

Spring/Summer 2015

the Mount

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE



Wake the World with Dawning Joy



Pope Francis has designated this year as the Year of Consecrated Life. He has encouraged religious women and men “to look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope.” He has urged those living religious life—consecrated life—to “wake up the world” by how they live their lives.

Benedictines are women religious who seek God in community and respond in prayer and ministry, taking vows of stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience. We are ever grateful for the many ways we have been gifted by those who have gone before us. We live in the present with passion, “clothed with faith and the performance of good works . . . with the Gospel for our guide . . .” (Rule of Benedict: Prologue 21) and we

embrace the future with hope because “God’s love shows us the way of life” (Rule of Benedict: Prologue 20).

This issue of *The Mount* is all about “waking up the world.” There are stories about how the sisters are doing that: about women who are new to community, sisters who are marking jubilees, sisters who are living the present with intention and sisters who have died as faithful monastics. Other stories are about you and how you are waking up the world with us through the Oblate Way of Life, through Monasteries of the Heart, and through your unwavering financial and moral support of our life and ministries; all tell how God is being glorified through good works, dedicated service, faithful witness and abundant generosity.

“Waking up the world” is no small task. We are committed to the challenge. We hope you are, too, because it will take all of us working together to make a real difference.

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Cover Photo: Jo Clarke, Oblate

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Contributors

Joanne Cahill, Oblate, Jo Clarke, Oblate,
 Ann Comstock, Oblate, Diane Cook, OSB,
 Susan Doubet, OSB, Vena Eastwood, Oblate,
 Janice Etchison, Oblate, Margaret Kloecker, Oblate,
 Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, Marilyn Schauble, OSB,
 Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Cari Serafin, Oblate,
 Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Anne Wambach, OSB

The Mount Photographers

Ed Bernik, Jo Clarke, Oblate, Susan Freitag, OSB,
 Ann Muczynski, OSB, Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Editor: Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB
 Editorial Assistant: Linda Romey, OSB

Thank you to Printing Concepts, Inc., in Erie for the design and printing of this issue of *The Mount* for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. In addition, they provide certified paper, this issue FSC®, which supports our efforts to be good stewards of the earth.



BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT
 The Benedictine way is to seek God in cenobitic life and to respond in prayer and ministry.

From the Prioress

Wake Up the World

Anyone who knows me knows how much I love music. I love to play music, sing it, listen to it. I have used music to share myself and my thoughts and feelings. It has often been an expression of my faith. Music has had the potential to change me and bring meaning to my life.

You might imagine, then, how pleased I was when I came across the song that was written in celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life: “Wake the World with Dawning Joy.” When Pope Francis called on all people to express their gratitude for those who have embraced religious life, world-renowned composer Steve Warner was commissioned to do it in song. The song was inspired by the words of Pope Francis: “Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world . . . It is this witness I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up.”

For me, the first verse captures the song’s intention:

*Wake the world with dawning joy!
Wake it with your gladness!
Work for justice, live in peace,
claim the Word courageous!
Let us sing to God this new day,
see the world in a different way.
Let us wake the world, wake the world,
with abiding words of faith.*

© Steven C. Warner, 2014. Commissioned by NRVC and VISION Vocation Guide in honor of the Year of Consecrated Life.

As Benedictine Sisters we attempt to work for justice and live the spirit of the Benedictine mandates of *pax* (peace) and *ora et labora* (pray and work). We do this with our very lives: in the rhythm of prayer and work, in the balance of silence and sound, in harmonious relationships with God and others. The living of our monastic life is like a musical composition that takes effort, commitment, practice and fine tuning but once its vibrations hit the universe it can effect change and inspire hope.

“Wake the World with Dawning Joy” inspires me with its gospel values and alignment to the Benedictine way of being a prophetic witness of peace by working for justice. It is a reminder, not just for the Benedictine Sisters but for everyone, to focus on shaping the attitudes and behaviors that help us to live the way of faith, hope, love and joy—a way that will allow us to not only see the world *in* a different way but to *wake* the world to a different way.

May it be and become a way that sings of the goodness of God with a melody that offers joyful praise so that, as Benedictines hope, God may be glorified in all things!

Anne Wambach, OSB

Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie



In Praise & Thanksgiving

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie raised their voices in a jubilant song of praise and thanksgiving when Sister Anne Wambach was re-elected prioress on May 23 for a second five-year term. As prioress, Sister Anne is responsible for the spiritual and administrative leadership of the community and its various ministries.



Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress

"I am humbled by the trust that the community has once again placed in me and overwhelmed by the expression of love and support that continues to be extended to me," said Sister Anne. "My community of sisters continues to inspire me by their dedication to the monastic way of life and the manner in which they embrace the Benedictine charism of seeking God through prayer in community."

Eighty-seven perpetually professed members of the community cast their votes after a day and a half of prayer and discernment.

Contrary to typical elections, a Benedictine community seeks convergence and consensus through a facilitated process of reflection, discussion and nominee presentations. The process was led by Sister Joella Kidwell, president of the Federation of St. Gertrude, and Sister Lynn McKenzie, president of the Federation of St. Scholastica. Sister Lynn, as president of the federation to which the Erie community belongs, also presided over the election, which took place in the monastery chapel. "Being here has been a wonderful experience for both Sister Joella and me," said Sister Lynn. "The Benedictine



Sisters Joella Kidwell, Anne Wambach, Lynn McKenzie



Election Committee: (L-R) Sisters Susan Doubet, Dianne Sabol, Marla Bleil, Charlotte Anne Zalot

Sisters of Erie are blessed with many gifts and skills; they have amazing energy for their monastic life and ministries.”

Sister Anne is a native of Philadelphia, a daughter of Isabel and the late Michael Wambach. She began religious life as a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chestnut Hill, PA. In 1993, after discerning a call to the monastic way of life, she began the process of transfer and became a full member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1997.

Until being elected prioress for the first time in 2010, Sister Anne spent most of her ministry years as an elementary teacher and principal. She is also a past program and executive director of the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, a ministry of the Erie Benedictines. She holds a bachelor’s degree in education and a master’s in church music and liturgy and shares her gifts in music as part of the community’s liturgical ministry. In addition to her present role as prioress Sister Anne also serves as an elected member of the council of the Federation of St. Scholastica.

“I am deeply committed to our monastic community, the directions that we embrace together, and the many ways we touch the world through our ministries and our corporate commitment to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children,” said Sister Anne. “I look forward to continuing this journey with my sisters.”

In keeping with community tradition, the celebration to affirm Sister Anne’s re-election as prioress will take place on July 11, the feast of St. Benedict, the founder of western monasticism.



Sisters Lynn McKenzie and Joella Kidwell



A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

By Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director

There has always been and probably always will be much curiosity about the monastery and the monastic way of life. If the students who visit us for service trips learn anything it is this: life in a religious community is an adventure.

The dictionary defines adventure as a very unusual experience; participation in exciting undertakings, or a bold, and often risky, venture. Throughout the year, we host a number of college groups, and this year even a high school group, of young people interested in experiencing the monastic way of life. They do this by living with us in community; they join us in prayer, work in our ministries, and share our table. I daresay getting up to pray 6:30 a.m. morning prayer with the community might be an unusual experience for many teens and young adults and participating in various ministries with the sisters can definitely be an exciting undertaking. Bold venture—well, just join in a game night with the sisters and you will have the chance to encounter the intentional risk that results from a desire to win. So, yes, the monastic life can be and is an adventure on many levels and an awesome one at that. If you want to learn more about this bold and awesome life please contact me, Sister Marilyn, at vocations@mtstbenedict.org or 814-899-0614, ext. 2424.



Emily (left) and
Anne-Marie Welsh



Sister Marilyn Schauble
and Emily

Emily Welsh, evening anchor and producer for CBS affiliate WSEE in Erie and her mother, Anne-Marie, Director of Communications and editor of FAITH magazine for the Diocese of Erie, came for an overnight visit to the monastery as part of a collaborative effort between WSEE-TV and the Diocese to celebrate the contributions of religious sisters in the

Diocese of Erie. Emily interviewed sisters for a special series that was aired in May. “It was a great experience,” said Sister Dianne Sabol. “Emily made it easy for me to share some of my deepest feelings about being and ministering as a Benedictine Sister of Erie. She is a phenomenal newscaster.”

After visiting the Benedictines, as well as the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph, Anne-Marie offered some of her thoughts in the recent issue of FAITH magazine: “There is a great deal of power in any room filled with our women religious. They are highly educated, well-organized, visionary and accomplished. But more importantly, each sister has continuously opened herself to God’s invitation. Each is motivated by her love for God—a love that is nurtured and multiplied within her religious community; a love that spills out into the lives of the rest of us living in northwest Pennsylvania.”



January Canisius
Group, Winter
Service Week



March Canisius
Group, Spring
Service Week

Our long-standing relationship with Canisius College continues. We continue to host students for an Alternate Winter and Spring Service Week as well as an annual Women’s Retreat. “Coming to the Mount is always special for us,” shared Sarah Signorino, Canisius Campus Minister. “Our students have a life experience that is enriching beyond words.”



L-R Jeanne Wiles (mother of Madilyn), Madilyn Wiles, Delaney Jones, Sarah Willard and Sister Marilyn Schauble

For the first time a high school group came to the monastery for a service experience. As part of her senior project at Academy of the Sacred Heart High School in Buffalo, NY, Madilyn Wiles organized the trip. She and two classmates, along with her mother as chaperone, spent three days engaged in an experience of the monastic way of life in community and ministry. In a thank you note Madilyn wrote: "I cannot thank you enough for the wonderful experience you have given us. Thank you for saying 'yes' to the panicked girl on the phone, begging for an opportunity and a place to stay. Everyone has been incredibly warm, welcoming and kind. I will never forget these past few days and nights. I will treasure them forever."



L-R Sister Marilyn Schauble, Kelly Adamson, Anne Wambach

Long-time oblate Kelly Adamson organized a post-semester service trip to the Mount for two young women from the University of Dayton where Kelly works in campus ministry. In just a few days these students experienced what the Erie Benedictines are all about. Soon-to-be senior Katie Mahoney reflected: "I learned a lot about what it means to truly love others from watching the sisters interact with each other and



L-R Katie Mahoney, Sister Helen Heher, Alyssa Schimmoeller

the people in their ministries. They were overflowing with love for every person they came across. I learned a lot about what it means to truly treat someone as if they were Christ."

National Catholic Sisters Week

National Catholic Sisters Week is a celebration of the lives and legacies of Catholic sisters every year from March 8-14. This year, in conjunction with the Year of Consecrated Life, communities of religious women throughout the United States hosted events to help people get to know who they are and what they are about. The Erie Benedictines issued an invitation to a Lenten Vigil Prayer followed by tours of the monastery and refreshments. Sister Dianne Sabol, a member of the vocation committee, is seen here with a group of guests who attended the Open House. "Benedictine hospitality is not limited to an open house," said Sister Dianne. "Guests and visitors to the monastery are always welcome to join us for prayer and it is very easy to arrange for a tour of the monastery. The monastic tradition of hospitality is a hallmark of our Benedictine spirituality."



