It will soak into your soul and become a part of you. Then in need you can call on a line to express yourself when your own words do not come.

*1. The path of the upright is straight; you smooth the way of the upright. Following the path of your judgments we hoped in you, Lord.*

*o 2 Your name, your memory are all my soul desires. At night my soul longs for you, and my spirit seeks for you. When your judgments appear on earth the world's inhabitants learn justice*

*Lord, you will proclaim peace for us for you have accomplished for us all we have done.*

# A Benedictine Vocation

by Sister Lisa Maurer

A Benedictine vocation is distinct. It is a 1,500-year-old invitation to seek God, offering a countercultural way of living in a chaotic world. Rooted in the Rule of St. Benedict, this vocation calls women to a life centered on prayer, work, and community. It is a path that finds holiness not in extraordinary acts, but in faithful attention to the ordinary rhythms of daily life. If you have been reading *Pathways* for any length of time, you know this to be true about life at St. Scholastica Monastery.

A Benedictine vocation is often misunderstood as solely a life of cloistered isolation. In reality, it is a remarkably flexible and life-giving path. Benedictine Sisters serve in many different ministries, responding to the needs of the Church and the wider world. Over the years, our Sisters at St. Scholastica Monastery have been involved in cancer research, coaching football, teaching kindergarten, and conducting research in Antarctica.

Rooted in the sixth-century Rule of St. Benedict, the Benedictine way of life emphasizes *ora et labora*—prayer and work. This tradition provides a stable, communal foundation that enables Sisters to serve the needs of the Church and the wider world wherever they are called. Our Sisters have ministered throughout Minnesota and in many places across the United States. This remarkable freedom flows, perhaps surprisingly, from the very vows each Sister professes—stability, obedience, and *conversatio morum*.

One of the most distinctive elements of Benedictine life is the vow of stability. Benedictine Sisters commit themselves to a particular community and place for life. Stability is not simply about remaining in one location; rather, it is a spiritual commitment to stay, to grow, and to love patiently—both oneself and others. In a world that often values constant movement and change, stability offers a quiet but powerful witness that true growth comes from putting down deep roots.

In the Benedictine tradition, the vow of obedience is rooted in the Latin word *obedire*, meaning “to listen intently.” Appropriately, listen is the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict. Obedience in a Benedictine vocation

is not blind submission but a spiritual practice of attentive listening. It is a commitment to listen for

the will of God as revealed through Scripture, the Rule of St. Benedict, the monastic community, and the Prioress.

By living the vows of stability and obedience, a Benedictine Sister also embraces the third vow she professes: *conversatio morum*. This phrase refers to a continual conversion of life and heart—a lifelong commitment to the monastic way of life. Within this vow are found the commitments to poverty and chastity. *Conversatio morum* is not a single moment of change, but an ongoing, daily effort to seek God, confront personal weaknesses, and grow in virtue.

A Benedictine vocation is distinctive because it holds contemplation and action in balance. It is marked by a spirit of hospitality and the wisdom of moderation. In this way of life, joy is found in the ordinary and the presence of God is discovered in everyday moments. As Saint Benedict wrote, “As we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (Prologue of Rule of Benedict, 49).

To experience this way of life more fully, we invite you to watch *The Rule of Love* by scanning this QR code with your cell phone’s camera. This short video gently reveals the daily rhythm of prayer, community, and work at St. Scholastica Monastery.

You might find yourself wondering: Could this be for me? If something in you is curious, drawn, or simply wondering—you don’t need to have everything figured out. You are simply invited to take the next step.



The joy of Final Profession



We would love to hear your questions, your story, or what has been on your heart. For more information about Benedictine vocations, please email [vocations@duluthosb.org](mailto:vocations@duluthosb.org) or visit [www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations](http://www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations).

Please know that you are held in our prayers.

# Oblates Renew Their Oblation on the Feast of St. Benedict



Every March 21 we remember the passing of our founder St. Benedict. At Eucharist after the homily, our Community's Oblates come to renew their oblation before the prioress. Given Duluth's unpredictable March weather, not all were able to attend. This year seven came to renew their promises to God.

Standing before the altar they say in unison:

*I renew my oblation as an oblate of St. Benedict of St. Scholastica Monastery and promise again to seek God and to serve God's people according to the values of the Rule of St. Benedict.*

Then they pray:

*God, most compassionate and loving, strengthen us in our commitment to follow you in the way of St. Benedict. In our daily prayer and work, may your grace inspire us to live with Christ, to bring Christ's love to the world community and Christ's peace to all hearts.*

What are Oblates? They are Christians of any age and of many faith traditions who seek a deeper relationship with God in a supportive community. They study the Rule of St. Benedict, with its emphasis on prayer, silence, obedience, building community, and humility, and carry the ancient practices of the Benedictine way of life into their home, workplace, and worship community.

Benedictine Oblates affiliate with a particular monastery, their monastic home base. Through relationships with the Sisters and with other Oblates, they mature in living the Rule faithfully and mindfully, continuing the Benedictine charism into the modern world. Oblates are welcome to make a retreat or have 'desert days' at the Monastery. Many volunteer their time here, serve at Sunday Eucharist, or give reflections at Vespers on Saturday evening during Advent or Lent. They are a treasured part of the Community and are welcome at communal Morning and Evening Prayer and at Eucharist.



From left, Oblates Thom Chartier, Pastor Sean Koos, Michele Naar-Obed, Rev. Dr. Cheryl Fleckenstein, Thomas Bersell, Lloyd Ketchum, and Lori Barnstorf

At the time of their Oblation, after a period of study and prayer, Oblates make these commitments:

- to put a priority on daily prayer, especially some portion of the Liturgy of the Hours,
- to apply the teachings of The Rule in their daily lives and relationships wherever possible,
- to practice *lectio divina*, a meditative reading of Scripture,
- to maintain connection with the Oblate community and the monastery, usually through monthly meetings.

*For more information about the Oblate Program at St. Scholastica Monastery, please contact Jane Dolter, Director at 218-391-4516 or [janedolter@msn.com](mailto:janedolter@msn.com).*

## Pilgrimage as Sacred Rest

Pilgrimages have been part of many world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the list goes on. Though the 12th century is often cited as the golden age for Christian pilgrimage, this kind of practice predates antiquity.

Pilgrimages are done for many different reasons and can take many different forms, each shaped by the intention of the traveler as much as the path itself. For some, pilgrimage means setting out toward a sacred destination, walking ancient routes worn smooth by generations of seekers, moving step by step toward a place permeated with spiritual meaning. For others, pilgrimage unfolds closer to home. It may take place during the unfolding of ordinary life, where one intentionally creates space for prayer, reflection, and attentiveness to the sacred in their surroundings.

Pilgrimage can be undertaken alone, in silence and solitude, or shared in community, where conversation, companionship, and mutual support become part of the journey. Whether outwardly expansive or inwardly focused, each form carries the same essential invitation: to seek, to listen, and to be changed. Both the physical journey across landscapes and the interior journey of the heart can reshape how we see the world and our place within it.

