

the Mount

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
THAT PERCHES IN THE SOUL,
AND SINGS THE TUNE WITHOUT THE WORDS,
AND NEVER STOPS AT ALL . . .

(EMILY DICKENSON)



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Credits

Contributors

Joanne Cahill, Oblate, Ann Comstock, Oblate,
Patti Eichen, Therese Glass, OSB, Ann Hoffman, OSB,
Alyssa Kissel, Oblate, Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB,
Annette Marshall, OSB, Emma Lee McCloskey, Brianna
Mekuly, Karen Oprencok, OSB, Mary Ellen Plumb,
OSB, Dianne Sabol, OSB, Marilyn Schauble, OSB,
Jacqueline Small, Oblate, Marlene Trambley, Oblate,
Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Anne Wambach, OSB

The Mount Photographers

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

Editor: Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Copy Editor: Linda Romey, OSB

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HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS . . . Emily Dickenson

A few weeks back we had a terrible storm replete with thunder and lightning, high winds and pouring rain. When it was over, I was struck by the birds singing. It sounded as though there were hundreds of them, each with their own melody, some pleasing to the ear, some not. As I sat listening and marveling at the same time, a favorite poem came to mind: “Hope is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickenson.

Perhaps you know it, perhaps you don’t. You can read it in full on the back cover. This poem is sometimes referred to as an extended metaphor. It likens the concept of hope to a feathered bird that remains perched in the soul of every human. It sings; it inspires; it consoles; it challenges. It withstands anything. Maybe that is why birdsong is so strong and beautiful after a storm. Maybe it is true that hope is the breath of the soul that allows the song to go on.

Birdsong . . . As this issue of *The Mount* started to come together I realized that maybe what we Benedictines of Erie do in our very life and living, in our ministries and outreach, in our work for peace and justice, in leading and in following, is sing our song, with or without lyrics, by word and action. In so doing, we share our hope and our hopes with the world. “A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song,” original words of children’s author Joan Walsh Anglund and often attributed to Maya Angelou.



We know well that there are all kinds of “storms” redefining everything: country, world, nation, city, neighborhood, church, community, family, our very selves. As we weather the storms we must allow them to strengthen our voices rather than silence them. After each storm, like the birds, we must sing the song of hope that lives within and manifest it for others to see and hear.

The authors, the articles, the happenings, the news, the pictures in this magazine—in each one a song is being sung. Maybe a word or a phrase, a story or a photo will grow the hope that is within you and draw you more deeply into the awareness that hope is indeed the thing with feathers that perches in your soul, too, and gives you a song to sing. After every storm, as Mark Twain says so well: “Sing like no one’s listening, love like you’ve never been hurt, dance like no one’s watching and live like it’s heaven on earth.” The birds do it; surely we can, too.

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Cover Photos: Jo Clark, Oblate

BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT

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

From the Prioress

That God May be Glorified

When this spring's issue of *The American Monastic Newsletter*, a publication of the American Benedictine Academy (ABA), arrived, I noticed an advertisement for the Summer 2018 ABA Biennial Convention with its theme of "Artisans of the Monastery." There was a call for artwork for the ABA Art Show which will be part of the convention. Convention speakers will be Kathleen Norris, of *Cloister Walk* fame, and David Paul Lange, OSB, artist of the young Benedict and Scholastica drawings we have throughout our monastery. Various displays are in the works and, since the convention is being hosted by St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN, there will also be tours of the Saint John's Bible Gallery in Collegeville, MN, home to 28 original folios portraying an amazing hand-written, hand-illuminated Bible (see www.saintjohnsbible.org).

All of this reminded me of the attention that Benedictines have given and continue to give to the arts. We reverence God-given beauty and creativity; we nurture a sense of wonder; we advance the realization of the sacred in our midst.

The newsletter arrived just as our own annual March Women's History Month art show was being hung in the hall just outside our monastery gift shop, Chapter 57, named after the chapter of Rule of Benedict on "The Artisans of the Monastery."

This much-enjoyed event showcases artwork by our sisters, oblates and co-workers in our ministries. We've had photography, woodworking, fiber arts and needlecrafts, ceramics, painting, quilting, paper folding, candle making and numerous multi-media pieces. The work remains in our Chapter 57 gallery for several weeks and is shown on our website, too. Some of the pieces are for sale.

Of course, this display is for our visual artists; the full range of artisans of the monastery would include our talented musicians, writers, bakers, our sisters who produce such stunning liturgical environments for our prayer, those who arrange displays of all sorts and styles for celebrations and events—not to mention those who bring beauty to our gardens and grounds. It seems the list is endless.

I don't know if St. Benedict and the monastic leaders of his day in the 6th century would have had all of these arts in mind when they included Chapter 57 in the Rule, but we know that all of them, in our time, contribute greatly to the life, spirit and beauty of the community. We also learn from the fact that this chapter on Artisans of the Monastery encourages artists to practice their craft with humility and the permission of the prioress or abbot. The chapter also warns about the evils of fraud in the selling of our products and avarice in pricing them.

In today's culture we look on personal gifts such as artistic talents as an attribute to be celebrated, something that brings out the individuality of each person. We are encouraged, even from childhood, to find and develop our talents, especially those unique to us. The temptation to pride and arrogance is always there—humanity is the same in all centuries, and in capitalistic countries such as ours, the idea of making a profit is inbred in the production of goods and services. But, as Sister Joan Chittister has explained in one of her commentaries on the Rule, there is another viewpoint to consider in all of this—perhaps the most important: "The function of the artist in the monastery is to make the transcendent visible... to touch the soul...to enshrine beauty so that we may learn to see it."

When I look around our monastery, when I see and experience how we continue to preserve creative arts in our age, I realize more and more that Benedictine artisans of the monastery understand that making the transcendent visible and enshrining beauty so that it may be seen, is done for the primary purpose of glorifying God. It is no surprise, then, that Chapter 57 ends with perhaps one of the most quoted lines in the Rule of Benedict, taken from the First Letter of Peter in the New Testament. It is a verse that, while clearly a fitting phrase to sum up the work of the artisans, is equally about every part of Benedictine life. All that we are, all that we do, is done "...so that in all things God may be glorified."



Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie



*All that we are, all
that we do, is done
"...so that in all
things God may be
glorified."*



Living in the moment: **Lectio for Life**

By Therese Glass, OSB

Life reveals valuable lessons to us if we are attuned to its voice. Psalm 19 tells how the voice of the heavens can speak to us without a word, without a sound. Here are the beginning verses:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
The skies proclaim the work of God's hands.
Day unto Day pours out the story;
Night unto night makes known the beauty.
Without a word,
Without a sound,
Without a voice being heard,
Their message fills all the earth,
Resounding to the ends of the universe.*

The psalm reminds me that the universe speaks to us without being asked to do so. All creation continues to unfold. The present day, the present hour, the present moment is a new beginning. I only have the present in which to hear on-going revelation. I must listen with the ear of my heart while awake and while I dream to hear, learn from and experience the story of the moment. The entire universe is my book.

Here are some of the times that the universe has spoken to me, mini-reflections as it were, that have evolved from pondering animate and inanimate creation. Maybe they will help you hear the voice of the heavens that is within you. I call them **Lectio of Life**, borrowing the concept from the monastic practice of *lectio divina*, the slow, meditative reading of sacred texts.



Therese Glass, OSB, taught in elementary schools of the Diocese of Erie and the Fort LeBoeuf School District for over 25 years. Other past ministries include East Coast Migrant Program, Benet Press, Benetwood Apartments and St. Benedict Education Center. Currently she ministers at AIM USA (Alliance for International Monasticism) and in the Writing and Lecturing Office of Joan Chittister, OSB.



Steps, Stairs, Stories

Our former motherhouse and girls' academy in Erie has "St. Benedict's Academy" engraved in the lintel over its main entrance. Currently it houses our day care, a sisters' living space and ministry offices. Inside there are 88 steps in the wide stairwell that goes up to the 4th floor. As I climb the stairs each day (my personal Mount Kilimanjaro) I wonder how many times sisters have trod those stairs as they listened to and strove to meet the needs of the times from the mid-1800s to 2018. Because of their faithful listening and response, high school students, children, visitors and co-workers have been enriched by hospitality, openness and unconditional love. Hundreds, maybe even thousands, of persons have interacted with one another. I feel the presence of those from the past; I feel united with those who are climbing the stairs in the present; and I look forward to those yet to climb those stairs. Indeed we are a community of saints...in process.



Hope, Trust, Motivation

While recently attending a professional ballet, a sociable and articulate three-year-old girl was sitting behind me. During the intermission she chatted about the awesome dancers. After the ballet I heard her say, "Well, I can't dance that good... YET!" There was no doubt in her mind that she, too, would be an accomplished

ballerina someday. Self-doubt was not in her. May I have such commitment to persist and persevere in whatever ways God calls me.



Harmony in Diversity

While carpooling to our ministry one day, we were greeted by a single rainbow which then became a double rainbow. As we drove, the growing rainbows manifested such beauty in multiple colors that we rejoiced in our rich blessings. We didn't need a pot of gold. We wondered aloud, "How can we share our joy?" which led to "How can we share our riches with migrants, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ persons, victims of abuse and violence and also with the air, land, sea and the flora and fauna?" Maybe it begins with being aware of how blessed we are.

Wild Windows

After evening prayer on an extremely sunny and almost unbearably cold day a sister near me in chapel excitedly whispered, "Look at those wild windows!" Indeed the narrow stained-glass windows on the west wall did seem to be dancing with joy despite the freezing temperature outside. For humans life can be such a combination of contrasting feelings at the same time. It takes spiritual maturity to sustain such a mix. Trusting God's sustenance leads us to joy even in the midst of adversity.



Humility and Humor

Many years ago while I was presenting a math lesson to first-graders a school administrator came into the classroom to observe. Thinking that a child who was eagerly waving was going to comment on my intriguing arithmetic lesson I called on the child who pleadingly asked me, "My back is itchy. Would you scratch it?" What a humbling experience for me, but it didn't take long for my pride to take second place to the wonderful humor of the moment.

Freed- Not Confined

A close friend of mine needed to use a wheelchair for almost 60 years. When someone remarked, "How difficult it must be to be confined in a wheelchair," my friend calmly responded, "Oh, I am not confined to my wheelchair. My wheelchair frees me to do what I otherwise could not do." Perspective and attitude make such a difference.



INITIAL MONASTIC FORMATION

Reflections from a Scholastic

By Karen Oprenochok, OSB, Scholastic

"If God was in you, you would give me that food." A woman who comes to our Emmaus Food Pantry said this to me a few months ago and I haven't been able to forget it. We had given her food, of course, but she was asking for more than we could hand out at the time.

Sometimes it feels that whatever we do at our food pantry and soup kitchen, it will never be enough.

We guesstimate how many people will come, hoping we've ordered or cooked in sufficient quantity. The Benedictine values of balance and hospitality suggest I find a way to give freely while keeping something on hand for the next person who comes along.

Food is only part of it. Remember, the woman said to me, "If God was in *you*." Oh ... she can't see God in me. Maybe she meant that if God were in me I would give without measure.

About a year ago Sister Dina Lauricella and I made our first profession of monastic vows. In her reflection that day our prioress, Sister Anne Wambach, spoke about what life is all about for a follower of Jesus. She said, "We are not given these graces and blessings to keep for ourselves. We are sent out into our own part of the world, sent to dedicate ourselves to making life better for others." Sister Mary Miller, director of Emmaus Ministries, which is where I minister, says our job is simple, "Just keep showing up, every day."