Oblates Visit the Mission of Friendship

By Janice Etchison and Cari Serafin, Oblates



Cari Serafin (left) with Janice Etchison

Twelve oblates of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, accompanied by Sister Claire Hudert,* traveled to Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, to meet and visit with the oblate community that has existed there for almost 20 years. The 14 members of the Erie Benedictine oblate community in Mérida is an outgrowth of the Mission of Friendship that began in 1971 when the dioceses of the Yucatán and Erie began a cooperative relationship. Over the years several Erie Benedictines and oblates have served at the Mission of Friendship, visited Mérida and supported its work.

How right and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live in harmony. It is like fragrant ointment running down over your heads . . . (Psalm 133: 1 – 2)



Gathering of prayer partners at the home of oblates, Nestor and Manuela

Traveler Lyta Seddig explained why she was moved to make the trip: "I know I was touched when the oblates from Mexico came all the way to Erie. So, when the possibility of our going to Mexico was broached, I was very interested. I wanted to get to know them better."



US and Merida Oblates gather behind the welcome banner upon arriving at the airport

The goal of this trip, that took place January 8-17, was to strengthen the connection between the oblate group in Mexico and the oblates in the States.

During the planning stages of the trip, Sister Claire and Oblates Cari Serafin and Marilyn Randolph made recommendations for activities that would create memorable experiences. Claire, Cari and Marilyn spent many years ministering to people in Mérida and were well acquainted with the Mexican oblates and the surrounding area. Sister Claire's idea to pair each U.S. oblate with a Mérida oblate as a prayer partner prior to the trip gave it real focus.



Oblate family: Brigida and Chucho and children

"I felt privileged and honored to be an emissary of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery and I think the oblates in Mérida feel more connected with us," said Neil Himber. "I know I feel more one with them and I pray that they continue to grow in numbers and in faith and in good works. I was touched by the hospitality extended to us, from the happy surprise welcome at the airport to the final send-off party."



Farewell party: Oblate dancers and daughters

Janet Houk was also struck by the welcome at the airport: "My experience traveling to Mérida was a gift in so many ways. It began with the Mexican oblates meeting us at the airport—a total surprise. We spoke different languages but the language of the heart was understood: Welcome! We await our adventures together!"

The Mérida oblates renewed their oblation in the presence of their guests. For Mexican oblate Josefina Martín León, "the most memorable for me was the renewal of our commitment, especially the ceremony, the gathering and the presence of Sister Claire among us." During the ceremony, Sister Claire remarked, "Today we celebrate a precious and holy moment, when oblates from the U.S. can actually be present with you as oblates from Mérida. It is a wonderful gift that God has given us, this moment to share physically as well as spiritually. For that we are profoundly grateful. But even more than that, we are grateful that we are truly united, united in spirit, united in THE SPIRIT, which we share." At the end of the ceremony the U.S. oblates pinned onto their prayer partners a sign of their oblation.



Claire with oblates and families at the commitment ceremony



Oblate Jackie Burns pinning Jose



Sr. Claire pinning prayer partner, Vanessa

Meeting the oblates in their homes was extremely meaningful, a time when the prayer partners could learn about each other and share experiences. The Mérida oblates extended their hands in true and loving friendship and provided memories that will last a lifetime. "We are Manos Amigos, friends joining hands in prayer and work in the spirit of St. Benedict. We are called a Mission of Friendship because we have become spiritual friends," explained another of the Mexican oblates.



Gathering of prayer partners at the home of oblate, Nelsi

In addition to visiting homes and participating in the commitment ceremony, the U.S. oblates spent time at ministries sponsored by the Mission of Friendship, including a day care center and an afterschool program for young girls. They also visited a senior center run by the Missionaries of Charity, a community of sisters founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta.



Oblate Pat Sabol, from Illinois, surrounded by children at Erie Diocese-sponsored daycare center

On a lighter side, the group traveled to a beach on the Gulf of Mexico, visited a hacienda located in the Mayan village of Dzibikak and toured ancient Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza and Uxmal.

Bob Seddig reflected that, "To be with our oblate prayer partners and their families, to visit and enjoy warm hospitality in their homes, was a deeply meaningful experience. I will never forget the caring,

the warmth, and the love our Mexican oblates showed for us, day after day after day. If there is to be peace in the world, I am convinced that it will come about through such friendship and common bonds."

*May you travel in an awakened way,
gathered wisely into your inner ground;
that you may not waste the invitations
which wait along the way to transform you.*

— John O'Donohue

*Health issues forced Sister Claire Hudert to cut her trip to Mérida short and return home early. She had suffered for many years with the cancer that took her life on January 26, less than a week after the oblates returned from their trip to Mérida.



Monasteries of the Heart

a new movement for a new world

Listen with the Heart: Becoming a Benedictine Leader

By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, Director of Monasteries of the Heart

What happens when you prepare a party for 50 guests and over 300 show up?

Something similar happened to Monasteries of the Heart, an online movement created by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie to share Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers, when it offered its members participation in a six-month online leadership program—*Listen with the Heart: Becoming a Benedictine Leader*.

"We had a grant from Fetzer Institute to subsidize 50 participants," explained Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, director of Monasteries of the Heart, "and over 300 people applied. We chose our 50, but another 50 paid for the program because they were so interested in Benedictine leadership."

Fully online, through videos, a live-streamed webinar, a practicum, and a series of readings and discussions, participants learned to integrate Benedictine leadership

principles into the workplace, parishes, and the family structure. The course inspired some to start new Monasteries of the Heart communities in their local areas where members gather physically as well as online communities with virtual gatherings and no geographical boundaries.

Participants, who ranged in age from 36 to 75 and represented every continent except Africa, were also required to submit a final paper summarizing their learning before receiving a certificate of completion.

Sister Joan Chittister, founder of Monasteries of the Heart, was the prime instructor of the leadership course and staff members Sisters Mary Ellen Plumb and Anne McCarthy facilitated the sessions.

Learn how to become a member at www.monasteriesoftheheart.org



L-R Cathy Meyn, Carol Smith, Marilyn Rositer, Linda Graffius, Jan MacInnes (Missing from photo: Jeanne Gaber, Elaine Kern and Betty Pletz)

Marilyn Rositer, who completed the "Listen with the Heart, Becoming a Benedictine Leader" training, offered an information session about Monasteries of the Heart between services on January 11 at Luther Memorial Church in Erie, PA. "I hoped maybe a dozen people would attend," she said. "Instead, we had 31." Marilyn credits the leadership training for inspiring and empowering her to provide the opportunity to other seekers who may want to journey through Monasteries of the Heart.



Greg Baker (right) with Mercyhurst students

Greg Baker, campus minister at Mercyhurst University, offered students a Monasteries of the Heart four-week class experiment as his final project in the Leadership Course. Greg wrote, "I am heartened by the potential of Monasteries of the Heart and its unique offerings for younger generations. The gospel has largely kept its potency and authenticity through alternative movements like the monastic and apostolic communities. I pray that we find ways to translate these movements into a viable community for the very gifted, very lonely young generations."



COMMENTS FROM "LEADERSHIP" PARTICIPANTS

The program has given me confidence to change my style of leadership to one I hope will prove to be more empowering and affirming of others . . . I have now started a lectio divina group in our parish.
–Eileen, United Kingdom

As a result of this course I am being more conscious and intentional about my role as a leader in my church and community. Most valuable to me is the understanding of the necessity to have a Vision and that the Vision must come from a core set of values.
–Betty

One of the strengths of the program for me was having people from many different countries and cultures work together. I appreciated the use of a variety of tools and techniques. I found that sharing an issue with others and hearing their feedback helped me to think differently, to listen better. More than ever, I believe it is important to listen, speak the truth and to have the courage to act appropriately despite the consequences. –Pat

As wonderful and inspiring as the rest of the course was, the best part for me was the practicum. My small group was fantastic and getting to know them throughout the five weeks we had together felt like a revelation to me. Before that time I felt a bit skeptical about the possibilities of personal sharing via the Internet, but through the smaller group I learned not only that I could lead a group online, but that it was possible to bond as a group with people I've never actually met . . . I joined an online Monasteries of the Heart and was asked to lead the Lenten retreat . . . what I learned in the leadership training made it possible for me to say yes to this invitation. –Laura, Italy

I found the weekly intention around the Psalm verse to be a way to keep my attention throughout the program. Each week I put the verse on my computer screen saver as a reminder—in addition to memorizing it and saying it over and over throughout the day. Each video lesson was very impactful for me and I have referred to my notes again and again.
–Mary Anne

CHITTISTER, SHRIVER AND WINFREY

By Susan Doubet, OSB



MARIA SHRIVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY

Sister Joan Chittister has appeared on national television many times but when representatives called from “Super Soul Sunday,” Oprah Winfrey’s Emmy award-winning series that features inspirational interviews with top thinkers, it began a unique and amazing five-month experience for Joan, her staff and the Benedictine community.

Oprah, one of the most influential women in the world, invited Joan, an outspoken advocate of justice, peace and equality—especially for women around the world—and a spiritual visionary, to her home in Santa Barbara, CA, for a daylong interview and conversation. Titled “Oprah and Sister Joan Chittister: A Life of Passion, Purpose and Joy,” the segment aired on March 1.



During the spirit-charged interview, Oprah read selections from Joan Chittister: *Essential Writings*, a compilation of Joan’s writings that captures and distills her spirit and her message including reflections on her own journey, why she remains in the Church and what sustains her faith and hope. She and Joan then unpacked those

thoughts as soul-mates on a spiritual quest.

“The conversation with Oprah was not a TV gimmick. It was an authentic conversation with a woman who really cares about the spiritual journey. It was beyond the adversarial kind of interview that is common on U.S. television. It was a genuine and refreshing experience,” said Sister Joan.

Emails, letters and calls flooded Sister Joan’s office, expressing gratitude and support for the ideas and thoughts expressed throughout the exchange between these two high-profile women leaders.

Essential Writings, edited by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB and Mary Hembrow-Snyder, PhD, was the #1 best-seller in Amazon’s Religion and Spirituality category after the Oprah interview.

The entire interview, as well as half-dozen unaired clips from the interview, are available on Oprah’s website at oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/Oprah-and-Sister-Joan-Chittister.

A month later, Maria Shriver, an Emmy and Peabody award-winning journalist and New York Times best-selling author, joined Joan on stage at Mercyhurst University for the Second Annual Joan D. Chittister Lecture. A capacity crowd of more than 800 people filled the university’s D’Angelo Performing Arts Center on April 9 to hear the two women share their perspectives on issues of peace and justice—especially as they affect women. Overflow seating was available at the Mercyhurst Athletic Center where attendees viewed a live stream of the event.

