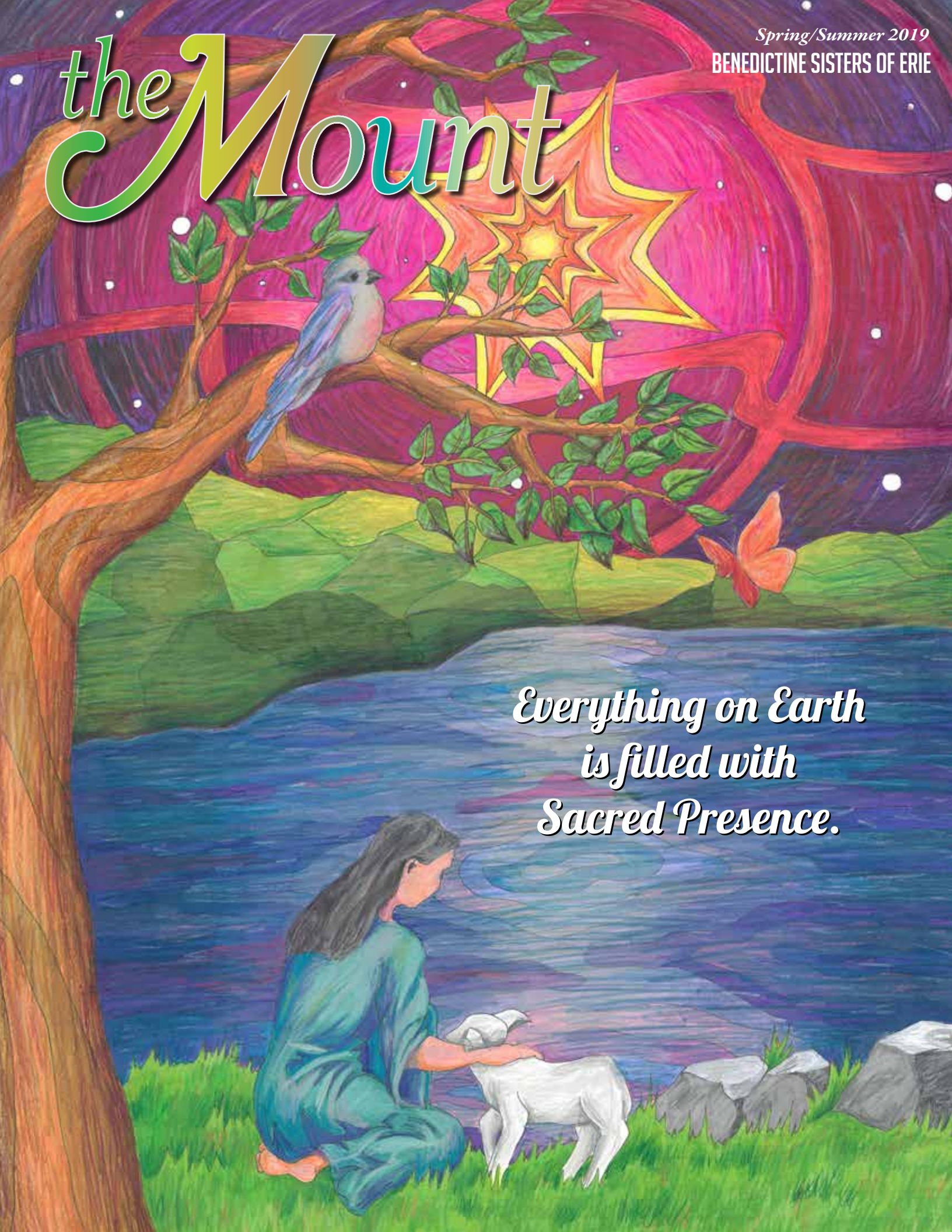


Spring/Summer 2019
BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE

the Mount

*Everything on Earth
is filled with
Sacred Presence.*



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



*Everything on earth is filled with sacred presence.
Let us bow down and worship.*

—Mary Lou Kownacki

Living in harmony with all of creation, reverencing the people with whom we interact and the surroundings of which we are a part, contributes to environmental wellness. This issue of *The Mount* is a reminder that a simple mantra can teach us how that is possible: *Everything on earth is filled with sacred presence. Let us bow down and worship.*

Jane Goodall, a well-known anthropologist, says: “You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.” What difference do you want to make? How do you want to foster environmental wellness? The articles shared in this magazine may help you answer these questions.

What you will read in the following pages is intended to raise new awareness. From the Rule of Benedict and its teaching on humility, the cornerstone for conversion of heart, mind and behavior, to practices in which we can engage to save our earth; from creating a community of kindness to leavening the world with a spirit of love—all of it is meant to inspire a lifestyle that promotes peace and harmony and protection and care for all of God’s creation.

Of course, awareness is just the beginning. I have come to learn that any new awareness needs time to be understood, accepted and valued so it can lead to action that will last. I urge you to reflect on what you read here and take the time to understand, accept and value what you have learned so that you can respond with action that lasts. Enduring action is needed to preserve the earth, reverse climate change, protect refugees and bring an end to racism. Enduring action is needed to promote love and compassion, justice and peace. As Dr. Seuss says: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

Together may we move forward from awareness to a response of positive, long-lasting action that will grow and nurture the environmental wellness we so need in our lives and in our world. *Everything on earth is filled with Sacred Presence.* Everything. Everyone. All of creation. *Let us bow down and worship.* Let us respond. Let us act.

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Front Cover: Original Drawing

Back Cover: Original Drawing

Jen Frazer, Postulant

Jen Frazer does most of her sketches with graphite pencil, and in this case, she has incorporated colored pencils and markers. Her art uses a dream-like simplicity and symbolism to express spiritual themes. In these art pieces, color is used to help create the stained-glass effect that adds to the fanciful element of the drawings.

BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT

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

From the Prioress



Three years ago, I lived the mantra, “Everything on earth is filled with sacred presence,” on a once-in-a-lifetime vacation with a friend of mine to the Canadian Maritime provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. I did indeed “bow down and worship” nearly every minute of the two-week trip.

We flew into Bangor, Maine, and soon discovered why Maine is called the Pine Tree State—during our three-hour drive east into New Brunswick we followed a

canyon-like trail through the tall White Pines and rock formations of Maine’s Atlantic shore. The pines continued into New Brunswick all the way to the port city of Saint John. The trees and forests are filled with sacred presence.

