

Spring/Summer 2017

the Mount

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE



**Let us open our eyes to the light that can
change us into the likeness of God.**

— Rule of Benedict, Prologue 9 (Translation by Patrick Barry, OSB)

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Open yourself to the light . . .

Isn't the cover of the magazine glorious? For me it captures the essence of this issue of *The Mount*. The articles, reflections, photos, reports, updates, happenings—the wealth of content would not exist if there had not been an openness to the “light,” an openness to God, to others, to the world. Benedict tells us in the Rule that openness to the light can change us, in fact, does change us so that we, too, can effect change. Openness to the light allows us to then be light for others, a presence and a power that can transform situations, offer acceptance and respect, extend comfort and care, and bring clarity to ideas and dreams, imagination and vision.

For Benedictines, openness to the light that is God empowers us to be passionate about making a difference through a meaningful life, one that understands the importance of love and kindness. As lecturer and author Barbara DeAngelis says: “Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless the one who gives them.”

This magazine reflects the efforts and hopes of a group of women who embrace the monastic way by seeking God, the Light, in the communal life and responding in prayer and ministry. It shows how those associated with us as oblates, friends, benefactors, employees and volunteers, and through Monasteries of the Heart, are choosing to live Benedictine values. Through awareness of God, hospitality and welcome, reverence for all of creation, peace and justice efforts, truthful living and a commitment to the common good, all of us together are making a difference one moment, one day at a time.

May this issue of *The Mount* inspire you to open your heart to the light, open your heart to God, open your heart to your neighbor. Experience how it can change you; experience how it can change the world in which we live.

*Let us open our eyes to the light that can
change us into the likeness of God.*

—Rule of Benedict, Prologue 9 (Translation by Patrick Barry, OSB)

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Front Cover Photo: Lucia Marie Surmik, OSB

Back Cover Photo: Susan Doubet, OSB

From the Prioress

Kindness, always kindness

It's not easy writing about kindness. It's like trying to write about love, friendship, compassion, peace or even about anger, war or failure. They are such universal experiences and cross the borders of historical eras, genders, cultures, classes and even religions that countless poets, philosophers and writers of all persuasions have written about them. And most of us ponder—or at least wonder about—their meaning, giving them a special place in our great, curious path through life.

Of the hundreds of thoughts on kindness that I have read and pondered myself, the one that has stayed with me when all the others floated away is, “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”



The fact that the quote is sometimes attributed to Plato, other times to Ian McLaren, is a commentary on its truth: its author could be either man and they lived 22 centuries apart.

I had grown in awareness that “everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle” long before I became prioress. When I was a school teacher and principal I experienced it in obvious situations in some of the battles my colleagues, students or their families were fighting, as well as in the subtle ones, the battles that were fought privately and quietly in many lives.

I am no less certain of the existence of those battles now, when most of my days are spent in interaction with our sisters, oblates and benefactors. They, too, have battles and

they, too, are fighting them mightily, in their own way.

Perhaps Plato or McLaren and any number of wise women and men grew into the awareness that solution seeking, advice offering or judgments are often inadequate and do not necessarily lead to the resolution of these battles. A personal response that is kind—a look, a word, an action that indicates sincere care, sympathy, thoughtfulness or gentleness may be enough to tip the battle to the side of retreat.

For me, there are too many unkind reactions these days in both our personal lives and in the public arena: sharp retorts, nasty replies, bombastic threats or snide putdowns that belittle and embarrass. Kindness is not always the easiest choice—it can be easier to react negatively, to criticize and judge. But we are called to kindness, patience and compassion. For Christians and all people of faith, kindness is a virtue to cultivate, practice and treasure. The struggles and battles we face daily are real. So let us strive to be kind to each other at all times and in all ways.

Anne Wambach, OSB

Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie



We need apostles now

By Mary Ellen Plumb, OSB

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother,
and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
And Jesus was transfigured before them;
his face shone like the sun
and his clothes became white as light . . .

Then Peter said to Jesus,
“It is good that we are here. . . “

While Peter was still speaking, suddenly
a bright cloud overshadowed them,
and from the cloud a voice said,
“This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.”

When the disciples heard this,
they fell to the ground
and were overcome by fear.
But Jesus came and touched them, saying,
“Get up, and do not be afraid.”
And when they looked up,
they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain,
Jesus ordered them,
“Tell no one about the vision
until after the Long-Awaited One
has been raised from the dead.”

Matthew 17: 1-9

I was seven years old and I desperately wanted to be an apostle. I eagerly revealed this to my parents who, after some gentle prodding, learned that my reasoning was simple: I wanted to be an apostle because I wanted to be invited to the mountaintop with Jesus and have a transfiguration experience that might change me, too.

My dad explained, “You know, honey, there is a lot more to becoming an apostle than a few minutes on the top of the mountain with Jesus.” I didn’t get it then. I’m not sure the original apostles got it right away either. But I understand better now.

I have never believed that when Jesus told his beloved apostles not to speak of this spectacular event until after the resurrection, it was simply to keep a great secret. In fact, the more time I spend with this gospel, the more I suspect that what Jesus was trying to tell them was exactly what my dad tried to tell me: it takes a lot more to be an apostle than a few dazzling moments on the mountaintop. It is not what we say about an event, even a dramatic event that matters. It is what we do with what we have come to know and experience that counts.

To become an apostle, to live the gospel in the name of Jesus, demands more courage, strength and wisdom than you might believe possible. Even so, and especially now, we need apostles. In the midst of a cultural, spiritual and moral drought that leaves us feeling helpless and inept, we need apostles.

Simply put, Jesus might well have been telling his apostles—and telling us—, “Don’t speak of what you’ve seen. Instead, do something with it, live it, share it and empower it in yourself and in others. Go, make a difference. Transform the world.”

That's a pretty tall order but it will happen when we

- ✿ show respect to every person in every encounter, being kind again and again and again,
- ✿ listen through the filter of reverent acceptance rather than judgment and suspicion, always with an ear and a heart willing to learn from another's piece of the truth,
- ✿ learn to forgive the smallest slights as well as the largest hurts, having honest conversations and compromising despite our differences,
- ✿ speak words of peace with integrity and compassion in the face of hatred and anger.

It will happen when we

- ✿ speak and act out of our conscience, our values, and our moral integrity, giving voice and action to our determination to end injustice, oppression, war, violence, bullying and hatred in any form,
- ✿ stand strong next to those whose country of origin or ethnic identity is not our own, whose sexual orientation differs from our own, whose faith or religion or deepest convictions do not match our own, and seek to protect their rights and dignity as we would our own,
- ✿ demand equal pay for every woman, authority in church and state for women, insist on affordable health care for all, claim the right to a good education that opens the possibility for a fulfilling future for every single child,
- ✿ and voice these demands again and again, boldly, courageously and with conviction.

It will happen when we

- ✿ alter our lifestyle choices and attitudes to protect the earth and its vast but vulnerable resources, giving away what we do not need and tempering our wants in consideration of those who have little or nothing at all,
- ✿ seek to fill our part of the world with beauty, art and music, giving generously of our time and talent for the sake of others,
- ✿ uphold the dignity of all life, the truth and wisdom of every culture and religion, when we proclaim and celebrate the wonder of all we might become together,
- ✿ direct our own hearts and souls toward goodness and right.

My dad was right. There definitely is a lot more to becoming an apostle than a few dazzling moments on the mountaintop with Jesus. It is what we do with the mountaintop moments that can make the difference. It is how we live life here and now that can transform us and the world in which we live. The one thing I know for certain is this: never has the world needed such apostles more.

Mary Ellen with her dad, Harry Plumb (1928-2012).



WOMEN CHANGING THE WORLD

A DYNAMIC WOMAN NAMED MIRIAM MAKES HISTORY

Sister Miriam McMullen-Pastrick was named among the Dynamic Dozen honored at the Women Making History 2017 annual event sponsored by the Mercy Center for Women and held on April 4. For the past 25 years 12 phenomenal women from Erie County have been recognized each year. Miriam is now counted among them because she, too, has made a difference in the lives of countless people.



“My passion is public speaking,” declares Miriam whenever she describes her life’s work. That life of dedication to communication has taken many forms through the years: high school forensics, speech communication with collegians, and adult learning classes and workshops. This commitment has allowed Miriam to touch the lives of thousands throughout her personal and professional life. Miriam is a born teacher. The academic world of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College has been her teaching home for the past 25 years. Her energy is sparked daily by her dynamic and dedicated students.

As an Erie Benedictine, Miriam supports the community’s corporate commitment to women, both personally and professionally. She has expanded her teaching outside the formal classroom to arenas such as Mercy Center for Women, the Chautauqua Institute, Porreco Center, and the Hamot Health Connection, sharing her knowledge of civility, guided imagery, conflict management, dream analysis and contemplative prayer, and codependency with adult women.

Miriam expressed her gratitude for being chosen as one of the Dynamic Dozen, and said: “I am honored to be one of the women recognized by Mercy Center for Women. Any

success that is mine has resulted from Divine Inspiration, excellent role models and dogged determination.” In addition she shared the wisdom that has inspired her in the form of two specific quotes, one from John Wesley, the other from Joan Chittister:

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.
—John Wesley

Don’t be afraid to speak the truth ... be afraid of what will happen if you do not speak. —Joan Chittister

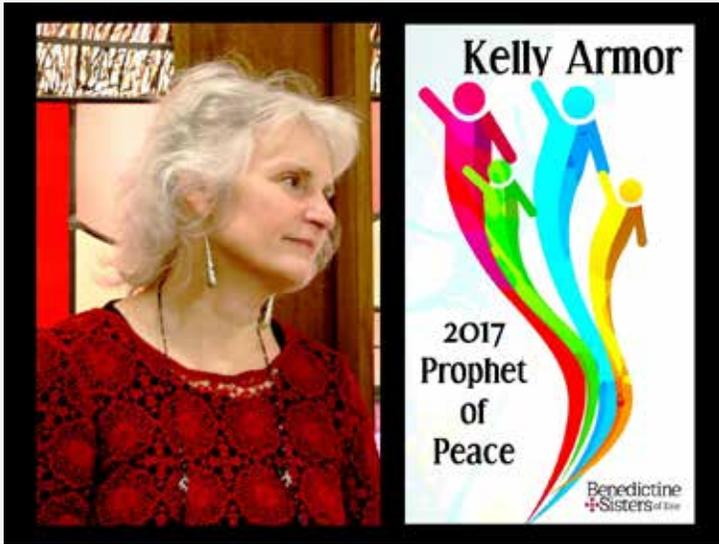
SISTER PAT HAUSE RECEIVES THE GSWA 2017 SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR AWARD



“When you are recognized as being good at something you love it is very humbling,” said Sister Pat Hause when named Social Worker of the Year by the Geriatric Social Workers Association (GSWA). Sister Pat, the administrator of Benetwood Apartments, a government subsidized non-profit facility administered by the community that provides

monastic hospitality to low income, elderly, and disabled persons, was nominated and chosen by her peers.