At the time of this writing, I find myself on the threshold of a pilgrimage that will be the most physically demanding undertaking of my life. In June, I will begin a 400-mile trek across Norway, walking on a medieval pilgrim's route (St. Olav's Way) from Oslo to Trondheim over the course of five weeks. Even now, this journey has already begun to shape my days. Every spare moment is given to preparation: walking mile after mile to build endurance, testing what I can carry, discerning what is essential and what must be left behind. There is a certain humility in this process, in recognizing the limits of my body



while also discovering its quiet resilience. Each step of preparation becomes, in its own way, a rehearsal not only for the terrain ahead, but also for the inner landscape I will encounter.

This pilgrimage is not simply an endurance challenge. I am approaching it as a time of sacred rest, a kind of

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## CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND ENRICHMENT UPDATE

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Sabbath where I will be able to look back on my life, consider what lies ahead, and, most of all, turn inward. At first glance, “rest” may seem at odds with such physical effort. Yet sacred rest is not the absence of activity, but a reorientation of the soul. It is a deliberate setting aside of daily demands and distractions so that I can listen more deeply, notice more fully, and receive life as gift.

In this sense, the long rhythm of walking becomes a form of prayer. The steady cadence of steps, the openness to changing weather and terrain, the simplicity of carrying only what is needed all create space for a different kind of awareness. With less to manage, the body speaks more clearly. The beauty of the natural world takes prominence, and the movements of the Spirit become easier to notice. There is an invitation to trust the path, to trust one’s own capacity, and to trust in something greater that accompanies the journey. Pilgrimage has a way of revealing what truly matters. It clarifies, refines, and sometimes gently unsettles, making space for new insights and profound gratitude.

As I prepare, I sense this time on the path will also be one of remembering the many gifts that have shaped my life, the relationships that have sustained me, and the presence of the Sacred that has quietly accompanied me through every season. To walk for five weeks is to step outside of ordinary time, to enter a space where reflection can unfold more freely. It is an opportunity to gather the threads of my lifetime and to hold them with reverence, even as I look ahead to what may come next.

In a deeper sense, this pilgrimage reflects a truth that is always present. Our whole life is a pilgrimage. We are always moving through growth, loss, renewal, and discovery. Some stretches feel clear. Others feel uncertain. Each step, whether steady or hesitant, becomes part of the path.

To see life as pilgrimage is to recognize that you and I are always being invited deeper into awareness, compassion, and connection with the Sacred and with one another. It is to understand that transformation does not happen all at once, but gradually, often quietly, through the accumulation of small, faithful steps. Whether we travel across countries or remain within

the familiar spaces of home, the call remains the same. Walk with intention. Stay open. Trust that the journey is shaping us in ways we may not yet see.

My 8 ½ years as director of our wonderful Center for Spirituality and Enrichment continues to be part of my own life’s journey, and I bring all of you with me as I set out on this physical pilgrimage. The road from Oslo to Trondheim will come to an end, but the deeper journey will continue. That may be the truest gift of pilgrimage. We do not only arrive somewhere new. . .we begin to see with clearer eyes and a more open heart the sacredness of the path we have been walking all along.

May the Spirit enliven your life’s pilgrimage this summer and for always!

*Dawn Holmberg Carrillo*

*Director of the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment*

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*Photographs by Gene Gibbons, used with permission*

## Sister Lois Eckes and Deacon Dan Goshey

by Theresa Butler, Development/Public Relations Administrative Assistant

The connection between the Benedictine Sisters of Duluth and the Diocese of Duluth Permanent Diaconate program is long standing. It began in the 1980s when the Diaconate program chose the McCabe Renewal Center for their formation weekends. It was providential that, at the same time the Diaconate program was growing (almost to the point of being too large for McCabe), the Sisters also began discerning about their use of McCabe. In June 2024, the Sisters closed and sold McCabe Renewal Center and in September 2024 the Diaconate formation retreat weekends moved to the Monastery’s Center for Spirituality and Enrichment. It has proven to be a natural and grace-filled transition.

Sister Lois Eckes had the joy of working with the deacon candidates and their wives when she was Director of McCabe. Now, as Director of Hospitality for the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment, she continues this relationship. She says, “It is like God provided this space. Around the time we decided to sell McCabe, our Monastery renovation was nearing completion. The residents on Benet Hall, on the second floor of Stanbrook, moved into their new space in the Monastery, and we remodeled second floor and made it available to our guests. We now have 32 guest rooms.” Sister Lois continues, “When guests come to our Monastery, they are welcomed as Christ and invited into the sacred story of this holy place, which resides even in its very floors and walls and palpable energy. A frequent comment from the deacons and our other guests is that they feel like they have come home when they spend time with us.”

Deacon Dan Goshey, Director of the Permanent Diaconate, shares, “The big draw here is they have the classroom space, they have the lodging – wonderful and comfortable accommodations – meals right on site. We leave only once during the weekend, to go to the Cathedral where some of our men serve at Mass and are involved in the liturgy. Otherwise, we come and stay. When we were at McCabe, we would leave



to go to the Pastoral Center to have class and then return. When we stay in one place it feels like home.”

Diaconate Formation includes four dimensions: Spiritual, Human, Academic, and Pastoral. The Formation weekends are held monthly from September through May, with a week-long Study Week each June. There are currently two different groups in formation. The aspirants, men and wives in their first two years of the program, gather for the day on Saturdays. The candidates and wives, who are in a four-year program, arrive Friday evenings and remain through Sunday noon. The weekends are a mix of classes, meals, prayer, and recreation. There are currently nine couples in aspirancy and fifteen couples in candidacy.

It is a family affair for many: one couple brings their 6-month-old when they come. Others arrange childcare to attend the weekend formation program. Many describe the weekend as a marriage retreat, where intentional time together nurtures their relationship and enhances their marriage. On Valentine’s Day this year, on a Friday at the beginning of the formation weekend, Deacon Dan told the candidates and their wives to go out for dinner, an opportunity for which they were grateful.

The weekends use a variety of rooms and spaces. Deacon Dan shares, “These are places where people can gather and be together. The spaces help build

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## MONASTERY PROFILE

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community, friendships, and bonds. People who didn't know each other at the beginning become best of friends and are family by the time they leave. Having places where they can do that is absolutely key." The couples also enjoy an opportunity to be on the campus of The College of St. Scholastica and go there for gelato. Deacon Dan says he usually grants them their request, as he loves them to have that time to bond and connect with the greater community.

Like other groups who use the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment, the Diaconate program pays for lodging, meals, and facility rental fee. They appreciate the great deal of flexibility and the openness on the part of the Sisters and the Center to accommodate them. Deacon Dan says, "I don't think I have asked for anything that I have not been able to have happen." Sister Lois adds, "They all have a special place in our hearts."

We honor the deacons who joined the Order of Permanent Diaconate this May, and we pray that this beautiful partnership between the Diocese and Sisters continues to flourish for many years to come.