A standing ovation greeted the two friends as they took their places on stage for the presentation, aptly titled “In Conversation.”



First introduced to Sister Joan’s work by her mother, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Maria and Joan have become both professional and personal friends. “My respect for Maria developed from this joining of the voices

of women on behalf of half the human beings in the world,” said Joan. “This will only strengthen this world and our country.”

During the conversation Maria spoke of her life’s journey, made references to growing up as a member of the Kennedy family and shared experiences that led to her personal philosophy and passion for the causes she believes in and espouses today.

“Ask yourself: Are you compassionate and kind?” she said. “Are you growing and evolving, and are you socially conscious? That, to me, is success. If people leave here today and they think about using their voice, and if they think they actually have the power to ignite change in their own lives, at the schools they work at, at the businesses they work at, to me, that’s success.”

Mercyhurst’s Joan D. Chittister Lecture Series is endowed by the Boyle Family in honor of Helen Boyle, Mercyhurst Class of 1934, a longtime friend of Sister Joan.

You can view the entire “In Conversation” with Joan and Maria at joanchittister.org/joan-chittister-videos.

A BLESSED MINISTRY

By Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Director of Monastic Formation

Pope Francis has called religious to “wake up the world” and “to live the present with passion” in this Year of Consecrated Life. As Director of Monastic Formation I am blessed with a ministry that keeps this call ever before my eyes. I journey with the women who come to the monastery seeking God, and it is a privilege to share their hopes and dreams as they discern a possible future with us.

Today’s candidates, older than those who entered in the past, come with an array of life experiences and skills and with varied career backgrounds. It is a challenge for them to become “beginners” in the monastic life after many years of living on their own. The adjustment to community life in the monastery is often overwhelming so during their first months I help them understand the culture of monasticism with its many practices and traditions that are often foreign to them.

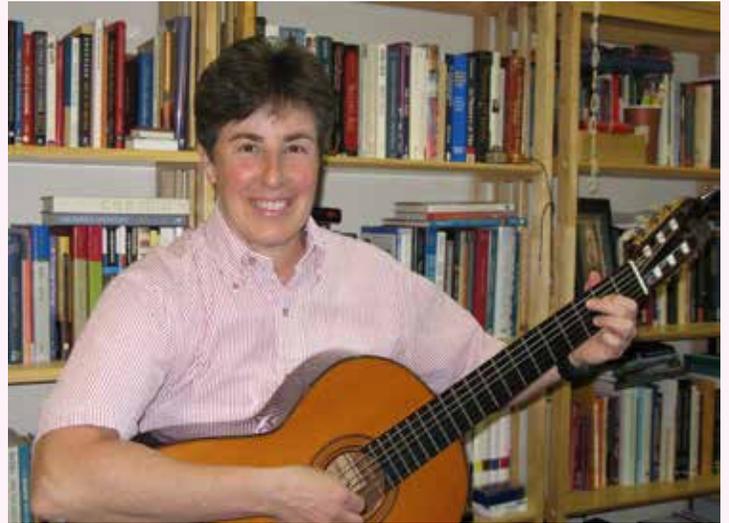
The postulants receive classes in community living skills, monastic values, liturgy, psalms and Scripture. Through daily *lectio*, slow meditative reading, they learn to listen with the ear of their heart to God’s invitation to live in love. By working in community ministries 32 hours a week they are initiated into the *ora et labora* (prayer and work) rhythm of the Benedictine way of life.

During the novitiate year, study and prayer become more intense as the novices focus their energies on life within the monastery. In weekly meetings we reflect on the places of grace where God has been present. These first years of monastic formation are designed to foster personal growth in self-knowledge and acceptance to prepare for the gift of self that comes with profession of monastic vows.

Walking with the four women currently in monastic formation has deepened my prayer life and increased my awareness of God’s presence in daily encounters. It challenges me to teach more by example than words and it demands a healthy dose of humility and humor for the many times I fall short. It is an experience of mutual learning and reverence as we share the mysterious workings of God.

The postulancy is generally a 12-month program for women beginning to seek God by living monastic life with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. A postulant experiences monastic life by entering into the community rhythm of *ora et labora*.

FROM THE POSTULANTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Dina Lauricella

What do you enjoy most about living in this monastic community?

I really enjoy the inclusive-language liturgy and the music of many talented musicians. I love singing the psalms and letting them really sink into my bones. This community also has many opportunities for ministry and it was easy to find a place where I could fit in. The collective knowledge, experiences and personalities of the many sisters are quite interesting and amusing.

What gives you life and nourishes your spirit?

Even though it has been a challenge, the love and support that I have experienced is very important to me. I know I have a long journey ahead of me and I feel confident that the guidance and direction I am receiving will get me there. Simply knowing that something I am doing is making a difference and enriching the lives of others is very life-giving.

What has been the biggest challenge or adjustment for you so far?

Making the transition from living alone to living in community with people I barely knew took me a while. Also, getting into the rhythm of the monastery and not being able to come and go as I please was an adjustment.



Karen Oprenoch and Sister Stephanie

What do you enjoy most about living in this monastic community?

I enjoy the diversity of people and the opportunity for growth. There always seems to be at least one sister who shares any particular interest (the arts, sports, activities). There are plenty of opportunities to try something new; for example, shortly after entering I began guitar lessons and joined *schola*, the community choir. The monastic formation classes are varied and definitely soul-stretching.

What gives you life and nourishes your spirit?

The Divine Office. I prayed the Liturgy of the Hours (aka the Office) for years by myself. Praying with the community is a completely different experience. The singing, the music, the readers—all bring it new life. I've fallen in love with the Office all over again.

What has been the biggest challenge or adjustment for you so far?

I lived alone for 24 years before entering the postulancy so the biggest adjustment is that I'm now a part of a community of 100 sisters. This can be challenging but it is also by far a great source of joy. My family and friends have asked me if living a postulant's life is what I thought it would be. My answer: it's all that and more. I am learning so much as I continue my spiritual journey—about community, about monastic life, and especially about me. It can all be a little bit overwhelming, but at those times the support of the sisters is always nearby. There is nowhere else I would rather be.

The novitiate is a year of intense study and prayer where the novice learns more about the Benedictine charism and the monastic vows. She continues to discern her call to this community and her readiness to make first monastic profession.



Ann Michaud reflects on her experience as a novice

My experience has been of a very rich, full and busy novitiate.

Many people have asked me, "What do you do as a novice?" Here's a snapshot. I participate in communal prayer and liturgy. I study the Rule of St. Benedict, the history of the community, the documents of the Federation of St. Scholastica, to which our community belongs, the liturgical life, monastic studies, Scripture, and contemporary issues in the Church and the world, as well as research areas of the community's Corporate Commitment, becoming involved in related projects.

I spend an hour daily in *lectio divina* and an hour in spiritual reading, as well as time exercising and journaling. There is the opportunity for art as meditation, which balances all of these activities. So far I have studied guitar and have begun writing classes as part of this meditation.

I spend time working in various internal ministries, such as the liturgy office and hospitality ministry. Preparing breakfast on weekdays for the sisters in the infirmary gives me the opportunity to interact with these wise elders. The majority of my time is spent at the monastery allowing me to become more familiar with individual sisters whom I now meet daily. Through it all, I am further discerning my call to life in this Erie Benedictine community. I am delighted to be a part of this wonderful group of women who serve God's people with love and compassion. It's an astonishing life!

Sisters in first monastic profession focus on the process of integrating prayer, ministry and community. This 3-6 year stage of formation is a preparation for perpetual monastic profession.



Sister Patricia Witulski reflects on her experience as a first-year scholastic

It was less than a year ago that God imprinted upon my heart the desire to serve the precious, faceless individuals served by Emmaus Ministries, a Christian presence and outreach in Erie's inner city. At the Emmaus Soup Kitchen, we are "bread for the body and care for the soul," what Benedictine hospitality is all about. We want our guests, just like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to come to "know God in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35). Being part of this endeavor fills me with gratitude and joy.

When I became a scholastic* and began my new ministry, I chose words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta as my daily mantra: "Do small things with great love." This is not an easy task but one I strive to live out in the daily opportunities God graciously gives me. I know that without prayer I could not even begin to walk in the compassionate footsteps of Christ.

At the soup kitchen I, too, am walking on the "road to Emmaus." It is the place where I find Christ. I have discovered that when I am living in the present moment and my heart is open to hearing God's message of tenderness and love, I encounter God in the most unexpected people and places. Some days I encounter Christ in the guests at the soup kitchen; age, gender, and ethnicity make no difference in God's eyes. Other days, God speaks through me as I become the hands and feet and gentle voice of God. I simply attempt to do what God would do: listen, console, offer hope, and even bring joy and laughter while serving up a hot nutritious meal. I have found the soup kitchen to be a give-and-take adventure in kindness and love. Every day offers me the chance to grow in these qualities. How can I not be grateful and filled with joy?

**Sister Diane Rabe, Director of Scholastics, journeys with Sister Pat during this stage of monastic formation.*



Sister Anne Wambach (left) and Sister Joachim

When prioress Sister Anne Wambach asked Sister Joachim Frey, "Do you desire to continue your monastic journey with this community, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie?" Sister Joachim quietly answered yes, with the twinkle in her eye and the gentle smile to which we have grown accustomed. The question was posed as part of the Initial Rite of Incorporation process which took place on Saturday, February 14, during the community's Evening Prayer.

Sister Joachim came to the community from St. Marys, PA. When it became clear that their monastery would be closing as a result of a climbing median age and lack of new members, the 17 Benedictines of St. Joseph Monastery started to visit other Benedictine communities. After prayer and discernment Sister Joachim asked to come to Erie. "With open hearts we welcome another monastic into our midst," said Sister Anne. "She is indeed a blessing to us." Sister Joachim joins two other sisters from St. Marys who began their process of incorporation in November, Sisters Kathleen Warner and Mary Bernard Lander.

During the ritual, Sister Joachim received the community pin as a symbol of her desire to become a fully incorporated member. "Transferring your vows to another community is never an easy decision," said vocation director Sister Marilyn Schauble, who also transferred her vows to the Erie Benedictines many years ago. "It is a privilege for us to support Sister Joachim as she continues the monastic journey with us."

Faithful to Vocation

Six Benedictine Sisters of Erie will celebrate jubilees in 2015, a year designated by Pope Francis as the Year of Consecrated Life. Sisters Jerome Eustace and Jean Lavin will celebrate 70 years of vowed life while four sisters will celebrate 60 years: Sisters Paula Burke, Mary Bernadette Ladner, Veronica Mirage and Michelle Wilwohl. They consecrated their lives to God as a way of seeking holiness through the profession of vows: stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life and obedience. All of them continue to seek God, living in community and responding in prayer and ministry. The Erie Benedictines are proud to recognize these sisters and rejoice that these women continue to “wake the world” with an abiding presence of faith, hope and love.