GSWA is an organization that was formed to foster and enhance professionalism among the nursing home and geriatric health related social workers, case managers and professionals. “Being part of this organization has provided me with support and helped me to be better at work I love doing,” explained Sister Pat. “I will look at this award and feel honored, of course, but mostly I will look at it and see all of the people that I have worked with and all the people that are served through the work that my staff and I do at Benetwood Apartments.”



KELLY ARMOR RECEIVES THE PROPHET OF PEACE AWARD

"I am completely humbled and overwhelmed. To have the Erie Benedictines, to whom I've looked up to since I was in high school, call me a 'strong woman' seems like a dream," said Kelly Armor, recipient of the 2017 Prophet of Peace Award.

"This award recognizes an individual or group that embodies some aspect of the community's corporate commitment and its concerns for peace and justice, sustainability, and the needs of women and children," said Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress. "Kelly has shown that unity can be preserved, and peace can be gained through the recognition and acceptance of difference. She has used her gifts and talents to educate, show reverence and bring different peoples together to help build and maintain a culture of acceptance and love, peace and nonviolence—a culture that forms the foundation of respect and dignity for all and the acceptance of cultural identity and diversity."

Kelly Armor has been a professional folk musician and storyteller and for over 20 years. She is the Folk Art and Education Director at the Erie Art Museum and specializes in Appalachian, Celtic, maritime and East African music, storytelling, songwriting, and instrument making. Kelly has also amassed a collection of over 70 traditional children's songs from refugees now living in Erie. She lived in East

Africa for 2-1/2 years which sparked her love and interest in oral tradition. Kelly is a woman who has used her gifts without hesitation to bring out the best and create the best for others, especially in relationship to the refugee population, the new Americans in the city of Erie.

The annual award was given at a special Evening Prayer held at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery on February 10, with a dinner following. It was the celebration of a woman who knows that to dare more means to receive more and who understands that love has the power to drive out fear.

AN *ERIE-TIMES NEWS* PERSON OF 2016



In early January Sister Marlene Bertke was named one of the *Erie Times News* People of 2016. She was among four honorees who have made and continue to make a lasting and positive impact in the Erie area.

Sister Marlene is recognized as a leading activist for numerous social issues. She helped found the Take Back the Site Vigil program in 1999 and the monthly immigration vigil in 2013. Sister Marlene recently stepped away from being the Benedictines for Peace Coordinator but she has not stepped away from her commitment and participation in social justice activities and BFP-sponsored events. "We are very proud of Sister Marlene's ongoing efforts as a member of Benedictines for Peace," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "Her passion and commitment exemplifies the Benedictine way of life; this honor is well-deserved."

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER



The Benedictine Sisters of Erie have received the 2017 Greater Erie Award from Preservation Erie for developing The Studio at St. Mary's: Space to Create. The 5th annual Greater Erie Awards was held on Thursday, April 27 at the Masonic Temple Ballroom. Sister Mary Miller received the award on behalf

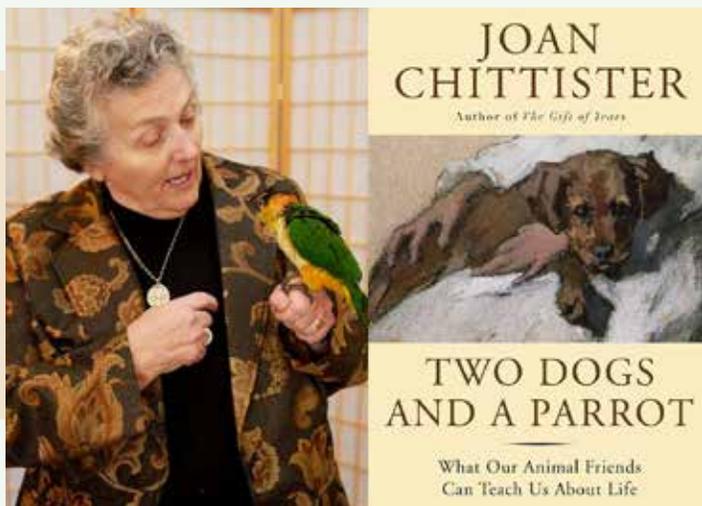
of the community. "The development of "The Studio" has exceeded our expectations," said Erie Benedictine Sister Mary Miller, director of Emmaus Ministries whose Kids' Cafe after-school program is located on the ground floor of the building. "To have such a mixture of creative artists and innovative programs makes it an exhilarating workplace and, more importantly, a vehicle to impact center-city Erie with stability, imagination, creativity, spirituality and beauty. Emmaus' mission has always been to feed the body and feed the soul."



ANOTHER AWARD FOR SISTER PAT LUPO

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie Board of Commissioners recognized Sister Pat Lupo of the Neighborhood Art House for her 18 plus years of service to the youth of public housing. Some of her activities have included raised gardens at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, Ostrow Apartments and Erie Heights, coordinating the yearly International Coastal Clean-up at McDannell Run in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, the development of a wetlands area adjacent to McDannell Run, teaching environment programs to youth and partnering with her youth "Green Team" to develop a recycling program in the John E. Horan garden Apartments.

BEST BOOK OF 2016



Spirituality & Health Magazine named *Two Dogs and a Parrot* by Sister Joan Chittister one of its Best Books of 2016, calling it "a favorite guide for walking the seeker's path." The six books chosen were listed in the January/February 2017 issue. The review notes: "(a) deceptively simple set of lessons that our animal companions can teach us about living in this crowded world."



The Benedictine Sisters of Erie will continue to take action on Climate Change

As prioress I speak for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. We are disheartened and concerned by the announcement of President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, the global agreement to combat Climate Change.

Care for the earth has been integral to the Benedictine Charism since our very foundation in the 6th century. The Erie Benedictines have consciously and deliberately included this responsibility in our community's Corporate Commitment and have taken significant steps. Both as community and as individuals, we have deepened our understanding and been intentional in our actions toward sustainable living.

Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, clearly lays out the crisis that our planet faces and calls all of us, all nations, all religions, all people, to find a common solution to Climate Change. "Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. . . . All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents (*Laudato Si'*, 14)."

The decision of President Trump is deeply disturbing but it strengthens the resolve of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie to be faithful to the responsibility we embraced when we signed the Paris Pledge in November of 2015. We believe that all of creation is sacred and to be revered; to this end we will continue to uphold our commitment to a 50% reduction of carbon pollution by 2030 and to become carbon neutral by 2050.

As individuals, as religious communities, as Church, we must increase our efforts to do what we can. We urge everyone to make his/her/their own commitment to reduce carbon pollution through energy conservation, purchasing electricity from a "green provider," and making use of renewable energy products and sources. If we expect nations to commit to significant energy policies, then we should do so ourselves, at home, in the workplace, in our churches, and in all the places that touch our lives. Now is the time to take decisive steps in our commitment to environmental sustainability. Now is the time to protect our common home. Now is the time to lead by example. "While the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference, (*Laudato Si'*, 179)."

Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress

Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Corporate Commitment

As Benedictine Sisters of Erie we commit ourselves to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children.



BFP—*Benedictines for Peace*

Benedictines are the oldest religious order in the Roman Catholic Church. Born in late antiquity when marauding armies made all civilization vulnerable to violence, Benedictines adopted as their motto the Latin word “pax” (peace). The central teaching in the 1,500 year-old Rule of Benedict is that everyone, including every stranger, is to be welcomed as a blessing and treated as Christ.



Benedictines for Peace (BFP) carries the ancient quest for peace into contemporary times. As the peace and justice outreach of the Erie Benedictine community, BFP members advocate for nonviolence, social change and justice by direct action, prayer and bearing witness.

Benedictines for Peace was organized nationally in 1980 to bring Benedictines to a fresh recognition of their charism of peace. Initially, Benedictines and Cistercian communities formed local groups to address the issues of nuclear disarmament. Today, Benedictines for Peace groups address social justice and peace issues that are of local, state, national and international concern.

Erie Benedictines for Peace works collaboratively with local peace and justice groups, religious communities and universities to address many social justice concerns. Benedictines for Peace also maintains membership in like-minded national organizations.

Take Back the Site

Take Back the Site vigils, 15 minutes in length, are held at the site of any death in the city of Erie that resulted from an act of violence. The vigils are held with the purpose of reclaiming the site for nonviolence with a prayerful presence.



During the vigil prayer is offered for the loved ones of the person who was murdered and for the loved ones of the person who committed the murder. Family, friends, neighbors and those committed to being a presence for peace and non-violence take part in the vigils. The first vigil was held in November 1999. To date there have been 103 TBTS vigils.

Build Bridges Not Walls

Since 2013 BFP has held a Justice for Immigrants vigil on the first Friday of each month. The gathering takes place from 12:15 to 12:45 pm at the federal building in Erie, 6th and State Streets.



New BFP Coordinator

After many years of service as the coordinator of BFP Sister Marlene Bertke handed over the leadership to Sister Anne McCarthy in January, 2017.

The current steering committee includes:
Janice Etchison, Oblate
Katherine Horan, OSB
Kathleen Kutz
Dina Lauricella, OSB
Anne McCarthy, OSB (Coordinator)
Sam Miller
Ann Muczynski, OSB



Stay Connected with BFP

Receive alerts from Benedictines for Peace each time there is a
...Take Back the Site Vigil
...An Immigration Reform Prayer Vigil
...An event or action that BFP is supporting

Visit www.eriebenedictines.org/bfp to read more and sign up.



Women Seeking God

Jessica Chan Varquez

“The community has been blessed yet again by a ‘Riepper’ in our midst,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. Jessica Chan Varquez, age 24, an oblate from Mérida, Mexico, completed her 6 month commitment to the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program in February. “You, Jessica, have been faithful to the process of seeking God through prayer, community and ministry,” said Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Director of Monastic Formation. “We are grateful for the gifts that you have so generously shared with us.” While holding back tears during the simple blessing ceremony that ritualized the end of her time in the program Jessica expressed her gratitude as well: “I thank you for your welcome. I thank you for your hospitality. I love you all.”



program of St. Benedict’s Monastery, St. Joseph, MN, that invites recent College of St. Benedict graduates to travel to another monastic community where they build relationships that support justice and service as they strive to live Benedictine values. This is what Erin has done at St. Benedict Education Center tutoring refugees and at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House teaching music to the children. Erin has returned to her hometown in Iowa where she is pursuing work as an elementary school teacher.