Zachary David Bennett

David Clayton Gunnarson

Chadwick Allyn Knudson

Joel Clark Spaeth

Duane Lee Stangler

Matthew Joseph West



## REMEMBERING OUR DECEASED FAMILY AND FRIENDS

### Please Pray for Our Deceased Family and Friends

Carolyn Ann Muske.....	1/14/2026	Gerald Fitzpatrick.....	2/1/2026
Joyce Krusiak .....	1/19/2026	Mary Johanna Giesen.....	2/2/2026
Daniel P. Eckes .....	1/23/2026	<i>Sister of Sr. Helen Giesen and former Sister</i>	
<i>Brother of Sr. Lois Eckes</i>		Joseph Patrick Murphy .....	2/6/2026
Steven Stelman .....	1/23/2026	Armand W. "Bud" Fortier .....	2/28/2026
<i>Brother of Sr. Joan Marie Stelman</i>		<i>Brother of Sr. Sue Fortier</i>	
Tim MacPherson .....	1/27/2026	Frances Mary Kessel.....	3/8/2026
Richard LeSavage.....	1/28/2026	<i>Sister of +Sr. Johnetta Maher</i>	
David Hood .....	1/28/2026	Elizabeth Ann (Stich) Lane .....	4/17/2026
Marianne L. H. Rheinberger .....	1/31/2026	<i>Former Sister</i>	

# The Creation of *The Rule of St. Benedict* Illuminated Manuscript

by Heidi Johnson, with support from Sister Lisa Maurer, Meridith Schifsky, and Sister Therese Carson

The Rule of St. Benedict is a spiritual guide for living a balanced and faithful life in community. Written more than 1,500 years ago, it offers practical wisdom for seeking God in the ordinary rhythms of each day - through prayer, work, humility, and mutual care. Its purpose is not perfection, but transformation: shaping hearts to listen deeply, live with intention, and grow in love of God and neighbor.

In 1980, a new English translation of The Rule was published by the Liturgical Press at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> Fr. Timothy Fry, OSB, was the translator and editor-in-chief. In it he said, Saint Benedict (c. 480-547) "...wrote his Rule primarily for monks, but its sound principles for working together and living together have proved relevant to people of all classes of society through fifteen hundred years" (Fry, 1982, p. 9).

In the late 1980s, Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB was inspired to create an illuminated manuscript of the Rule. She was born Molly McGough in 1925 in Cloquet and attended Duluth Cathedral High School and The College of St. Scholastica. She did graduate work at the University of Minnesota, receiving a Master of Education and a Master of Fine Arts from Notre Dame University. She entered St. Scholastica Monastery and became a Sister in 1943. She taught elementary and high school and was an art professor and chair of the department at The College of St. Scholastica from 1959-1967. A year later, she started the Barn Program in a carriage house at the Community's McCabe Center as a program for children. It included creative activities for writing, science, dance, music, and art.

Sister Mary Charles created art using many different mediums, including wood cuts, ceramics, sculpture, watercolors, and wood carving. In 1990 at the age of 65, she began her studies in iconography. From then until a year before she died in 2007, she wrote more than eighty icons for churches and patrons all over the country.

According to Meridith Schifsky, who was the calligrapher for the illuminated Rule, Sister Mary Charles approached

her in 1988 to do the calligraphy for the project after first asking Sister Margaret Clarke, OSB, who declined. An illuminated manuscript is a partnership between the calligrapher who writes the script and the artist who creates the illuminations. Sister Mary Charles knew that Meridith had taken a calligraphy class in high school from Sister Thomas Carey, OSB, so Sister Mary Charles encouraged Meridith and provided her with a book to use as a refresher as well as the supplies, including a pen, ink, and 140# Arches high quality watercolor paper.

For the illustrations, Sister Mary Charles used opaque gouache paint that Meridith gave her, so it was a true sharing, although Sister Mary Charles chose which passages would be included from the Rule. Six chapters were skipped, and several others were condensed.

Meridith and Sister Mary Charles would get together to talk about each page, deciding what calligraphy would go where and what spaces would be left open for the artwork, including the images and decorations. Meridith would first calligraph each page using the Italic font with some Roman letters, and then give it to Sister Mary Charles to add the illuminations. This included applying gold leaf to some. It took a full two years for Meridith



Sister Mary Charles McGough



Sister Mary Charles McGough, OSB  
with the icon she wrote of  
St. Benedict and St. Scholastica,  
2004

<sup>1</sup> Fry, T. (Ed.), (1982), *RB1980: The Rule of St. Benedictine in English*. Liturgy Press

## MOMENTS IN MONASTIC HISTORY

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and Sister Mary Charles to finish the Rule, as Meridith was working as a nurse at the hospital three days a week while raising her family.

Since its completion in 1990, the illuminated Rule has held a special place at St. Scholastica Monastery. Visitors to Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel can see it on display in the right front corner by the stained-glass windows of Benedictine Saints and the icon of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict, also written by Sister Mary Charles. The book is part of Community funerals where the Rule, a red rose, and a lighted oil lamp are placed on the Sister's casket. Together they symbolize the Sisters' shared vowed monastic profession, which binds them together as Benedictine Monastics.

Recently, first-year College students in Sister Lisa Maurer's *Dignitas* class have been studying the Rule of St. Benedict and learning about illuminated manuscripts. They visited the Chapel and listened to librarian and archivist Heidi Johnson talk more about their history and especially of this illuminated Rule.



*Sr. Mary Charles McGough and Meridith Schifsky  
with two pages of the Rule, September 1990*



*Sister Lisa Maurer's Dignitas Students with Heidi Johnson, Feb. 26, 2026*

**Stay tuned for our Annual Report, where aspects of illuminated manuscripts will be explained along with examples from Sister Mary Charles and Meridith's Rule.**

*Heidi Johnson is an Assistant Professor and the Instruction Librarian and Archivist for The College of St. Scholastica.*

## Supporting Chum Duluth's Ministries

Each year, the Chum Extravaganza brings people together to share a meal, make connections, and build a stronger community, while raising support for their mission of providing basic necessities, fostering stable lives, and working toward a just and compassionate community. This year's fundraiser was held on February 12. Sisters and our employees represented the Monastery, one of 42 member congregations that support Chum. Together attendees raised \$55,000 to support Chum's vital work for the people in the Duluth region.



Representing the Duluth Benedictines are (left to right) Sisters Kathleen Hofer, Jayne Erickson, Dorene King, and Theresa Spinler, Justin and Amber Terch, and Theresa and Brandon Butler.

If you are called to support Chum's mission through volunteering your time, donating food or other needed supplies, or helping fund their work, go to their website at <https://www.chumduluth.org/>.

## Feeding families at Steve O'Neil Apartments

The Sisters are blessed with healthy and varied meals, thanks to talented cooks in our kitchen. What is left over each day is packaged and frozen. Twice a week volunteers pick up the containers from here at the Monastery and from the Westwood kitchen at Benedictine Living Community – Duluth. They deliver their bounty to the Steve O'Neil Apartments, a 50-unit supportive housing community for women with children who are working toward financial independence. Our abundance helps provide them with nutritious food. We are grateful for the faithful volunteers who make it possible.



Natalie Constance comes on Thursday morning.



Sue and Rick Sommer come every Tuesday morning.

### Blessing our student athletes

This spring, student athletes from The College of St. Scholastica were welcomed to Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel for prayer services at the start of their season.