Sister Jerome Eustace

“Believing that God is with me has helped me through the years. Trying to live one day at a time is what keeps me going and I have managed to do that, more or less! Of course, there is nothing more important than our spiritual lives. *Ora* empowering *labora*—prayer empowering work. I have no intention of giving it up. I will continue to cherish our *ora* and do as much *labora* as my body permits as I march on to the next decade of my life: the 90s!”

Sister Jerome ministered in elementary education throughout the diocese of Erie for 35 years, both as teacher and principal, after which she moved into health care for 15 years. She served in the infirmary at the monastery and then worked as a nurse aide at Twinbrook Nursing Home. Following this she was receptionist at Benetwood Apartments before engaging in contributed services at the monastery where her responsibilities include accompanying sisters to appointments and taking care of guest and infirmary laundry.



Sister Jean Lavin

“My prayer life, my community, and the people I have served through the years have kept me faithful to my vocation. The scripture line: ‘Do not fear, I am your God; do not be anxious, I am with you’ has been a source of comfort and support. I have learned that developing a prayer life is a lifetime endeavor and I intend to continue to do just that as best I can for the rest of my days.”

Sister Jean, known to many as Sister Agnes Jean, was a music instructor in many parishes throughout the Erie diocese for 20 years before becoming a professor of piano and music theory at Youngstown University. During that time she produced and directed “Sisters ’66,” a musical production that was televised on the Ed Sullivan show. She then worked in several capacities in the business department of Mercyhurst University, including positions as professor and director. In 1990 she began ministry at St. Benedict Education Center as a faculty member in life skills and as the director of Stillpoint contemplative prayer retreats. She has also served on the monastic council and in monastic formation. Presently, Sister Jean is engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence.



Sister Paula Burke

“The faithful love of God has been my mainstay through the years. Sometimes, it is beyond my understanding but I never doubt it and I am ever grateful. The Divine Office has centered me and I value how chanting the psalms calms me and gives me peace. I believe that every person needs quiet time to marinate in the scriptures and to let the Word of God engage the senses. Because I take the opportunity to do that I have a heightened sense of the sacredness of all creation. I care for the earth and all who live upon it and I will continue to do that for as long as I am able.”

Sister Paula spent eight years as an elementary teacher before moving into other ministries that included housekeeping and dental receptionist work. She eventually pursued food service and worked as a cafeteria assistant, a baker, and a manager at a number of places, among them Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, St. Benedict Academy and Smuggler’s Wharf, Inc. In addition, she used her gifts at Glinodo Conference Center as a member of the Summer Camp Staff. Sister Paula has been engaged in a variety of contributed services at the monastery and for the last 25 years she has worked in the Business Office, where she continues to minister.

Sister Mary Bernadette Ladner

"A line from the *Rule of Benedict* has kept me going through the years: 'Prefer nothing whatsoever to the work of God' (RB 43:3). I have come to understand how very important it is to always take time for silence and prayer and community. My vocation has been strengthened by being in relationship with God and with people of faith. In the days I have left I will continue to be faithful to these values."



Sister Mary Bernadette came to Erie when Holy Family Priory in Benet Lake, WI, merged with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. As a Benet Lake sister, she served as prioress, treasurer and formation director in the community. She ministered as a coordinator and director of religious education in many parishes across the United States for 30 years before coming to Erie where she taught for a short time at Kennedy Catholic High School in Hermitage, PA. For the last 20 years she has worked in the monastery library, a ministry that she continues, along with the ministry of prayer and presence.

Sister Veronica Mirage

"My Benedictine community sustains and enriches me every single day. This allows me to continue in a ministry that I love at All Saints School in Wickliffe, OH, where I presently minister as a religion teacher and coordinator of liturgy. I learned to be generous and hardworking from my parents and I have transferred those values to my monastic life. As a Benedictine I am on a constant journey, seeking God through faith-filled living. I understand how important it is to devote time and energy to my spiritual life, a spiritual life that guides me in following Christ in all that I do."



Sister Veronica has ministered in education her entire religious life. In her 60 years in community she has been an elementary teacher in a number of parishes in the Diocese of Erie and also served as an administrator for 20 of those years. Currently, she teaches religion and is the liturgy coordinator at All Saints of St. John Vianney School in Wickcliffe, OH, where she has ministered since 1985.



Sister Michelle Wilwohl

"God has never failed me in my hope and I receive great strength from praying the Benedictine *suscipe*: 'Uphold me, O God, according to your word and I shall live; and do not fail me in my hope.' To keep answering the call of my vocation all these years has been a treasure. *Ora et labora*, prayer and work, have guided me and helped me to know Jesus the Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. I believe in giving time and energy to my spiritual life through reflection on the scriptures and participation in the sacraments. I will continue to do this so that I may be ever and always conscious of the Living God."

Sister Michelle was a teacher in the Diocese of Erie for almost 35 years before becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse. She used that skill set in work at Hamot Hospital, St. Vincent Health Center and the monastery infirmary. Her other ministries have included the Glinodo Camp Administration Team, office assistance and volunteer coordinator at the Villa Conference Center, and assistant to the Director of Employment at St. Benedict Education Center. Presently, Sister Michelle works as a kitchen assistant at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie through the Eyes of Others

Women Religious Change Lives

Jo Clarke, Oblate, Director of Annual Giving

Many of us were taught by women religious who changed our lives. Our role models were strong, intelligent, and well-educated women who instilled in us a sense of worth and capability that as women we could do anything!



This is what the Benedictine Sisters of Erie continue to instill in those to whom they minister every day. In community the sisters work to create a microcosm of a world that reflects the Christian message where all are equal; where all human gifts are valued; where one does not have power simply because of gender; where one is not excluded or prevented from reaching one's human potential simply because of economics; and where debate and ideas are valued. Imagine a world without the sisters and the ministries they founded.

Imagine the social services system in Erie without the Benedictine Sisters. In Erie we are surrounded by great social needs: the poverty rate for children under the age of 18 is 45.5% and in Erie County it's 28.4%. The overall poverty rate in Erie is 29.2% and in the county it is 18.3%. The sisters take the plight of the poor seriously.

However, the sisters realize they can't continue their ministry of prayer and action on their own. It's a shared responsibility and together with people like you and me—their oblates, families, and friends—anything is possible.

It's precisely because the sisters ask others to become involved that amazing things happen:

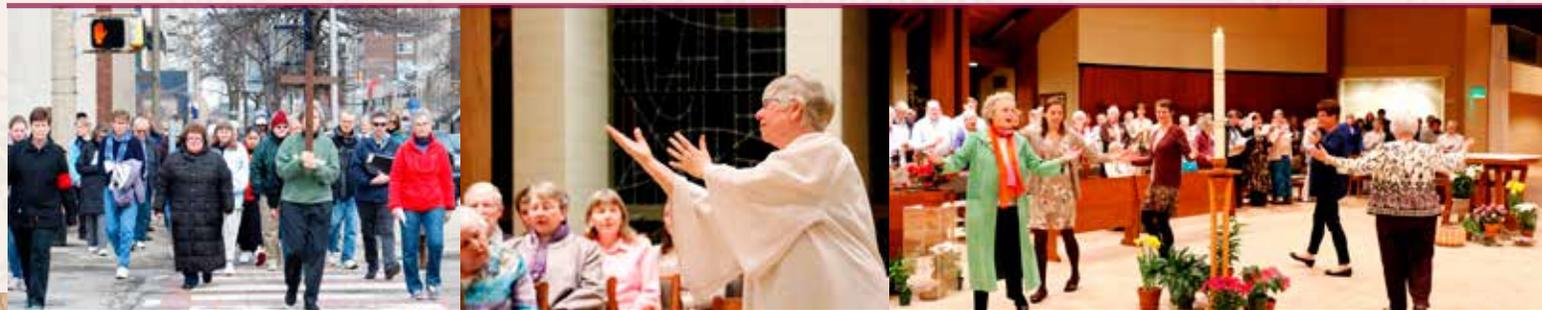
- Children are able to gain the confidence they so badly need as the result of playing a musical instrument on stage.
- Parents can feed their family because their new job training leads to employment.

- Seniors discover friendship and feel secure in their new affordable apartment.
- Physically challenged children experience a team spirit with their friends through playing wheelchair basketball.
- Struggling parents have peace of mind knowing their child is safe in affordable daycare.
- Families struggling to get on their feet are fed.
- Seekers of new ways of spiritual living find community through online discussion in *Monasteries of the Heart*.
- Guests at the monastery find a place of prayer and peace, welcome and hospitality.

Wherever there is poverty and injustice, whether it is spiritual or physical, you will find women religious, courageously working to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We need such women to continually challenge us to respond. As it says in the *Rule of Benedict*, "All are to be welcomed as Christ." What a radical philosophy and one even more crucial for our time when the gap between rich and poor is ever-widening on both the individual level and among nations. The sisters continue to take public stands on many issues from war to poverty to injustice against women and children. Their writings call us to speak out in the world and in the church, urging equality and opportunity for all.

Anne Wambach, prioress, says: "The way that achieves good—that brings kindness, mercy and attentiveness as Jesus would do, is the answer to the dilemma of knowing the right course to take. Every time we choose the good action or response it brings life, light, and love; every time we choose the good action or response it leads to justice."

As an oblate and Director of Annual Giving for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, I am reminded every day that those of us whose lives have been blessed with some measure of resources have a responsibility to help and empower those with little. When we are advocates for the voiceless we offer a hand instead of pointing a finger, giving each person we touch the ability to realize his or her full potential.



The Benedictine Sisters, like all of us, are human, and for me it is their humanity, their commitment to equality, acceptance, and dignity for all that represents everything that is good in the Roman Catholic Church. Sisters, on behalf of the 50% of society that is female, on behalf of all those who have no voice, on behalf of the poor and marginalized—please keep on challenging all of us, including the Church, to move forward, no matter how uncomfortable or difficult it might be.

An Experience of Love

Joanne T. Cahill, Oblate

I came to know the Benedictine Sisters of Erie about 20 years ago and am now a frequent visitor to the monastery. To experience their hospitality is to experience love. To experience their liturgy is to know that prayer is not always a feel good experience, as it will take us places we mightn't choose to go on our own. To experience their community is to know encouragement and support for one's continued growth. These women are a formative presence in my life.

While the sisters did not teach me to pray, they certainly have deepened my prayer and expanded the horizon of what I call prayer. From them, I have come to appreciate the 'daily-ness' and 'never-ended-ness' of prayer, which sharpens the senses and enables what Benedict calls 'holy listening.' For example, as I write this, the winter scene is stark. A half dozen birds are on the feeder, their colorful presence all the more beautiful against a frozen white world. Not too many years ago, I would have been too 'busy' to look up and notice and I certainly would not have experienced the pure joy of witnessing such a simple scene that I feel in this moment.