The next day we took a ferry across the Bay of Fundy—known for its 50 feet tides, the highest tides in the world—to Nova Scotia, a mix of beautiful country sides, stunning ocean views, little towns and one large city, Halifax, its capital. Whether we were in small shore towns or in Halifax, we luxuriated in seafood, shore life (blue herons were so common we almost started to take them for granted!) and friendly locals. The skies and waterways are filled with sacred presence.

Halifax blends the life of a big city with a tourist-friendly waterfront without losing its natural beauty. The parks, shops, museums and restaurants were busy, but more like a large family gathering than frantic tourists. The fishing, both for tourism and as regular work for residents, was built right into the ambiance. We visited natural history and art museums, learning about the early days of this part of North America, especially of the Mi’Kmaq people who were the first inhabitants of that land. Life and work and history are filled with sacred presence.

Even a rainy day couldn’t keep us down. It gave us the opportunity to visit the truly magnificent Alexander Graham Bell interactive museum. Bell had settled in Nova Scotia because it reminded him of his native Scotland. We realized at the museum that the telephone is almost overshadowed by the myriad of other inventions credited to him. Human ingenuity and creativity are filled with sacred presence.

The last days, and our favorites, were yet to come. They included another long ferry ride to Prince Edward Island and wonderful days exploring PEI’s north coast, walking the trails and boardwalks along the ocean and being amazed at the glorious farms, fields, lighthouses and the spirit of the people we met. The highlight here was our visit to the homestead of the Anne of Green Gables books. Walking the adjoining woods and sharing the history of the author, the time period, and the place was a perfect ending to our weeks of “bowing down and worshipping” the natural wonders and people of Eastern Canada.

A stop at Maine’s beautiful Acadia National Park on our way home assured us that “sacred presence” is not just in the Maritimes but is everywhere. “Let us bow down and worship.”

Anne Wambach, OSB

Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Climate Crisis and Humility: Benedict's teaching as a guide

By Anne McCarthy, OSB
Coordinator, Benedictines for Peace

Pope Francis nails it in *Laudato Si! Care for Our Common Home*: "People may well have a growing ecological sensitivity but it has not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption which, rather than decreasing, appear to be growing all the more." (*Laudato Si!* Sec. VI No. 55)

The science is clear. Human activity is the cause of climate crisis, already driving one weather emergency after another as we see on the evening news. In October 2018, a major report by scientists connected with the United Nations warned that if we keep burning fossil fuels at the current rate, in 10 years' time we won't be able to stop the planet from warming over 1.5°C, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

There is also consensus about what is needed: keep 80% of the current carbon in the ground; divest from the fossil fuel industry; invest in renewable energy; build a new, more equitable low-carbon economy; and pressure governments into limiting emissions.

But the urgent, decisive redirect needed at every level of society to meet this crisis is lacking. A change in human consciousness is needed. I believe that love is the best fuel for transformation.

For that, Benedictines have a unique gift: Benedict's teaching on humility. For Benedict, humility is the cornerstone for conversion of heart, mind and behavior. Erie Benedictine Joan Chittister translates his teaching on humility for our time in her 2018 book, *Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life*.

Building on her foundation, we can explore how Benedict's teaching on humility would extend to all of creation. Would a humble stance on the planet direct

us to be of service in our environmental crisis in the way Benedictines stabilized Europe long ago? I invite you to consider how each step of humility directs us toward transformation.



Keep the reverence of God, creator of the earth and the heavens, always before us.

The stance of reverence in all creation begins with this foundational relationship.



Don't follow our own will or live for ourselves, but accept our role as co-creator.

This is the opposite message of a consumer society that encourages impulse decisions to fill our desires. As co-creators, instead of being paralyzed by the magnitude of the crisis, we take one step at a time for the planet.



Seek direction from the wisdom of the earth.

The wisdom and insight of the earth can teach us how to live. For example, trees in a forest connect and support each other through their root systems. Evergreen trees send nutrients to deciduous trees when they shed their leaves. Deciduous trees return nutrients when their leaves return. We can learn the importance of community and diversity from trees.



Endure in the struggle for the planet and accompany those who are persecuted in their fight for eco-justice.

Communities of color and those in poverty suffer the most from climate change. Dorothy Stang, SND, (murdered in 2005 in Brazil) and Berta Cáceres (murdered in 2016 in Honduras) are two of many killed while fighting for environmental justice. Those of us in the Global North especially need to offer solidarity and accompany the most vulnerable.



Acknowledge the harm human activity—including my own—is doing to the planet.

This acknowledgement is both personal and communal and is the basis for changes in behavior.



Renounce entitlement to an unjust share of the planet's limited resources.

The sense that we, especially in the U.S., somehow “deserve” better than other humans is the hidden attitude fueling our society's abuse and overuse of the resources of the planet. Transforming our sense of entitlement—and the racism inherent in it—begins with awareness.



Let go of the arrogance and narcissism of the anthropocentric world view.

Water, air, climate stability, and soil belong to everyone, to all beings and to all generations. What would our decision-making process look like as a society if we embraced this truth?



Honor and learn from the traditions of the earth.

One example: the current movement for zero waste attempts to imitate natural ecosystems in which everything produced is used.



Cultivate silence and listen with the heart to all of creation.

Heart listening takes time, space and openness. For example, those of us in Erie know Lake Erie and its shores well: its moods, its colors, and its seasons of calm and sudden storms. We become passionate about preserving that experience for our children's children. And that passion—love, really—spreads to the region and to the planet.



Never ridicule, reject or render invisible any parts of creation.

What part of creation do I take for granted? Ignore? The air I breathe, the water I drink, the food I eat, or the earth itself that keeps me alive? Mindfulness of the gifts of creation and gratitude for them can motivate us to change aspects of our lifestyle (meat-heavy diets, over consumption, thoughtless use of fossil fuels) that are unsustainable if we truly want to meet environmental goals.



Raise our human voice to communicate clearly for our common home.

The imperiled planet does not have a voice in our political and economic decisions. It needs our voice. Clearly. Loudly. At every decision-making table and in the streets.



In all times and places, live in reverence.

This is Benedict's final step of humility where one bows in reverence—with eyes fixed on the earth—in the chapel, the monastery, the garden, on a journey, and in the field. The humble, fully-human one, Benedict says, has learned that love casts out fear. The humble one truly knows that “everything on earth is filled with sacred presence.”

Pope Francis teaches, “These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course.” (*Laudato Si!* Sec. VI No. 55) May the steps of humility urgently, help us radically transform our lives, our communities, our regions, our globe to prevent irreversible devastating effects of climate change. Amen. “Let us bow down and worship.”