Settling into monastic life, in particular the Benedictine way of life, is how I look upon this time as a scholastic. I want to dig in and get my hands dirty as I look to fulfill our charism by deepening my relationship with God, in the setting of communal life, while responding in prayer and ministry. It's not easy, it hasn't been so far. Yet God has gifted me with time, time in this place, and my task is to welcome that time however it comes – easy and good or difficult and frustrating. I am so blessed.

Maybe that's what I need to remember. By continuing to say "yes" to God every day and in every way, big or small, those who frequent our pantry will be able to see God in me.



Kathleen McCarthy becomes a Novice



"I ask that I may continue to seek God through sharing the monastic life with this Benedictine community," requested postulant Kathleen McCarthy during a special ritual at Evening Prayer on January 27. In response, the Benedictine community welcomed her into the novitiate, the second stage of initial monastic formation. During the ritual Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress, invited the community to support Kathy and Sister Marilyn Schauble, Novice Director, (right) throughout this year of continued discernment. Sister Marilyn then presented Kathy with a copy of the Rule of Benedict as a sign that it will be a focal point of her studies in the coming year.

Education and Enrichment for Women in Initial Monastic Formation

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie belong to the National Religious Formation Conference, which provides periodic intercongregational weekends on a regional level for women and men in initial formation programs. In the spring Sister Marilyn Schauble, novice director, Sister Kathleen McCarthy, novice, and scholastics, Sisters Dina Lauricella, Karen Oprenochok and Valerie Luckey attended a session at Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center in Villa Maria, PA. In addition to offering pertinent topics for newer community members, the weekends also provide opportunities for women and men to meet and share experiences with others who are in the initial stages of religious formation.

Karen Oprenochok, OSB, is beginning her second year as a Benedictine scholastic, the final stage in the initial monastic formation process prior to requesting permanent monastic profession. She is originally from Windsor, Ontario, Canada and ministers at Emmaus Ministries, www.emmauserie.org. Learn more about becoming a Benedictine Sister of Erie at www.eriebenedictines.org/become-benedictine.

At the April gathering Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA, Ph.D., The Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Biblical Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL, shared her reflections on the teaching of Pope Francis as found in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, under the presentation title of *God So Loved the World – But do we?* She encouraged a way of understanding our participation in the 'community of Earth' based on interconnectedness rather than domination.

Learnings . . .



(L-R) Sisters Kathleen McCarthy, Dina Lauricella, Valerie Luckey, Marilyn Schauble, Karen Oprenchok

It was very good to hear Dianne Bergant speak. One of many things that struck me is how we humans are totally dependent on the natural world - for air, water and food. The universe does not need humans - except for us to take responsibility and live in harmony with our environment in order to survive. *—Sister Kathleen McCarthy, novice*

Dianne Bergant gave some new insights into the Genesis creation stories I had not heard before. The Genesis story includes 5 verbs: increase, multiply, fill, subdue, and dominate which come from monarchy. These words challenge me to remember that all of us were meant to function in our environment as God would, even with our limitations, relying on our interdependence with the universe, not our domination of it.

—Sister Dina Lauricella, scholastic

We think that we are the center of the universe and that nature should comply to our wants. Nature is indifferent to our schedules and agendas. Humans are

totally dependent on the natural world. If we don't have water, we die. Water doesn't need us to survive. Plants and animals can, and do, thrive without us. It seems to me that we humans have a long way to go if we are to live and work on this planet in a responsible and faithful manner. *—Sister Karen Oprenchok, scholastic*

For me it boiled down to these key questions that Dianne posed: Can you trust a God who has control over things you can't control, and which you want to control? Can you trust a God who understands things you can't understand, and which you want to understand? It is easy to say that I want to trust this God. But can I? I might need more time to answer that question! *—Sister Valerie Luckey, scholastic*



The four women in the initial monastic formation program, Sisters Dina Lauricella, Karen Oprenchok, Valerie Luckey, scholastics and Sister Kathleen McCarthy, novice, along with sisters on the formation team gathered at the community's Glinodo Center for their spring weekend. The focus was the Gospel of Mark. Bonnie Thurston, poet, author and theologian, was the presenter. She unfolded three of Mark's major themes: Desert Spirituality, Discernment, and Economic Justice.

Benedicta Riepp Program: Comings and Goings

Colleen Leathley (left) completed her nine month participation in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program at the end of December, 2017. Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Director of Monastic Formation, thanked Colleen for the energetic and enthusiastic spirit that enlivened the commitment she



made to live as a monastic with the Erie Benedictines. Colleen, a 52-year-old New Zealand native and registered psychologist on a mid-life sabbatical, returned to Sydney, Australia where she had been working for the last 26 years.

After spending a month as an observer Priscilla Richter, a former minister and resident of North Carolina, was initiated into the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience program on December 20. During the ritual Priscilla expressed her desire to journey with and live monastic life with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie for the next 11 months. With the assurance of the community's support she pronounced and signed a statement of promise in the presence of Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, and the community. After being presented with the Rule of Benedict, Priscilla was welcomed into the monastic experience program with a special blessing from the community and became, what the community has affectionately dubbed, a "Riepper." She will be mentored by Sister Ann Muczynski (right).



Learn more about the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program at <https://www.eriebenedictines.org/node/121>

Final Incorporation

Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, rejoices with Sister Jacinta Conklin (left) after the ritual in which Sister Jacinta transferred her vows from her community of origin and became a fully incorporated member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Sister Jacinta, originally from St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys, PA, came to live in Erie when it became clear that their monastery would be closing as a result of a climbing median age and lack of new members. After two years of prayer and discernment she asked to transfer her vows and become fully incorporated into the community of the Erie Benedictines.



In Memoriam

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 Agnes Jean Lavin, OSB

May 31, 1924 – January 17, 2018



Perpetual
Monastic
Profession

August 20, 1948

Our sister, Jean, passed into eternity in a manner befitting her contemplative spirit: peacefully and in the presence of God alone.

Jean lived life with faith and fervor: committed to prayer, awakened to transformation; with an enriched social consciousness and an abundance of creativity and vision.

Full of grace and beauty, Jean was an exceptional teacher and an enlightened spiritual guide. She devoted herself to well-being and witness as a Benedictine presence in the world.

Let us hold dear the memory of this woman who showed us how important it is to live and move and be in God.

May you, O God: Source of all life, Universal Christ, and Evolutionary Spirit, keep us open and receptive to your Presence within and about us, in all ways and always, now and forever. Amen.

Vocation Ministry

By Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director

In today's world, women discerning a religious vocation are often professional women who feel called to live the Gospel intentionally and desire to do that with others. That feeling, that call, is what puts them in search for the community that will be the right fit. Women attracted to monastic life learn that the Benedictine way is to seek God in the communal life and to respond in prayer and ministry. They learn that the vows of obedience, stability and fidelity to the monastic way of life don't separate Benedictines from the world but rather, allow them to be in the world. The vows allow Benedictines to respond to the changing needs of the times and effect change through the practice of monastic values such as listening, prayer, stewardship, hospitality, reverence for all creation, justice and peace, work, and community.

If you or someone you know might be interested in monastic life through permanent membership with the Erie Benedictines, contact Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director for more information or a conversation. Phone: 814-899-0614, ext. 2424; E-mail: vocations@mtstbenedict.org

The Canisius connection continues



An alternative winter break service trip for students interested in a monastic experience and curious about the life and work of sisters in a monastery was hosted by the Erie Benedictines in January. It was organized by Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director, and Sarah Signorino, Canisius College Campus Minister.



A new option: Mini-Service Trip. A group of Canisius Students came for a long weekend in February to experience monastic life and ministry. It was short but sweet and filled with new and meaningful experiences.

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Loving God,
we believe that
Benedictine monasticism
bears fruit for the world.

We are grateful for the witness
of the Benedictine sisters among us.

May their faithfulness
to the monastic way of life
awaken women to the
stirrings of the Spirit.

Bless others with the courage
to accept the invitation
to seek you in community
through prayer and ministry.

May these seekers find fulfillment
for the longing in their hearts:
in communal life well-lived and
in loving attention to the needs
of your people.

May they be upheld as we are upheld
by your constancy and steadfast love.

We ask this with confidence
in your goodness and grace,
now and evermore.
Amen.



For the second year the Erie Benedictines hosted the BE THE LIGHT YOUTH THEOLOGY INSTITUTE. This initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the Lilly Foundation, prepares the college leadership team for a special summer program offered to high school sophomores and juniors. The retreat/training experience was organized by Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director, and facilitated by Sister Mary Ellen Plumb.

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.

(Corporate Commitment of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie)

Erie Benedictines join their voices

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie stand with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) in denouncing the American government's decision to rescind the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for more than 57,000 Hondurans.

"As Benedictine Sisters and as women of faith, we take the Gospel call and our own corporate commitment to heart in our concern for these vulnerable people who face numerous challenges should they be forced to return to a country where violence and the oppression of human rights and dignity continues," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress.

The removal of TPS for Hondurans increases the number of people affected to 300,000 plus. As Christians and people of faith, we have a responsibility to human beings: aliens and exiles, refugees and migrants included. The right to conditions worthy of human life is not exclusive.

LCWR Statement

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is deeply troubled by the decision of the Trump administration to terminate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for more than 57,000 Hondurans. Honduras is the seventh country whose citizens have been stripped of their right to protection by this administration.

"Rescinding TPS from human beings under continuing threat of violence of all types is inconsistent with the values and traditions of this nation and with our belief in the God-given dignity of all persons and their inalienable right to life," said Carole Shinnick, SSND, interim executive director of LCWR.

The TPS program is designed to protect people from being returned to harm. That is precisely what Hondurans will face if they are forced to return to a country racked by violence, roiled by political repression, and plagued by continuing environmental challenges.

Hondurans have been contributing members of our communities for 20 years. They have raised families, paid taxes, and contributed to the growth and development of this country even as US foreign policy has added to the endemic poverty and persistent violence that continue to afflict Honduras.

The cancellation of TPS for Hondurans brings to approximately 315,000 the number of our neighbors, friends, parishioners, co-workers, and colleagues whose gifts will be lost to us all. The short-sighted decision to rescind TPS protection for the citizens of Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti, Nepal, Liberia, Nicaragua, and Sudan places us all at risk. Ending their protection promises to tear families apart, fragment our communities, disrupt local economies, and places their well-being at risk.

Catholic sisters will continue to heed the scriptural command to welcome the stranger and care for those in need. We urge the Trump administration to reconsider its decisions and we call on Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to develop legislative solutions to protect vulnerable people.



BENEDICTINES FOR Peace

CATHOLIC DAY OF ACTION FOR DREAMERS: A DAY OF COURAGE AND COMMITMENT

Teach me your ways, O God that I may walk in your truth. (Psalm 86:11)



On the 27th of February 2018, more than 200 Catholic priests, sisters and laypeople gathered to support immigration reform and justice for young people brought to the United States illegally as children, known as Dreamers. Five members of Benedictines for Peace (BFP) took part in this Catholic Day of Action for Dreamers: Sister Anne McCarthy, Oblate Jacqueline Small, Sam Miller, Breanna Mekuly and Tinamarie Stolz. They participated in the action of nonviolent civil disobedience knowing that arrest was certain. The day, which followed a USCCB-organized (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) national Catholic call-in day to protect Dreamers, began with prayer and ended with 42 arrests, including the BFP participants. "Work for justice takes commitment and courage and we must continue the effort for comprehensive immigration reform," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "We stand in solidarity with all those who are advocating for secure DACA legislation and we forge ahead with the DREAMERS walking in God's truth because as Benedictine Sisters we have committed ourselves to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace."