These services, led by Sister Lisa Maurer, reflect on the values of preparedness, positivity, persistence, and boldness. Through Scripture and stories, Sister Lisa encourages the student athletes and their coaches to be thankful for the ways God uses sports and competition to help them grow into who they are called to be.

We are grateful for this tradition of prayer, reflection, and community as each new season begins.



CSS Women's Softball Team



CSS Men's Spring Athletics Teams

### Sisters and College students join in a Holy Hour of Prayer

On a Friday morning in February, Sisters and students from The College of St. Scholastica came together for a Holy Hour of prayer. We listened to Scripture, sang hymns, and in silence opened our hearts to God's small, still voice speaking to us.

Each person was offered a paper clip to wear in solidarity with people of color and immigrants who have been and continue to be targeted and unjustly imprisoned in our own country. This tradition began in Norway during World War II, when Norwegians wore paper clips in solidarity with Jews, Romani, homosexuals, and others who were seen as 'undesirable' by the Nazis and exterminated in the Holocaust. We continue this silent protest today.

Friday evening we watched *Paper Clips*, a 2004 documentary about a school in Whitwell, Tennessee, where children collected paper clips to represent each innocent murdered by the Nazis. What began as a class project grew to involve the whole community and contributors from all over the world. They bought a cattle car that had been used to transport Jews to extermination camps and turned it into a small museum.

Visit the Monastery and you may see Sisters still wearing a small paper clip to remind us of the many thousands of innocent immigrants and American citizens of color who are unlawfully detained in our own country.



## Sharing Our Rich Catholic and Benedictine Legacy

Students gathered for their *Dignitas* class at The College of St. Scholastica had the opportunity to hear directly from someone who lives the Benedictine tradition each day. Sister Kathleen Del Monte, OSB, PhD, Associate Vice President for Mission Integration at the College, joined the class to share the rich Catholic and Benedictine legacy, reflections on Benedictine values, and the importance of recognizing and honoring the inherent dignity of every person. Every year, Sister Kathleen visits each of the multiple sections of *Dignitas*, spending a full class period with the students.

The *Dignitas* program provides the foundation for students' entire college experience. The name *Dignitas* comes from the Latin word for dignity and reflects the program's focus on the intrinsic and absolute value of every human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Through conversation, reflection, and shared learning, students are invited to consider what it means to live and learn in a community rooted in the Benedictine values of hospitality, respect, community, stewardship, and love of learning.

Sister Kathleen shared the story of the College's founders, including Mother Scholastica Kerst, Mother Benedicta Riepp, St. Benedict, and St. Scholastica. Students also learned about the Sisters' ministries in education and healthcare, the significance of The Rule of St. Benedict, the meaning of sponsorship, and the continuing ministries and living presence of the Sisters today.

An important feature of their time together was a facilitated discussion about what Benedictine values mean to students and how they can demonstrate and live out these values in their own environments through compassion, hospitality, attentiveness, and respect for others.

During her visit, Sister Kathleen reflected on how the commitment to dignity is deeply woven into the Benedictine legacy. For more than 1,500 years, Benedictines have sought to recognize Christ in every person, welcoming others with respect, compassion, and care.

Students listened as Sister Kathleen explained that Benedictine spirituality calls us to slow down, listen carefully, and approach others with openness and humility. As St. Benedict writes in the Prologue to his Rule, we are called to "listen with the ear of the heart."

Moments like these are among the many ways the Sisters continue their ministry of education and presence at The College of St. Scholastica. By sharing their faith, wisdom, and



Sr. Kathleen Del Monte with *Dignitas* class.



Sr. Lisa Maurer (at left) and her winter *Dignitas* class, with guest speaker Sr. Lois Eckes (center)

lived experience with students, they help ensure that the Benedictine spirit remains a vibrant and living part of campus life.

For first year students, the *Dignitas* experience offers more than an introduction to College history and mission. It is an invitation to embody Benedictine values through their thoughts, words, and actions and to carry forward this rich legacy in the communities they will one day serve.

Sister Lisa Maurer has also had the privilege of teaching within the *Dignitas* program, bringing both her experience and Benedictine perspective into the classroom. Through discussion, reflection, and shared learning, she accompanies students as they explore meaningful questions about life, values, vocation, and the responsibility we share in caring for one another.

Learning in *Dignitas* extends beyond academics. Students are invited to listen deeply — to one another, to their own experiences, and to the call to live with intention. In this way, the course becomes more than a graduation requirement; it becomes an opportunity for transformation and personal growth.

Sister Lisa's presence reflects the heart of Benedictine education: forming not only the mind, but the whole person. Through her teaching, students encounter a spirit of hospitality, respect, and care — values that remain with them long after the course concludes.

### Sister Dorene King and friends from the College attend a performance of *Middletown*

At The College of St. Scholastica's theater, this semester's play was *Middletown*. Written by playwright Will Erno with the main character John Proctor (the villain,) it explores the complex web of relationships within a small town which give meaning to the residents' lives.

Sister Dorene King attended two performances with some of her college student friends and enjoyed both experiences.



Ayla, Gaby, Sr. Dorene, and Anna



Janefrances, Sr. Dorene, and Judith

### Lenten Prayers for College Alumni

They may have graduated long ago, but we still remember and pray for our students who matriculated at The College of St. Scholastica. For over thirty years, alumni have received a postage-paid card on which they write their physical, emotional, and spiritual prayer needs. For the second year, they can also send in their prayers electronically, using an on-line Google form.

These come to the Monastery Development Office where they are opened, read, prayed over, and then placed in baskets in the small chapel on Benet Hall, our care center for aged Sisters. No concern is too small

to be taken to God in prayer, and nothing is impossible for God to handle.

We hold them all in our hearts, even when details fade and names are lost. God, who never forgets, knows for whom we pray.



### *The Rule of Love: a Reflection Inspired by the Wisdom of St. Benedict*

This winter, after a long collaboration between the Sisters, Tom Livingston, Producer and Miles Hanon, Writer/Director, our new documentary was released. A professional storyteller through the medium of film, Mr. Livingston drew out from both religious and lay followers of St. Benedict the stories of how they live his 1500-year-old Rule. Titled *The Rule of Love*, it shows how the Rule of St. Benedict is manifested in the quiet faithfulness of daily life — through listening, humility, patience, and care for one another. It invites us to reflect on how love guides our words, our actions, and the way we live in community.

May this video reflection encourage you to pause, listen with the ear of your heart, and notice the gentle ways God's love is at work in your life. To view the video, click on the link on our website's home page at <https://duluthbenedictines.org> or go to <https://vimeo.com/1106335057/d2204363b6?share=copy>.



Frontispiece of *The Holy Rule Illustrated* by Sr. Mary Charles McGough

## Caring for God's Creation

“Offer you life and death. Choose life!” This exhortation from the Book of Deuteronomy speaks today with fresh urgency. We have not taken care of God's creation, have been oblivious to the damage we have caused, and are growing closer to climatic collapse.