Colleen Leathley

Colleen Leathley, a registered psychologist on a mid-life sabbatical, has made a five-month commitment to be a participant in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program. The program offers an immersion in a daily rhythm of prayer, work, outreach to the marginalized, communal life, hospitality, peace and nonviolence. A native of New Zealand, Colleen has worked for the past 26 years in Sydney, Australia. She hopes to integrate her background in psychology with spirituality. Colleen is presently engaged in various Benedictine ministries as part of her program: the Emmaus Ministries Food Pantry, Benedictines for Peace and Benetvision.



First Monastic Profession

Sisters Dina Lauricella (left) and Karen Oprechok (right) made their first monastic profession on the eve of Pentecost and moved into the third stage of initial monastic formation: the Scholasticate. This is the next step in their ongoing journey of seeking God in community with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. “We are so pleased to welcome and uphold Dina and Karen as professed monastics,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “We are stronger because of their presence and commitment.” Sisters Dina and Karen will continue in the initial monastic formation program under the guidance of Sister Diane Rabe (center), Scholastic Director. During this next period of formation they will be engaged in full time ministry while maintaining participation in the life and prayer of the community.

Postulant Welcomed

Kathy McCarthy, a native of Pittsburgh and a former member of the L’Arche community in Erie and in Calgary, Canada, is the newest postulant in the community.

Postulancy is the first phase of monastic formation. Kathy, second from left, is pictured with Sister Marilyn Schauble, vocation director; Sister Anne Wambach, prioress; and Sister Stephanie Schmidt, postulant director.



New Beginnings

Erin Carey completed her time with the Erie Benedictines at the end of May. For the past nine



months Erin has lived and worked with the community as part of the Benedictine Women Service Corps (BWSC), an outreach

INITIAL MONASTIC FORMATION

By Stephanie Schmidt, OSB,
Director of Monastic Formation

“What is more delightful than the voice of God calling to us?” asked Benedict in the Prologue to his Rule 1,500 years ago.

Today, many of those who hear God’s call and consider answering it through religious life do their initial seeking online. Often they don’t personally know any religious sisters, were not raised in a Catholic culture and carry no memories of traditional practices and devotions. They meet communities like the Erie Benedictines through our websites and, if they are attracted to what they see and hear the voice of God calling, they may eventually ask to become members.

Initial monastic formation is the process of integrating potential members into the monastic life. Although the women who want to join us are capable, educated, professional women, they are still beginners in this particular “school of God’s service,” as Benedict calls the communal life.

With the help of God and the community, the Monastic Formation Director guides the newcomer through the transition into monastic life. It is a time of immersion in the daily life and rhythm of prayer and work in the community, a time of integration into its culture, heritage, values and practices as well as a journey from independence and self-sufficiency to healthy interdependence. This could be challenging for anyone in our highly individualistic society, but for women entering community it often means adapting from a household of one to a community of 90.

It is also a time of instruction on topics from the Rule of Benedict and monastic history to Scripture and liturgy, to social justice and community living skills. While the women grow to appreciate the community’s prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, they also deepen their personal relationship with God through the practice of *lectio divina*.

The period of initial monastic formation ranges from five to nine years and its underlying process of mutual discernment is not to be rushed. As the newcomer moves deeper into the heart of community life she must continually ask herself if this is the place where she truly finds God, where she can grow into her best self, where she can live fully, freely and lovingly.

The community likewise has a responsibility to discern if these women are able and willing to live the Benedictine life as we practice it. This time of mutual discerning requires open, listening hearts and inner freedom. There are many spiritual paths to God; is this community’s path the best one for the newcomer? She must be free to follow the call of the Spirit whether that means staying in or leaving the monastery. For some women, the call becomes clear quickly but for others, it can take several years.

Benedict tells us that, “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.” What more could we ask for and what more can we offer than “the inexpressible delight of love”?

MEMORABLE MOMENTS IN INITIAL MONASTIC FORMATION

I have been blessed with the opportunity to learn how to pray with Scripture, better known in the monastic circles as *Lectio Divina*. It has deepened my awareness of God's Presence in every aspect of my life. This graced way of praying has become a daily practice for me as a Scholastic. *Lectio* has taught me to listen with a radically open heart. It is praying with the Scriptures that guides me on a journey to a deeper relationship with the Holy One whom I seek.

—Pat Witulski, Scholastic (Sister in First Profession)



Learning about and experiencing community first-hand has been important to me. It's all about relationships. Conversion of self is done with community. It's like going on a bike ride with others: some are faster, some are slower, but the idea is to journey together and all arrive together.

—Dina Lauricella, Scholastic

During our class on the liturgical year something was said that struck me in a new way: "Eucharist has been celebrated *every Sunday since*" Jesus' death and resurrection. That phrase, *every Sunday since*, eliminated the distance of two thousand years. It connects Jesus and me – right here, right now.

—Karen Oprechuk, Scholastic



Art as Meditation is one part of the novitiate in initial monastic formation. For me, this experience of immersing in the arts as a form of prayer has helped me grow. As a society, we spend a lot of time engaged in our rational, linear left brain. Art as Meditation reminds me that engaging with our creative, intuitive right brains helps create a whole person.

—Val Luckey, Novice

Being in ministry at St. Benedict Education Center has given me the opportunity to connect with some of our refugees. I am touched and inspired by their courage, perseverance and joy.

—Kathy McCarthy, Postulant



Oblate Way of Life

By Ann Hoffman, OSB and
Dianne Sabol, OSB, Oblate Co-Directors

We are blessed to have 290 women and men oblates, people who have associated themselves with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in order to enrich their Christian way of life. They make a formal commitment to Benedictine prayer and values and choose to live a life based on the Rule of Benedict. By integrating Benedictine values into their lives they become Christ's presence in their families, cities, towns, neighborhoods and work places. The difference they make in their worlds helps to change the world.

Read the following reflections from some of our oblates. A thought or idea shared may resonate with you. If you find that you desire to deepen your relationship with God, with others and with yourself, that you want to ground your spirituality in values based on simplicity, respect, hospitality and reverence for all of life, and share in relationship with others on a similar spiritual path, then consider becoming an oblate of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

Being an Oblate . . .

Being an Oblate has changed my life; not in the sense that I am no longer the lump of rock made of the same minerals that defined me at birth. Rather, being connected with the Erie Benedictines has graced me with the opportunity to tumble for the past 30 or so years, along with other splendid stones – the sisters, other oblates and friends of the Mount – bumping into one another and the “grit” of daily life, guided by Benedict's Rule, to gradually re-form into the smooth, polished gems we were always meant to be.

Where once I was anxious, calmness blossomed. Where before I was severe, gentleness sprung. Where pride previously reigned, humility flourished. And while violence raged about, peace found a home, within. –**Mark Gorman, Alexandria, VA**

Because we wanted to live a simple life honoring the integrity of all of creation, we chose to become oblates of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Over the years, as we have come to know them, we see that, through their ministries, they truly are a “healing presence and prophetic witness for peace” as they care for the poor, especially women and children, and all of creation.

Since we live over 600 miles away, we cannot work with the sisters in their ministries in Erie. But, we can be in solidarity through an oblate relationship of prayer and service. This helps us to remain aware of similar ministries in our part of the country and the world as a whole. We find strength for the journey of living out our oblate promises here, where we live, through the mutual commitment we have entered into with this community. Truly, it is a blessing. –**Mary Ann Novascone and Barb Ostrowski, Prairie du Sac, WI**

I chose to become an Oblate in order to support the Benedictine Sisters as they minister to those in need. The quality of life for so many in our community has been uplifted through their faithful efforts.

I quickly learned that there was much that comes with that honor. The sisters and my companion oblates have challenged me to go beyond my “comfort zone” to be a voice and support for the marginalized. In turn, we oblates serve witness to others who are like-minded so that together we can increase Christ's call to provide hope and love. –**Pat Whitehill, Erie, PA**

Paul: Being an oblate has changed me in a couple of ways. First of all, it has deepened my spiritual life as I attempt to follow the Rule of Benedict and pray with the sisters. That, in turn, has led me to be more aware of the needs of others and to think of myself less.

Karen: Being an oblate has improved my relationships with others—family, friends and strangers. The Bible verse, ‘Never do to another what you do not want done to yourself,’ which is interspersed throughout the Rule of Benedict, has helped me be more merciful toward others and less judgmental.

Volunteering at St. Benedict Education Center and our involvement with Benedictines for Peace has helped us leave our comfort zone and become more sensitive to social justice issues in the world around us. –**Paul and Karen Groucutt**

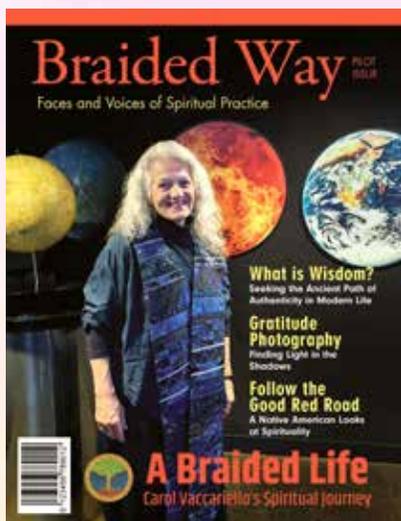
To learn more, visit ErieBenedictines.org, contact us at oblates@mtstbenedict.org or simply give us a call at 814-899-0614.



Headed to Rome

Oblate Joanne Cahill (center) has been selected to attend the 4th World Oblate Congress in Rome in November 2017. The Congress, which takes place every four years, brings together oblates, and this year oblate directors as well, from around the world for a week of prayer, input, conversation and reflection. They will explore the theme: A Way Forward - The Benedictine Community in Movement. "I am looking forward to bringing home the spirit and content of the gathering ... and considering ways in which such dialogue might continue among our own oblates," shared Joanne. Sister Ann Hoffman, Oblate Co-Director (left), will also be attending.