TAKE BACK THE SITE

For 19 years the Erie Benedictines, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, along with their oblates and associates have worked together to provide the Take Back the Site ministry. With violence on the rise, the ministry is

needed more than ever. Held at the site of any death in the city of Erie resulting from an act of violence, TBTS vigils reclaim the site for nonviolence and offer consolation and support to family, friends and neighbors of the victim and the perpetrator. To date, 110 vigils have been held, including vigils for four victims in 2018 alone.

ANNUAL GOOD FRIDAY

PEACE PILGRIMAGE:

THE WAY OF CHRIST'S LOVE

Benedictines for Peace held their 38th annual Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace. The Benedictine Sisters, along with oblates, family members, friends and interested public, walked through downtown Erie marking the Way of the Cross. This year's focus was on those in our world suffering today from violence and oppression of any kind. Each station offered a reflection on the teachings and actions of Jesus, showing the way of Christ's love.



SILENT PEACE WALKS CONTINUE

BFP's new initiative begun in August 2017 is approaching its one year anniversary. The Silent Peace Walk has continued through darkness and light, snow and rain, cold and heat, with a walk held monthly at a designated site, from 7-7:30 p.m. Each month a group of walkers have gathered and walked in silence as a way to promote inner peace, the foundation for constructive justice and peace.



JUNE SILENT PEACE WALK

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

7:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Bayfront Promenade,

Beginning and ending at the Bayview Park near Cherry Street.

Visit the BFP web page at www.eriebenedictines.org/bfp for more information and future dates, or to sign up and receive reminders and alerts from BFP for Silent Peace Walks and other events.



On the Love of Learning

By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB and Jacqueline Small, Oblate



Love of learning is a cornerstone of Benedictine life, the fuel for the zeal with which Benedictines throughout the ages established schools, preserved literature, studied Scripture, and authored books. The sections of the *Rule of Benedict* that deal with reading, prayer, and study make it clear that St. Benedict saw this part of life as being as essential to monasticism as work and prayer.

Fifteen hundred years after Benedict, the Monasteries of the Heart online community (www.monasteriesoftheheart.org), an outreach of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, is continuing that commitment to learning by bringing Benedictine wisdom and spirituality, including opportunities for study, into the lives of 21st century seekers.

Spiritual leaders such as Joan Chittister, the animator of the online movement, John Dear, Edwina Gateley, Judith Valente, as well as Monasteries of the Heart staff and members facilitate regular three-to-six-week eCourses for community members that cover a wide range of monastic topics. The facilitator posts lessons or reflections—text, audio and/or video—and invites participants into reflection and discussion. The comment section is often lively, with participants contributing their reactions and experiences.

In the first six months of 2018, Monasteries of the Heart presented six eCourses for which members paid a small fee. Here's a sampling of posts and comments from the first three courses.

eCourse 1: The Friendship of Women

(In this course participants received eight audio files of Joan Chittister reading from her book, *The Friendship of Women*. Staff members Oblate Jacqueline Small and Sister Mary Ellen Plumb facilitated the discussion circle and activities which included meditating on icons written by Oblate Marcie Bircher.)

Martha of Bethany

Women are beginning to value the truth, the experience of other women. They are beginning to recognize the cry of Martha of Bethany. Martha knew both fact and truth. She knew for a fact that women were not allowed to study the Torah and she let both her sister and Jesus understand, as she watched him instructing her in it, whatever the warnings of the Law, that she was seeing the tradition of exclusion crumbled by them.

She also knew the truth. On the road to Bethany, just as surely as Peter makes a confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah, it is also Martha who says to Jesus, "I know that you are the Messiah." Her experience has told her what the rabbis would not admit. Her insights have penetrated what the eyes of the system did not see. Her heart has heard what the ears of the Pharisees could not hear. Martha of Bethany is a truth-teller. She calls women to see themselves as architects of the faith as well as consumers.

—from *The Friendship of Women* by Joan Chittister (BlueBridge)



Two of the 217 comments from eCourse participants:

What a wonderful reflection on Martha, so great to hear a woman's perspective. She is usually interpreted from a male perspective, the one so busy about many things, not having chosen the better part. It makes me think of the truths we are missing out on regarding the interpretation of scripture when we don't hear a female perspective. If someone is on the receiving end of a friend sharing their truth, I believe you can only honor it with a deep silence and a sense of awe because it comes from the image of God in her. —flemink53

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Our stories get told by men, Helen gets blamed for Troy, Mary Magdalene gets turned from Apostle to prostitute, Joan of Arc gets burned, and Eve, well she is the epitome of all human ills — and when we try to tell our own stories we're attacked for subverting the comfortable narrative. I have been listening to the homilies of women over the past few months and have gained such new perspective on the readings of scripture.—NDiane



eCourse 2: Respond with Nonviolence: A Benedictine Approach to the World

(In this three-week course, participants received a daily teaching, discussion questions and activities from facilitator Sister Anne McCarthy.)

A Psalm of Peace from *The Rule of St. Benedict*

Listen with the ear of your heart.
This is advice from one who loves you,
welcome it and faithfully put it into practice.
If today you hear God's voice,
do not harden your hearts.

Your way of acting should be different from the world's way.
The love of Christ must come before all else.
Be the first to show respect for the other.
Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit,
turn away from evil and do good,
seek peace and pursue it.

Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ.
If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with them.
Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Do not return evil for evil,
do no injury,
even patiently to bear the injury done to you.
Love your enemies.
Bear persecution for justice sake.

Never lose hope in God's mercy.
Never lose hope in God's mercy.
(Arranged by Ann Muczynski, OSB, and Anne McCarthy, OSB)

Two of the 239 comments from eCourse participants:

I love this. There are three parts that particularly resonate with me. "This is advice from one who loves you." How personal and direct is this appeal! Next, "pray for your enemies out of love for Christ." This helps me realize that even as I may struggle to love another, I can still pray for them out of my love for Christ. And hopefully one day I can love them as well. And finally, the last phrase repeated twice: "Never lose hope in God's mercy." To me this says that even when I find this hard and I fail, I can hang on to the hope of the mercy of God. No one is beyond redemption. —Hanna

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The line, "If today you hear God's voice, do not harden your heart," is a line someone once quoted to me as I was discerning what to do with my life. And it is a line I ponder often, especially in times of transition. —susanfullam

eCourse 3—Monastery Scribes

(In this course Sister Mary Lou Kownacki provided a writing prompt every other day for a three-week period.)

In one of my favorite books, *haiku mind: 108 Poems to Cultivate Awareness & Open Your Heart*, Patricia Donegan writes "There is a word in Tibetan Buddhism, 'lungta,' or 'windhorse,' meaning 'uplifted energy,' something primordial within every living thing, which we can tap into anytime to refresh ourselves and uplift our spirits."

She lists a few examples such as opening a window to let in fresh air, taking off your shoes before entering a room, or simply picking up your head when feeling tired. These simple actions catch the "windhorse" and the spirit sails.

Here's a "windhorse" story about the artist Matisse told by his friend:

When I arrived at Matisse's home, I was not only late but exhausted. The exuberant artist listened good-humouredly. "My friend," he said, "you must find the artichokes in your life!" I was frankly baffled. Then Matisse, motioning to follow him, stepped outside. We walked through the garden until we came to the artichokes. "Every morning, after having worked for a stretch, I come here," he said, "and watch the play of light and shade on the leaves. Though I have painted over 2,000 canvases, I always find new combinations of colors and fantastic patterns. No one is allowed to disturb me in this ritual of discovery; it gives me fresh inspiration, necessary relaxation and a new perspective toward my work!"

Matisse knew "lungta." May we all be as wise. What are "the artichokes in your life?" Where do you go or what do you do to get nourished, to find new energy and inspiration? What is your "lungta," your "windhorse?"

—Mary Lou Kownacki

Two of the 841 comments from eCourse participants

My primary "lungta" is a soak in the bath. As a youngster it was the one place I could go in the house and lock the door on the world outside. I'd say, "I'm going to have a bath, anyone want to use the toilet before I have a bath?" This would guarantee me half an hour of undisturbed peace. It stayed with me over the years. Apart from a short time as a mother of young children it became one place I could guarantee no one would disturb. It may seem strange to some, but it has become a place of contemplation, of complete relaxation. I am at no one's beck and call. There are no demands on me, everything else can wait. —Elena

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When I awake in the morning — usually at sunrise — I need to sit undisturbed while I drink my coffee. This quiet time gets me centered for the rest of the day. What sounds a little silly, is that I play solitaire for a couple of rounds (maybe 5-6 rounds) while I sit in silence drinking my coffee. —lindarabbit



If you share a love of learning for Benedictine and contemporary spirituality, you can go to www.monasteriesoftheheart.org for more information. In the latter part of 2018, eCourses will be offered by John Dear, and Erie Benedictines Joan Chittister and Jean Wolbert.



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

By Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Director of Development

“We are blessed by the generosity of our faithful friends. Your commitment ensures the future of our community. We continue to pray for you and your loved ones daily.”

—Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress

Our Benedictine community has been blessed by the generosity and kindness of our benefactors since the sisters arrived in Erie in 1856. You continue to bless us with gifts designated for our greatest needs and the upkeep of Mount St. Benedict Monastery, our home and a center of hospitality for you and our many other guests who come to pray, worship and spend time with us. With your help we are able to serve others through the ministries you support. We cannot do this work without you.

In 2017 the Development Office continued to work with Development Consultants from the National Religious Retirement Office. Sisters Madeline Franze, SSJ, and Mary McFadden, SSJ, provided critical guidance on ways to improve development office operations and analysis of fund raising program expenses, income and outcomes. We are grateful for their insight and wisdom.

2017 BY THE NUMBERS



(L-R) Sr. Laura Beichner, Emma Lee McCloskey, Patti Eichen, Jo Clarke, Sr. Mary Jane Vergotz, Sr. Susan Freitag (Missing from photo: Ann Comstock)

Development Income	
Total	619,458.00
.....	
Development Expenses	
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	206,754.46
Special Programs	43,828.93
Contract Services	7,400.00
Benefactor Relations	7,062.95
Travel, Education, Dues & Membership	4,869.23
Office Equipment, Supplies	3,779.56
Printing, Postage	970.26
Annuity Payments	940.00
Total	275,605.39
.....	
Net Income	343,852.61



THANK YOU TO OUR 2017 BENEFACTORS!

Because of your generosity we received:

- 🌿 **Total Development Income = \$619,458**
- 🌿 **Total number of donors = 3189**
- 🌿 **Number of new donors = 405**
- 🌿 **Number of new donor gifts = 468**
- 🌿 **Total number of gifts = 5712**
- 🌿 **SBA Alumnae gifts = 1255**
- 🌿 **Five Bequests = \$31,303.55**
- 🌿 **Planned Givers = 71**
- 🌿 **Employer Matching Gifts = 22**
- 🌿 **Online Gifts: = 497**



REFLECTION

on the Benedictine Sisters of Erie –Past, Present and Future

By Emma Lee McCloskey, Ed.D., Director of Major and Planned Giving



PAST

As a child, I knew many of the Benedictine Sisters because I attended their Camp Glinodo. Sister Anne Marie Nolan and Sister Patricia McNally welcomed us to the cabins on Lake Erie where the sisters and staff encouraged us to form friendships that have lasted a lifetime. We swam, hiked, created crafts, composed skits and gathered nightly to sing around the campfire. As summer arrives each year I often recall my experiences as a young camper whose life was affected by those sisters who lived by the Glinodo motto, “That in all things God may be glorified.”