One of our long-term goals is to deepen our care for God's creation. To this end, a work group is studying Pope Francis's writings on the care for our common home, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*. In January the Community attended via Zoom a group discussion of *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis' impassioned, prophetic call for the world to move from petroleum-based energy production towards carbon-free sources.

The narrative is well-known and sobering. When we burn coal and petroleum, we release massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, trapping the sun's heat. As ocean waters warm and expand, they flood low-lying coastlands and islands. Sea life dies in warmer waters. Solar heating pumps energy into storms that devastate cities, while long term drought withers crops and empties underground aquifers. As lands grow hotter and drier, people are forced from their homelands into cooler areas; this mass migration disrupts social structures and governments.

All of this is stressing our overburdened healthcare systems. Tropical diseases such as malaria and yellow fever are spreading into temperate zones. Particulates accumulating from burning petroleum, coal, and from forest fires have increased rates of cancer and respiratory disease. The additional cost is staggering, an estimated \$820 billion per year, world-wide. None of this is paid for by the industries creating the problem.

The window for turning this around is closing, while we continue to favor profit over the health of the earth and its inhabitants. What can one person or one community do? Here is what we are doing:

- We are reading Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*, and educating ourselves on the problem using sources other than the industries that are creating it.
- We reuse, recycle, and reduce consumption of energy, water, and plastic at the Monastery, and keep up with

local opportunities for recycling.

- We don't mow lawns until mid-spring (May in Duluth) to protect the pollinators in hibernation. Then we mow no shorter than three inches. We have also planted diverse, eco-friendly, no-mow prairies.

- We installed solar panels on a rooftop to offset purchased electricity, a system that one day will recharge electric cars.

- We are looking at how we can divest from fossil fuel industries and instead embrace 'green' funds in carbon-free technology.
- We encourage the use of cloth shopping bags, avoiding plastic film bags. Plastic trash creates microplastics that are ingested by aquatic animal; they move up the food chain and into us.
- We continue to study ethical and Catholic Social Justice policies, and advocate for laws that protect the environment.

We must let go of our selfishness and greed for, as Pope Francis said in his exhortation, “Everything is connected, and no one is saved alone.” We rise together, or we sink into chaos. We choose life!



Pope Francis

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>, via Wikimedia Commons



Educating ourselves

### Comfort in a Troubled World: Sister Jayne Erickson Featured on Real Presence Radio

**O**n March 4, 2026, Sister Jayne Erickson, Sub Prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery, was featured in an interview on Real Presence Radio, where she gave listeners a glimpse into the heart of Benedictine life.

During the conversation, Sister Jayne reflected on the importance of finding hope in everyday moments. “The Benedictine way of life teaches us that hope can be found in everyday moments, sharing a meal, offering a kind word, welcoming a stranger, or taking time to pray.”

Sister Jayne also shared her gift of music. She has written songs that express the depth of Benedictine spirituality, and her song “Hiding Place” was featured during the interview. She creates from a place of prayer, acknowledging the realities of suffering while gently pointing toward hope. Her work reminds us that even in times of turmoil, God remains our hiding place through the quiet, faithful living of each day.

Through melody and the written word, Sister Jayne offers companions for the journey, expressions of faith that speak to the heart and encourage resilience, trust, and gratitude.

To listen to Sister Jayne’s songs and read her reflections, visit: <https://duluthbenedictines.org/connect/blog/author/jerickson/>



*Sr. Jayne Erickson*

### Sheltering Presence Sheltering Love

**O**n Thursday, April 9, Sister Lois Eckes was interviewed by the local WDIO-TV, along with Seth Currier, Executive Director of the Damiano Center in Duluth’s Central Hillside neighborhood. The Center is raising funds for a sheltering roof over their small outdoor pavilion in the southwest corner of their parking lot, and will rename it the Sister Lois Pavilion, in honor of her nineteen years of service on the Damiano board.

In the interview, Sister Lois said, “I am deeply touched and honored by their decision, and even more, deeply grateful that Seth and the Damiano Board planned to add the roof, making it a more welcoming place and offering protection in inclement weather.”

Sister Lois had suggested the name ‘Benedictine Sisters Pavilion’ but was told they wished to honor her. When asked how she felt, she said, “Seth described this addition as a fitting symbol of my years of service on the board. He said my presence was seen as a kind of sheltering presence, attentive to all that would best respond to and care for the needs of the guests served by Damiano’s dedicated staff and volunteers. I was continually inspired by my fellow board members to offer that soulful service.”

She continued, “I love the image of being a sheltering presence, for that is what Damiano is: a gem within the heart of our city, along with Chum Duluth, the Union Gospel Mission, the Salvation Army, and others. That is who God is in each of our lives, our world, and all creation. That is who we are called to be for one another: a sheltering presence of love, mercy, and hope, and deep peace ever flowing.”

The pavilion has three picnic tables and is used year-round as conditions allow. The pavilion will be a welcoming place and can be used for more months. With our long winters, every extra week of sunshine is a blessing.

To watch the interview, go to <https://www.wdio.com> and search for ‘new pavilion at damiano.’



*Residents at Damiano Center  
enjoy the April sunshine.*

## Sisters attend Technology and the Sacred: Interfaith Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence

In an online presentation from The College of St. Scholastica's Braegelman Catholic Studies Program, we heard a lively and often impassioned discussion about Artificial Intelligence (AI) as viewed through the lens of diverse faith traditions: Indigenous, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian. Program director Dr. Kevin Vaughn moderated the discussion, with panelists Adrian (Naabekwa) Liberty, a leader in Ojibwe cultural revitalization; Zahra Takhshid, PhD, a Muslim associate professor of Law; David Zvi Kalman, from the Shalom Hartman Institute; and Iliia Delio, a Franciscan theologian in science and religion.

All panelists had concerns about the quality of the knowledge base that allow AI algorithms to respond to queries. They voiced doubt whether AI can provide sound judgements on religious issues. Dr. Zahra Takhshid voiced his concerns about how human agents will be held accountable for the use of AI-generated information or conclusions. Would using AI to create a sermon stifle the minister's own voice and let their personal faith wither? For faiths that are based on Scripture, AI cannot replace human-to-human interactions and should not be trusted as a guide in the study of religious texts – for what would happen to the warm and trusting relationships between teachers and students within churches, synagogues, and mosques? We form our image of God through human connections, not through a keyboard and database. AI technology could subtly alter our self-image and unintentionally make ourselves gods that create and control our own destiny.

Adrian Liberty shared the Anishinaabe perspective. For Ojibwe people, it is oral wisdom that keeps knowledge and wisdom alive. Community relationships between generations are threatened when younger people use ChatGPT instead of learning from their elders, the keepers of wisdom. Healthy connections between individuals and within communities are "spirit medicine," where wisdom passes through the sharing of presence. A real concern is that AI's data base includes much misinformation about the world's indigenous peoples, written by people who conquered them and destroyed their cultures. Even accurate information



*From top left: Kevin Vaughn, Adrian Naabek Liberty, and Zahra Takhshid; from bottom left: David Zvi Kalman and Iliia Delio*



may be corrupted by software algorithms. And finally, data centers have an enormous energy footprint and require vast volumes of water for cooling.