Noticing injustices in the world, as well as its beauty, is also holy listening and being moved in heart to do something about injustice is the fruit of prayer. The presence of the Benedictine Sisters at the margins in Erie is visible and palpable. They remind us that the work of peace and justice



is never done and they bear the fruit of prayerfulness and holy listening each day when:

- they open the doors of the soup kitchen and serve up generous portions of food and companionship – nourishments that are in short supply among the poor of Erie
- they boldly hold vigil and reclaim for peace a place in the city where violence ended a precious life
- they welcome immigrants, teach them the language and ways of their new world, and furnish them with basic household necessities
- they teach the arts to inner-city children who often find little beauty in their own lives and aspirations
- they stand in solidarity before government and corporate interests in the face of environmental destruction
- they give witness to the value and place of women in church and state

They are a remarkable group of women and I give thanks for them each day.

Eternally Grateful

*Margaret Kloecker, Oblate
Emmaus Ministries Staff Member*

As I reflect on my own upbringing, I recall other women religious frequenting the margins of society. It was the nuns who honed my skills in making placards and standing in the heat or cold protesting some injustice. While the issues of those days are now a bit faint, the experience of raising a prophetic voice remains crystal clear. Perhaps this has always been the role of sisters—to be at the margins, reminding the world—indeed the Church itself—that we are to be the flesh and bones of the gospel in our world. It is the sisters who continue to teach us this profound truth by the remarkable example of their own lives. They are a great gift to us, to society and to the Church.



I made the choice to attend St. Benedict Academy (SBA) over 50 years ago because I admired my cousin who was a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. On my first day of school the first sister I met promised to look out for me for the next four years. Little did I know that small interaction would lead to a lifetime of friendship with this community of remarkable women.

Academically, I was well prepared for the challenges in life but it was at SBA that I learned much more important life lessons. What really stayed with me was the unconditional love the sisters showed to me. No judgments, just wanting the best for me. Even though I went about building my life after SBA, the love and care never stopped. They were still looking out for me. As I faced life's personal challenges I always came back "home" to "the Mount," (Mount Saint Benedict Monastery) and the sisters.

In 1996, I was looking for a new start professionally. I renewed a friendship with an old high school friend who had become a Benedictine sister. Through her I realized I belonged back in the Benedictine family—that I was a Benedictine at heart—that I was always happy when I was part of the Benedictine community. I was immediately offered an opportunity to come to work in the Benedictine Sisters' development office. Best decision I ever made! I made my oblate commitment the following year. Then one day, Sister Mary Miller approached me and simply asked me to come work with her at Emmaus Ministries because she needed me. It took me all of two seconds to say yes and I finally felt like I was "back home."

One phrase from the *Rule of Benedict* that I feel best describes the Benedictine Sisters of Erie is "Listen with the ear of your heart." I always admired and respected the sisters who taught at SBA but it was after the academy closed that I think they showed Erie who they really are. The Benedictine Sisters opened their hearts and listened to the cry of the poor; they took to the streets and have worked tirelessly not only to beautify the neighborhood surrounding the original monastery in downtown Erie, but also to provide food, access to the arts and physical activities, daycare and adult education. Now that unconditional love I have always felt is freely given to the poor of inner-city Erie.

I am very proud to stand with and work alongside these women and plan to always be there for them in any way I can. Whatever I am today that is good and just came from the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. They can count on my commitment to sharing Benedictine values and charism in my work and my personal life. Consider me eternally grateful!

A Haven of Peace

Vena Eastwood, Oblate

I first encountered the *Rule of St. Benedict* as a novice in my Anglican community; however it did not seem relevant to my daily life as a lay person until several years later when I became Chaplain of St. Benedict's School in Derby. A friend suggested that I read *Insights for the Ages* by Sister Joan Chittister of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. After doing so I wanted to visit Erie and Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. I made my first visit to Erie in 1999.

I found the Erie Benedictine sisters at a time when I was experiencing some stress in my life and their community and monastery became a haven of peace for me. It has been a safe sanctuary of encouragement and understanding where I have experienced openness and acceptance, kindness and care, so much so that I made the decision to transfer my oblation from a monastery in the United Kingdom to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 2007.

Although I live in England I maintain close contact with the Erie Benedictines. For 16 years I have come annually to work, pray and study alongside the sisters in their daily lives and various ministries, spending between two and five months each year. The community is a group of women that offer the best of both worlds: monastic contemplative prayer life based on the daily office, and dynamic active work in the wider community of Erie. Through the years I have worked in or visited most of the Benedictine ministries in the city of Erie. The diversity of the sisters' work and their outstanding commitment to the poor has made my continuing search for an active, applicable, relevant spirituality exciting, adventurous and real. I thank the Benedictine Sisters of Erie for their indelible influence on my spiritual journey.





L-R (Front) Sisters Marilyn and Charlotte; (Back) Sister Anne, Lynn and Dale McBrier

The Latin word *opus* (work, labor) is used to identify, list, and catalogue a work of art or music. In this case, Opus 51 refers to the monastery's new virtual pipe organ, a gift to the community from Lynn and Dale McBrier, in loving memory of Lynn's mother, Jeanne McSherry Blum.

For Randy Moe, the builder and owner of *Encore Organ Technology* in Minnesota, the number indicates that the monastery's new organ is the 51st in his line of production. Randy transformed the community's two manual Allen organ into a three manual virtual pipe organ with 10 audio channels.

Last September the 35-year-old Allen digital organ in the monastery chapel suffered a serious malfunction when one of its computer boards became defective. It was inevitable that the rest of the computer boards would eventually follow suit. Costly and non-guaranteed availability of parts was the writing on the wall that indicated it was time to research feasible replacement options.

Sister Marilyn Schauble, one of the community's musicians, undertook the task and came across a new option that is the product of living in a digital world. "We have always dreamed of a pipe organ but it was not a financially feasible option for us," she said. "I was amazed to learn that there was an affordable option with a pipe organ sound."



Opus 51:

The Mount's New Virtual Pipe Organ



Randy Moe at work

The virtual pipe organ is played through large, high quality speakers and controlled by MIDI (musical instrument digital interface). The stops to regulate the varied sounds are managed by two touch screens. The new device does not have actual pipes, but uses digitized recordings of a pipe organ. "The organ sounds so authentic," said Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot, community organist. "Each stop touched, each pedal pushed, each key pressed, activates notes and tones recorded from famous organs. The samples are of such high fidelity that the untrained ear would hardly be able to tell the difference."

"The digital age made the organ a possibility," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, "but the generosity of Lynn and Dale McBrier made it a reality and we are indeed grateful." Lynn's mother, Jeanne McSherry Blum, died on May 31, 2013 and Lynn and Dale chose to remember her with this gift. "I can't tell you what it means to me to know that my mother's spirit is helping to create such magnificent music in the Mount chapel," said Lynn. "It is so significant and spiritual for me and I am the one who is indeed grateful."

In Memoriam



Sister Phyllis Weaver, OSB

November 11, 1923 - December 15, 2014

Perpetual Monastic Profession

August 21, 1946



Gracious God,
our sister, Phyllis, has found her peace in you.

She was a woman of deep and abiding faithfulness:
to prayer and conversion, community and friends,
teachers and students, guests and family.

Attuned to the pulse of Benedictinism
the common good was her concern
and hospitality was her gift.

She was persevering in all pursuits
and unwavering in her commitment
to the monastic way of life.

Phyllis knew her mind
and was fearless in speaking her truth.
Present and active, attentive and steadfast,
she was painstaking in her attention to detail,
earnest in her offering of affirmation,
and sincere in her expression of gratitude
to one and all and for things big and small.

We mourn the passing of this elder
while rejoicing in the glory that is hers,
now and forever. Amen

*. . . 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.*

—*Rule of Benedict: Prologue 49*

Sister Phyllis Weaver

Sister Phyllis Weaver, OSB, 91, and in the 71st year of religious life, died on December 15, 2014, at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, surrounded by sisters and family members.

A native of Sharon, Pennsylvania, Sister Phyllis was the daughter of Paul and Theresa (Rhing) Weaver. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1941, pronounced her perpetual monastic vows in 1946, and most recently celebrated her Jubilee of 70 years in 2013.

Sister Phyllis held a B.S. in Education from Villa Maria College and an M.A. in Elementary and Secondary Administration from Notre Dame University. She had permanent certification in elementary education; secondary education in English, Latin, French and Spanish, and in secondary administration. For more than 50 years she used her gifts in education, both as teacher and administrator, at the following schools: St. Mary, Cathedral Preparatory School, St. Benedict Academy and Sarah Reed Children's Center (Erie); Immaculate Conception (Clarion); Sacred Heart and St. Joseph (Sharon); St. Gregory (North East); Venango Christian (Oil City).

In 1994, Sister Phyllis began a new ministry as Hospitality Coordinator at the monastery, a position she held until 2010. For 16 years she arranged accommodations for hundreds of visitors and showed them the heart of Benedictine welcome. Her faithfulness to the monastic way of life was steady and sure and she was keenly interested in all matters relating to community, church, city, nation and world.

Sister Phyllis was preceded in death by her parents, her sisters, Margaret Mealka and Florence Cattron, and brother, Paul Weaver. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her sister, Mary Libertin (Nicholas), many nieces and nephews and their children, as well as good friends in the Shaw family.

What is more delightful than the voice of the Holy One calling to us? See how God's love shows us the way of life.

—*Rule of Benedict: Prologue 19-20*

Sister Audrey Berdis

Sister Audrey Berdis, OSB, 74, died on Monday, January 26, 2015, after a two day illness, and surrounded by her sisters in community and members of her family.

Born to Joseph and Mary Ann (Janosik) Berdis on December 18, 1940, Sister Audrey was a native of Holy Family Parish in Erie. She attended the parish school and St. Benedict Academy. Sister Audrey entered the School Sisters of Saint Francis in Pittsburgh in 1958, pronounced her perpetual vows in 1965, and celebrated her silver jubilee in 1985. In 1992, after discerning a call to the monastic way of life, she began the process of transferring her vows. Sister Audrey was fully incorporated into the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1995 and celebrated her golden jubilee in 2010.

Sister Audrey held several degrees: B.S., education, Carlow College, Pittsburgh; M.S., education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; M.A., administration, University of Dayton, Ohio; M.S., counseling psychology, Gannon University, Erie. She also participated in numerous workshops, seminars and retreats in support of professional, personal and spiritual development. For many years she served as elementary principal and teacher in the Pittsburgh and Erie dioceses, eventually returning to Erie to become principal of Holy Family School in 1984. Sister Audrey's ministry to others through social services in Erie began with her directorship of Hope House for Women, 1989-1993. From 1994-95 she worked as a counselor at Mercy Center for Women. She served as a counselor and treatment specialist at Community House, Inc. until 1996 when she became a counselor and case manager at St. Benedict Education Center. In 2007 Sister Audrey began her ministry as service coordinator at Benetwood Apartments, the ministry in which she was serving at the time of her death.