A Braided Life

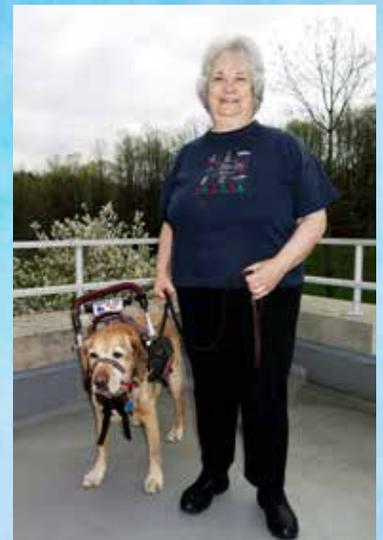


Oblate Carol Vaccariello was featured in the pilot issue of *Braided Way*, a magazine that celebrates the diversity of the world's faith traditions. The publication aims to support an individual's spiritual development, while influencing the larger culture toward inter-spiritual and inter-religious understanding, acceptance and engagement. The article, "A Braided Life,"

unfolds Carol's unique spiritual journey. Go to <http://braidedway.org/> to access the magazine.

A Special Connection

Oblate Glory Piovarcy recently had the opportunity to share her personal experience of receiving a service dog trained by prison inmates with Madeleine O'Neill of *Erie Times News*. Glory explained how in 2013 she was matched with Linton, a service dog who had been trained by inmates at SCI Cambridge Springs where she had been volunteering through a separate program. In the article Glory reflects: "It really brought tears to my eyes," she said. "It meant so much to meet the inmates and to know that they were the ones that started his life out teaching Linton to be a service dog."



Oblate speaks at Women's March in Erie

Oblate Doris Cipolla was one of the featured speakers at the Women's March in Erie on January 21. She addressed at-risk LGBT Rights and advocated for the protection of democratic values for all: "We must stand together, each supporting the other so that all of our human and civil rights may be manifest. We must hold our legislators accountable to our constitutional rights and also to our unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Let us uphold one another. By uplifting the rights of others we can uplift our own."



Vocation Ministry

By Marilyn Schauble, OSB,
Vocation Director

“Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.”

—Parker Palmer

My conversations with women who inquire about religious life are lively, personal, caring, holy, respectful, and sacred. My hope is simple: that they see religious life as alive and well and see religious women filled with zeal for God. It is both a gift and a witness to the world that there are women who want to live together, serious about their spiritual journey, interested in stewarding the earth, desirous of welcoming Christ in the other, and open to life according to the Gospels and the Rule of Benedict.

I find guidance for companioning a woman who is considering religious life, particularly Benedictine monastic life, in Chapter 58 of the Rule of Benedict, The Procedure for Receiving Members. These four questions are adapted from that chapter and are part of every discernment process and central to discovering God’s call.

Is the one inquiring truly seeking God?

Does she have words, images or concepts that give shape to who God is for her? During the early stages of discernment, it is important to see that God is the primary motivator for the one inquiring. God is the ground and sustainer of any lifelong vocation.

Does the one inquiring show eagerness for the Opus Dei?

For Benedict, the *Opus Dei* (the Work of God) is prayer, both communal and personal. Is there evidence of a personal prayer relationship with God in the woman inquiring about religious life? It is this personal relationship with God that will feed the daily communal prayer relationship with the monastic community. Prayer, communal and personal, is interconnected with every aspect of our monastic life.

Does the one inquiring embrace holy listening?

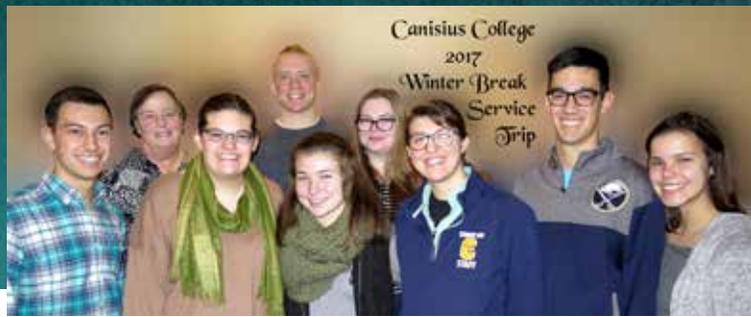
Is there openness to new ideas and new ways to express how God is speaking to her? Is she comfortable with silence? Can she express her spiritual life and reverence the spiritual life of another?

Does the one inquiring understand the challenges of interdependent communal living?

Does she realize that this life is one that fosters care and concern for each community member—that this concept of interdependence then reaches out to care and concern for the neighborhood, the city, the world?

Mount St. Benedict Monastery may be the right place for a woman hoping to grow spiritually: to truly seek God, to show eagerness for the *Opus Dei*, to embrace holy listening, to live a life of care and concern for others. Might that be you?

To learn more about the Benedictine way of life visit ErieBenedictine.org or contact Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director, at vocations@mtstbenedict.org or 814-899-0614.



CANISIUS STUDENTS COMPLETE WEEK OF SERVICE AT THE MOUNT

For seven students and their adult mentor, winter break meant a trip to Erie for an alternative ministry experience. The group lived at the monastery and worked with the sisters in various Benedictine ministries. Sister Marilyn Schauble, Director of Vocations, coordinated everything with Sarah Signorino, Campus Ministry staff member at Canisius College.

Maggie, a student, shared: "This week has been such a blessing, from helping teach English to a Somalian Refugee to serving pancakes at an old age home (and everything in between). I am so thankful for the sisters of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery for hosting us this week, but more importantly for their commitment and dedication to the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless."

THE MOUNT HOSTS "BE THE LIGHT" LEADERSHIP TEAM FROM CANISIUS COLLEGE

Thanks to a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Canisius College has been able to offer a special summer program to high school sophomores and juniors called: BE THE LIGHT YOUTH THEOLOGY INSTITUTE. The Leadership team for this endeavor came to the monastery for a retreat/training experience hosted by Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director, and facilitated by Sister Mary Ellen Plumb.

"An authentic Christian leader is a pilgrim, an individual who claims their own spiritual journey and empowers others to



do the same," said Sister Mary Ellen who saw the weekend to be an opportunity for the participants to discover new paths into the heart of God. As Sister Mary Ellen explained to the group: "It is in the heart of God where you will find everything you need to share your gifts and your spirit for the sake of others. This is, not only the task of our time together, but your task throughout Be the Light."

PROJECT MIRIAM

With pamphlets, DVDs, prayer cards and medals of Benedict in hand Sister Marilyn was ready to tell her vocation story and the story of the Erie Benedictines to a group of high school and college-age women who had accepted the invitation to attend Project Miriam, A Vocation Dinner.

Sponsored by the Erie Diocese and facilitated by Father Michael Polinek, Diocesan Vocation Director, the Project Miriam provided the opportunity to learn more about religious life. Held at Villa Maria Academy, the evening was attended by approximately 36 young women and featured a panel of religious sisters that included representatives from Sisters of the Spiritual Family the Work, Franciscan Sisters, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of St. Benedict.

"This was a great initiative by the Diocese," said Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director. "I met young women who are searching for God and a way to live out that relationship in their lives. I enjoyed good conversation and honest interest from those in attendance. It was a blessed opportunity to let these young women know that religious life can be a viable way of life to live out one's vocation."



Jubilarians



Sister Mary Grace Hanes met the Benedictine Sisters as a student at St. Benedict Academy (SBA) and it set the direction for her life. After graduating she entered the community and this year marks 70 years since her profession of vows. Faithfulness to the monastic way of life and the community's horarium of prayer is what keeps her commitment strong.

The first years of Sister Mary Grace's ministry were spent in education, both as a teacher and administrator. She taught in diocesan schools before finding herself back at SBA where she served in varied capacities: teacher, assistant principal, principal and guidance counselor. Sister Mary Grace also spent time as community treasurer and house coordinator. These ministries prepared her for her work as community secretary and secretary to prioress Sister Joan Chittister before using her secretarial skills at AIM (Alliance of International Monasticism) and Benetvision, the writing and lecturing ministry of Sister Joan Chittister, positions she held until her retirement in 2011. At the present time, Sister Mary Grace remains actively engaged in community life and the ministry of prayer and presence through which she is able to extend the Benedictine charism of hospitality and welcome to all the guests that visit the monastery. Her gracious presence is a gift to all.

Sister Andrea Weidle, a native of Oil City, PA, first professed her vows as a Benedictine Sister 70 years ago. She served in the ministry of education for 20 years and was an elementary teacher in parish schools in the Erie Diocese before teaching religion and physical education at St. Benedict Academy (SBA). Later, she was an administrative assistant at SBA as well as a library aide. Other ministries included time as an EKG technician at St. Vincent Hospital and staff member at Glinodo, the former summer camp of the Erie Benedictines. For several years her work at camp was also an opportunity to take pleasure in the surrounding beauty of Lake Erie and the grounds and the wonder of all of God's creation which gave her great peace. In 1985 Sister Andrea began her ministry with Catholic Charities doing social work for 10 years. During that time her focus was ministry to elderly persons whom she faithfully assisted in many ways. After that Sister Andrea worked in various internal ministries at the monastery until failing health prevented her from doing so. Presently, Sister Andrea resides in the monastery infirmary; her ministry is one of prayer and presence. Although language skills now fail her she is warm and welcoming and responds happily to greetings and kindness. When she smiles she lights up the room.



Sister Mary Bernard Lander, a native of Lucinda, PA, became a Benedictine sister of St. Joseph's Monastery, St. Marys, PA, and professed her vows 70 years ago. When that monastery closed Sister Mary Bernard transferred her vows to the Erie Benedictines and was fully incorporated into the Erie community in 2015.

Sister Mary Bernard is quick to tell people that she learned the importance of working hard and praying just as hard from her parents and from the Benedictine sisters who were her teachers in Lucinda and primary example of the religious life that she would eventually embrace. Through the years her kitchen skills were used in the ministry of food preparation and cook in local convents and institutions in which the St. Marys' Benedictines ministered. In time she took on the responsibility of farm maintenance, grounds keeping and recycling at their monastery. She was self-taught and proved herself more than capable of handling these important responsibilities with hard work and faithfulness.

The twinkle in her eye and a wonderful sense of humor has endeared Sister Mary Bernard to the Erie Benedictines where she has found a home and a community in which to live her monastic commitment. Presently she is engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence and participates fully in community life.



Sister Laura Beichner is a native of St. Joseph Parish, Oil City, PA. She attended the parish schools and was taught by the Erie Benedictines. After high school, she followed the call to become a sister herself, a call that she felt since the age of five. It was in 1957 that she first professed monastic vows and this year she celebrates 60 years of monastic profession.