There were acknowledged benefits. AI's expanding information base is accessible in organized fashion to the human mind. While not replacing human contact, it can be a useful research tool. An AI presence on ChatGPT can be a useful intermediary for those who struggle to open themselves and be vulnerable with others. It may help them develop the skills and confidence to talk with others and deepen their own understanding of what it means to be human.

Whatever we may feel about it, AI is here to stay, and we must develop global ethics to use it in ways that benefit humanity. Our faith calls us to accept responsibility in determining how artificial intelligence will transform us. Iliia Delio believes that, after an initial and perhaps painful learning process, we will use it as a tool to combine science and religion, a hybridized human/AI community that will help us address emerging challenges.

But for now, the technology is still in its infancy, and its developers and users need our spiritual and ethical guidance to help it grow into a useful tool and not become our master.

## Movie Night at the Monastery

Friday night is dedicated to Movies and Popcorn. Sister Elizabeth Farias searches for newly released movies and old standards and streams them on television screens in Stanbrook or our chapter room. She says she doesn't particularly enjoy watching movies, but always makes wise selections.

Over the years we have watched many excellent films, including more recently biographies of saints (*Cabrini*), documentaries (*Paper Clips*, about a student-led memorial of the Holocaust), Christmas themes (*The Nativity Story* and *The Polar Express*), classics (*Little Women* and *The Grapes of Wrath*), and historical (*Something God Has Made*, *Apollo 13*, and *Hidden Figures*). For our anglophiles, we have watched all the recent Jane Austin films, *The Englishman Who Went up a Mountain* (set in Wales), *Local Hero* (set in Scotland), and *Downton Abbey: the Grand Finale*. We are occasionally blessed to have students from the College join us.



Sisters and guests watch *Downton Abbey: the Grand Finale*.

## The Presentation of the Lord

At Eucharist on February 2, we listened to St. Luke's narrative of Joseph and Mary bringing their son to the Temple in Jerusalem. Their purpose is two-fold: the ritual purification of the mother following the mystery of birth, and the redemption and dedication of a first-born son to God. In Hebrew law, every first-born belongs to God, and so must be 'redeemed' with a payment of five shekels to the temple treasury before being returned to the parents. But, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, there is no mention of this monetary transaction between his parents and God. Rather, he wrote, "Instead of being 'redeemed' and restored to his parents, this child was personally handed over to God in the Temple, given over completely to God ... and from now on belongs to him completely." Mary and Joseph understand and give their assent to their son's mission.

Simeon and Anna, on their part, prophesy to the people of Israel, who have been awaiting their promised Messiah. Simeon calls this baby "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:30), and Anna joyfully describes Jesus as the redeemer of Jerusalem. The name Jesus or Yehoshua means 'Yahweh is salvation'. Thus, the Feast of the Presentation is associated with light, a scarce resource in our long, dark winters. At the beginning of Mass, the priest blesses representative candles with Holy Water, blessing the Light that carries us safely through dark times and into the light of Christ.



Candles to be blessed, with an icon of St. Simeon and Jesus, by Sr. Therese Carson

## Super Bowl Sunday

The time of Evening Prayer is almost invariably at 5:00, but occasionally is moved according to liturgical needs. And, of course, on Super Bowl Sunday, when it moves to 4:40 pm so football fans can have dinner in front of the television. This past February, despite the absence of the Vikings or Packers, several enthusiastic football fans took advantage of the large screen in our Chapter room to watch the Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots vie for the title of Superbowl Champions. (Seattle won.)



Sisters Lisa Maurer, Beverly Raway, Theresa Spinler, Jayne Erickson, and Kathleen Hofer

## Feast of St. Scholastica

**O**n February 10, in collaboration with The College of St. Scholastica, we celebrated the feast of our founding saint at Eucharist. Bishop Daniel Felton of our Diocese celebrated and gave an inspiring homily. We were blessed with the College's *Bella Voce* choir, leading us in Benedictine hymns and soloing in meditative songs at the Preparation of the Gifts and Communion. One included these haunting lines:

*Perhaps it does not begin. Perhaps it is always. Perhaps it takes a lifetime to open our eyes, to learn to see what has forever shimmered in front of us, the luminous line of the map in the dark, the vigil flame in the house of the heart, the love so searing we cannot keep from singing, from crying out in testimony and praise...*

~ from *Where the Light Begins* by Susan LaBarr



Bishop Daniel Felton, with *Bella Voce* members in background



Seated at the head table for the festive dinner were (from left) Sister Kathleen Del Monte, Associate Vice President for Mission Integration at the College; Rev. Corbin Eddy, our resident chaplain; Sister Beverly Raway, former prioress; Rev. Joseph Sobolik, Campus Ministry; Dr. Barbara McDonald, College President; Prioress Sister Jeanne Ann Weber; Bishop Daniel Felton; and Rev. Gabriel Baltes, our friend from St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, Illinois.

## Luminaries in the Night

**I**n early February, as the snow and cold deepened, associate Marce Wood brought light into the darkness with ice luminaries. She filled balloons with water and set them along a Garden Court walk and in the garden outside Benet Hall. In the bitter cold the interior froze. She popped the balloons and carefully peeled the rubber away, leaving globes of ice that were open at the top to receive an electric candle. (Gusty winds kept extinguishing the votive candles.)

Marce has been a live-in volunteer associate with us since last autumn, and has shared her creativity and her warm, loving spirit with us. Sadly, she returned home the end of April, but we are grateful for the months she gave to us and to God here at the Monastery. She has been our own light in the darkness.



## A Quick Question About Pathways

Dear Friend of St. Scholastica Monastery, For many years, *Pathways* has been one way the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery remain connected with the many friends, benefactors, volunteers, and neighbors who share in the life of our community. I am grateful for your continued connection with us.

As part of our ongoing commitment to good stewardship, we are reviewing our mailing list for the printed version of *Pathways*. Printing and mailing costs continue to rise, and we want to be thoughtful about how we use the resources entrusted to our care.

We would appreciate hearing from you regarding your preference.

Please let us know if you would like to:

- Continue receiving the printed copy of *Pathways*
- Receive the digital version only
- Be removed from the *Pathways* mailing list

If you prefer the printed magazine, we are happy to continue sending it to you.

You may share your preference by emailing [monastery@duluthosb.org](mailto:monastery@duluthosb.org) or calling 218-723-6536.

Thank you for your friendship and support of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery. Please know that you remain in our prayers.

With gratitude and peace,

*Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, O.S.B.*

Sister Jeanne Ann Weber, OSB



## Benedictine Conversations with Fr. John Klassen

In February, the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment invited Father John Klassen of Saint John’s Abbey to share his ideas on how we as Christians should live in an increasingly conflicted and polarized world. He recalled a recent conversation with someone whose stock market investments were growing but who failed to see that farmers and small business owners were struggling and may go under. After a heated exchange they both apologized, but the question remained: How can we share opposing views through peaceful encounters?



Our news sources are increasingly polarized and don’t distinguish between facts and ‘spin’. Fine nuances are ignored in favor of scoring points. We ask the cynical question Pontius Pilate asked of Christ, “What is truth?” Many aren’t searching for truth but for statements that confirm their own views. Fr. John suggested that those who believe false views – such as a flat earth – can believe what they want but should not be navigators guiding us into the future.