Sister Audrey's interests extended to other areas, including healthy living, exercise, outdoor activities and travel. She visited the Mission of Friendship in Merida, Yucatán, Mexico and spent some time in South Africa. Most recently, she was involved in the revival of the Stillpoint Contemplative Prayer Days at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. Sister Audrey was a gentle woman who served others with kindness, care and compassion. She enjoyed life fully and was enriched by the bonds of community and family. Her ever-present delight in God's goodness endeared her to many.

In addition to her parents, Sister Audrey was preceded in death by 6 of her 13 siblings: Eleanor Tarasovitch, Mildred Merski, Sister Eileen, OSF, Joseph, Francis, and Thomas. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her community of origin, the School Sisters of St. Francis (Pittsburgh), seven brothers and sisters: Lawrence, Rev. Donald, James (Barbara), Robert, Sister Kevin, OSF, Ann Krauza (Paul), and Jean Abate (Frank), and numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.



Sister Audrey Berdis, OSB

December 18, 1940 - January 26, 2015

Profession and Monastic Incorporation

August 5, 1965 and November 18, 1995



Gracious and Loving God,
you have called to yourself our sister, Audrey,
a seeker with a contemplative spirit and open heart.

Audrey danced through life
and delighted in your presence.
She recognized you in people and places,
and found you in friendships and fun.
She knew contentment in the routine of the daily
and joy in the surprise of unexpected pleasures.

Her life was full:
engagement in ministry enlivened her,
time with family enriched her,
love of community empowered her.

Audrey's unexpected death reminds us
to be present to each moment
and to respond to any and all situations
with gratitude, wonder, inner strength and love.

May we who hold dear her memory
find peace in you, O God,
the source of our faith and the answer to our hope,
both now and forever. Amen!



Sister Claire Hudert, OSB

August 17, 1943 - January 26, 2015

Perpetual Monastic Profession

March 23, 1968



God of wholeness and plenty, our sister, Claire,
 having walked the earth with buoyant love,
 even step, and open smile,
 has found her completion in you.

We imagine her kissing eternity
 with lightheartedness and laughter,
 all the while reveling in abundant blessing
 with wonder and awe, spontaneity and simplicity.

Claire viewed people and things through a lens of beauty,
 extending a welcome that sparkled with acceptance
 and a hospitality that glimmered with love.
 Her wisdom was beyond measure, her passion was deep;
 her patience was admirable, her charm was endearing.

May we reverence her memory
 and uphold the teaching she has entrusted to our care:
 engage life with enthusiasm,
 enrich thought with insight,
 uplift kindness with compassion,
 so that in all things and all manner of being,
 God may indeed be glorified.
 Amen!

... let us set out on this way with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see the Holy One "who has called us to the eternal presence" (1 Thes 2:12).

— *Rule of Benedict: Prologue 21*

Sister Claire Hudert

Sister Claire Hudert, OSB, 71, died on Monday, January 26, 2015, unexpectedly in spite of an extended illness, surrounded by her sisters in community and members of her family.

Born August 17, 1943, in Baltimore, MD, and baptized Elaine Claire, Sister Claire was the third child of J. Anthony, Sr. and Helen (Sramek) Hudert. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Bristow, Virginia in 1961 and pronounced her perpetual monastic vows in 1968. In 1982 she discerned the decision to transfer from her community of origin to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and was fully incorporated in 1985. She celebrated her silver jubilee in 1988 and her golden jubilee in 2013.

Sister Claire held an A.A. in Liberal Arts, Marymount University, Arlington, VA, a B.A. in Mathematics and Spanish, Carlow College, Pittsburgh, PA, and an M.A. in Theology, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN. She began her teaching ministry in 1965 and taught in both elementary and secondary education. She was also a Director of Religious Education before coming to Erie where she taught at St. Benedict Academy from 1984-88. In 1988 Sister Claire began her work as a missionary in the diocesan-sponsored Mission of Friendship in Merida, Yucatán, Mexico. There she taught basic reading and math to women who had not had the opportunity for education. Upon returning to the United States Sister Claire became the associate director of the Mission Office of the Erie Diocese in 1990. In 1993 she resumed her hands-on missionary work at the Mission of Friendship until 1997 at which time she became the director of the Office of Healing Ministries in the Diocese of Erie. She returned to the classroom in 2004 and taught theology as an Adjunct Lecturer at Gannon University, Erie. A chaplaincy position at Polk State Center, Franklin, PA enticed her in 2006 and Sister Claire began her work with mentally challenged adults, teaching them about Jesus and about how much God loves them. She was engaged in this ministry at the time of her death.

For Sister Claire ministry was love in action. Her various ministries provided her with challenges and opportunities to show God's love through actions: in teaching, feeding, healing, listening, assisting, supporting, comforting. It pleased her no end to provide direct service to people that she preferred not to call poor but rather, "people who live humbly." For Sister Claire the word poor suggested that someone is less because they have less. Through her ministries she touched the lives of many "people who live humbly" and to them, her many students, her community, her family and her friends, she brought the special gift of light and laughter, spontaneity and joy.

Sister Claire was predeceased by her parents. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her ten siblings: Joseph, Regina Corcoran (Richard), Carl (Becka), Anthony (Cynthia), Elizabeth Watkins, Marianne Hudert, Linda Spach-Korepta, Cathleen Shutt (Michael), Christopher (Peggy) and David (Caroline), and many nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

If we wish to dwell in God's tent, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds.

— *Rule of Benedict: Prologue 22*

Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub, OSB

Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub, OSB, 86, formerly Sister Mary Jane, died unexpectedly on April 21, 2015 at UPMC Hamot, Erie, Pennsylvania.

A native of Erie, Sister Mary Therese was the daughter of Louis and Gertrude (Rastatter) Eichenlaub. She was a 1947 graduate of St. Benedict Academy and entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie the same year from St. Mary Parish. Her celebration of first vows in 1948 was followed by perpetual monastic profession in 1951. Having marked the milestones of 25, 50 and 60 years of vowed life, Sister Mary Therese was in the 68th year of her religious life at the time of her death.

Sister Mary Therese held a B.A. in Education from Villa Maria College and spent 25 years in elementary education, three of which were in administration. Her teaching assignments in the Diocese of Erie included: St. Gregory, North East; St. Stephen, Oil City; Immaculate Conception, Clarion; Sacred Heart and St. Joseph, Sharon; and St. Mary, Erie. In 1970 Sister Mary Therese began studies in cosmetology and after receiving her operator's license in 1972 she pursued her teaching certification and taught at the Wil-Mar Beauty Salon before becoming a full time hair stylist in 1973. At a time when this type of work was most unusual for a religious woman Sister Mary Therese recognized it as a very special ministry and an opportunity to live the Gospel by being attentive to her clients through conversation and a listening presence. She loved the challenge and creativity that the work afforded her and did it happily for more than 40 years. Sister Mary Therese also worked for a number of years as a staff member in the Business Office at Mount Saint Benedict. Most recently, she was a monastery receptionist, greeting guests and answering the phone, a ministry in which she served until the time of her death.

Sister Mary Therese understood that a little kindness can go a long way and she never stopped looking for ways to help others. Her most recent outreach included donating a large collection of Beanie Babies to UPMC Hamot to become gifts of comfort for children undergoing medical procedures. She also made a weekly trip to the UPMC Hamot Surgery Center to collect "disposable" socks that she laundered, bagged and distributed to guests and clients at both Emmaus Ministries and St. Benedict Education Center.

In addition to her parents, Sister Mary Therese was preceded in death by her brother Robert and his wife, Rita, and her brother Jack. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her brother Richard (Patricia, deceased), her sister Katherine Nuber (James) and many nieces and nephews and their children to whom she was their beloved Aunt Mamie.



Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub, OSB

April 25, 1928 - April 21, 2015

Perpetual Monastic Profession

August 20, 1951



God of Wonder and Surprise,
our sister, Mary Therese, left us quickly and quietly,
without fuss or fanfare, as would have been her wish.

Mary Therese was as steadfast
as she was determined,
as strong as she was sensitive,
as capable as she was creative.
Her generosity knew no limits;
her thoughtfulness thrived on giving.
She took pleasure in reaching out
to the young and the old,
the defenseless and the vulnerable.

With enduring fortitude and bold candor
she exhibited stamina and resilience in the face of hardship,
and rejoiced in opportunities for celebration and fun.

Let us hold close the memory of this woman
whose devotion to community and family
was shown with attentive care and boundless love.

May her example of good deeds
inspire us to be unwavering in our effort
to do what is right and good, always and in all ways. Amen.

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

BY MARY JANE VERGOTZ, OSB,
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AND
M. DIANE COOK, OSB, TREASURER

Saint Benedict's 6th century message is echoed in the message Pope Francis directs to women and men religious in our time. It is a message for all people who desire to live in the love of Christ and with the joy of the Gospel. Saint Benedict directs us to "speak the truth with heart and tongue" while Pope Francis asks us to "wake up the world." During these turbulent times in our nation and throughout the world we are asked to act in new ways to create an environment where all are received as Christ and where our actions reflect the common good.



The Benedictine Sisters, with the help our faithful supporters, have worked since 1856 to be witnesses of "a different way of doing things." When our sisters first arrived in Erie from St Marys, PA, recent German immigrants welcomed and supported them by arranging for housing and food. Our older members recall stories about the financial struggles the community faced along with most people in our country, especially during the Great Depression and World War II. People shared food with the sisters and helped with transportation despite rationing of gasoline. These faithful people were there when we needed their help. They indeed "spoke the truth with heart and tongue."

How do we describe a "different way of doing things" in more recent times? Perhaps it is in the financial support given by our donors throughout the country and beyond or through volunteerism at our ministries. Perhaps it is seen through the Liturgy of the Hours, our daily prayer for you and all people around the world. Perhaps it is experienced through our mutual relationships when we spend time together. Perhaps it is present when you visit the monastery, our homes or our ministry sites. Perhaps it is experienced in ways that cannot be captured in words.

Since 1856 we, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, have committed ourselves to live the monastic way of life under the guidance of our Prioress with the Rule of Benedict and Scripture as our guides. We have benefited from your love, generosity and kindness as you touch our lives in so very many ways. We hope we model "a different way of acting" as we attempt to "speak the truth with heart and tongue."

May God bless you for your kindness and generosity.