Sister Laura spent the first 38 years in the ministry of education. She was an elementary teacher in many parish schools of the Erie Diocese before spending 20 of those years as an administrator and principal. She then turned to internal ministry in the monastery, first in the community's Insurance Office and then in both the Business and Development Offices. Her facility in mathematics and her administration experience prepared her well for this work. Currently, Sister Laura continues her work as a staff member in both of these offices and is responsible for accounts payable and donations respectively.

Sister Laura is multi-talented and creative. She gardens, does craft work and lately she has earned a reputation for making beautiful cards using the Iris Folding technique, a paper craft technique that involves folding strips of colored paper in such a way to form a design. She says, "No matter what we are doing, inside or outside, we can contribute to the creation of beauty and peace so that in all things God may be glorified."



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Sister Carol Ann McLaughlin made her first profession in 1957 as a Sister of St. Joseph of Northwest PA, her community of origin. In 1974 she felt the call to monastic life and began the transfer process to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie where her incorporation was finalized when she professed perpetual monastic vows in 1976.

Sister Carol Ann's early years of ministry were spent in elementary education, both as teacher and principal. She served in a number of schools in the Erie Diocese before turning to health services. She worked as a nursing assistant both at Hamot Medical Center and the infirmary at Mount St. Benedict monastery before becoming a certified dialysis technician, a ministry in which she spent 35 years, offering competent and compassionate care to chronically ill patients.

In 2007 Sister Carol Ann began a new adventure with Therapy Dogs United (TDU) becoming a certified volunteer. When she retired from health services in 2013 it was only natural that she and her miniature poodle, Rusty, would spend several hours a week visiting nursing homes and schools to provide healing and emotional support to patients and students. As with all of her ministries throughout her religious life, Sister Carol Ann's approach to her work is reflected in the words of the Rule of Benedict: "Every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection." That remains her prayer and her hope as she continues in the vowed religious life she has lived for 60 years.

Sister Margaret Ann Pilewski celebrates 50 years of monastic profession. She credits her parents for giving her a strong faith foundation and stable family life, both of which influenced her decision to enter religious life. During her time in community she has been involved in the ministry of education and her favorite quote from the Rule of Benedict supports her desire to be the best teacher possible: "Listen with the ear of the heart." (RB Prologue: 1) She taught in Erie diocesan elementary schools before moving into secondary education at St. Benedict Academy where she spent 12 years until its closing in 1988.

Through the years Sister Margaret Ann pursued her natural talent for art by education and opportunity. She has participated in and won awards in various art shows over the years. In 1994 she was named artist of the monastery and also took on the responsibility of managing the community's gift shop, Chapter 57, named for the chapter in the Rule of Benedict that speaks of the artisans of the monastery. For the past 22 years Sister Margaret Ann has been involved in ministry at the Inner City Neighborhood Art House (NAH) in a variety of capacities: clay teacher, artist in residence, and Art Coordinator. Since 2010 she has been the NAH Program Director. It is her hope and desire to continue to share her artistic gifts with children through her ministry in the safe, nourishing and caring environment of the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House. She understands that art is a means of helping children communicate ideas and grow in sensitivity to the world around them.



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In Memoriam

Since the last issue of the *The Mount* death has touched us up close. Five community members have moved into larger life with God—into the very fullness of God’s life. As the ritual prayers at the time of death remind us: “Life is changed, not ended” And while there is finality in death that cannot be denied for those left behind, therein also is the root of Christian hope, “a hope that does not disappoint.” (Romans 5: 5) The lives of our sisters, the faithfulness they lived so well, the seeking of God in which they persevered until their last breath, remain with us in memory and call us to be present in the here and now, to live fully alive so that we too may live into the fullness of life with God who seeks us even as we seek.

Complete obituaries are available online at www.eriebenedictines.org/obituary-sisters.

Sister Bernadette Lorei, OSB December 9, 1926 – November 22, 2016

God of enduring love,
our sister, Bernadette,
now enjoys her eternal rest.

Throughout her religious life
she was self-disciplined and hard-working,
steadfast in her commitment to community,
faithful to prayer, and dedicated to ministry.

A soft heart lived within her
and a sparkle in her eye
belied the fierce spirit of determination
for which she was known.

Her family was a cherished blessing
and she was unfailing in her gratitude
for gestures of kindness and attention
from the sisters and her loved ones.

May we hold dear the memory
of this simple and unassuming woman
whose integrity and single-minded devotion
in seeking God each and every day
leaves us an example to live
now and forever. Amen.



Sister Janet Staab, OSB January 12, 1937 – January 5, 2017

God of all blessing,
you have freed our sister, Janet,
and given her fullness of life.

Her passing, though unexpected,
was as she would have wished it:
quiet, peaceful and unassuming.

Janet valued her independence
and desired to remain engaged in life.
A strong will and unwavering determination
sustained her through physical challenges
that left her body vulnerable but her spirit willing.

Ever faithful to her monastic commitment
Janet spent her final years resting in you, O God,
coming to terms with her increasing needs,
and praying for her family and her community,
to whom she was grateful
for every kindness shown her.

May we cherish the memory of this woman
whose courage and stamina allowed her to be
an example of fortitude and fidelity
in any and all situations. Amen.



Uphold me, O God, according to your word and I shall live.

Sister Maureen Tobin, OSB June 8, 1929 – January 21, 2017

With quiet dignity our sister, Maureen, passed from this life to the next upheld by friendship and love.

Throughout her life Maureen listened to the world and the people that surrounded her and responded with kindness to all.

Community members, family and friends held a special place in her life.

Ever sensitive and fully genuine, her interest was sincere, her dedication was immeasurable and her generosity was limitless.

May we bring to life the legacy Maureen left: wholehearted acceptance of one and all, steadfast commitment to life-giving change in the pursuit of peace, and genuine compassion and care for every part of God's creation.

God of all hopefulness, help us to grow and flourish with the faithfulness of heart that Maureen modeled so that we, too, may be a simple blessing of beauty to everyone we meet, now and evermore. Amen.



Sister Roberta Lavin, OSB May 24, 1926 – February 24, 2017

Our sister, Roberta, has passed from this life to the next. With dignity, as befitting a woman known to be well-mannered and precise, she received the gift of eternal rest.

Roberta cultivated refinement and esteemed courtesy, sharing these qualities in community and among family and friends with grace and wit, constancy and care.

She was a revered teacher, who, with patience and steadfastness, was persistent in her efforts to help students succeed.

Music and dance revealed the sensitive and humble heart of one who will be remembered for her faithfulness and dedication to the monastic way of life.

Loving God, may we be one with Roberta in our praise of you, now and forever. Amen.



Sister Sallie Harrington, OSB August 16, 1939 – April 10, 2017

Our sister, Sallie, a woman of faith, now enjoys fullness of peace.

With a welcoming heart full of acceptance and care, Sallie reached out to all. Her kindness was simple; her interest was sincere.

Faithfulness and sacrifice helped her raise children; determination and stamina helped her overcome adversity.

Commitment and desire helped her seek God in community, a place where she gave of herself in hope of making life better for others.

God of all goodness, may we, like Sallie, be steadfast in love, upright and constant in our efforts to uphold one another and all, with tenderness and compassion, now and evermore. Amen.



Do not fail me in my hope.

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

By Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Director of Development

*"Your generosity ensures the community's future.
Your support is a great blessing to us."*

— Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress

During 2016, you, our benefactors, supported the Benedictine Sisters of Erie through untiring acts of kindness and generosity. You designated your gifts to the sisters so that their greatest needs and the upkeep of their home, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, could be met. Your gifts also ensured that the sisters could provide services and programs to those less fortunate in the Erie community and beyond. You believed in us so that we could together meet the complex challenges of our day.



Mount St. Benedict Monastery serves as a center of hospitality for guests seeking time apart for prayer and solitude or time for rest or renewal in a beautiful, welcoming and peaceful space. The monastery is a place of worship, prayer and community life for the sisters and more than 800 guests each year. In addition to those who come and stay in monastery guest rooms or hermitages, many of you join us for prayer, liturgy and events at the monastery like our regular Enrichment Series presentations.



Each day the sisters and their oblates and co-workers strive to keep a strong Benedictine presence in the neighborhoods where the sisters settled in 1856. We are able to serve others through these ministries where you designated your financial support. We cannot do the work we do without you!

- Because of you more than 120 infants, toddlers and pre-kindergarten age children thrive academically, physically and socially at **St. Benedict Child Development Center** in high quality educational and health related programs. The Center began in 1969 to care for neighborhood children from 3-12 years old in Head Start, child care and after school programming.



- Since 1995, we have enriched the lives of children living in Erie's inner-city through the **Neighborhood Art House**. There, children are given the opportunity to participate in the visual, performing and literary arts and environmental awareness and action in a safe, nourishing and caring environment at no cost to them.
- Together we have made it possible for hundreds of children and youth who are economically, physically, socially and/or emotionally challenged to come to **St. Benedict Community Center** and take part in recreational and therapeutic activities. Opportunities for team building, mentoring, friendship and hope abound at the Center.



- In the halls of the **St. Benedict Education Center**, the former Saint Benedict Academy, you will see

men and women moving from welfare to work. More than 800 people annually, including about 200 immigrants, learn practical skills like resume development, job search and interview techniques that will lead to sustainable employment. The dedicated staff know that this work is imperative to enabling families in our inner-city to become self-sufficient.

- Nestled in beautiful surroundings on property adjacent to Mount St. Benedict Monastery, 81 low income, elderly and disabled residents of **Benetwood Apartments** live in a safe, affordable and comfortable home. Residents often attend liturgy and other events at the monastery and enjoy walking on the monastery grounds.

In all we do, we are blessed with your presence. Thank you for making the hopes and dreams of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie real through your vigorous and considerate giving. Let us continue our good work together.

We are growing, with strong women of faith and dedication entering our community and women and men committing to the Oblate Way of Life. A young generation of dedicated volunteers is emerging. All of this contributes to a rich and vital life of prayer and ministry.



We are thankful, and affirm your importance as you journey with us in our 161st year! We hope to hear from you often.

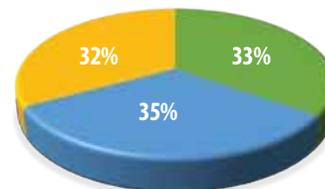
Thank you to our 2016 Benefactors!