Anne McCarthy, OSB, coordinates Erie Benedictines for Peace and is on staff with Benetvision (www.joanchittister.org) and Monasteries of the Heart (www.monasteriesoftheheart.org). She leads retreats on nonviolence and feminist spirituality and holds an MA in Theology from St. John's University, Collegeville in monastic studies.

IT'S OUR CHOICE

By Annette Marshall, OSB
Member, Committee for Alternative Resource Energy

How'd we get here?

Take time to smell the roses. It's good advice to pause and enjoy the beauty of life. It is also very important for the health of our planet. Those who live in awe of the beauty and bounty of nature are more likely to care about what happens to it.

After centuries of pollution from industry and individuals, two major influences became a call to action. Pollution became a cause for alarm when, in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson made the connection between human illness and pesticides. But it was the 1972 photo of our fragile blue planet taken from outer space that ultimately stirred something in human hearts and we realized in a very graphic way that we seven billion human inhabitants of this earth share one finite planet.

Twenty million Americans took to the streets on the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970*. In the years since, we've demanded greater protections from pollution resulting in environmental legislation and industry regulation. Families learned to recycle, homeowners learned how to prevent run-off, children in schools planted butterfly gardens and participated in clean-ups. We began to understand the benefits of planting trees and growing organic food and carpooling.

Now we are faced with another challenge, one that calls for immediate and significant changes in our use of energy. It has been almost 40 years since we first heard about global warming. After careful experimentation and projections, 99% of scientists



(PHOTO CREDIT: PAT LUPO, OSB)

Teach the children how nature “works.” Foster a love for the natural world. Help them take action now.

agree that human activity resulting in escalating greenhouse gas emissions is the cause of the current crisis.

So, here we are. Worldwide droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, wildfires and species extinction fill our daily news cycle. This environmental crisis spans the globe, yet we seem to lack the personal and political will to change our behavior.

It took the earth 4.5 billion years to develop the beauty and diversity of life we now enjoy. Surely, we are not going to stand by while human action – and inaction – brings destruction to our beautiful planet.

We can start today by taking time to smell the roses and taking action on their behalf.

* <https://www.earthday.org/about/the-history-of-earth-day/>



What's next?

Really, it's our choice.

We can choose to do nothing and live with the consequences of accelerating climate change, or we can each do our part to slow the global atmospheric changes that threaten us all.

Action is needed on two fronts: personal and political. I can lessen my own contribution to warming the planet by making lifestyle changes. But I must also exercise my responsibility as a citizen and demand change in our country's priorities.

The challenge is immense – and I am just one person. Do my actions really make a difference? ABSOLUTELY!

How?

There are basically two ways to stop the escalation of greenhouse gases: reduce greenhouse gas emissions going into the atmosphere and remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere so that we arrive at net zero.

The only way to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases is to leave the coal, natural gas and oil in the ground and use alternative, renewable sources for our energy needs. Removing carbon dioxide is best done nature's way through photosynthesis although there are new technologies being developed that may be able to assist.

Political Action:

We must press our local, state and national governments to take immediate action through incentives to industry and individuals to convert to renewable energy sources. We need

to enforce and strengthen the existing Clean Air Act. As a country, we must stop abandoning our global responsibility and implement the pledges we made in the Paris Climate Agreement.

We also need to sequester as much carbon dioxide as possible. Trees naturally sequester carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. To date, this is the most efficient way to do this, which means it is imperative that we preserve green space in our cities and maintain and expand our national and state forests. Additionally, we must encourage investment in the development of emerging technologies that sequester carbon dioxide.

Individual Actions:

- Make your home as energy efficient as possible: seal doors and windows, use LED bulbs, turn off lights, TVs, computers and other electronics when not in use.
- Purchase electricity from green sources. To do more, convert your home energy use from fossil fuels to electricity.
- Consider installing your own solar panels. Home, business and industry installations are increasing exponentially.
- Plant trees!

We don't have the luxury of leaving the solutions to someone else. We CAN affect climate change. Let's do it!



Using renewable energy like solar and wind, coupled with sequestering carbon dioxide naturally through trees, can be done on any scale - individual, corporate, government.



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*

Erie's Emerging 2030 District Launched

By Marlene Trambley, Oblate, Committee for Alternative Resource Energy (CARE) Chair

"Care for the earth has been integral to the Benedictine charism since our foundation in the 6th century," according to Sister Anne Wambach, prioress.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Emmaus Ministries are two of the nine founding partners of Erie's Emerging 2030 District. The District's goals are to reduce energy use, water use, and transportation emissions 50% by 2030. It is a Green Building Alliance (GBA) strategy which provides partners with a roadmap and the support needed to meet these goals.



At a February event, County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper declared, "The 2030 District reinforces that dynamic, collaborative environment that we are fostering in Erie County, while also prioritizing sustainability and helping to create a more vibrant, resilient downtown." Erie Mayor Joseph Schember added, "Anything we can do to reduce energy consumption is a positive."

And from GBA Northwest Director Guy McUmbur: "The Founding Partners have not only made a commitment for their buildings, but for the future of the city and the planet." He added that one more partner and the city of Erie will become an "Established" District joining more than 20 national districts.



Hold Erie Coke Accountable (HECA)

By Pat Lupo, OSB, Environmentalist

The Erie Coke Plant, a fixture for decades on the Erie's East side, is repeatedly cited for air quality violations. The issues of water quality, soil, human health and economic impact are also concerns.

Hold Erie Coke Accountable (HECA), a citizen and community initiative, inspired by Erie's hope to rise as a leading 21st Century City of Choice, rides on a high quality of life and a healthy environment. HECA leadership is provided by Pat Lupo, OSB, and citizen scientist Dr. Mike Campbell.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie support HECA. It is a moral opportunity and, yes, a moral imperative to engage and empower citizens concerned about Erie Coke's effect on the city of Erie. Find us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/HoldErieCokeAccountable/>) or go to our website at <https://www.holderiecokeaccountable.com/erie-coke-news/>

The public is urged to submit complaints of smells, tarry spills or fresh soot deposits, water quality concerns and photos of the toxic emissions plumes directly to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. A submission form and contact information is available on the HECA website listed above.