Sister Audrey Steff (center) with Joseph and Janice Gruenwald

"Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else. You are not to act in anger or nurse a grudge. Rid your heart of all deceit. Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love. Bind yourself to no oath lest it prove false, but speak the truth with heart and tongue."
—Rule of Benedict, Chapter 4, written in the 6th century



Sister Anne Wambach with Tom Loftus

“Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world.” — Pope Francis, to leaders of religious orders in 2014



Sister Mary Louis Eichenlaub (left) with Therese Walter

Operating Income

We are pleased to report that our overall operating income increased by 7% from the previous year. This increase is attributed to the gains in investment activity and in sisters' stipends/salaries. Overall income from development activities decreased, as 2013 restricted pledges/gifts for the renovation of the community/dining room were completed in that budget year. In 2014 our bequest income was lower than in 2013 when we received a larger number of bequests. Development income from our annual programs increased by 13% over the previous year. Sisters' stipends and salaries from their ministries, social security and pensions continue to be the majority of our income followed by investment activity and development income.

Our long-standing donors have been joined by many new supporters who believe in the Benedictine Sisters and our good works. They continue to respond when we ask for help or wish to remember those who have died or are celebrating special occasions or for reasons unknown to us.

Operating Expenses

In 2014 our overall operating expenses increased by 9% from the previous year. Payroll expenses increased due to staffing changes in the provision of health care services at the monastery and increases in employee health care costs. Members' personal expenses also increased due to the rising cost of food, supplies, and medical care. On a positive note, administration expenses were reduced and property, building and transportation expenses decreased due to lower gasoline costs and a decrease in the cost of utilities.

Summary

Once again we are able to report that our overall financial standing continues to be favorable. We completed the 2014 fiscal year with our operating income exceeding our operating expenses. We ended the year in the black due to careful management of our budget and the continued good will and financial support of our donors. The community is committed to finding ways to cut or maintain our costs wherever possible. Our investment strategy continues to provide ongoing income for our operational budget as well as support for our retired sisters. According to the National Religious Retirement Office, we are 77% underfunded to meet our future retirement needs, a slight decrease from 2013. We continue to study our retirement needs while working to identify additional funding streams.

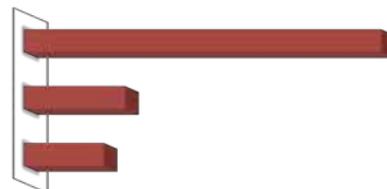
Development Income

Annual Programs	350,346.00	52%
Unrestricted Gifts	77,620.00	12%
Restricted Gifts	242,333.00	36%
Total	670,299.00	



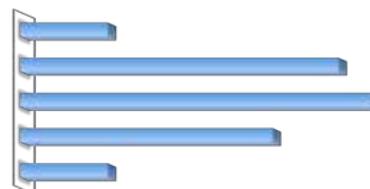
Benedictine Sisters of Erie Operating Income

Sisters' Stipends/Salaries	2,257,799.00	67%
Development/Gifts	670,299.00	19%
Other	515,593.00	15%
Income before Investment Activity	3,443,691.00	
Investment Activity	811,383.00	
Income after Investment Activity	4,255,074.00	



Operating Expenses

Administration	291,401.00	8%
Members' Personal Expenses	1,048,179.00	29%
Payroll Expenses	1,118,568.00	32%
Property/Buildings/Transportation	806,636.00	23%
Other	283,832.00	8%
Total	3,548,616.00	





Guarding the Nest

Sisters' Photos Win Honorable Mention at ICA Senior Art Show

Sisters Stephanie Schmidt and Patricia Witulski both received Honorable Mention awards in the Senior Art Show sponsored by the Independent Council on Aging (ICA) for their photographs, "Guarding the Nest" and "Celebration," respectively.

The event was open to both professional and amateur artists 55 years and older. Sisters Stephanie and Pat, along with Sisters Ann Muczynski and Lucia Marie Surmik, entered the competition, which included many different types of media: oil painting, acrylic, pencil, watercolor, wood work, stained glass, pottery, and photography. "It is always a thrill to have one's work recognized in a show filled with an abundance of talented artists," said Sister Stephanie. Sister Pat added, "I decided to enter as an amateur photographer. It was a delightful surprise to see an Honorable Mention Ribbon hanging on the frame of the photo."



Celebration

"Out of the Grid" by Oblate Barbara Hauck Wins Award of Distinction

When the American Association of University Women (AAUW) sent out a request for art submissions for its 2015 notecards, Oblate Barbara J. Hauck submitted a handwoven piece entitled "Out of the Grid." A nominating committee chose 50 submissions out of several hundred received; general membership then voted on these 50 to select six for publication, including "Out of the Grid."

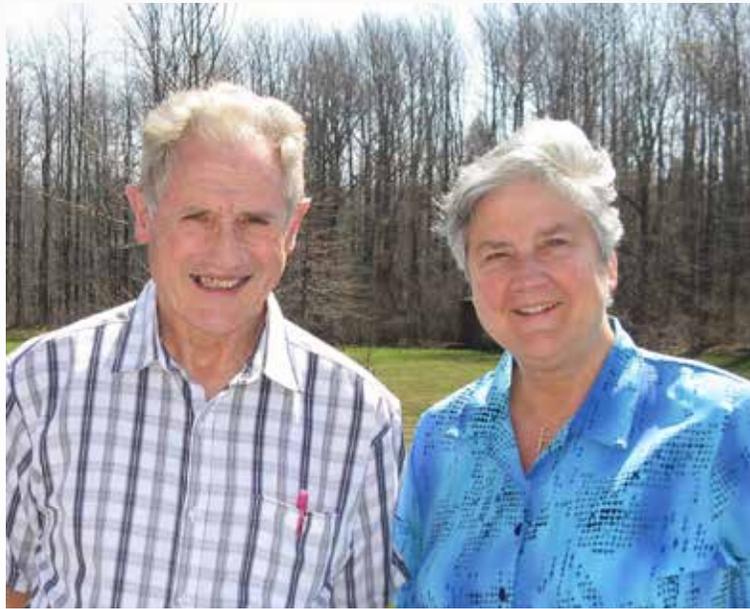
The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, DC, then selected "Out of the Grid" for its Award of Distinction "Many years ago I had a dream that I was standing on a high hill throwing doughnuts to the world," said Barbara. "It was a metaphor for my desire to simply make art for the sheer joy of it. I'm blessed to be honored."

"Out of the Grid" was created by painting the warp (lengthwise threads wound on to the loom) before it was woven. "I manipulated it with weaving, wrapping and tapestry techniques," explained Barbara. "The piece's name alludes to the fact that weaving is, in effect, a grid but I am attempting to break that limitation through paint and manipulation."

Barbara also teaches weaving at the Neighborhood Art House.



Out of the Grid



Michael DeSanctis and “The Enduring Power of Beauty”

“Beauty in art is soul-baring. Thank you for sharing your soul with us,” said Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Director of Monastic Formation, to Dr. Michael DeSanctis at the end of his lecture on “The Enduring Power of Beauty.” The presentation was part of the ongoing Enrichment Series sponsored by the Erie Benedictines as a means of sharing educational and inspirational opportunities with the larger community.

Using contributions from a variety of artists and media including photographs, sculpture, architecture and paintings, Dr. DeSanctis, professor of fine arts and theology at Gannon University, engaged the audience in a reflection on the power that beauty can have in a world where ugliness and violence seem to surface at every turn. In addition, Dr. DeSanctis shared a number of significant quotes from artists through the centuries to show how art encourages deeper seeing and feeling, rediscovers what is necessary for humanness and invites the transformation of the human person.

A Day with Diarmuid O’Murchu

In his presentations at the annual Spring Community Weekend, Diarmuid O’Murchu, a gifted teacher and long-time student of such evolutionary pioneers as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Brian Swimme, discussed how certain concepts from quantum theory may point to deep spiritual truths about relationships.

“We are at all times the sum of our relationships,” he said. “That is what defines our identity. We must rediscover and reclaim the deep connections with all of creation and grow more deeply into them.”

Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Director of Monastic Formation, expressed the community’s gratitude to Diarmuid: “You have called us to be an empowering presence in thought, word and deed; you have invited us to new ways of relating to God and all of creation and I thank you.”

“Diarmuid challenged us to be adult people of faith who recognize that we are called to relate with all of creation in such a way that we recognize the Reign of God as a web of empowering relationships” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “I go away with a deepened understanding and desire to re-discover, re-claim and grow more deeply into those relationships.”

A member of the Sacred Heart Missionary Order and a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, O’Murchu is a social psychologist who has facilitated programs on Adult Faith Development in many countries throughout the world.



In conclusion Dr. DeSanctis emphasized, “Everything has a beautiful underside. An understanding of that can lead to an appreciation of the enduring power of beauty.”

Next Enrichment Series: A one-man, one-act presentation of the spiritual journey of writer-monk Thomas Merton by actor and playwright James Nagle on Monday, July 20, 2015, 7:00 p.m. at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. Further details will be announced on the community web site, eriebenedictines.org. The event is free and open to the public.



L-R Ed Kissell, S.O.N.S. Vice President, Sister Anne Wambach, Jerry Skrypzak, President

S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie Honored with 2015 Prophet of Peace Award

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie presented their 2015 Prophet of Peace Award to the S.O.N.S. (Save Our Native Species) of Lake Erie Fishing Club for their extraordinary efforts to improve fishing on Lake Erie and its Pennsylvania tributaries. Their dedication to promoting the growth and health of the Lake Erie Fishery has resulted in a contribution that is both significant and far-reaching. Their work is indeed a pursuit of justice and peace that is rooted in reverence and respect for all of God's creation.

"This award recognizes an individual or group that embodies some aspect of the community's corporate commitment and its concerns for prophetic witness, peace and justice, sustainability, and the needs of women and children," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "By their very example and their efforts, the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie stand before us as an example of what prophets do: call attention to central and pressing issues of their day."

The S.O.N.S. received the award at a special Evening Prayer held at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery on the feast of St. Scholastica, February 10, with a reception following. President of the organization, Jerry Skrypzak, who accepted the award along with Vice President, Ed Kissell, expressed how honored the group was to be chosen: "Wow! I don't think there are any words to express what I am feeling right now . . . thank you for this great honor. It is our pleasure to accept it for doing something we love."

Executive Director at SBEC Named

Nancy Sabol, MA, was named executive director of St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC) just before the new calendar year began. This ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie has a broad-based mission to meet the social, spiritual, economic, educational and vocational needs in a wide range of persons, including a large population of refugees. Nancy, an oblate of the community, is a native of Erie with a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology. She succeeds Sister Christine Vladimiroff who served as executive director from 2010 until her death last September. The selection was made after a regional search and selection process.



"We are very pleased that Nancy has accepted this position," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "She will bring leadership and creativity to the programs at SBEC and a deep sense of commitment to this Benedictine ministry. Her previous work with a non-profit organization owned by a religious community, as well as her commitment to Benedictine values through the Oblate Way of Life, gives her a singular breadth of perspective and experience."