Together we:

- Realized a 9% increase in development income.
- Reached a total of 4,785 donors including 382 first-time donors.
- Generated income from eight bequests totaling \$285,384.
- Received a commitment from 60 individuals for future bequests.
- Made Employer Matching Gifts totaling \$15,700.
- Received ongoing support from the St. Benedict Academy Alumnae.
- Initiated consultation services to the Development Office from the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) to increase financial resources for the continuing community support fund.

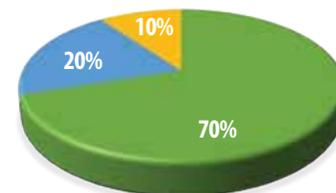
Development Income

Annual Programs	339,958.00
Unrestricted Gifts	310,943.00
Restricted Gifts	321,878.00
Total	972,779.00



Development Expenses

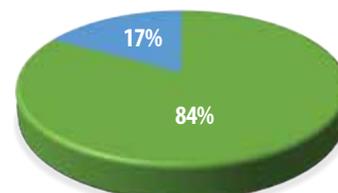
Salaries	176,305.00
Fundraising Programs	50,548.00
Administrative Expense	24,362.00
Total	251,215.00



Benedictine Sisters of Erie

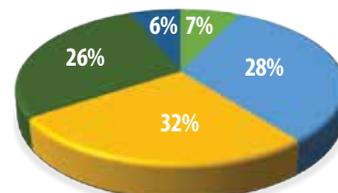
Operating Income

Sisters' Stipends/Salaries	2,038,422.00
Other	407,713.00
Income before Investment Activity	2,446,135.00
Investment Activity	367,063.00
Income after Investment Activity	2,813,198.00



Operating Expenses

Administration	199,448.69
Members' Personal Expenses	1,004,637.08
Payroll Expenses	788,961.92
Property/Buildings/Transportation	842,200.00
Other	184,020.00
Total	3,019,267.69



Back Row (L-R)

Sr. Mary Jane Vergotz, Development Director
 Ann Comstock, Oblate, Development Staff
 Patti Eichen, Development Staff

Front Row (L-R)

Jo Clarke, Oblate, Director of Annual Giving
 Sr. Susan Freitag, Development Staff
 Emma Lee McCloskey, Director of Major and Planned Giving



CARE

The mission of the Committee for Alternative Resource Energy (CARE) is to positively respond to the challenge of climate change by serving as a resource for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie as they seek to reach their goal of carbon neutrality, and by promoting sustainable energy use by the general public.

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life.

—Pope Francis, Laudato Si

By Annette Marshall, OSB and Marlene Trambley, Oblate

Pope Francis makes clear that climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is a moral one as well. We are being called to ever greater attention and action on behalf of our fragile planet.

At the same time, governmental regulations that help protect our air and water are being stripped away. We know the **carrot and stick** approach: encourage (carrot) and demand (stick). If a reduction in government regulations weakens the stick, it is up to us to increase the carrot. We can change behavior by informing, encouraging and building momentum to support environmentally responsible action. It is up to all of us.

Better Light – Less Electricity

With the goal of a 50% reduction in our fossil fuel emissions by 2030 and the knowledge that increasing energy efficiency is a first step, the Benedictine community undertook an extensive LED retrofit and replacement project at Mount St. Benedict in June and July 2016. The chart explains the goals of this project.

Weather can dramatically impact the amount of electricity needed for heating and cooling. When we account for this using weather-normalized data, we can confidently project a 15% - 20% reduction in annual electricity usage. Likewise, CO₂ emissions should meet or even exceed the 14% predicted.

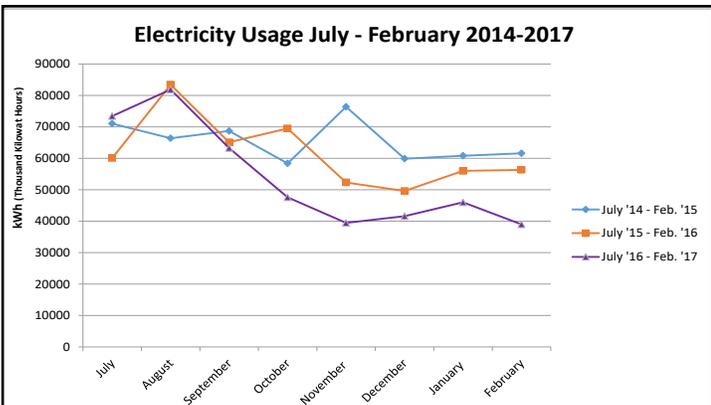
But there's more to the story. Not only did we take significant steps toward our overall goal of energy efficiency, the resulting lighting is brighter, causes less eye strain, and doesn't have the hum or the flicker of traditional fluorescents. The outside security lighting is far more effective, and the chapel lighting is both cooler and more evenly distributed.

We'll continue to monitor this project that was funded by the Penelec Sustainable Energy Fund.

CARE Web Page
We are pleased to introduce a new CARE web page. Read about it on p31.

PROJECT GOALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrofit/replace approximately 873 inefficient fluorescent light fixtures and incandescent bulbs with LED Replace/retrofit 39 exterior lights with LED Install six occupancy sensors 	<p style="text-align: center;">RESULTING IN ANNUAL SAVINGS OF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120,064 kWh of electricity usage 83 tons of CO₂ emissions \$11,555 in electricity costs

It's been eight months since project completion, and so far, the savings are measuring up to the projections.



Green Practices

Energy efficiency depends on all of us. Here are a few suggestions for you to consider implementing, find more on the CARE webpage.

- Develop a reasonable plan to convert your home to LED lighting and set the plan in motion.
- Tell your friends that changes in lighting can be the most effective way to reduce electricity consumption.
- Influence decision-makers at your workplace to take a serious look at the advantages of LED technology.
- Regularly change filters and belts in electrical equipment for more efficient operation.
- Adjust your thermostat to reduce electrical usage at night.
- Buy Energy Star appliances.
- Share what you are doing on the CARE webpage.

Making a difference differently for 1,500 years:

By Linda Romey, OSB, Web Developer

The followers of Benedict have influenced and shaped the life around them for 1,500 years, starting with those who first spread Benedict's teaching by word of mouth to medieval scribes who preserved ancient texts to today's bloggers and web keepers who offer Benedictine spirituality to the world.



Around 500 CE Benedict fled Rome, heart of the decaying Roman Empire, to the caves of Subiaco where he wrestled with questions of faith and life's meaning and purpose. As his reputation for wisdom and holiness spread people sought him out.

He founded 12 small communities and wrote a guide for them, The Rule of Benedict, that emphasizes moderation and balance, commitment to community, to the guest, to daily work and prayer.

"An obligation to human community and a dependence on God are the cornerstones of Benedictine life," writes Erie Benedictine Joan Chittister in *The Rule of Benedict: Spirituality for the 21st Century*, one of her commentaries on the Rule. Those cornerstones became the saving grace of western civilization and culture.

By the Middle Ages monasteries were centers of life and worship whose abbots and abbesses ruled on a par with popes and kings. Great numbers of monastics lived in small city-sized monasteries where they received pilgrims and travelers, performed works of charity, cultivated farmland, raised livestock and maintained rigorous prayer and liturgical schedules. Scribes painstakingly copied and illustrated manuscripts that monasteries held in extensive libraries. Local populations depended on the monasteries not only for the spiritual but also for education, agricultural advancement and economic security. Monastic communities grew as nobles, peasants, and every class in between joined the ranks,

becoming equals under Benedict's Rule when they did so.

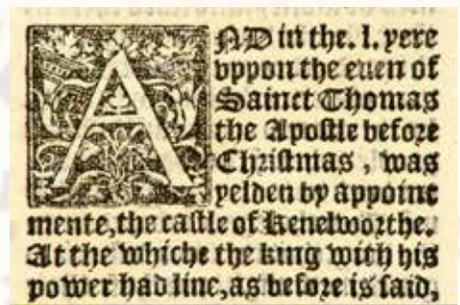
Monasteries were not immune to the effects of the Renaissance when entire populations became literate

and the advent of science and reason changed how people interacted with the world. As great abbeys fell into decline, some consumed by their lust for power and wealth, Cistercian and Trappist reforms sought a return to a stricter interpretation of Benedict's Rule. Gutenberg's invention of movable type contributed to the expansion of human knowledge and communication. The power and influence of the Church waned and access to sacred texts was no longer limited to a small minority. And because the cornerstones of God and human community remained, albeit with new ideas and greater awareness of human consciousness and meaning, monasteries continued to follow and adapt the Rule of Benedict, attract new members and influence the world around them.

Then the American, French and Industrial Revolutions seeded democracy, free thought, capitalism and scientific discovery...and paved the way to where we find Benedict's Rule today—virtually everywhere. In the 20th century, Vatican II and the renewal of religious life altered monastic history as enclosures and medieval practices gave way to modernity. New commentaries on the Rule

appeared with applications to life outside the monastery and books flew off shelves as newly recognized laity sought to satisfy their hunger for spirituality. And women's monasteries welcomed these seekers and embraced the poor and immigrants and children and they renewed their place as centers of prayer and worship, reclaiming their great liturgical tradition.

Today at ErieBenedictines.org, seekers around the world pray daily with the community. They learn about Benedictine life, find out



communicating the Benedictine way



how to volunteer at a community ministry or make a donation. And as one seeker from 20,000 miles away discovered, they can come to know the community. Colleen Leathley, who arrived from Australia in March for a six-month stay in the Benedicta

Riepp Monastic Experience Program, says, "When I viewed the Benedictine Sisters of Erie website, I got the impression these women had a clear sense of identity and lived mission, that the community was dynamic, strong in feminist theology (while also respectful of traditional Catholic rituals), stood up for what they believed in, and knew how to celebrate and have fun. I found when I came to the Mount that the website content is indeed reflective of 'real life' here. I felt I 'knew' a lot of the sisters through their blogs or news items and photos. It was a homecoming, even though I had come from the other side of the world."

And then there are virtual monastery members: more than 16,000 seekers have become members of Monasteries of the Heart, (monasteriesoftheheart.org), an online movement founded by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie six years ago to share Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers.

The cornerstone may now consist more of computer code than cement but it's the

same commitment to human community and God as it was 1,500 years ago. Yes, pilgrims still come in persona but they now also come through fiber optic networks. And however they get here, they still find community following Benedict's Rule as seekers have done for centuries.