Front (L-R) Marianne Stuckert, SSJ (Sisters of St. Joseph), Sandell Snyder (City Mission), Annette Marshall, OSB (Emmaus Ministries), Sarah Bennett (Mercyhurst University)

Back (L-R) Rev. Chris Weichman (First Presbyterian of the Covenant), Marlene Trambley, Oblate (Benedictine Sisters of Erie), Kathy Dahlkemper (Erie County), Joseph Schember (City of Erie), Jeff DeBello (UPMC Hamot)

Benedictines for Peace

By Anne McCarthy, OSB, BFP Coordinator



Over 100 joined this year's pilgrimage which turned cold and windy especially by the bay. Some rode a chartered bus between some or all of the stations. *Credit: Linda Romey, OSB*



Sister Val Luckey, OSB holds the earth flag at St. Peter Cathedral where the station dealt with ways a theology of domination endangers the earth and women. *Credit: Jo Clarke*



Cherylann Carter, representing Earth Mother, brought passion to her message. *Credit: Jo Clarke*

Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace

"Walk the Stations of the Cross with the Sorrowful Mother and Mother Earth" was the theme of Benedictines for Peace 39th Annual Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace on April 19. During a two-hour silent pilgrimage from site to site in the city, walkers focused on the suffering caused by climate crisis and the need for effective action as they prayed and reflected at each contemporary station. Some of this year's stops and themes were: Griswold Park (highly explosive oil trains cross through the city); the Federal Building (war ravages humans and the earth); the State Governor's regional office (corporate tax breaks promote fracking) and the pier at Dobbins Landing (pollution from the Erie COKE Plant and environmental racism). The final station at Mount St. Benedict Monastery focused on how climate crisis threatens hope.



Participants reflected—before the bars of a closed gate—on ways that asylum seekers are turned away at our border. The effects of climate change are driving more people from their ancestral lands to seek refuge and welcome elsewhere. *Credit: Linda Romey, OSB*



The children walking the pilgrimage were a reminder that they will be most affected by our actions today. *Credit: Linda Romey, OSB*



At the fishing pier on the west of lower State Street, the station included a water blessing and commitment to promise to love and protect water, especially Lake Erie, so that all creatures have life from it in generations to come. *Credit: Jo Clarke*

Dear Joan: Letters from Millennial Women Theologians

By **Jessie Bazan**

These are a few of the honest, powerful questions raised in the book, *Dear Joan: Letters from Millennial Women Theologians*, due out in September 2019 from Twenty-Third Publications.

What is this book all about? *Dear Joan* puts the stories of nine millennial, Catholic, feminist theologians in conversation with one of the most prophetic Catholic feminist writers of today — Erie Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister. The book's goal is to promote an intergenerational sharing of wisdom while giving special voice to questions raised by young Catholic women. It begins with an introduction on the hopes and challenges Joan and I see facing young Catholic women today. The body of the book is a series of letters from the millennial theologians to Joan on three themes: sisterhood, speaking truth, and smashing the patriarchy. Letters are narrative-based, with each writer telling a specific story from her life that illuminates the theme and sharing a spiritual or social insight gained from the experience, especially in light of what she learned from Joan. Joan responds to each letter with the honesty and wisdom we've come to know and love.

How did this book come about? The authors and Joan spent two weeks listening to and learning from each other at the Joan Chittister Institute for Contemporary Spirituality held at Mount

Dear Joan,

Where can we find communities who accept us fully for who we are?

How can the church reach out to people who have been wounded by an institution whose practices can at times isolate people like my mother?

How have you navigated a world in which you are not welcome? Where do you find the courage to walk forward, often alone, and proclaim your truth to all those who have stood in your way?



St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA, in June 2018. We discussed issues that touch the deepest core of our being — life callings, images of God, relationships — and we did so with striking honesty. We are eager to spark similar conversations in parishes, campus ministries, and living rooms across the world. Joan has authored more than 50 books and hundreds of articles during her prolific career, but none in this format. This book will add to her legacy while introducing the next generation of prophetic women to the world.

The vulnerable sharing between a world-renowned spiritual writer and a new generation of theologians offers a unique model of dialogue for a church that prizes the passing on of its tradition — and its engagement in the modern world. We hope you will join the conversation this fall.

—Jessie Bazan, M.Div., attended the JCICS last summer and serves as editor for *Dear Joan*.

THE TIME IS NOW: A CALL TO UNCOMMON COURAGE

by **Joan Chittister, OSB**

Joan Chittister has been a passionate voice for women's rights for over 50 years. Called "one of the most well-known and trusted contemporary spiritual authors" by Publishers Weekly, this rabble-rousing force of nature for social justice and fervent proponent of personal faith and spiritual fulfillment draws on the wisdom of prophets—both ancient and modern—to help us confront the societal forces that oppress and silence the sacred voices among us.

Pairing scriptural insights with stirring narratives of the truth-tellers that came before us, Sister Joan offers a compelling vision for readers to combat complacency and to propel ourselves toward creating a world of justice, freedom, peace, and empowerment.

For the weary, the cranky, and the fearful, Sister Joan's energizing message invites us to participate in a vision for a world greater than the one we find ourselves in today. This is spirituality in action, this is practical and powerful activism for our times.

ORDER at BENETVISION (<http://store.benetvision.org/timeisnow.html>)





From **30** to **70**, age doesn't matter when seeking spirituality

By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

This summer, almost 30 women seeking to learn from Sister Joan Chittister will come to stay at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. They will include the participants in the 2019 Joan Chittister Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, a young woman who will be an intern with two of Sister Joan's ministries, and a scholar who will use the Joan Chittister Writer-in-Residence program to develop her masters' thesis.

Joan Chittister **Institute for Contemporary Spirituality**

The second Joan Chittister Institute for Contemporary Spirituality will take place July 12-19. It will draw together 25 women from different backgrounds and walks of life to discuss some of Sister Joan's books and engage in meaningful dialogue about Benedictine and feminist spirituality with Sister Joan and other Benedictine sisters and oblates. The Institute will be organized around the five Benedictine values of prayer, *lectio divina*, good work, study, and building community, with sessions led by several members of the Erie Benedictine community. Applicants for the Institute hail from as far away as Malta and as close by as Cleveland and Buffalo, and range in age from their thirties to their seventies.

KATIE GORDON

Katie Gordon, who will graduate this May from Harvard Divinity School with a Master of Theological Studies in Religion, Ethics, and Politics, will be the 2019 Joan Chittister Intern. Katie is an organizer of Nuns & Nones, which seeks to create communities and conversation between women religious and millennials without formal religious affiliations. She has also worked with the On Being Project, a public radio show and podcast that examines the fundamental questions of life. Katie plans to spend the months of June and July in Erie, developing a podcast series about foundresses of religious orders, and finding creative, modern ways to bring monastic wisdom to people of all generations who identify as spiritual seekers.