Nancy's background uniquely qualifies her for this position. For 30 years Nancy worked at Gannondale, a human service provider and non-profit agency owned by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity. She served in a variety of leadership positions, including 10 years as Executive Director. "Nancy has proven her ability to lead effectively, both internally with staff and externally in inter-agency networking and collaboration," said Sister Anne. "I am confident that she will represent SBEC well in the broader community and with government offices and agencies."

Upon accepting the position, Nancy noted, "I look forward to continuing to serve and partner with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in this new capacity. I have a long history of working with women religious to promote mutually held beliefs. I have a passion for mission and a strong belief in the ministry of the Erie Benedictines."

Eliminate Fracking in Pennsylvania Now

Sisters Lucia Marie and Claire Marie Surmik, along with Sister Pat Lupo, were part of the Erie contingency that traveled to Harrisburg as anti-fracking activists on the day of the new governor's inauguration. "We joined over 300 people from across the state in a rally to get our message out," said Sister Claire Marie. "Fracking must be eliminated in Pennsylvania."

The activists urged Governor Wolf to follow the example of New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo and stop fracking now. Hydraulic fracturing, abbreviated "fracking," is the process of drilling and injecting fluid into the ground at a high pressure in order to fracture shale rocks to release the natural gas inside at the price of numerous environmental, safety and health hazards. After the march the group met at Grace United Methodist Church to plan future strategies to help achieve a moratorium on fracking in Pennsylvania.



L-R Sisters Claire Marie Surmik, Pat Lupo, Lucia Marie Surmik



Come to the party!

The Inner-City Neighborhood Art House (NAH) is celebrating its 20th Anniversary on July 12 from Noon – 3:00 p.m. Come to the party at the NAH, 201 East 10th Street, Erie. Enjoy the music of Tennessee Back Porch as well as games, activities and displays depicting 20 years of service to Erie's inner-city children. Birthday cake and ice cream sundaes will be served.

For more information call Sister Annette Marshall, Executive Director, at 455-5508.

From the
Director

By Ann Comstock, Oblate

*“We’ll always come to thee again,
when Alma Mater calls”*

Reunions

Class of 1960 55th Class Reunion

Saturday, July 18

Picnic at Glinodo Conference Center
6270 East Lake Rd, Erie, PA

Noon until ?

Cost \$35 per person includes food and non-alcoholic beverages

RSVP June 1, 2015

Sunday, July 19

Liturgy at 9:30 a.m.

Mount St. Benedict Monastery

Contact: Carolyn Peters McLean
716-213-3768
carolyn.p.mclean@gmail.com

We want to hear from you! Class reunions every five years are a tradition with SBA alumnae. We will gladly include information regarding your reunion on our website. Send us the facts and we’ll post them as soon as we get them. We’ll send you an updated class list from our database and a set of mailing labels. Please provide us with any follow up stories and photos (digital, please) you might wish to share and we will post them on our website (eriebenedictines.org/sba-alum). Classes who are planning reunions are eligible to receive a \$35 check to help defray mailing costs. We ask that you provide us with new or updated addresses for the database. It is one of the best ways we have to keep in touch.

Please contact Ann Comstock. Call 814-899-0614 ext.2573 or contact by email at: sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org

Please visit our Website

Visit ErieBenedictines.org/sba-alum for event updates and to download sign-up forms, or send your email address to Alumnae Director Ann Comstock at sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org to receive electronic reminders and sign-ups. If you don’t use email, write to Ann at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA, 16511. Whenever you see or hear about SBA alumnae being honored or highlighted for their achievements, let us know. Clip an article or jot down the details then call, write or email us the information so we can share the news with all our members.



Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Carolyn F. Steiner	‘44
Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub, OSB ..	‘47
Dolores R. Ulecki	‘52
Nona Pikiewicz Horton	‘53
Mary Jo Kraut Polatas	‘53
Barbara Sislowski Ester	‘54
Loretta K. Kaczmarek Konieczko	‘54
Nancy Henderson Ranus	‘57
Sister Audrey Berdis, OSB	‘58
Susan Shank Wagner	‘60
Susan Kowalski Yonko	‘61
Patricia Ann Adams Rizzo	‘61
Camille Marie Laniewicz Hess	‘61
Gloria Jean Kubeja Kopycinski	‘63
Rosemary McNamara Kephart	‘63
Patricia Adams Weigel	‘64
Patricia Bayer Neimeic	‘64
Sue Farina Bernardini	‘74
Cynthia A. Shauberger Carson	‘77
Mary Christine Lamb	‘79
Carrie J. Duda Roth	‘89
Margaret Riazzi Kightlinger	

Scholarship Winners 2015-2016

We are very pleased to announce that 20 scholarships of \$250 each were awarded to relatives of SBA alumnae who will attend Catholic schools, grades K through 12, for the 2015-2016 school year. This program has contributed over \$61,000 in support of Catholic education since it began in 1991. The alumnae association is pleased to show our support for Catholic education through these scholarships.

Scholarship Winners

Student	Alumnae Member	Relationship	School
Michael Bevan	Janet Hammond	Nephew	Cathedral Prep
Caelyn Frances Cole	Ruth Falconer Fox	Granddaughter	Immaculate Conception School
Dylan Schley	Mary Jo Schley	Son	St. James School
Sammy Tojaga	Kathy Polito	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Allison & Abby Koca	Bonnie Prokocki	Grandchildren	St. Luke School
Abigail Whitman	Mary Beth Whitman	Daughter	Villa Maria Academy
Ethan J. Taraski	Judith Ruland	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Claire Ropelewski	Rose Marie Ropelewski	Granddaughter	Mercyhurst Prep
Hannah Marchant	Mary Ann Marchant	Daughter	Mercyhurst Prep
Dylan Danch	Margie Glass	Great nephew	St. George School
Lilly Pinzok	Barbara Dulin	Grandniece	St. Boniface School
Aiden Bowes	Anne Shiel	Grandson	Our Lady of Peace School
Emily Bahm	Rita Bahm	Granddaughter	Mercyhurst Prep
Spencer Staab	Janice Shaffer	Nephew	Cathedral Prep
Adriana M Post	Sandra Kempisty	Cousin	Villa Maria Academy
Alexis Brabender	Mary Ann Brabender	Niece	Mercyhurst Prep
Isabella Bruni	Pat D'Annibale	Grandniece	St. James School
Sara R. Durst	Linda Mish	Granddaughter	St. George School
Rosalind Roark	Amy Roark	Daughter	St. Dominic School
Madeline Welch	Doreen Welch	Daughter	Villa Maria Academy

Mark Your 2015 Calendar

- 
6/14 Sunday, June 14
 - Sunset Boulevard**
 - Erie Playhouse
 - 13 West 10th Street
 - Erie, PA
 - Cost: \$22

- 
6/24 Wednesday, June 24
 - Hoss's SBA Fundraiser (all day)**
 - Hoss's Restaurant
 - 3302 West 26th Street
 - Erie, PA

- 
7/18 Saturday, July 18
 - Class of 1960 55th Class Reunion (Noon until?)**
 - Glinodo Conference Center
 - 6270 East Lake Road
 - Erie, PA

- 
8/19 Wednesday, August 19
 - SBA Alumnae Outing – Buck Night**
 - Jerry Uht Park
 - Erie, PA
 - Gates open at 6:00 p.m.

- 
12/1 Tuesday, December 1
 - SBA Christmas Party**
 - Ambassador Conference Center
 - 7792 Peach Street
 - Erie, PA

Saint Benedict Academy Winter Wonderland Tuesday, December 2, 2014

"Once again, the St. Benedict Academy Alum Christmas Party was a huge success," said Ann Comstock, SBA Alum director and one of the coordinators of the favorite annual event. The Ambassador Conference Center in Erie was the setting for the 420 women who gathered for the 2014 party with its "Winter Wonderland," theme. Classmates, friends, teachers and sisters had the opportunity to catch up with each other and enjoy a festive, holiday evening. One attendee shared, "I love the spirit of this party and this group of women. I look forward to it every year."

Monies raised from the Gift Baskets Raffle (125 in all) provided a generous donation to the Saint Benedict Child Development Center, a Benedictine inner-city ministry where a staff of 40 full and part-time teachers manages daycare, head start for migrant children, and infant care programs.



Katie Shewan Young '87, current President of the Saint Benedict Academy Alumnae Association (left) with Sister Diane Rabe (right) and children from the Center.



"SPIRIT OF SBA"
IS ALIVE AND WELL.



“with friends we never can forget”

Now's the time to order your SBA apparel and support our Alumnae Association.



ANTI-PILL FLEECE FULL-ZIP JACKET

- 8.5 oz, square/13.75 oz, 100% anti-pill polyester
- Sturdy non-rust full zipper
- Convertible collar
- Oversized nylon reinforced slash zipper pockets
- Elasticized cuffs and hem
- Color- Navy



ANTI-PILL FLEECE FULL-ZIP VEST

- 8.5 oz, square/13.75 oz, 100% anti-pill polyester
- Sturdy full-zip with dyed-to-match zipper pull
- Convertible collar
- Oversized nylon reinforced side pockets
- Elasticized hem
- Color- Navy



RECYCLED SUPER FEATURE TOTE with SBA logo

- Measures: 15"W x 13"H x 4"D
- 600 denier polyester, 50% recycled
- Zippered main compartment
- Adjustable Straps
- Contoured main front pocket
- Gusseted side front pockets
- Compartments for water bottles and cell phones as well as pen loops
- 8" x 9" inside hanging pocket
- Hanging ring for keys
- Color-matched hardware

SBA ORDER FORM:

For multiple orders, please copy this form and send together with your order. Additional order forms available on line at: eriebenedictines.org/sba-alum.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Jacket: Size _____ Price _____

Vest: Size _____ Price _____

Tote: Color _____ Price _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Remember, these are unisex sizes and tend to run large.

Unisex Sizes and Pricing:

Jacket:	(S-XL)	\$40
	(2X)	\$42
	(3X)	\$44
Vest:	(S-XL)	\$35
	(2X)	\$37
	(3X)	\$39
Tote:		\$15



Payment must accompany order. Make checks payable to: SBA Alumnae Association

Local orders may be picked up at SBEC – the old SBA Academy at 330 E. 10th Street at the main office.

Orders requiring shipment: Please call Ann Comstock: 814-899-0614 X2573 or email her at sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org for shipping charges.

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery
6101 East Lake Road
Erie, PA 16511-1599

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The Mount



Wake the world with dawning joy!
Wake it with your gladness!
Work for justice, live in peace,
claim the Word courageous!
Let us sing to God this new day,
see the world in a different way.
Let us wake the world, wake the world,
with abiding words of faith.

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