The committee behind the overall look and feel of ErieBenedictines.org includes Sr. Susan Doubet, Sr. Dina Lauricella, Oblate Jo Clarke, Sr. Linda Romey, Web Developer, Sr. Karen Oprenchuk, and Sr. Charlotte Anne Zalot, Director of Communications

In addition, some 20 additional sisters, oblates and staff from many Benedictine ministries contribute to the creation and maintenance of our online presence that includes the main Benedictine Sisters of Erie website, ErieBenedictines.org, [Monasteries of the Heart](http://MonasteriesoftheHeart.org), at monasteriesoftheheart.org and author and international lecturer Sister Joan Chittister's page, joanchittister.org. More than 15,000 visitors a month view more than 125,000 pages on these three websites.

Other ministry pages include the Inner-city Neighborhood Art House, neighborhoodarthouse.org, Emmaus Ministries, emmauserie.org; St. Benedict Education Center, sbec-erie.org; St. Benedict Community Center, eriebenedictines.org/communitycenter.



Happenings...



Women's March

Benedictine Sisters and Oblates were included in the numbers for the January Women's March on Washington, both in Washington and in Erie. "For us, as well as for many religious women throughout the nation, this was an opportunity to support the very things we work for day in and day out," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "The Benedictine Sisters of Erie have a corporate commitment to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children. Today provided us a special opportunity to uphold that commitment."



Benedictine Sisters and Oblates join in Erie Climate Change Rally

On the 100th day of Trump's presidency more than 300,000 people in Washington DC and across the country joined together in a powerful demonstration of unity for jobs, justice, and climate action. The people of Erie, including Benedictine Sisters and oblates, were out in full force to take part in Erie's Climate Change Rally which was hosted by Our Water, Our Air, Our Rights, co-Sponsored by Erie Benedictines for Peace, the Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of Mercy, Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, Erie Urban Development Corporation, the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie, and Solar Revolution LLC, and endorsed by the PA Chapter of the Sierra Club. Approximately 500 people were in attendance to voice their concerns and challenge the present government and the new administration, to open their eyes to the reality of climate change and to begin to act responsibly so that our children and grandchildren can be assured clean air and water and an earth to be their home.



Packing for the Camino: Carrying Monastic Life to New Generations



(L-R) Sisters Anne Wambach (Prioress), Edith Bogue, and Stephanie Schmidt

Sister Edith Bogue, a Benedictine from Duluth, MN, was the presenter for the community's April weekend. Trained in sociology and social work she has honed in on the important topic of nurturing and carrying monastic life forward in the 21st century. Her theme was: Packing for the Camino: Carrying Monastic Life to New Generations.

Using the analogy of the Camino—a pilgrimage, a walk, a quest of some kind taken in order to ask and hopefully answer important questions about one's self—Sister Edith suggested that in order to carry monastic life forward in the 21st century we must take the walk of change with intention and purpose. "The 'Camino' can provide the time, space, and quiet to encounter God anew," she said. "Taking the walk of change will lead to critical junctures that lead to new paths." She explained the journey as the "Generative Way," generativity being the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation, and explained: "The generative way is only generative if it creates something new."

Joan Chittister and Cokie Roberts—Electric!

The Joan D. Chittister Lecture Series was held on April 25. The energy that pervaded the evening was tangible—an evening electrified by 2 women in a conversation that drew 800 people to the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center at Mercyhurst University. Local author and activist Joan Chittister, OSB and Cokie Roberts, acclaimed political commentator, conversed about religion, politics and women's roles in positions of leadership from deep foundations of faith, conviction and hope. "Women religious and the work they are doing enliven my hope," said Roberts. "These women are paving the way for all women to be the voice of conscience. We need women's voices more than ever." At the end of the evening Chittister reminded all present that Christians believe in life after death; they look forward to that life but "we can't forget life before death. We must be alive and active now."



(L-R) Sister Joan Chittister, Cokie Roberts, Sister Anne Wambach (Prioress), and Sister Susan Doubet



2017 Women's Art Show

For more than 15 years the Chapter 57 Gallery, under the direction of Artist of the Monastery Sister Margaret Ann Pilewski, has celebrated Women's History Month with the Women's Art Show. This year's display focused on the theme of "Diversity" and included a variety of works by many talented artists. Visit www.eriebenedictines.org/art-show-2017 to view the show online.



Reading by Women Writers

Twenty women who attend sessions at The Writing Studio, 310 East 10th, participated in public reading there on Wednesday, May 3. "We had a standing-room only crowd that couldn't have been more positive and enthusiastic," said Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, coordinator of The Writing Studio. "I was especially pleased with the diversity of the readers and audience—a good representation of ages and races and professions."

The women who read attend two writing sessions currently offered at the Studio. "At Your Service" is for women veterans and the group meets twice a month with Liz Allen and Laura Rutland as facilitators. The Women's Writing Circle meets monthly and is facilitated by Sister Mary Lou.

Damanta Khadka, SBEC Seamstress, becomes a Naturalized Citizen

Damanta Khadka is a native of Bhutan. She and her family were exiled in 1993 and spent 19 years living as refugees in Nepal. Finally given the chance to re-settle, Damanta came to the United States. In December of 2014 she was hired as a seamstress at St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC), where she works in the Mending Place. With hard work and the help of Judy Lynch, teacher and former Erie County Executive, Damanta took, and passed, her citizen exam and was naturalized on March 8.



Going to the Dogs?

Patti Eichen, Benedictines Sisters Development Staff and Neighborhood Art House (NAH) Staff, still finds time to volunteer at the ANNA Shelter, the Association for Needy and Neglected Animals, in Erie. She was the impetus behind a special project undertaken by the children at NAH. Under the direction of Sarah Everett, NAH printmaking teacher, the children created several hundred colorful bandanas stamped with the NAH logo and the words Handmade with love by a student at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House. The bandanas were presented to the ANNA Shelter with the intention that each dog would wear one, as it is adopted and leaves the shelter for its "Forever Home."

Honorable Mention

Sister Lucia Marie Surmik received an Honorable Mention award in the Senior Art Show sponsored by the Independent Council on Aging (ICA) for her photograph, "What a Tail!" The event, hosted by the Mercy Hilltop Center, was open to both professional and amateur artists 55 years and older. "It is always exciting to have your work recognized," said Sister Lucia, "especially in the midst of so much talent and such varied media."





Retreats & Spirituality Page: Benedictine Spirituality for Everyone

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie are pleased to announce the redesign of the Retreats & Spirituality page of our web site. The page was redesigned with your needs in mind and it provides easy access to information pertaining to retreats and programs, prayer and reflection, and spirituality resources including spiritual directors and retreat/workshop leaders. In addition there is a **new feature: podcasts on Creation Spirituality**. These digital audio files have been prepared by Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, OSB. The podcasts can also be accessed through iTunes. If you go to the iTunes store and subscribe, the podcasts will be delivered to your feed every two weeks. We invite you to visit the Retreats and

Spirituality page (www.eriebenedictines.org/spirituality). Thanks for taking few minutes to explore its contents and see what you might find relevant and enriching for your spiritual life.

CARE Web Page

We are pleased to introduce a new CARE web page. You can visit us at www.eriebenedictines.org/care, or find us under the Ministries and

Communications tab as *Environmental Actions (CARE)*. If you have information or news that you would like to share with our readers, use the **1 Contact Us** link on the right side of our page. Comments or suggestions are also welcome. On the right side you will also find **2 What You Can Do** as well as **3 Other Resources**. The left side contains stories, articles, websites and videos.



Blogs by Sisters

There have been some changes made on the web page, SISTER BLOGS. Each blog now has links to the most recent three posts of each blogger and it will update automatically each time the sister posts to her blog.

These are the five blogs at Sister Blogs (www.eriebenedictines.org/blog-feeds):

Light through Stained Glass Windows by **Sister Susan Doubet, Subprioress**

Sister Susan posts on Mondays and Thursdays and gives readers a unique view of the prayer and community life of the Erie Benedictines.

Living the Zeal of Benedict

by **Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director**
Sister Marilyn posts regular reflections on the Rule of Benedict. Make a difference in the world! Live the ZEAL of Benedict!

Walking in the Holy Presence

by **Sister Valerie Luckey, Novice**
Sister Val shares her journey with through initial monastic formation with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Her unique perspective, love of poetry and creative eye make for inspiring posts.



Two of our sisters blog at **Monasteries of the Heart (www.monasteriesoftheheart.org/)**, an online movement sharing Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers:

A Seeker's Path

by **Sister Joan Chittister**
Each week Sister Joan illuminates a spiritual quality that the world's most ancient seekers say is a cardinal component of a life dedicated to seeking God in the moments of the daily.

Old Monk's Journal

by **Sister Mary Lou Kownacki**
Sister Mary Lou's journal, shared each week, is an ongoing source of monastic formation; the rich and raw material of life that helps shape her Monastery of the Heart.



From the
Director
By Ann Comstock, Oblate

*"We'll always come to thee again,
when Alma Mater calls"*



The longer I am the SBA coordinator, the more I realize the value of the SBA Alumnae Association. Despite the closing of St. Benedict Academy in 1988, the alumnae have remained strong and committed. They have shown their support of the Benedictine Sisters and their ministries, they have maintained friendships with classmates, and they have come together to celebrate themselves and others. When Alma Mater calls, they are right there ready to respond, ready to lend a helping hand, ready to be the kind of organization that makes a difference.

I recently invited the alum to share thoughts and memories about SBA, past and present, the difference the sisters made in their lives, the values that keep them strong and the spirit that makes the SBA Alumnae Association the dynamic group that it is. The response I received was incredible! While there is not enough space to run all of them in this issue I promise to share them in upcoming issues until I have no more left. I hope you enjoy these reflections as much as I have. I feel inspired and proud to call myself an SBA Alum.