PRESENT

I recently completed my first year in the Development Office as Director of Major and Planned Giving. I find that same welcoming presence I experienced at summer camp continuing today at the monastery and in the sisters’ work throughout the Erie community, regionally and nationally. Hospitality is part of the Benedictine way of life, fosters spiritual growth, and brings visitors to the monastery from around the world. Guests often join the sisters for Morning and Evening Prayer in the monastery chapel where they experience the monastic culture of prayer, reflection and community.

Former Prioress Sister Phyllis Schleicher said, “The Rule of Benedict is actually the rule of life, and in that Rule, Benedict gives us a path to life. The very first word of the *Rule of Benedict* is, ‘Listen,’ and we listen with the ‘ear of our hearts.’”

The sisters listen and respond directly to our local community’s battle against poverty, violence, malnutrition, family instability, injustice and crime. Currently, there are 42 sisters serving in inner-city ministries in Erie and elsewhere. With vision and hard work, the sisters have transformed the lives of thousands of men, women and children for more than 160 years.

Many of the sisters work into their 80s and beyond. In 2017, the sisters median age was 76 and more than 53% of the 90 sisters, including four new members, are actively working. In addition to ministries outside of the monastery, some sisters work at the monastery in essential departments and offices. There are sisters who pursue music, art, woodturning, candle-making, and photography resulting in music and prayer resources, hand-crafted greeting cards, art work and more for sale at Chapter 57, the Monastery Gift Shop, where a limited selection of items is now available on the community website, ErieBenedictines.org/chapter57.



FUTURE NEEDS

Despite their untiring work and modest lifestyle, 2017 figures from the National Religious Retirement Office indicate the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are 75.32% underfunded for their retirement needs. In 2017, while the average Social Security beneficiary received \$16,345, the average Social Security benefit for a Benedictine sister was \$7,126.42. For each sister receiving healthcare services in the monastery infirmary, the cost is approximately \$31,656 annually. More independent sisters over the age of 70, who are in internal ministries as well as the ministry of prayer and presence, require \$26,278 annually to cover basic needs. We are fortunate that some sisters qualify for healthcare and supportive services from LIFE (Living Independence for the Elderly)—Northwestern Pennsylvania provided by the Lutheran Home of Erie.

National Religious Retirement Office development consultants are working with our Development Office to increase income for our retirement needs. In addition to annual contributions and fundraising initiatives, major donations and planned gifts will be needed to address this shortfall. We held a Wills and Estate Planning Seminar at the monastery in October 2017. Shaun B. Adrian, Estate Planning Attorney with MacDonald, Illig Attorneys, shared the benefits of having a proper will, information on durable power of attorney and how to make a legacy gift to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Information about a Fall 2018 Wills Seminar will be available this summer.

The Benedictine Sisters appreciate all the people who have honored their past and joined them in the present to restore hope in peoples’ lives. More than 55 years after I first met the sisters at Camp Glinodo, I remain inspired by their humility, compassion and prayerfulness and am in awe of their impact on our world.

To initiate a conversation about Major or Planned Giving, contact Emma Lee McCloskey at 814-899-0614 ext. 2415, or email elmccloskey@mtstbenedict.org.



Enhance Your Support of the Benedictine Sisters through ERIEGIVES

By Patti Eichen, Development Associate

"To receive a gift from a donor at any time of the year is always humbling and greatly appreciated." —Patti Eichen, Development Associate

Why a gift on ERIEGIVES Day?

For 162 years, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie have responded to the changing needs of the community, particularly segments of the population for whom advocacy is lacking. To this day, the Benedictine sisters are involved in ministry in the same inner-city Erie neighborhood where they first arrived in 1856 to teach the children of the German settlers.

Your support helps the sisters to meet their needs so that they can address the needs of this larger Erie community. You help them, so they can help others. The needs of Mount St. Benedict Monastery and the care of elder sisters are vital to continuing the work which the sisters started all those years ago in the Erie community. Because of you, the sisters and all those to whom they minister can look to the future with hope.

The sisters' **commitment** is to use their human energy to open their home and hearts, to build community, share resources, and minister to others.

Their **ministries** encompass hope for a world that is more compassionate, just and forgiving.

The **possibilities** are endless as they work to empower those who have little.

Their **dedication** is to address vital local issues: poverty, needs of women and children, peace and justice, and energy conservation.

Their **passion** is to create a society of equality, acceptance and dignity for all.

For more information on the Benedictine Sisters of Erie visit our website www.eriebenedictines.org or contact Patti Eichen, Development Associate at 814-899-0614, ext. 2442, or email peichen@mtstbenedict.org

How does ERIEGIVES Day work?

During a designated 12-hour period of online giving the Erie Community Foundation and their sponsors will enhance each donor's gift by providing a pro-rated match to each gift.

This year ERIEGIVES Day is Tuesday, August 14, and on this day you have the opportunity to support the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and have your donation increase. For 12 hours, between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. EST, you can make an online donation to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie at www.ErieGives.org. The minimum gift is \$25, there is no maximum limit. Visa, MasterCard and Discover are accepted. You can also choose to contact the Erie Community Foundation by phone at 814-454-0843 on Erie Gives day and make a donation using a credit or debit card.

For more information on Erie Gives Day visit www.ErieGives.org

Tubilarians



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Sister Mary Therese Egan is a native of Oil City, PA, and a graduate of St. Joseph Parish Schools where she first heard the call to religious life and made the decision to enter the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians—that speaks of the patience, kindness, strength, endurance, and constancy of love—inspired her to live her religious life, both in community and ministry, with faithfulness and dedication. Education was Sister Mary Therese's primary ministry for many years and she served at diocesan schools in Erie, Cleveland and Virginia, both as teacher and administrator. In the Dodge City, KS diocese Sister Mary Therese shared her computer talents as a computer technician and interactive TV coordinator. Presently, Sister Mary Therese is the Information Technology Director at Mount St. Benedict where her technical expertise, endless patience and good humor bless the community.

Sister Justina Gutowski entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie from St. Joseph Parish, Oil City, PA, where she came to know the sisters, their way of living, and their goodness. She graduated from St. Benedict Academy and entered the novitiate in December 1956. For 60 years Sister Justina has been guided by the Rule of Benedict, particularly the phrase: "Let us prefer nothing to Christ." With Christ as her guide and companion, she ministered in the field of elementary education as a teacher in the primary grades for many years in Erie diocesan schools. This was followed by her ministry at Benet Press, the community print shop, where she eventually, as manager, assumed responsibility for all aspects of its operation. When Benet Press closed in 1998, Sister Justina became Director of Food Services at the monastery, a position she held for 15 years. Presently, Sister Justina is engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence and also volunteers clerical assistance to the business office as needs arise. The community continues to be blessed by Sister Justina's quiet, steadfast presence.



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Sister Phyllis Schleicher is a former Prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. She grew up in St. Mary's Parish, Erie, where she attended the parish school. She went to St. Benedict Academy and then entered the Erie Benedictines where she faithfully embraced Benedict's first words in the Rule: "Listen carefully, my daughter, to my instructions and incline the ear of your heart." For Sister Phyllis, Benedict's wisdom goes to the core of the Christian message. Turning toward God in prayer while listening for God's word, welcoming it and proclaiming it for and with others has guided her throughout her monastic and ministerial life. After first serving in elementary schools in the Erie Diocese she returned to St. Benedict Academy as teacher and administrative team member. Following this, she qualified for licensure as a nursing home administrator and ministered in this capacity at John XXIII Home in Hermitage, PA, until she was elected prioress in 1990. She served two terms in that role. Currently Sister Phyllis, a founding member of Catholic Rural Ministry (CRM) in the Erie Diocese, is Director of CRM in Potter and McKean Counties under the auspices of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie. Through this ministry she practices the art of listening, which for her is really the art of loving all those she serves.

Sister Rita Zattosky moved to Erie from Aliquippa, PA, and attended Mount Calvary School followed by St. Benedict Academy where she came to know the Erie Benedictines. For 60 years of religious profession she has, in her own words, been taking each day as it comes and doing the best she can. A passage from Luke's Gospel has been her strength and guide: "Anyone who wants to follow me, the Christ, must put aside her own desire and carry her cross every day and keep close to me." Inspired by this scripture Sister Rita has lived a faith-filled monastic and ministerial life. She did housekeeping and cooking in several convents before she became an elementary school teacher in the Erie Diocese. In 1984 she began ministry at the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania as staff monitor and then receptionist for 16 years. Her gifts of hospitality were then put to use as monastery receptionist, a ministry in which Sister Rita continues to share the blessing of warm welcome to all who call or come to the door.



Sister Mary Susan Hallstein, a Pittsburgh, PA native, was exposed to a number of different religious communities at a young age. She was taught by Mercy Sisters and Franciscan Sisters and volunteered with The Little Sisters of the Poor at their home for the elderly. She even had a relative who was a Sister of Charity. But, as she says, somehow God called her to be a Benedictine. Sister Mary Susan worked for several years after high school before entering the Benedictine Sisters of Benet Lake, WI, where she made her perpetual monastic profession. In 1986 she came to Erie when her community of origin began a merger process with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. With the 1991 completion of the merger, Sister Mary Susan transferred her vows and fully incorporated as an Erie Benedictine. While in Benet Lake, Sister Mary Susan served as Procurator and Formation Director. Since coming to Erie, Sister Mary Susan has worked as the community's Health Insurance Coordinator, a ministry she began in 1990 and in which she still serves. What is most important to Sister Mary Susan is that first and foremost she is a lover of Christ. It is that presence that she extends to community and through ministry with gentleness and generosity.

Sister Marla Bleil entered the Erie Benedictines from St. Gregory Parish, North East, in 1966. She credits her monastic community, the Erie Benedictines, for guiding her throughout the journey of her religious life. For Sister Marla, communal and personal prayer, scripture reading, retreats and the love and support of community have fostered and nurtured her spiritual growth. She has shared this stability through ministry. For many years Sister Marla taught as an elementary school teacher throughout the Diocese of Erie. After 32 years in education Sister Marla took on the work of Administrative Assistant at Benetwood Apartments, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters that offers monastic hospitality to low income, elderly and handicapped persons. Now, 18 years later, she remains in this same ministry and offers a stable, welcoming presence to all whom she encounters.



Tubilarians

Continued

Sister Janet Goetz, a native of Northeast, PA, attended St. Gregory Parish Schools. She credits her vocation to her parents and the sisters who taught her. The sisters' love for monastic life, their daily attention to the Liturgy of the Hours, and their joy in community inspired her to enter the Erie Benedictines and to make a perpetual monastic commitment. She was an elementary school teacher before becoming a registered nurse and then a nurse practitioner. Eventually she became a nursing instructor, working with young women and men and helping them to become compassionate, caring and well-trained nurses. Spiritual and educational programs provided by and through the community direct and influence her monastic life. The sisters' commitment to praying the Liturgy of the Hours together and caring for each other in small ways continues to inspire her. At present, Sister Janet works at the monastery as assistant to the community archivist. By her gentle presence she reverences the life that surrounds her.