JESSIE PAGAN

In the month of July, Jessie Pagan, who is currently finishing the first year of her Master in Theological Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School, will become the first participant in the Joan Chittister Writer-in-Residence Program. Jessie will spend the month concentrating on a writing project of her own design, influenced by the work of Sister Joan. Her proposed project is a thesis exploring how devotion to Mary and cultivated Christian feminine spirituality could be utilized for healing by women who have experienced pain or trauma at the hands of the Church.

"The women who come to study and work with Benedictine ideals and values this summer will have much to offer our community, and will enrich us with their experiences, gifts, and hopes for the future, even as they are enriched by the community's way of life, charism, and history," said Sister Joan.

VOCATION MINISTRY

By Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director

We have been blessed with two new postulants. On Sunday, January 13, we welcomed Jen Frazer, 43, an artist and art teacher with advanced education in theology from the Boston, MA area. Jacqueline Small, 26, an oblate and a staff member of Monasteries of the Heart and Benetvision became a postulant on Sunday, April 26. She comes steeped in theology and social work education. I have had the privilege of walking with both of these women as they discerned their religious vocation and it was an honor for me to accompany them into the monastery where the community was gathered to welcome them in the Ritual of Entrance into the Postulate.

The ceremony, though brief, is very touching. After knocking on the door, the community sings: Listen, my daughter, to the precepts of your teacher; incline the ear of your heart. The Call and Dialogue follow and the seeker expresses in her words her desire to seek God within our community as she continues her spiritual journey. The prioress reminds the community that the new postulant will look to us for faithfulness to the monastic way of life and then presents a cross to the new postulant as a sign of her willingness to follow Christ with us.

This ritual that we repeat with each new seeker never gets old for me. It is rooted in welcome and colored by



Jacqueline Small



Jen Frazer

excitement and the energy of newness as together we pray: Your love, O God, is constant. Complete the good work you have begun (Psalm 138).

The journey for these new postulants continues, now, under the guidance of Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Postulant Director. Postulancy is the first stage of initial monastic formation. As postulants Jen and Jacqueline will participate fully in the life of the community and live the communal life of prayer and ministry. They will learn community history, vision and values and have classes on Benedictine spirituality as they continue to discern their vocation. Let us pray that these two new seekers will find fulfillment for the longing in their hearts as we continue to uphold them with our love and support.



Sr. Anne Wambach and Postulant Jen Frazer



Sr. Marilyn Schauble, Postulant Jacqueline Small,
Sr. Anne Wambach, Sr. Stephanie Schmidt

VOCATION TIP LINE

To learn more about monastic life with the Erie Benedictines or if you know anyone that might be interested in monastic life with the Erie Benedictines please contact Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB Vocation Director vocations@mtstbenedict.org 814-899-0614, ext. 2424.

Initial Monastic Formation

The Importance of Learning

By Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Director of Monastic Formation

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow,” writes inspirational author Anthony D’Angelo.

Benedict would have agreed. Study is an essential part of the monastic formation program because seeking God and love of learning go together, as our two postulants and four scholastics (sisters in first profession) are discovering. Learning stretches us beyond the known and familiar and invites us to grow and change. It can lead us to the heart of God.

In their introduction to monastic life, postulants learn the basics in classes on prayer, Liturgy of the Hours, community living skills, monastic values, and Benedictine history. Scholastics move into more individualized classes based on interest, including the areas of liturgy, new cosmology and spirituality.

Sometimes the entire group comes together for educational opportunities. For example, in April, they all attended an intercommunity formation weekend at Villa Maria Retreat Center in Villa Maria, PA, where

Anthony Gittins, CSSp, Catholic Theological Union Professor Emeritus of Theology and Culture, presented some of the challenges of intercultural living.

Two of our own sisters recently offered educational opportunities to these newer seekers. Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot, PhD, presented on Conscience Formation and Moral Agency during a May weekend gathering. In June, Sister Dorothy Stoner, MA, MDiv, began teaching the unique features of the Gospel of John.

As Monastic Formation Director, I am grateful that we can offer such educational experiences to our postulants and scholastics. It is my hope that they will grow in their appreciation of and passion for learning as they continue to seek God with us.

Scholastic, literally defined, means of or related to school and education. In the Benedictine world temporary professed sisters of a monastic community are called Scholastics. They are learning the monastic way of life as they continue to discern a perpetual monastic profession.



(L-R): Sisters Karen Oprechok, Dina Lauricella, Kathleen McCarthy, and Valerie Luckey, Scholastics

First Monastic Profession

On March 15, Sister Kathleen McCarthy expressed her desire to commit herself to God in and through the community of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and professed the monastic vows of stability, obedience and fidelity to the monastic way of life for a period of three years. First Profession of Monastic Vows has moved Sister Kathleen, a native of Pittsburgh and a former member of the L'Arche community in Erie and in Calgary, Canada into the third stage of initial monastic profession: the Scholasticate. This is the next step in her ongoing journey of seeking God in community with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. She will be guided by Sister Diane Rabe, Scholastic Director. During this next period of formation Sister Kathleen will be engaged in full time ministry at Erie Homes for Children and Adults (EHCA) as a Direct Support Professional in their Options Program while maintaining participation in the life and prayer of the community.



Sr. Kathleen McCarthy receives the community pin from Sr. Anne Wambach, prioress.



Sr. Anne Wambach, prioress, Sr. Kathleen McCarthy, Sr. Diane Rabe, Scholastic Director, Sr. Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director and Novice Director for Sister Kathleen

New “Riepper”



Katlyn Ward, a 24 year old college graduate and former AmeriCorps Vista volunteer, has made a commitment to be a participant in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program. The program offers an immersion in a daily rhythm of prayer, work, outreach to the marginalized, communal life, hospitality,

peace and nonviolence. A native of Lowville, NY, Katlyn has participated in mission trips to Nicaragua and spent some time in Morocco. “She is a serious seeker interested in intergenerational living,” said Sister Stephanie Schmidt who will be directing Katlyn’s program. “We are happy to welcome her and provide the opportunity for her to become immersed in a daily rhythm of prayer, ministry and community life.” During the next five months Katlyn will be working in various ministries including the Emmaus Food Pantry, Benedictines for Peace, and Health Services in the monastery. Her mentor will be Sister Miriam Mashank.



Sr. Miriam Mashank, mentor, looks on as Katlyn Ward signs her commitment paper.

The Creation of a Community of Kindness



NCSW
NATIONAL CATHOLIC
SISTERS WEEK

Creating a community of kindness was the topic. Mercyhurst University Walker Recital Hall was the place. Religious Sisters, Erie political leaders, and Mercyhurst staff were the speakers. Erie News Now and Northwest Bank were the sponsors. Sisters, friends and interested members of the Erie community were the audience. Put it all together and you have the makings of a conversation, panel discussion and sharing—and the creation of a community of kindness.