In the United States, the incomes of lower and upper levels of wealth are diverging. The bottom two-fifths face serious poverty, while the upper three-fifths amass unheard-of wealth. Despite this, the poorest support causes that favor the wealthy. Fr. John believes the cause was the enactment of legislation regarding same-sex marriages and the rights of the disenfranchised in America. In reaction, many of the working class embraced the more conservative party. Now both sides of the discussion claim the moral high ground for their political views, defending their beliefs with increasing emotional energy and mistrust.

Fr. John recommends we stay engaged in the national conversation, calling on what Abraham Lincoln termed ‘the better angels of our nature’ to stay together by remembering our shared history and healing the wounds.

In the Benedictine tradition, we use deep listening skills to make sharing emotions safe, to help move us to mutual understanding, trust, and respect; to become better citizens of our republic.

Moderator Dawn Carrillo mentioned the ideas of writer Margaret Wheatley, who suggests that our civilization

may be in late-stage collapse. We need to ask ourselves, Who do we choose to be? How can we support one another? How do we tap the human capacity

*“We must wean ourselves off the 24-hour news cycle, where one commentator after another speaks out of their position but without being grounded in any real knowledge or training or education. This does not help us.” ~ Fr. John Klassen*

for kindness and goodness, to engage in respectful dialogue? Seek those who are good, courageous, and steadfast; the voices speaking in today’s wilderness.

Dawn shared a poem by Steve Garnass-Holmes, where God speaks to us.

My child, I know you are wondering how this will turn out. I don’t know. Believe it or not, I don’t control the future. You have choices, other people have choices, that I will not overrule. . . . But I will be with you through it all, and I will be holding every little part of this with love and grace, which changes things. Like gravity, my love doesn’t interfere, but affects everything. Despite all your uncertainty this is certain: I will hold you, and be with you, and in you, and in all you encounter. My grace will endure. And in the end, you will be whole, and blessed, and at home in me. Be at peace and come with me into the future.

To view the full discussion, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0iBdS3XV8o> or [www.retreatduluth.org/Programs/Benedictine Conversations Archive](http://www.retreatduluth.org/Programs/BenedictineConversationsArchive) and select February 2026.

## Open House at the Arts and Crafts Room

**O**n February 12, we enjoyed an Open House for the new Sisters' Arts & Crafts Room, lovingly organized and prepared by Sister Donna Schroeder and Marce Wood, Associate. Sister Donna passed out a brief note on the room's *raison d'être*, in which she said, "The tools are an accumulation over many years. Many were given to me by my dad and some of those date back to the family business (HiWay Service), a garage, machine shop and gas station next to U.S. 2 in northeastern North Dakota."

Guests, who included Sisters, employees, and anyone passing by, toured the space, shared refreshments, and enjoyed stories and photos from Sister Donna's family history connected to some of the workshop tools — a beautiful celebration of creativity, history, and community.



Sister Donna and her work bench, as she shows some of the hundred of woodworking tools, glues, finishes, and paints.



Sister Donna Schroeder with photos of the family business

## Valentine's Day on Benet Hall

**S**isters living on Benet Hall enjoyed a delightful "Happy Hearts Happy Hour" to celebrate Valentine's Day. There was laughter, sweet treats, and joyful time together — a beautiful reminder that community is one of life's greatest blessings.



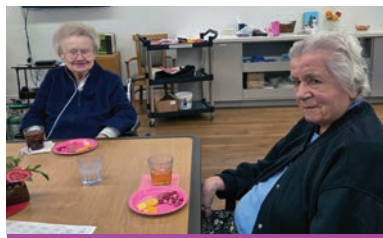
Sister Lisa proudly shows off the jumbo Valentine's crossword puzzle the Sisters completed as part of the fun.



Jan Barrett talks with Sister Josine Krausnick.



Jan Barrett makes sure Sister Lois Ann and Sister Mary Susan have plenty of snacks and beverages.



Sister Clare Marie and Sister Katie enjoy the Happy Hour and celebrating together!

## Celebrating Mardi Gras

We love to celebrate the great and small feasts of the Church, and the more secular feasts that circle in the background of the liturgical year. *Mardi Gras* is one of the festivals that stand at the intersection of secular and holy. The phrase means Fat Tuesday and recalls the time in Church history when the Lenten Fast meant abstaining from meat, eggs, and dairy. Mardi Gras emptied the pantry shelves of banned foods. Of course, in medieval times, the poor abstained from them year-round.

Fasting during Lent, as our Mardi Gras table prayer reminds us, “prepares us for the fasting and self-denial of Lent, so that we will hunger more intently for you. Today the Lenten fast focuses less on what we give up and more on how Isaiah described a religious fast that pleases God:

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”*  
(Isaiah 58:6-7)

Nevertheless, Mardi Gras at the Monastery remains an evening of music and pizza, a pint of beer, and chocolate, courtesy of the leadership staff at Benedictine. This year we were entertained by John Wombacher, a talented young man who led us in a sing-along of tunes from the 1950s through ‘70s.



Sisters Jeanne Ann Weber and Joan Marie Stelman brought a bouquet and crown for Janis Kovala Hooey, who will be retiring from Benedictine.



John Wombacher and Sr. Jeanne Ann Weber sing Johnny Cash’s ‘Ring of Fire’.



Celebrating Mardi Gras are (from left) Sr. Dorene King, Marce Wood (Associate volunteer), Sr. Jeanne Ann Weber, Sr. Theresa Spinler, and Sr. Donna Schroeder.

# Lent, Holy Week, Easter: the Heart of Our Faith

## ASH WEDNESDAY

After celebrating Mardi Gras, we spent the day in silence except for Eucharist and communal prayer. This year the world beyond our walls disappeared in heavy blowing snow that brought down trees, downed power lines, and stranded travelers. We kept our power and were glad not to venture outside. Students from the College joined us for Eucharist and the distribution of ashes.

We sang *Hosea* by Gregory Norbet, a former Benedictine monk. In the Book of the Prophet Hosea, God calls to the lost souls who have wandered far away, and yearns to bring us home:

*"Come back to me with all your heart, don't let fear keep us apart. ... Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life. ... You shall sleep secure with peace; faithfulness will be your joy."*

During the forty days of Lent, we remember again that God loves us and will always be at our side, until the day we return in joy to our Eternal Home and are wrapped in God's loving arms.

## HOLY WEEK

Lent ends with the Wednesday in Holy Week, and from here into Easter we avoid unnecessary talk, keeping our minds focused on Jesus.