Sister Dorothy Stoner entered the Erie Benedictines from St. Joseph Parish, Sharon, PA, in 1966. The call to be different from the world around her was what attracted her to the monastic life—a call to which she was able to respond because of the loving, supportive family life created by her parents. To this day she is challenged by the line in the Rule of Benedict that reads: "Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else." A communal way of life, grounded in scripture and given expression in prayer, continues to give meaning to her monastic life. Sister Dorothy has ministered in education and pastoral work. Currently, she shares her monastic life of prayer and community at St. Benedict Education Center, a ministry owned and administered by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie that provides education and job placement services to those on public assistance and assists refugees in their enculturation and resettlement process in order to improve the lives of families. Sister Dorothy prioritizes being a monastic presence to all whom she meets.

Sister Susan Freitag grew up in South Bend, IN, and began her religious life with the Daughters of Divine Charity where she made her final profession in 1973. After much discernment she transferred those religious vows to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1988. Her favorite line in the Rule of Benedict reads: "Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love"—words that she lives by daily. As a Benedictine Sister she continued in the ministry of education she had begun with her community of origin and taught in Erie Diocesan schools. This was followed by Benedictine ministries and parish pastoral work. No matter what her ministry, Sister Susan understands that everything she does is done with God's help. She believes that the religious woman she is and the work that she accomplishes is in the hands of God. At present Sister Susan is a staff member of the community's Development Office and a teacher at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House where she gives generously of her time and talents.



What might change in me, in you, in any of us for the price of 10 minutes a day?

By Mary Ellen Plumb, OSB



"And write 10 minutes a day, every day, all day."

Thus the instructor of our Women's Writing Circle sends us home after each gathering.

I want to become a better writer, and the directive intrigues me, so I've been faithful to the task, day by day, for nearly a year now. And it has changed me — writing is more vital to the fiber of my being and I can no longer imagine a day without writing.

So, I got to thinking — what else might change in me, in you, in any of us for the price of 10 minutes a day?

Ten minutes a day to slowly and patiently cultivate a new talent or project: write poetry or paint or dance or play a musical instrument or swing a golf club or build a treehouse. Enjoy every moment!

And move toward a spirit that will breathe creative and free.

Ten minutes a day to listen closely to someone of a different culture or political viewpoint or generation than yours. Listen carefully. Learn thoroughly.

And move deeper into a heart that will welcome each and all.

Ten minutes a day to pray the prayers of a different faith tradition than your own. Savor each word and the wisdom you discover there.

And move closer toward celebrating faith in all its dimensions.

Ten minutes a day to walk attentively through your neighborhood, through the woods, on the beach — anywhere where nature abounds. Pick up and discard anything that mars the beauty that surrounds you.

And move nearer to cherishing the Earth as its devoted caretaker.

Ten minutes a day to do something extra and thoughtful for someone who has not asked for it, even someone who does not know you by name.

And move fervently toward becoming a kinder soul.

How else do we ever change ourselves?

How else do we ever change our world?

Ten minutes a day.

Oblate Way of Life

By Dianne Sabol, OSB, Oblate Co-Director

Benedictine Oblates seek God in association with a monastic community. Desiring to deepen their relationship with God, with others and with self, they ground their spirituality in values based on simplicity, respect, hospitality and reverence for all life. With the Rule of Benedict and the Gospel as their guides they are able to integrate Benedictine values into their lives and become Christ's presence in their families, churches, cities, towns, neighborhood and work places. The difference they make in their worlds helps to change the world. The following stories reflect how being an oblate can and does, could and might, change one's life and the world in which that life is lived.

Living the Rule of Benedict

Jacqueline Small, Oblate

My efforts to live out the Rule of Benedict as an oblate have led me to a lot of places that scared me, over the past two and a half years. Back in February, they led me to jail.



Along with four members of Benedictines for Peace, and about 35 other Catholics, I was arrested for civil disobedience while praying for justice for immigrants in a Senate building in Washington, DC. This was part of the Catholic Day of Action with Dreamers, a day meant to encourage Congress to act for the Dreamers: young people who immigrated to the United States as children, without going through legal channels, who for years have had amnesty under a policy known as DACA, Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals. Since the Trump administration ended DACA last year, they are in a precarious and unclear situation, at risk of being deported to countries they may not even remember.

This was my first arrest, and I was nervous leading up to the action. I wanted to participate, of course—I'm the daughter of an immigrant, so I have some sense of what it means for a family to make a foreign country their home, and I'm sickened by the cruelty this administration has shown to immigrants and refugees. But even with that desire, it was still scary to risk arrest. I don't know if I could have found the courage if I wasn't an oblate, if I didn't know that I had the support of the Benedictine community, if I hadn't promised to "live the way of the Gospel and the Rule of Benedict," and to work for "the transformation of the world."

We were arrested and released in a matter of hours, treated respectfully throughout the process, and given platforms to talk about our experiences. But as I write this, six weeks after our protest, there is still no legislative solution in sight

for the Dreamers, and they still live with fear and uncertainty and prejudice against them. That's hard to take. But I was encouraged by the amount of support and love that we received. I have to go on hoping that this community, and others throughout the country, will keep risking our comfort to agitate for the sake of peace and justice. Benedict, who calls his followers to respect the common good, to welcome all people as Christ, and to pursue what is best for others, demands nothing less of us.

Oblate Jacqueline Small is a staff member of Monasteries of the Heart and Benetvision. You can read her blog at www.monasteriesoftheheart.org. Learn more about becoming an Oblate of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie at www.eriebenedictines.org/oblates.

An oblate's journey blessed by motherhood

Alyssa Kissell, Oblate

When I think back on my journey with this Benedictine community, I am amazed at how far I have come and the milestones I have passed along the way. As a young college student on my first visit to the monastery, I never imagined I would still

be connected with the sisters nearly a decade later, sharing with them important and life-changing moments such as my wedding and, most recently, becoming a mother.

The Benedictine charism is about seeking God—who is ever present with us—and specifically about seeking God together in the communal life. My family of three is a small community of its own, and the God whom we seek has been especially present in our lives over the past several months. I admit it was sometimes difficult to see this: when I was pushing 42 weeks pregnant and my patience was quickly fading, or in the early



Photo credit: Abbey Kysiak of Abbey Lynn Photography



weeks at home with a newborn when 3 a.m. passed in a blur and the days began to run into one another. But, I have only to look into my daughter's beautiful face to see God in the gift that she is to my husband, also an oblate, and me. Yes, God is indeed present in our lives.

As a mother I have learned to look for God in the little moments that may seem insignificant; however, they are anything but. As our daughter

discovers the world in new and ever-changing ways, she gives new meaning to our seeking God together "in community." This tiny member of our small family opens our eyes to wonder. God is changing our lives through her, and we look forward to what is yet to come as we continue our journey in the oblate way of life.

Ed. Note: Alyssa first came to the monastery as part of a college service week program. After college graduation, she spent a year living with the Benedictine community as a participant in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience program. Upon completion of the program Alyssa settled in Erie and continues to teach at St. Benedict Child Development Center, where she started working while living at the monastery.

Why I seek the Oblate Way of life

Breanna Mekuly

I've always been a seeker. Which meant that I often found myself confused with a lot of questions about how to best live according to what I believe.

As a part of my search, I sought out places where, as a feminist Catholic, I felt liturgically and socially comfortable yet challenged to continue growing spiritually and personally. I had read about the Erie Benedictines, in *Good Catholic Girls* by Angela Bonavoglia, and I first met them in 2014 and felt an instant deep spiritual connection. Not only were these women religious, they and their



oblate community asked similar questions to mine. They lived their lives purposefully in a way that seemed to make sense with what I believed.

I felt a magnet-like force pulling me toward Erie. So, I relocated.

Since moving to Erie, I have grown to know several oblates and a few have become close friends. In them I witness the lifestyle I desire: one that is deeply rooted in social justice and a prayerful life, yet also committed to a family or partnership along with the commitment to Benedictine community life.

In late February, I joined in an act of civil disobedience in Washington, D.C., asking Congress to support a clean Dream Act and path to citizenship for DREAMERS. Before the liturgy, group prayers and arrest, Sister Anne McCarthy led our small group from Erie in a private prayer. With holy water and a few special words, we blessed ourselves with courage to stand up for what we believe and donned aprons that read, "Benedictine Sisters of Erie."

In this experience, I recognized again why I appreciate being connected to the Erie Benedictine community. Together, the community – sisters, oblates, and friends alike – pray and act according to similar beliefs and hold one another close even when physical distances separate them. While participating in this act of civil disobedience I knew that I was not just standing up for the dignity of the DREAMERS by myself, but as a representative of a larger faith community.

As an oblate, I hope to continue actions like this. I hope to be connected to and encouraged by the spiritual and communal life of the Erie Benedictines no matter where I am or what I'm doing.

Ed. Note: Breanna was the 2016 Joan Chittister Summer Intern. During the internship she lived at the monastery and worked in the offices of Sister Joan, Benetvision and Monasteries of the Heart. She took a position with Emmaus Ministries after she moved to Erie in the fall of 2016 where she serves the city's hungry and poor. She actively participates in work for peace, justice and gender equality.

In memoriam

Patricia Goetz 11-20-17

Robert (Bob) Delle Vella-Rauth 3-28-18

Virginia (Ginny) Bertges 5-27-18

To learn more, visit ErieBenedictines.org or contact the co-directors: oblates@mtstbenedict.org or 814-899-0614

Fourth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates

By Joanne Cahill, Oblate and Ann Hoffman, OSB, Oblate Co-director

“My dear oblates, each of you, like monks and nuns, have a unique vocation which you must discover for yourself,” Edward Linton, OSB, Director of International Benedictine Formation, told 165 oblates and 32 oblate directors gathered in Rome last November for the 4th World Congress of Benedictine Oblates. Participants from 35 countries attended the 2017 Oblate Congress that was titled, *“A Way Forward: The Benedictine Community in Motion.”*

Erie Oblate Joanne Cahill, from State College, PA, and Sister Ann Hoffman, Oblate Co-director, represented Mount St. Benedict Monastery at the gathering. Erie Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister delivered the Congress keynote, telling participants, “Oblates are not meant to be simply consumers of the tradition. You are meant to be the carriers of the tradition as well.” Oblates are men and women who make a formal commitment to live Benedictine values in their daily lives through association with a particular monastery.

If there was one theme that resonated throughout the congress it was this: in a world where Benedictine oblates now outnumber nuns, sisters and monks, they shoulder the same responsibility for bearing witness to the 1,500-year-old Benedictine tradition and for transmitting its values to the world as do their vowed brothers and sisters. This theme also resonated in the words of Abbot Primate Gregory Polan when he issued this challenge, “You, as oblates, share in the mission of a monastic community to live a life in the spirit of St. Benedict, and to make that life known to others.” (The Abbot Primate is elected to head the Benedictine Confederation.)

Gone are the days where sisters and monks alone can possibly bring the Way of Benedict to the many places in a broken world that lack and need such values. Gone, too, are the days where oblates relate to the monastery solely as a place to draw spiritual sustenance. Oblation implies a shared responsibility to foster hospitality, peace-making and community. Sisters and monks can, and must, see oblates as, in the words of the Abbot Primate, “their best friends.” Oblates can and must recognize their responsibility to carry forth the Benedictine tradition. It will be the mutuality of this “living friendship” — a phrase frequently heard during the Congress — that will show us the way forward.