The initiative was part of the celebration of National Catholic Sisters Week (March 8 – 14, annually) planned by the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Benedictine Sisters, and the Diocese of Erie. The panelists and guest speakers shared strong, hope-filled messages. Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, based her remarks on the Benedictine principal of listening with the ear of the heart as the beginning of kindness: “If you really listen and hear what a person needs it is easy to be kind. As the saying goes: ‘There isn’t anyone you cannot love [and give the gift of kindness to] once you’ve heard their story.’”

Members of the audience had the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas. “It was very moving to hear people speak of their experiences of kindness—whether they were on the giving or the receiving end,” said Sister Anne. “Random acts of kindness, paying it forward, simply offering a smile and a greeting—once you try it, you find out how remarkably easy it is.”

The conversation was a beginning. Attendees left with kindness magnets, window clings and pins—all with a simple yet important message: **BE KIND**. By working to build strong and kind family, school, neighborhood, city and church communities we can have a positive and productive effect on the world in which we live. Remember: **Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.** (Lao Tzu)



A message from Sister Anne Wambach, Prioress

In a world where you can be anything, be kind.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie believe that kindness can make a difference. It takes courage; it takes intention. But when kindness prevails, good things **do** happen. Let us together renew our efforts to be kind in thought, word and action. It **will** change the world.

Jubilarians

The year 2019 is the Jubilee Year for nine community members. These monastic women continue to seek God, living in community and responding in prayer and ministry. The Benedictine Sisters of Erie are proud to recognize our jubilarians and celebrate the gift they have been and continue to be to the community, the church and the world.



Sister Irene Warchol celebrates 75 years of vowed life. After entering the community in July of 1942 and graduating from St. Benedict Academy in 1943, she professed her first vows in August of 1944. Sister Irene considers the daily communal and private prayer life of monastics to be a very special blessing and has always felt privileged to be able to attend to the needs of others, especially the poor. Food service was her specialty and for more than 60 years she ministered in area church and convent kitchens. In 2011, after 32 years, Sister Irene retired from her longtime ministry of bread baking at the monastery—a ministry that she says taught her humility, patience and faithfulness. Sister Irene is now fully engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence at the monastery. She humbly carries it out with the patience that she has learned from a lifetime of fidelity to the monastic way of life.

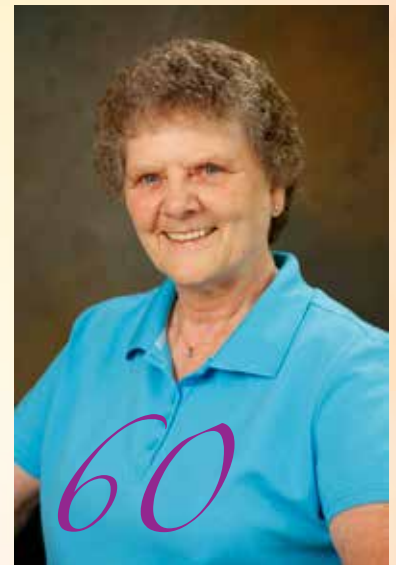
Sister Mary Hoffman, having been born and raised in North Collins, New York, found the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and never turned back. She celebrates 70 years of living the vowed monastic life. Her early years in ministry were in education. She taught in both elementary and secondary schools throughout the Erie diocese before using her talents in social services and accounting at John XXIII Home in Hermitage for 11 years. She then returned to Erie and was involved in community ministries. Since 1999 Sister Mary has been engaged in Catholic Rural Ministry (Bradford Deanery) in the Diocese of Erie where she has been present to the rural poor in the Eastern Vicariate through catechesis, retreat work and spiritual formation. For Sister Mary this provides the perfect opportunity to be a compassionate presence to God's people which she does with untiring commitment. Faithfulness to the monastic way of life keeps her strong and able to seek God in community and to respond in prayer and ministry.





Sister Irene Spacht has lived the vowed life as a Benedictine monastic for 60 years. Born and raised in North East, PA Sister Irene grew up on a farm where she learned the value of hard work, a work ethic she continues to put to good use in ministry and service. With degrees in math and certified in education and as a school counselor, Sister Irene spent her teaching career of 45 years primarily in elementary education in the Diocese of Erie. From 1995-2004 she ministered in her home parish at St. Gregory School as teacher and principal. Following this, Sister Irene used her skills in community ministries. In 2010 Sister Irene was appointed Community Liturgist for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, a ministry through which she is able to share her gifts and love of liturgy with the community and worshipping assembly. Sister Irene is known for her willingness to help others in any way she can. Faithfulness to prayer continues to give meaning to her monastic life.

Sister Colette Korn, a graduate of Saint Benedict Academy, has been a vowed Benedictine Sister of Erie for 60 years. Through those years she has been involved in varied ministries, starting with the community's sewing room where she became adept at habit-making. When habits were no longer worn, she transferred to food service until 1973 when she became a nurse aide. As a nurse aide Sister Colette ministered at Hamot Medical Center before becoming involved in home health care. It was in this ministry that Sister Colette's attentiveness, concern and expertise helped end of life to be easier for dozens of patients. Even now, although not formally active in nurse aide work since 2011, Sister Colette shows special care to the sick and infirm in the community while also serving in the hospitality ministry as daily receptionist. In addition, Sister Colette participates in a variety of the monastery's internal ministries. She is always ready for any good work and quick to respond to any need in a spirit of giving and generosity.



Sister Kathryn Disbrow came to the Benedictine Sisters soon after her graduation from Saint Benedict Academy in 1957 and this year celebrates 60 years of vowed monastic life. As an elementary school teacher and principal, with degrees in math and administration and certification in early childhood development, Sister Kathryn worked for 22 years in the Diocese of Erie. In 1981 Sister Kathryn became the administrator of the community's newly established East Coast Migrant Head Start program. After that she was a staff member in the business office at the monastery and also served as Community Treasurer for a period of time. In 1999 Sister Kathryn became the lead teacher in the infants' room at Saint Benedict Child Development Center where she ministered until 2017. Presently engaged in hospitality ministry as monastery receptionist, while also being faithful to the ministry of prayer and presence, Sister Kathryn is an example of the steadiness and stability in which monastic life is rooted. Her gentle presence is a gift to all.