On **Holy Thursday morning**, we receive the oils that were newly blessed in the Chrism Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral in Duluth. These are the Oil of the Catechumens, the Consecrated Chrism, and the Oil of the Sick. The Holy Chrism is a sign of consecration and is part of the ceremonial at each Sister's Perpetual Monastic Profession. Together we pray,

*"We believe that the Holy Chrism makes us temples of God's glory and radiant with the goodness of life that has its source in God. We welcome everyone born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and grant them royal, priestly, and prophetic honor as people of God."*

Then the cantor sings these invocations, and we respond, *"Anoint us to your service, Lord."*

*At our Baptism...  
At our confirmation...  
through our vowed monastic profession...  
through our commissioning to ministry...  
In our positions of leadership...  
In all the tasks of our daily life...*

We pray,

*"Bountiful God, through anointing with oil we are consecrated to new life in Christ, full membership in the Church, and ministry to your people. Confirm and renew us as your holy people united in Christ our King and High Priest."*



College students, their classes cancelled by the winter storm, join us for Eucharist.



Reception of the Holy Chrism, with Sr. Jeanne Ann Weber and Sr. Joan Marie Stelman



Stay with me... watch and pray...

## MONASTIC LIFE

**At the Mass of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday,** we remember Jesus's gift to us of his Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist. We are present on his last evening with his friends as he washes their feet, showing us how we, too, are called to walk his path and care for each other with love. The Eucharist does not end with a blessing; from now until the end of the Easter Vigil the Church continues one great prayer of connection, agony, and deep joy. We process with the Blessed Sacrament into the Eucharistic chapel, where it will rest for a while. Sisters take turns remaining with Jesus, faithful in their Gethsemane vigil. *"Stay with me, remain here with me. Watch and pray; watch and pray."*

**On Good Friday** Morning Prayer is stark, solemn, the baptismal font silent and dry. In each moment we live the suffering and death of Jesus. From now until Evening Prayer on Saturday, we open the Liturgy of the Hours with the chanted Lamentations of Jeremiah: the prophet weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian empire, and we mourn with Christ.

At the Good Friday service, we offer ourselves up with Christ as we listen to St. John's Passion. With the whole Church we venerate the wood of the Cross, offer up prayers for the needs of all the world, and receive Communion consecrated at yesterday's Mass. The remaining hosts are returned to the sacristy, where the sanctuary light remains burning until Christ's Resurrection. Very quietly we sing *"Adoramus te, Christe / et benedicimus tibi / quia per sanctam crucem tuam / redemisti mundum."* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, for by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

In her poem *Looking at Stars*, poet Jane Kenyon captures the starkness of Good Friday,

*The God of curved space, the dry  
God, is not going to help us, but the son  
whose blood spattered  
the hem of his mother's robe*

We remember that his blood was shed for all of us – all humanity, regardless of how they envision their Creator or live out their faith.

As Shūsaku Endō put it,

*Christ did not die for the good and beautiful.  
It is easy enough to die for the good and  
beautiful; the hard thing is to die for the  
miserable and corrupt.*

It is not our place to judge in which category each of us belongs, for we are all sinners. That is something to consider during the long hours of Holy Saturday.

**The Easter Vigil** opens in darkness. We stand in the Gathering Space with unlit candles as our resident chaplain Fr. Corbin Eddy prays over the new fire and lights the paschal candle. The spark of light is passed from candle to candle until our faces are lit by the new fire. Then, following the candle held high, we process into the chapel and listen to the proclamation of the Exsultet:



Sr. Theresa Spinler chants  
*The Lamentations of Jeremiah*



As Sr. Jeanne Ann Weber uncovers the Cross,  
Sr. Jayne intones, *This is the Wood of the Cross,  
on which hung the Savior of the World.*



Sr. Kathleen Del Monte and Sr. Jeanne Ann Weber  
light the Paschal candle.



Sr. Luce Marie Dionne sings the Exsultet.

*Rejoice, O heavenly powers! Sing choirs of angels!  
Exult, all creation around God's throne!  
Jesus Christ, our King is risen!  
Sound the trumpet of salvation!  
... This is the night  
when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death  
and rose triumphant from the grave.*



*We listen to the chant, a part of this ancient rite since the seventh century.*

Then candles are blown out, lights turned on low, and we listen to the story of salvation, from the wondrous Creation of all things, through the growth of the Israelite people from a handful of nomads to a great throng of descendants of Abraham; through their captivity in Egypt and their liberation by the power of God; then the long Babylonian exile, where we hear in the Book of Baruch a warning for us today: "If you had walked in the way of God, you would be living in peace forever" (Baruch 3:13). In St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, we hear again that in the waters of baptism we died to our sins and now are resurrected into new life. (Romans 6:4)

Then for the first time since Ash Wednesday, we sing full-throated the Alleluia, a shout of deliverance and thanksgiving. All the lights are turned up, and we listen to the story of those faithful women who had followed Jesus in his ministry and stood near the cross witnessing his final hours. Now they come to his grave early on the day after Passover, two days after his death, to properly wrap his body with spices and ointments, a last kindness to their friend. There they find the tomb open and two figures shining with light tell them Jesus has risen as he said he would. They run to tell the other disciples, but "these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11).

The Belgian theologian Henry J. Nouwen wrote, "The resurrection of Jesus simplifies everything. Life is so complex. There are so, so many memories, so many events, so many possibilities. There are people to pay attention to, events to reflect on, choices to ponder. And there is the ongoing question of priorities: who to respond to first, what to consider first, where to go first...."

"But here, before the rolled-away stone, a simple center from which hope radiates, all is very simple. I sense the deep truth of this simplicity. Jesus is risen. All has become one." (from *Finding Our Sacred Center: A Journey to Inner Peace*)

After the homily, we return to the Gathering Space to bless the new waters. New fire, new water, new people. We had faith that the pump below the font would work, and after some tense laughter the water flowing, filling the font to overflowing. In his homily, Fr. Corbin had quoted Cardinal Basil Hume, former Catholic Archbishop of Westminster in England, and in the tense waiting we hear again, "The great gift of Easter is hope." Cardinal Basil had continued, "...Christian hope makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake." And, perhaps, trust that the One who made the heavens and earth can also touch our pump and make the water flow again, for nothing is too small for God.

Sister Maria Volk, a kind Sister who has passed her years of active ministry but brings quiet joy wherever she goes, came from our Benet Hall infirmary and stayed through the Easter Vigil to its final, joyful Amen. She reminds us that God calls us to love each other because of who we are. We are not what we own or what we do, what we say or what people say about us. By our simple existence, we are the beloved daughters and sons of God, called to love each other as family. And that is enough.

Through the fire and water of new life, may God bring new energy to our faith and hearts, and make our lives extraordinary.



*After Fr. Corbin blesses the new waters, Sister Jeanne Ann Weber sprinkles us with it, using cedar branches cut from our cemetery.*



*Sister Maria Volk at the Easter Vigil*



## Christmas Bazaar Donations Needed!

It's time for spring cleaning! As you sort through your items, please consider donating to our **Annual Christmas Bazaar on December 3, 2026.**

We welcome clean, gently used items such as Christmas decorations, baskets, puzzles, accent décor, and homemade crafts.

*Please note, we are unable to accept electronics.*

Donations may be dropped off at the Stanbrook Hall or Monastery Information Desks.

Please indicate that items are for the Bazaar.

**Questions? Contact Lisa Roseth**  
at [lisaroseth@duluthosb.org](mailto:lisaroseth@duluthosb.org) or 218-723-6540.

***Thank you for your support!***

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