The Congress honored Abbot Primate Emeritus Notker Wolf, OSB, who championed the idea of a global network of oblates, for promoting international oblate gatherings and for his strong belief that oblates must be active bearers of the values espoused in the Rule of Benedict.

Congress days were long, beginning with *lectio* at 7:00 a.m. and concluding with Compline at 9:30 p.m. In between we attended workshops and small group discussions, celebrated Lauds, Mass and Vespers, gathered for delicious meals and conversation. And there was *aperitivi* — that wonderful Italian custom of pre-dinner libations! In these settings there was ample opportunity to learn from oblates around the world. We also enjoyed an audience with Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square and a visit to Sant’ Anselmo, the international Benedictine house of study. Our work as Congress participants culminated in the development of a draft vision statement that will guide the Congress and provide a framework for oblate communities around the world.





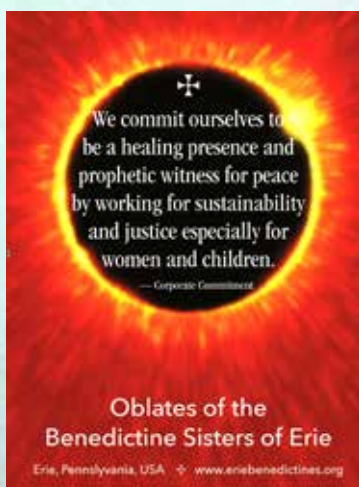
(L-R): Joanne Cahill, Oblate, Sister Joan Chittister, Sister Ann Hoffman, Oblate Co-Director

Draft Vision Statement (5 themes)

1. The Rule as our Living Tradition
2. Listening through Prayer and Contemplation
3. Oblate Formation to Ensure the Future
4. Oblate as the Good Steward
5. Oblates are Networked

Congress organizers invited each monastery to create a poster for display and then gave participants a chance to speak about their posters. Sister Ann commented on our poster that featured our Corporate Commitment over a graphic rendering of a solar eclipse. She explained that the sisters and oblates of our community work at removing the darkness in the world, one person at a time, by living our Corporate Commitment, so that the sun will shine brightly again.

The Erie Benedictine oblate poster featured our Corporate Commitment highlighted in a graphic rendering of a solar eclipse. Sr. Linda Romey designed the poster.



Joanne led a workshop on Monasteries of the Heart, an online movement sharing Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers that is an outreach of the Erie Benedictines. Sister Joan Chittister, animator of Monasteries of the Heart—also spoke at the workshop and responded to participant questions. (See pages 12-13 to learn more about Monasteries of the Heart).

In her keynote, Sister Joan underscored the mutuality of the relationship between sisters and monks and oblates, explaining, “One enlightens the other. One energizes the other. One empowers the other.” She asked the oblates four questions: Where do you come from? Who are you? What must you do?



Sister Ann with a group of oblates from around the world

and Why do you exist? And then she proposed answers to her questions: 1. You come from the heart of the Spirit. 2. You are monastic gifts given by God today. 3. You must embody and extend the charisms or gifts of the Spirit long embedded in this great monastic tradition in new and even richer ways. 4. For one reason, and one reason only: to become, like the great monastics before you, the blazing, flaming, searing light to others that you are really meant to be.

We returned to Erie and State College energized and inspired, recommitted to being that blazing, flaming, searing light to others.

Presentations from the World Congress of Benedictine Oblates, November 4-10, 2017

🌀 Keynote by Joan Chittister, OSB, “Let the Call Be Heard” <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/SrJoanChittisterOblateCongress-2017.pdf>

🌀 Address of Abbott Primate Gregory Polan <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/AP-GregoryPolanOblateCongress-2017.pdf>

🌀 Address of Edward Linton, OSB <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/FrEdwardLinton-OblateCongress2017.pdf>



Joanne Cahill with Abbot Primate Emeritus Notker Wolf, OSB



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

Plastics, Climate Change, Moral Issue

The ecological crisis that we face today requires that many things change, but it is we humans above all who need to change, Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si*, #202. He also says that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poor (L.S. #148). Climate change is a moral issue.

Catholic Climate Covenant and Earth Day Network are two organizations that are asking us to focus on the huge problem of plastic pollution, particularly single-use disposable plastics.

“Currently about 300 million tons of plastic are produced each year to make bags, bottles, packages, and other commodities for people all over the world. Unfortunately, only about 10% of this plastic is properly recycled and reused. The rest ends up as waste in landfills or as litter in our natural environment, where it leaches dangerous chemicals into the nearby soil and water, endangering humans and wildlife alike.” — Earth Day Network, www.earthday.org.

In addition to a littering problem, plastic is a petroleum product problem. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the production of plastic products uses about 8% of global oil production and that five ounces of carbon dioxide are released for every ounce of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) used to make water bottles. Taking into account the hidden environmental costs of the use of energy to transport, store, recycle and incinerate the plastic products, consuming plastic products exacerbates climate change.

What can we do?

- ✓ **Refuse** disposable plastic. Carry your own bags, containers and utensils. Say, “No straw, please.”
- ✓ **Reuse** durable, nontoxic straws, to-go containers, bottles.
- ✓ **Reduce** your plastic footprint. Use cloth bags for shopping.
- Recycle**
- ✓ Pay attention to the entire life cycle of items you bring into your life, from source to manufacturing to distribution to disposal.
- ✓

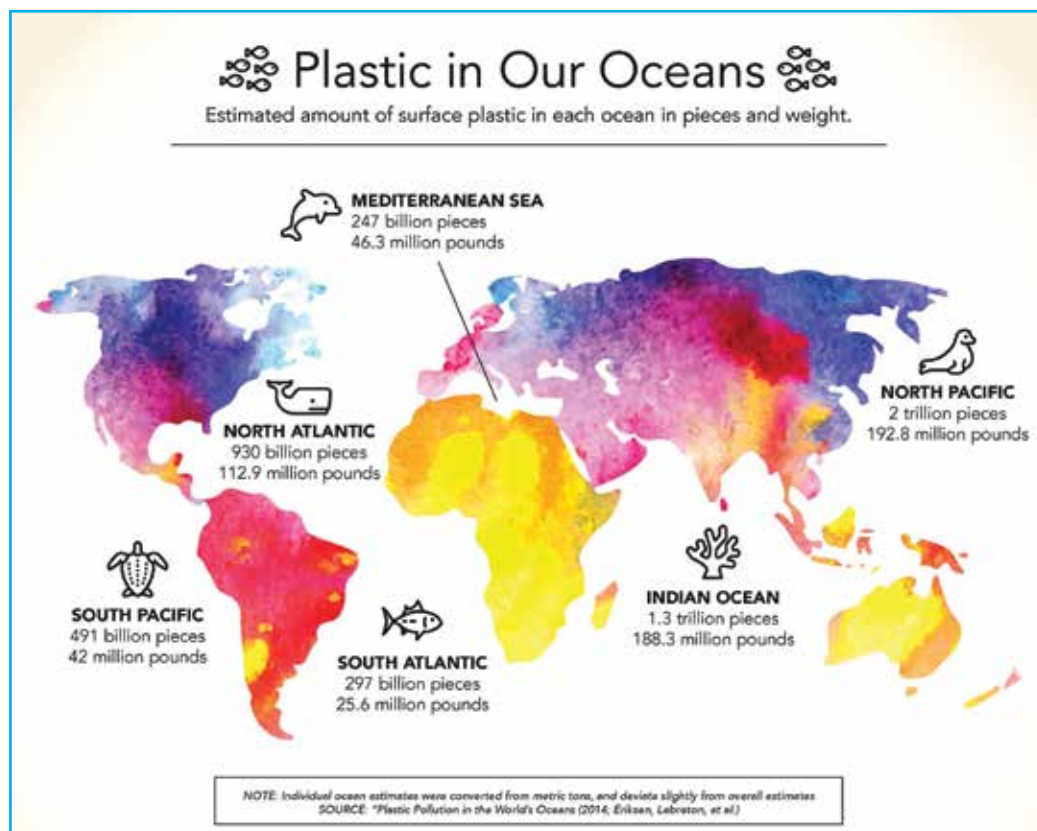
For additional information go to www.earthdaynetwork.org and www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/earthday.

Avoid single-use plastic.

Plastic-free water begins with our daily decisions and purchases. The next time you reach for that disposable plastic straw, water bottle, cup or throwaway container or bag, remember: clean water is vital to our survival and each person can make a difference.

Plastics in clothing.

Plastic is woven into fleece and many other popular synthetic materials. With each washing, plastic fibers are shed into the wastewater and eventually into our waterways. These particles, and the microbeads found in some facial scrubs and toothpaste, may be ingested by fish, a source of food for many, and contribute to the overall plastic pollution of our waters.



Joan Chittister

Institute for Contemporary Spirituality

This summer, the pilot session of the Joan Chittister Institute for Contemporary Spirituality will be hosted at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, June 17-30. This two-week summer intensive will be offered to a group of nine female Catholic graduate students or recent graduates of masters programs in divinity, theology, religion or related fields.

The subject of this year's program is "A Feminist Benedictine Option," and the discussions will focus on monasticism and women through the lens of Sister Joan's work. Sister Joan says monasticism "is as much a way of seeing and working and living as it is a way of praying. It is a spiritual vision that affects a person's whole style of life," by basing every day in praise, humility, stewardship, labor, and community.

The program, organized by the Benetvision staff (www.joanchittister.org), is an opportunity for young women to broaden their thinking and deepen the understanding of monasticism, in the company of other young, female seekers and scholars who are grounded in feminism and Catholicism.



The nine young women who will participate in the Institute are:

Jessie Bazan, from Eden Prairie, MN, who has a bachelor's degree from Marquette University and a Master of Divinity from St. John's University;

Eliza Biddle, from New South Wales, Australia, who has a bachelor's degree from University of Wollongong and a Master's degree in Theology from Newcastle University;

Lisa Cathelyn, from Berkeley, CA, who has a bachelor's degree from Marquette University and is studying for a Master of Divinity at Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University;

Teresa Coda, from Providence, RI, who has a bachelor's degree from Wittenburg University, and a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School;

Allison Connelly, from Minneapolis, MN, who has a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and will begin a Master's program at Union Theological Seminary this fall;

Meghan Dandrea, from Buffalo, NY, who has a bachelor's degree from SUNY Fredonia, a Master's in Education from St. Bonaventure University, and a Master's in Theology from Christ the King Seminary, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Pastoral Ministry through Christ the King Seminary;

Ellen Jewett, from Berkeley, CA, who has a bachelor's degree from Yale University and is now studying for a Master of Divinity at Jesuit School of Theology;

Elizabeth Palmer, from Notre Dame, IN, who has a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College and just received her Master of Divinity from Loyola University, Chicago;

and **Darby Ratliff**, from Buffalo, NY, who has a bachelor's degree from Canisius College, and will complete her Master's program in higher education at Canisius this May.



National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW) is an annual celebration that takes place from March 8-14. It is a branch of the National Catholic Sisters Project headquartered at Alverno College in Milwaukee, WI, and is headquartered at St. Mary's University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, MN. It is held in conjunction with Women's History Month and the first one took place in 2014. Created to honor women religious, it is a series of events that instruct, enlighten and bring greater focus to the lives of sisters. While it provides the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of sisters, it also serves to help young women learn about women religious and possibly consider a vocation to the religious life.