50 Years

Sister Rosanne Loneck met the Benedictine Sisters as a student at Saint Benedict Academy (SBA). Upon her graduation she earned a degree at Villa Maria College before entering the community where this year she celebrates 50 years of monastic profession. To this day SBA holds a significant place in her life. It was there that Sister Rosanne served as teacher, Director of the Summer School Program, and assistant principal and now as liaison to the SBA Alumnae Association. After SBA closed in 1988 Sister Rosanne engaged in a number of other Benedictine Ministries including St. Benedict Education Center, Camp Glinodo, and several internal ministries. Through the years Sister Rosanne has served the community as a formation director, purchaser of community supplies, Dean of the Monastery, Director of Human Resources, and Co-director of the Oblate/Associate Program. In 1991 Sister Rosanne became a certified Spiritual Director and since then has offered guidance and spiritual direction to individuals and retreatants alike, privately and through the Mid-Life, Long Life retreats she offers at the monastery.



Reflective thoughts . . .

Sister Rosanne is a woman of grace and gracefulness. With a gentle presence and a steadfast heart, she moves quietly through every day, leaving beauty and calm in her wake. Ever sensitive, always genuine, overflowing with interest, Sister Rosanne's is an everyday simplicity – expressing her own gratitude for life in the thoughtfulness she extends to so many in unassuming, creative ways. She inspires generosity by her own selflessness and empowers expansive kindness by her own unbounded compassion and care. Faith and spirituality define Sister Rosanne. She reflects a monastic commitment that is holy and sacred.

Sister Susan Doubet is a golden jubilarian. Her 50 years of vowed life have been a journey marked by ongoing discernment and change. After 27 years as a Sister of St. Joseph of Northwest Pennsylvania, Sister Susan discerned a new call—the call to monastic life. She began the transfer process to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1993 and her incorporation was finalized in 1997. As a Sister of St. Joseph, her ministerial life was spent as a secondary teacher, primarily of math and physics, for a brief time at Bradford Central Christian High School and then for 23 years at Villa Maria Academy where she also spent time as administrator/principal. As a Benedictine, Sister Susan has held the position of staff member in the Development and Public Relations departments, Benetvision Publications, and AIM (Alliance for International Monasticism) of which she eventually became the Executive Director for eight years. Since 2003 she has been Research Assistant to Sister Joan Chittister, a position in which she continues. In 2010, Sister Susan was appointed subprioress and continues to serve the community in this role.



Reflective thoughts . . .

Sister Susan Doubet is relentless in her pursuit of the sacred and the beautiful and justice and peace in our world. Unwavering in her love for the monastic way of life, Sister Susan's efforts and energy extend in kindness for the good of others. She gives herself fully to the task at hand and does nothing halfway. The world would be less without her caring attention, keen observations and solid convictions. Sister Susan is a teacher par excellence, delightful storyteller, wise mentor and solid friend. Her love of nature and care for creation is made manifest in the pleasure she takes in feeding the birds and the deer, measuring the snowfall, and walking the beach on a summer's day. Life is an event for Sister Susan and her talent for finding the humor in everyday situations allows others to find the inherent meaning and value that lies in all of life's experiences.

Sister Jacinta Conklin, originally a Benedictine Sister of Elk County and past prioress who supported her sisters with compassion and care, came to Erie in 2016. It had become clear that St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys, PA would need to close as a result of a climbing median age and lack of new members and the sisters began to discern their own personal future. Faithfulness of heart and an abiding commitment to the monastic way of life led Sister Jacinta to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and in 2018 she transferred her vows and was fully incorporated into the community. This year she celebrates 50 years of monastic profession. Sister Jacinta's ministries in Erie have kept her close to nature and close to people. She is community driver, library aide and sacristan and makes a big contribution to seasonal lawn care. Her sense of humor, easy smile, positive attitude and willingness to help wherever needed is truly a blessing.



Reflective thoughts . . .

Sister Jacinta embodies a genuine compassion and mindfulness for every part of God's creation. She loves the earth and tends the grounds and gardens with the same particular care with which she accompanies those whose step is faltering or tends to all that is sacred and beautiful in the chapel. Sister Jacinta finds contentment in the routine of the daily and joy in the surprise of unexpected pleasures. She relishes a great meal, a hearty laugh, a challenging card game as much as she delights in a breathtaking sunset or a satisfying book recommended by a friend. Ever faithful to Benedictine ora et labora, prayer and work, Sister Jacinta lives with firm conviction and steadfast hope in the monastic way of life.

25 Years

Sister Ann Muczynski, whose home parish was St. Joseph in Warren, PA, entered the Erie Benedictines in 1992 and professed her first vows in 1994. Sister Ann has embraced the monastic way of life with sincerity and integrity and this year celebrates her 25 year anniversary. Sister Ann's first years in ministry were spent in elementary education as a teacher in the Erie Diocese. She then pursued further education and earned her Master's Degree in Social Work from Case Western Reserve University. Sister Anne is a board certified clinical social worker with experience as a trauma specialist gained from working for Belle Center for Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse in Ohio and Family Services of NWPA where she was a trauma therapist and supervisor. Since 2011 she has been employed at Erie's VA Medical Center as a posttraumatic stress disorder specialist and serves as the clinic's Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator, work to which she brings exceptional competency. Sister Ann walks through life with a direction and purpose that is guided by a strong desire for peace and justice for all. She is deeply committed to Benedictine life and her faithfulness to prayer gives her the strength to be a healing presence in her community life and ministry.



Reflective thoughts . . .

Sister Ann Muczynski is a listening heart wide open to the world and the people she serves. Deeply rooted in the monastic values that define her soul and the prayer that centers her life, Sister Ann extends compassion and love to those whose needs are most urgent. In a lifelong devotion to her students and then, to traumatized children and most recently, to veterans, she is single-minded in her efforts to promote healing and wholeness. Sensitive and deeply genuine in her acceptance of one and all, Sister Ann never withholds sincere words of affirmation and gratitude. Her dedication to the challenge of engendering hope wherever and however it is needed, empowers Sister Ann to foster life-giving change in any and all situations.

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

By Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Director of Development

With Gratitude

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you who have blessed us with monetary gifts and donations. Gratitude is a small word, but it holds our deep appreciation. As beneficiaries of your kindness and generosity, we thank you for helping us to keep Benedictine tradition and values alive and active in our monastic life and ministries.

This Annual Report provides highlights of the 2018 fiscal year for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. We are pleased and grateful that so many of you enrolled in the Monthly Companions Program, a new venture introduced in 2018 that allows for a recurring monthly gift of your designation to the Benedictine Sisters.