SBA ALUM SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

I can still remember the day my parents told me I'd be leaving Wilson Jr. High and going to St. Mary's Catholic School. I know now that they saw potential in me and wanted to give me more opportunity. But the child in me only saw that I was leaving the neighborhood and friends that I knew to spend my days with strangers. Strangers became my closest friends. At St. Mary's, and later at SBA, the sisters became the wonderful women who would develop in me a lifelong love of learning and a belief that the condition of the world is my responsibility. The mark of St. Benedict Academy is imprinted on me and to some extent on everyone with whom I interact. I am proud to hail from those halls, and I am grateful for the experiences that shaped the person I am today. — **Virginia Glenn Flowers '66**

I have wonderful memories of my years at St. Benedict Academy. Those memories continue through my membership in the Alumnae Association. The sisters taught us many things, most importantly, a responsibility to the community and to God. As a member of the Alumnae Association I am able to help the sisters with their ministries and give back to the community. Our alumnae are still as strong as when the school was open. This surely is a testament to the spirit of SBA! — **Lisa Manendo '74**

As an SBA alum I am in awe of the faithfulness of the many SBA graduates who today are so proud to have been recipients of a Benedictine education. The fact that these women return year after year to SBA to support the present programs being offered at St. Benedict Education Center (a welfare-to-work ministry housed in the former high school) and to share in the social events with classmates is testimony of their love, faith and gratitude for the education offered by the Benedictines Sisters of Erie. — **Sister Phyllis Schleicher OSB '56**

I credit the Sisters of St. Benedict for making me the woman I am today. If it weren't for my education at St. Benedict Academy I really don't know what might have become of me. My home life was chaotic and non-supportive. The sisters provided a safe, consistent, loving environment in which we received an education centered on the concepts of social justice, our value as women and the equality of all people. Moreover, we were taught to investigate issues thoroughly through a variety of methods all the while learning how to think for ourselves. These values served to keep me aware of my intrinsic worth as a child of God and to therefore respect it in others, to want to be of service and to do it with kindness and an open heart. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to attend St. Benedict Academy and to continue to receive *The Mount Magazine* to learn and keep up with all the wonderful services and activities the sisters continue to provide. I brag on the sisters every chance I get. — **Cecilia G. Popp '63**

SBA shaped my life and my career. It was at SBA that I learned about social justice and the power of women leading around social justice issues. I learned that the world needed women leaders. Now in my work at a traditional women's college, I have the opportunity to help women become these global leaders that are still needed in our world. My life's work is tied directly to what I learned from the sisters and faculty at SBA. I am forever grateful. — **Mary Alice Ozechoski '81**

As an SBA alumna, I realize how big a role our teachers played in building our confidence in our talents and instilling a love of a subject in their students. In particular, Sister Dorothy Szczypinski made such a difference in my life. I was not the most confident of her math students, but she apparently saw something in me and gave me confidence in that “talent.” I became a math major in college and received my degree in math. I’ve spent my entire career in IT, primarily because of that degree. Not only did she make a difference in my life, but in several of my friends’ lives. We had a relatively small class when we got into our junior and senior years, maybe 15 students. At least four of us got our degrees in mathematics, or at least had a concentration in mathematics. How could this have been without a teacher like Sister Dorothy instilling in us the love of a subject that she taught? — *Jeanette S. Lewis ’73*

The SBA Alumnae Association has made a huge difference in the community by way of the ongoing support given to the Benedictine Sisters and their various ministries. The women of SBA have given their time, prayers and donations which have helped many in need. The Alumnae Association has given me the opportunity to rekindle my relationships with friends and has enabled me to meet many of the great women that graduated before me. I am able to stay in touch with my classmates as well as begin new connections with other alumnae that I have met through the Association. — *Marlo Machalinski ’91*

My time at St. Benedict Academy was so important to me in many ways. Being in an all-girls school allowed me to participate in discussions without the intimidation of males in the class. The retreats filled my spirit and kept my faith going. I was a farm kid from a family with limited resources. Sister Theophane helped me to find a live-in babysitting job for all my summers. This made it possible for me to pay part of my tuition and uniforms. Later after moving away, the alumnae organization kept me connected with what was happening back in Erie. In my mid 30’s, I discovered the writings and speeches of one of my classmates, Sister Joan Chittister. They reflected my world view and encouraged me to follow in a concrete way my quest for a deeper spiritual path. Her words and involvement in social issues have been a great support along my way. The “St. Ben’s effect” has moved me from a quiet country kid to a much more outgoing person, living out our alum worldview that “we are a part of something greater than ourselves.” — *Judy Hubert Kruger ’54*

Three words echo in my head when I think of my time at SBA: the *good*, the *truth*, and the *beautiful*. As students we were encouraged to look for the *good* in others; to always seek the *truth* in living out day-to-day lives; and to take time to enjoy the *beautiful*, i.e., whether a sunset over Lake Erie, the smile on another’s face, or the feeling inside of having made another person happy. (Thank you Sister Mary Louis Eichenlaub!) — *Jean Reynolds Miller ’58*

There are no words that could ever capture the wonderful days I was so lucky to share at SBA, but here’s my attempt... When I look back at my high school days at St. Benedict Academy, they were some of *the best days of my life*. It was the people...the nuns, the faculty, the staff, the coaches, the students—a perfect mix of people who left a positive feeling in my heart and memory to this very day. Real and supportive relationships that built confidence and allowed learning to flourish. When we talk about high school days, I use the word comradery to sum up everything...vocabulary.com explains it: comradery is the spirit of friendship and community in a group; someone who comes to mind when you say, “We’re in this together.” And together we all were and STILL are to this very day! — *Mary Hoffman ’71*

Keep in Touch...

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. 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). Call Ann Comstock at 814-899-0614 ext. 2573 or contact by email: 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 St. 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.



*"Spirit of SBA"
is alive and well.*

Reunions

Classes planning reunions next year are eligible to receive a \$35 check to help defray mailing costs. Also provided will be an updated class list from our database as well as a set of labels. Please provide us with any information regarding your reunion that you would like posted on our website. We would also appreciate any follow up stories and photos you might wish to share. All we ask is 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 with friends and classmates. Please contact Ann Comstock at 814-899-0614 ext. 2573 or sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org.

The SBA class of 1982 will hold their 35th Class Reunion on Saturday September 9, 2017 at Jr's on the Bay. Contact Sue Skrzypczak Chase at 814-825-2980 or mchase1@neo.rr.com. Any graduates who have moved recently or if you need to update your current address, please contact Sue Chase.

***Members of the SBA Class of 1976 met on Saturday, June 11, 2016
to celebrate their 40th Class reunion at The Lawrence Park Golf Club.***



First Row, L-R: Patricia Lukaszewski Fidorra, Kathy Solomosi Holland, Barb Archacki Zdarko, Ruth Siatkowski Lowers, Janice Akus Gardner, Sue Pacinelli DiVecchio, Carolyn O'Brien Carmosino, Cathy Behringer Barone, Debbie Stockman Lasko, Mary Jo Scheffner Steffes, Barb Visnosky Thoman, Cindy Anderson Tabolt, Mary Beth Cermak-Bell, Cindy Andrejczak Rettger, Leslie Phillips Borresen, Patricia Rettger, Julie Patalita Srnka, Diane Adkins Tobin, Karen Kuchcinski Sonney.

Second Row, L-R: Camille Osiecki Vahey, Renee Dorau Walsh, Marilyn Huegel Kingston, Pam Conover Perciavaille, Patty Nies, Linda Wargo Majewski, Selena Laufenberg, Kim Rinke Sullivan, Nancy Szcotkowski Cross, Darlene Webb Feeney, Cathe Piorkowski Hedderick, Jane Hogenmiller Steineck, JoAnne Shickler Harof, Maureen Maloney Johannismeyer, Debbie Allen Parr, Beth Bruno Gawronski.

*Mark Your
Calendars*



**Sunday,
October 1, 2017**
SBA Purse Bingo
Harborcreek Social
Hall
Harborcreek, PA



**Tuesday,
December 5, 2017**
SBA Christmas Party
Ambassador
Conference Center
7792 Peach Street
Erie, PA

Christmas Party 2016

Approximately 350 women gathered last December 2 at the Ambassador Conference Center to begin the Christmas season. "I just love this party," shared one alum. "It is a great way to begin the Christmas season." The gift basket raffle is one of the favorite features of this event. The monies raised from the raffle financed a generous donation of \$5,400 to the Inner-city Neighborhood Art House. It was a very successful event, thanks to the hard work and the incredible generosity of the SBA volunteers and attendees.



SBA Spring Luncheon

The SBA Spring Luncheon was held on April 29. At the luncheon 20 scholarships of \$250 were awarded to relatives of alumnae members who will be attending Catholic grade or high schools for the 2017-2018 school years. Scholarship checks will be sent directly to the schools prior to the opening of the school year.

2017 Scholarship Winners

Winner	Alumnae Member	Relationship	School
Madeline Welch	Doreen Welch	Daughter	Villa Maria Academy
Logan Braendel	Barbara Nazarian	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Erie Schwab	Donna Whitford	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Zachary & Krista Chalupczynski	Maryann Sullivan	Grandchildren	St. Luke School
Grace & Gabby Gallenstein	Erin Gallenstein	Nieces	St. Luke School
Jacob Sorge	Cheryl Carver	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Lisa Macek	Audrey Riazzi	Granddaughter	St. Luke School
Chloe H Staab	Jacqueline Staab	Great Granddaughter	Our Lady's Christian
Makayla Davis	Michele Breter	Niece	Villa Maria Academy
Roman Luniewski	Lucille Murawski	Great Nephew	Our Lady of Peace
Audrey Vamos	Kathleen Lane	Cousin	St. Mary of Assumption
Tyler Neimeic	Nadine Laufer	Nephew	Cathedral Prep
Madison & Kiera Bauer	Dee Madura	Great Grandchildren	St. Mary's Catholic
Maria Piecuch	Kathy Grisier	Niece	Mercyhurst Prep
Lyrissa Skolnik	Ann Marie Skolnik	Granddaughter	Our Lady of Peace
Lillian Imler	Barbara Dulin	Cousin	St. George School
Kaden Swanson	Diane Swanson	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Emily Stewart	Joan Ragen	Great Granddaughter	St. Luke School
Sophia Plyler	Christine Jaskiewicz	Granddaughter	Villa Maria Academy
Lillia Dahlkemper	Joyce Dahlkemper	Granddaughter	Mercyhurst Prep

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Ruth Buckel Considine	'43
Bernadette Lorei, OSB	'45
Wanda M. Drzewiecki Jurkiewicz.....	'46
Theresa C. Pol Frackowiak	'46
Teresa G. Jakubowski Wawrzyniak	'46
Cecelia Gutowski Truchanowicz	'48
Patricia Hughes Kelleher.....	'49
Phyllis Traphagen Coe.....	'54
Lydia L. Kozlowski Corrado.....	'58
Laura J. Korn Schwenk.....	'58
Bonita Kinsinger	'59
Anne Froehlich Metzger	'60
Bernadine Mizikowski Zdunski	'60
Nancy Randazzo Eckerdt	'65
Nancy Malinski.....	'67
Colette M. Piotrowicz Wisinski.....	'67
Shirley Mosalczyk Kempisty.....	'71
Diane C. Letizo Hopkins	'74

Benedictine Sisters of Erie

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

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