The theme for NCSW 2018 was "Women Who Are Called." It was carried through locally in a series of billboards, public service announcements (funded through a NCSW grant) and a very special event that honored three particular women religious of the Diocese of Erie.

Sisters Marlene Bertke, OSB, Rita Brocke, RSM, and Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ, were honored for their many years of dedicated social activism in a public celebration that was held at Mount St. Benedict Monastery and which included a number of honors and blessings. These committed religious women were acclaimed for their years of social justice work;



National Catholic Sisters Week 2018



Seated (L-R): Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ, Sr. Rita Brocke, RSM, Sr. Marlene Bertke, OSB; Standing (L-R) Sr. Mary Herrmann, SSJ, Sr. Mary Ann Bader, RSM, Sr. Anne Wambach, OSB

they have set an example and a reminder that all are called to the work of peace and justice. "The turnout spoke volumes to all of the religious women of the Erie Diocese," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "It was humbling for us to realize yet again the support, respect and appreciation we receive from the people of Erie and we are most grateful."

The Sunday celebration, the idea of Gary Horton, CEO of the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation, was planned by a committee that included: Gary Horton, Gary Loncki, Stephanie Hall, Sisters Nancy Fischer, SSJ, Anne McCarthy, OSB, and Michele Schroek, RSM and Betsy Wiest, SSJ Agregee; it was orchestrated by many people, including Lilly Broadcasting (Pam Forsyth, Alexis Bevevino, Rick Bonniger and Eva Mastromatteo) who facilitated video production. "The program, presentations and proclamations were memorable," said Sister Marilyn Schauble, one of the music ministers and the community's Vocation Director. "The chapel was overflowing and the participation was rich and full. It was wonderful." After the service, the guests were invited to a reception in the community's dining room prepared by the monastery's Food Service Staff under the direction of Susan Krantz. "Everyone worked together to make a truly memorable event from beginning to end," said Sister Anne Wambach. "It was a joyous celebration of Catholic sisters and we were happy to be a part of it."



Sister Marlene Bertke, OSB, came to Erie in 1973 to be part of Pax Center for peace and justice, and later transferred from the Benedictine Sisters in Covington, KY to the Erie Benedictine community. She co-founded national Benedictines for Peace (BFP) and served as director of Erie Benedictines for Peace for 23 years in addition to other ministry: teaching at St. Benedict's Academy, Erie, PA followed by ministry at Pax Christi USA, the Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM), and teaching English as a Second Language. She participated in protective accompaniment delegations to communities at risk during U.S. funded wars which took her to Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Chiapas, Mexico. On her return, she shared her experiences and advocated for change in U.S. policy. She was one of the originators of the annual Good Friday Pilgrimage, Take Back the Site vigils and monthly First Friday vigils for peace, an end to the death penalty, and justice for immigrants. Sister Marlene was named an Erie Times-News Person of the Year in 2016 for her peace and justice work.

Happenings...



Community weekend enriched by Dr. Massimo Faggioli

Massimo Faggioli, church historian and professor of theology at Villanova University shared his thoughts on Catholicism and the American Scene during the annual April community weekend for sisters and oblates. He explained how the pontificate of Francis, from the perspective of both politics and theology, has fostered the emergence of an interesting relationship between Catholicism and the USA.

Throughout the weekend Dr. Faggioli offered many insights and information about the history of the papacy since Vatican II. Through comparison he shared Pope Francis' vision of the Church. "It became very clear that Pope Francis wants a church that lives the Gospel—that looks like Jesus Christ and has a place for the marginalized," shared Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director. "For Benedictines this rings true. The Benedictine way is to welcome all as Christ; Benedict advocates that we always use the Gospel as our guide." Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, added. "It was a very enriching weekend. Massimo is passionate about the vision of the Second Vatican Council. His scholarship and expertise laid out a challenge for all of us. We must continue to work at becoming a church built on the foundations laid by Vatican II."

Educated Choice through Knowledge

The first presentation in the 2018 Enrichment Series at Mount St. Benedict Monastery drew a group of people interested in hearing about "Judaism: A modern look at an ancient faith." In her presentation, Rabbi Emily Losben-Ostrov, spiritual leader of Temple Anshe Hesed in Erie, explained how Judaism is an ever-evolving set of practices meant to be explored anew in each generation; she showed a timeline development of how Reformed Judaism, the most liberal type of Judaism, developed. "We have been reforming since the very beginning," explained Rabbi Losben-Ostrov. "We are educated through knowledge. Making educated choices through knowledge is at the heart of reformation."



(L-R) Sr. Stephanie Schmidt and Rabbi Emily Losben-Ostrov



2018 Spring Art Show: "Creation"

The Chapter 57 Gallery was lined with new pieces for the 2018 Spring Art Show held annually during March, Women's History Month. The theme "Creation" was in celebration of women and their art in all forms. "This year we were proud to exhibit the art of our Benedictine Sisters, oblates and invited friends of the monastery," said Sister Margaret Ann Pilewski, manager of the monastery's Chapter 57 Gift Shop and organizer of the show. "Our lives are filled with creation and the women artists who exhibited shared their unique ways of speaking inner truths and experiences through an array of media types." Currently, several of the pieces are available through the Chapter 57 online store. You can view the for sale art show pieces as well as a number of other items at www.eriebenedictines.org/chapter57. Many of the items are unique and created by artists of the monastery. In addition, the store features easy ordering and payment, printable invoices, and shipping or pick up options for your convenience. The prices are not inflated and the proceeds from all sales help to support the Erie Benedictines and their ministries.

Happenings...



YPC at the Mount

The chapel at Mount St. Benedict Monastery was filled with music when the Young People's Chorus of Erie (YPC) performed part of their spring concert for sisters and guests under the direction of Gabrielle Dietrich, conductor, and accompanied by Joyce Kriner, pianist.

"These talented young people leave no doubt in my mind that choral music is in good hands for the future," said Sister Marilyn Schauble, community musician and host. "It was a beautiful concert in every way. The musical renditions were in a variety of styles and languages, all with meaningful messages and amazing harmonies. "It was lovely and so memorable," shared one guest as she was leaving.

YPC Erie is a youth outreach organization of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Penn State Behrend and northwestern Pennsylvania's only comprehensive youth choral music program.

"This he would have loved"

"John was not a person who liked a lot of attention but this he would have loved," said Michael Fraley, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE). A service remembering John Horan (d. 2-25-16) and his commitment to the earth was held on April 27th by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie at the place where trees have been planted in his memory. The trees, donated by HACE, were planted as part of the streamside restoration project at Glinodo. The event was coordinated by Sister Pat Lupo and the prayer service was planned by Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski. It was attended by HACE staff and board members, Erie Police officers, Benedictine Sisters, oblates and friends.



HACE staff and friends

John Horan, executive director of HACE at the time of his death, a position he held for almost 40 years, had been very supportive of environmental initiatives throughout the Erie Housing Authority properties. He is also remembered for his many innovative ideas that served to better the city of Erie. His motto was simple: "It's about people." His countless efforts and his very person brought that motto to life in innumerable ways. An engraved memorial rock marks the area where the trees have been planted. It honors John Horan, a dedicated and hard-working visionary whose contributions positively impacted the lives of thousands of underprivileged Erie residents.



(L-R) Sisters Pat Lupo, Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, Anne Wambach

At the conclusion of the service, Fraley expressed appreciation to the Benedictine Sisters: "John loved the Benedictines because they always challenged him to be the best person he could be in every way possible. Thank you for all that you do and for this very special moment."

"We are grateful for the kind words of Mike Fraley," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "Erie is a better city because of the immeasurable opportunities John Horan worked to make available for so many through public housing, educational support and outreach programs. The staff of HACE, under Mike's leadership, is continuing John's legacy with dedication and commitment. This, too, John would have loved."

VMA students volunteer at the Mount

The outdoor furniture is in place, the grounds are cleaned of scattered branches and twigs, the tables and chairs are out on the dining room patio, Sister Helen's office is spic and span—and all thanks to a group of students from Villa Maria Academy (VMA). The Erie Benedictines at Mount St. Benedict Monastery were grateful to be a recipient of their service on their annual Outreach Day. What was even more special was that the girls and their adult leaders joined the community for midday prayer and lunch after their morning of service. Lauren Belmonte, a sophomore at VMA who occasionally helps in hospitality ministry at the monastery, was among the volunteers and she was able to show them “the ropes,” especially when it came time to go to the chapel and then navigate the dining room and food line at lunch. “It is always encouraging to experience young people so willing and happy to be of service,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “We are better because of it and we hope they will back – even just to visit. They are always welcome.”



Prophet of Peace

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie awarded the 2018 Prophet of Peace award to J. Sam Miller for the extraordinary manner in which he uses his gifts for the good of others.

“Sam’s efforts are clearly aligned with the Erie Benedictines’ Corporate Commitment,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “His dedication has resulted in contributions that are both significant and far-reaching. His work is indeed a pursuit of justice and peace that is rooted in reverence and respect for all.”

With prayer and praise Sam was acknowledged as a man of great simplicity whose commitment to justice, peace and environmental issues is reflected in the responsible and caring mission that he daily embraces.



(L-R) Sr. Mary Miller, Sam Miller, Sr. Anne Wambach



Photo credit: Jacqueline Small, Oblate

March for our Lives

Several sisters, oblates and friends of the community joined the hundreds who participated in Erie's March for Our Lives, a rally for change in gun and school safety laws. Thousands marched nationwide to show support for the safety and lives of schoolchildren everywhere. The rallies were in response to the Valentine's Day shootings at a high school in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead.

Happenings...

Refugees at SBEC participate in Little Hats Big Hearts Program

The refugees at St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC), like so many of us, want to make a difference through outreach. To this end they worked enthusiastically on a project entitled, "Little Hats Big Hearts" as a way of giving back to the community. Winsome Hoydu, a volunteer at SBEC spearheaded this undertaking in conjunction with The Children's Heart Foundation of the American Heart Association. Under her guidance, the refugees knitted approximately 40 red hats for babies who were to be born in the month of February at participating hospitals. The goal of these hospitals is to empower moms to live heart healthy lives and to help their children to do the same while raising awareness about Congenital Heart Defects.

"Little Hats, Big Hearts is a program that honors babies, moms, and heart healthy lives in a very special way," explained Sister Pat Witulski, SBEC staff member who was instrumental in helping this project become a reality. "The program started in February 2014 in Chicago, IL and collected 300 hats in the first year. It has expanded to include more than 40 states and SBEC is proud to be among the contributors."



2018 Poem in Your Pocket Day

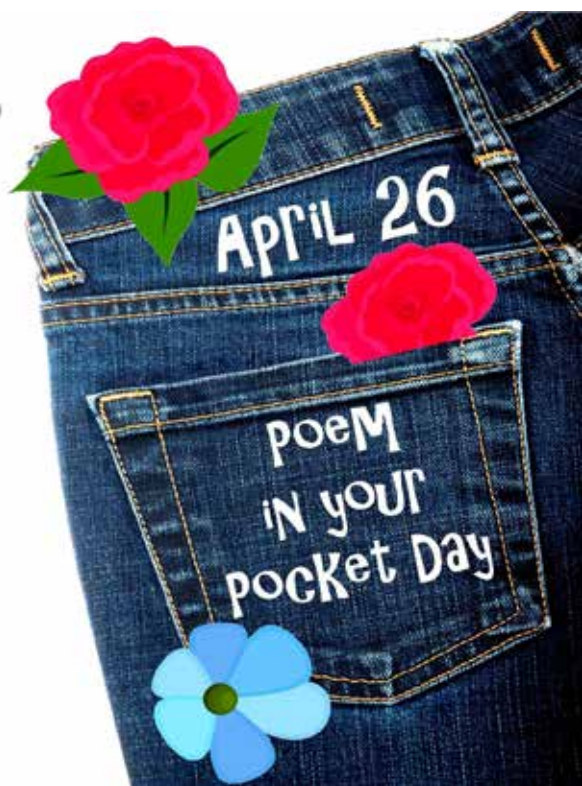
The Women's Writing Studio partnered with the Erie Public Library and five other places to celebrate National Poem in Your Pocket Day, Thursday, April 26.

Brew-Ha-Ha, Ember & Forge and State Street Starbucks coffee shops, Room 33 restaurant, and Springhill Retirement Community also distributed poems to patrons, residents, and staff. Over the noon hour volunteers, including Marisa Moks-Unger, Poet Laureate of Erie County, handed out poems in the Perry Square area to passersby.

"April is National Poetry Month and this event is one the most popular and widely celebrated," said Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, coordinator of the Writing Studio. "This is the third year Erie organized the day and we were excited to see it expand to area businesses."

Poem in Your Pocket Day began in New York City in 2002, and in 2008 the Academy of American Poets took it nationwide. "Poems can have a magical, humorous, and profound effect on people," said Sister Mary Lou. "I was at a gathering last year when a man approached me and said, 'Weren't you passing out poems on the street last year? You have no idea how that poem changed me. Thank you.' That made the whole effort worthwhile."

The Writing Studio, a collective of women writers and literacy advocates, is located at the Studio at St. Mary's, 310 E. 10th St. The studio sponsors writing workshops, author readings, book discussions, literary public art projects, literary activities for women in transition, and initiatives to celebrate National Poetry Month.



From the **Director**

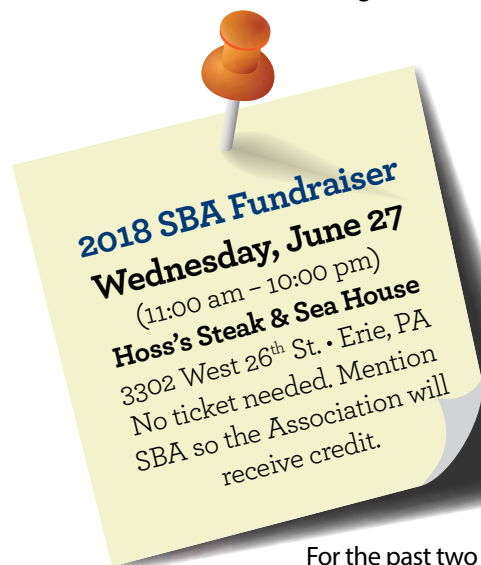
By Ann Comstock, Oblate

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



Save the Dates

Contact Ann Comstock at (814) 899-0614, ext. 2573
for details on these great events.



*****We Need Your Help*****

For the past two years, the Alumnae Association has been spending association money to create many of the Gift Baskets for the party. This cuts into the money we raise for the Benedictine ministry we are supporting. Please consider as a class, a group of alum friends, or as an individual making a donation for the Gift Baskets. Gift baskets, cash or gift cards and gift certificates will help. We greatly appreciate all the classes and individuals who have donated in the past and hope that you will be able to help this year. Please contact Ann Comstock at 899-0614 ext 2573 or at sbaalum@mtsbenedict.org if you wish to help. THANK YOU!

SBA ALUM SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

SBA has been one of the most important influences of my life. At SBA I learned that there were no restrictions on what I might choose to do with my life. There was no requirement to take one of the socially acceptable jobs: secretary, nurse, teacher, cosmetologist, etc. I was encouraged to explore the types of careers that appealed to me: commercial pilot, marine biologist, research scientist, stockbroker, etc. There were many possibilities out there that I didn't know about or was afraid to try because of my female gender. This was a bit before the mid-sixties with Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan. Being at SBA with the Benedictines encouraged me to spread my wings and fly. I could do anything. — *Susan Mehalko Roehrl '64*

The sisters made a difference in so many ways but to this day I constantly refer to the World Religions class at SBA. Learning about other religions and belief systems in high school has been so important in understanding other cultural religious beliefs in today's world. — *Denise Bunce Garcia '82*

My mother graduated from St. Benedict Academy in 1928 and was pleased to have me follow in her footsteps. My four years at SBA were growing years for me, having arrived as a shy, anxious 9th grader. An atmosphere of nurture and acceptance provided by the Benedictine Sisters and lay teachers surrounded me and I welcomed all that was offered to me wholeheartedly. I am especially grateful for the commercial background I received: shorthand and typing provided me with a grasp of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing-things that I used in my work as a legal secretary and in the publications sector, and that I continue to use every day. Many wonderful friendships were formed with girls who came from all parts of the city, friends I never can forget. Those four years are among the best of my life. — *Judy Lynch Allison '61*

SBA ALUM SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

I was fortunate to have had the role model of Sister Mary David during my 4 years as a student at St. Benedict Academy. She was and still is an avid part of my daily routine as I am still influenced by the love of music that took root 60 years ago. She would be delighted with the fact that I do 3 singalongs monthly at local nursing home, sing in the Resurrection Choir at Church, and am also a part of the Symphonic Singer Group in Erie. Yes, she made a difference that I will always cherish and remember. Thank you, Sister Mary David (d. 2005). — *Judy Pregler Gido '56*

The SBA community has made a difference in my life by allowing for me to share my time, talent and treasure with others. As a 1983 graduate we learned from the sisters to give back to the community and how the simplest things in our lives are often the most beautiful. I have embraced the SBA mission and made it a part of my everyday living. I currently volunteer at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen and sit on the Neighborhood Art House Marketing Committee. We come back to our roots at some point in our lives and commit to our Lord through small acts of kindness. I remember the many wonderful ways the sisters educated us as students. They prepared us for the world in a variety of ways. They helped to make us strong women with deep faith and a willingness to help others. Thirty four years later I remain in close contact with my classmates of 1983. We all have embarked upon the world sharing our gifts with others. Presently I am serving in my new role as the Executive Director of Mercy Center for Women. Their mission is helping women and children that have been victims of domestic violence. I credit the Benedictine Sisters for opening my eyes at age 15. We learn by example. The endless ways the sisters have helped the community to respect, work, pray and be instrumental people of God is an inspiration. — *Jennie Buffalari Hagerty '83*

Four years and graduation from SBA were the basis of one of the most prolific and valuable formative parts of my life. The lessons learned in Sister Leonarda's Bookkeeping class brought me several profitable positions while attending college classes in my early years of marriage. Sister Barbara Ann and Sister Mary Jude inspired my lifelong love of reading. Sister Teresita is responsible for my values as a citizen. Many of my fellow students became wonderful friends who are still close and part of my life today. But most of all my experiences at SBA helped to form and strengthen the faith that has seen me through the vagaries that befall everyone's lives. I hope that in some small way I can live up to the SBA motto drawn from the Biblical description of "a valiant woman." — *Mary Jane Waldo Adamaszek, '60*

I am grateful that my father was willing to pay for a parochial education. I am also grateful to all of the sisters that made it their mission to make sure his money was well spent. I enjoyed much academic success after graduating from SBA interwoven with a satisfying career. My retirement opened up new opportunities and now I am the parish nurse at St. James Church. — *Sheila Warner, '73 SBA*



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

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.

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.

Class of 1958

The SBA Class of 1958 is planning a 60th Class Reunion on Saturday, September 1, 2018 at the Erie Yacht Club. An early dinner is planned. For further information, contact Dolly Kowalski Corsi at 814-453-3796. Watch your mail for further details.

SBA Spring Luncheon

The SBA Spring Luncheon was held on May 26. 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 2018-2019 school year. Scholarship checks will be sent directly to the schools prior to the opening of the school year.

2018 Scholarship Winners

Winner	Alumnae Member	Relationship	School
Ethan Taraski	Judith Burke	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Isabella Bruni	Pat D'Annibale	Great Niece	St James School
Evelyn Logan	Dorothy Abate	Granddaughter	St. Luke School
Mario Corder	Carol Cannarozzi	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
McKenzie Richardson	Katherine Ore	Granddaughter	Our Lady of Peace
Molly Sawdey	Linda Milton	Granddaughter	Mercyhurst Prep
Andrea Fracassi	Marlene Squeglia	Granddaughter	Mercyhurst Prep
Bentley Vereb	Virginia Vereb	Grandson	Our Lady of Peace
Ryan Sweny	Judy Walczak	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Quinlan Cullen	Margie Tracy	Great Niece	St. George School
Isaac C. Mendes	Mary Dallas	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Jared Heidt	Joan Heidt	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Jacob Slater	Arlene Slater	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Raymond Ferritto	Janet York	Grandson	Cathedral Prep
Madi Bamberger	Nikki Borgia	Great Niece	Villa Maria Academy
Vincent Padalino	Kathleen Polito	Grandson	Our Lady of Peace
Rachel & Holly Ciotti	Jennifer Ciotti	Daughters	Blessed Sacrament
Morgan Eastman	Mary Ida Eastman	Granddaughter	St. Luke School
Andrew Applebee	Cindy Tabolt	Cousin	Mercyhurst Prep
Gwendolyn M. Cerula	Pauline Kowalski	Granddaughter	St. Gregory School



Snoopy once said...
"Everyone brings something special to the party"

We have 25,932 days of our lives to celebrate and that's very special!

Join the Class of 1966 for a

Sensational 70th Birthday Party

Friday, June 29, 2018

6:30pm to 8:30pm

Erie Yacht Club

1 Ravine Drive

Plentiful Hors D'Oeuvres

Sangria Punch

Cash Bar

\$35 per person

Contact Mary Margaret Joswig at mezjoswig@aol.com to make last minute reservations.

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Patricia Zickelbach Goetz.....	'41
Helen Monica Orzel	'43
Margaret Joanne Hughes Kress.....	'47
Frances Burgoyne Burt	'53
Dolores Grotkowski Holcomb	'57
Elaine N. Lipinski Straub.....	'57
Marilyn Przybyszewski Konieczny	'58
Leona S. Akus Konopka.....	'60
Carol Lee Huck Smith	'62
Betty Ann Jablonski Stufft.....	'65
Doris Ann Wisinski Baranello	'70
Charlene D. Heubel Burkholder	'75

Please help us to maintain an accurate mailing list and keep our costs down by contacting us with any change in mail or email information. If you prefer not to receive *The Mount* please let us know. Send correspondence to: Ann Comstock, Benedictine Sisters Development Office, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511, (814) 899-0614, ext. 2573, sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

EMILY DICKINSON (1830 – 1886)

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
THAT PERCHES IN THE SOUL,
AND SINGS THE TUNE WITHOUT THE WORDS,
AND NEVER STOPS AT ALL,

AND SWEETEST IN THE GALE IS HEARD;
AND SORE MUST BE THE STORM
THAT COULD ABASH THE LITTLE BIRD
THAT KEPT SO MANY WARM.

I'VE HEARD IT IN THE CHILLEST LAND,
AND ON THE STRANGEST SEA;
YET, NEVER, IN EXTREMITY,
IT ASKED A CRUMB OF ME.

The Mount