You touch our lives in many ways. We are ever grateful for your ongoing support. It inspires us to *"do all the good we can, by the means we can, in the ways we can, in the places we can, as long as we can."* (John Wesley)

2018 By the Numbers:

Total number of donors.....	3,193
Total number of gifts.....	4,085
Monthly Giving Program Participants	86
Planned Givers.....	78
Employer Matching Gifts	26

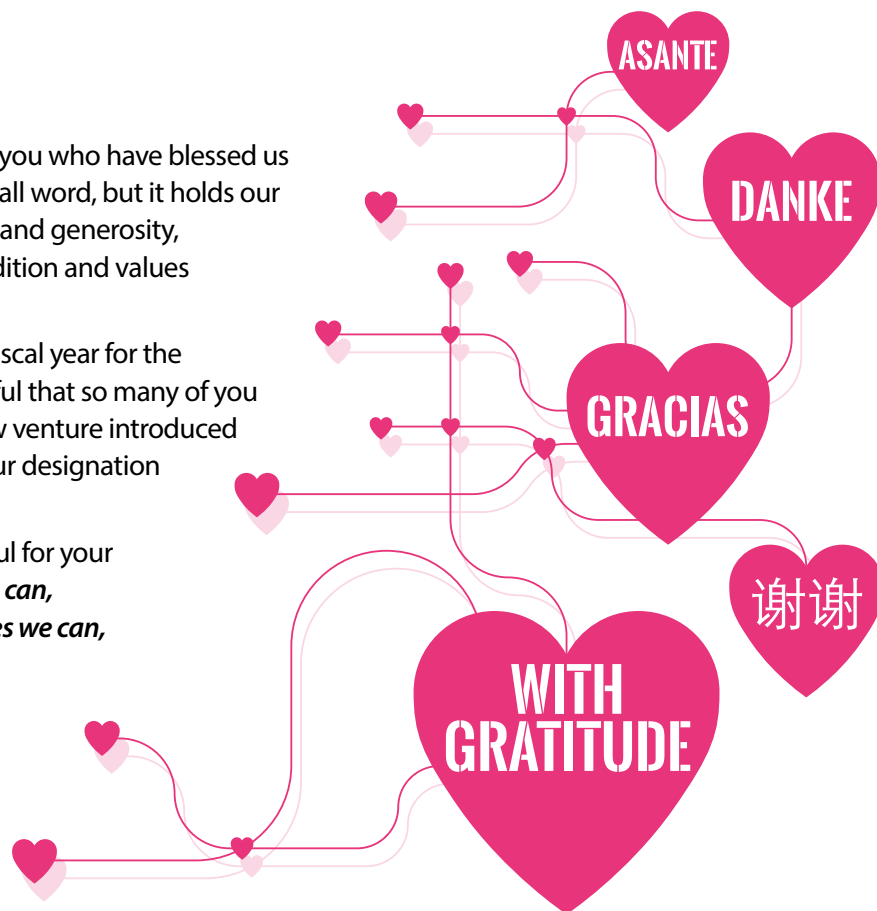
Development Income Total	\$495,970
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Development Expenses

Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$194,303
Special Programs	\$6,854
Contract Services	\$370
Benefactor Relations	\$4,435
Travel, Education, Dues & Memberships	\$2,155
Office Equipment, Supplies	\$11,268
Printing, Postage	\$600
Annuity Payments	\$940

Total Expenses	\$220,925
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Net Income	\$275,045
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2018 Bequest Income:

Many of our long-standing donors, friends, family members, former students and others have remembered the Benedictine Sisters with a bequest in their wills. We are grateful to and remember in a special way those who died in 2018 and left a bequest to us. We hold them and their loved ones in our daily prayer.

Total bequest gifts	\$ 452,019
Total number of donors	10
Total number of gifts	13

For more information on ways to give visit:
www.eriebenedictines.org/support-monastery

DONOR TESTIMONIALS



Sr. Janet Goetz (left) with her sister and brother-in-law, John and Kathy McKeown

Kathy McKeown remembers the Benedictine Sisters who taught her at St. Gregory School in North East, PA. "The sisters instilled in me a love of learning and I became an elementary school teacher for 35 years. My husband, John, who was also an elementary teacher, met the Benedictines through my sister, Sister Janet Goetz, prior to our marriage. John and I love visiting the sisters at the monastery where we are always welcomed like members of the family. Our support of the Benedictine Sisters is our way of saying thank you for all they have done for our family and many other families throughout the years. We are grateful for the prayers of the sisters, especially in times of illness."

—Kathy and John McKeown, donors since 1995

"Through the centuries, Benedictines have inspired searchers to a higher level of spirituality and morality. The Rule of St. Benedict teaches us to live with our human imperfections as we strive for holiness through its basic tenets. We support the work of our Benedictine Sisters so they can carry their mission to future generations, as it will surely be as vital as it is today, and to show our gratitude for their personal influence in our lives."

—Tony Tatalone and Chris Froehlich Tatalone, SBA '66, donors since 1996



"I see the Benedictine Sisters as today's Good Samaritans, helping those in need, with care and compassion. I want to feel one with them and to support their work."

—Sally Fullman, donor since 1996

Erie Gives Day

By Patti Eichen, Development Associate

How many times have you heard, "Money doesn't grow on trees," or even said it yourself?

Well, it's true. Money does not grow on trees, but it does grow on ERIE GIVES DAY.

The Erie Community Foundation is hosting Erie Gives Day on Tuesday, August 13, 2019. Please consider a gift to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on that day and see your donation grow.

During a designated 12-hour period of online giving on August 13 the Erie Community Foundation and their sponsors will increase each donor's gift by providing a pro-rated match. 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 and there is no maximum limit. Visa, MasterCard and Discover are accepted. You can also contact the



Erie Community Foundation by phone at 814-454-0843 on Erie Gives Day and make a donation.

New this year: Donors can write a \$25 minimum check for their Erie Gives donation. Checks must be made out to The Erie Community Foundation and be accompanied by a Check Donation Form. The form will be available for download at www.eriecommunityfoundation.org beginning June 13.

Your support of the Benedictine Sisters helps meet the sisters' needs so they can address the needs of the larger Erie community through their ministries. Your gift will also contribute to the formation of the community's new members, the well-being of aging sisters and the maintenance of Mount St. Benedict Monastery.

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

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

A HERITAGE THAT EMPOWERS

By Jo Clarke, Oblate, Director of Annual Giving

Our door is always open, not only the door to the monastery, but also to the journey of our lives and ministries. You, too, are symbols of hope and light on the journey. Your past support has been crucial in helping us address issues of poverty, the needs of women and children, peace and justice, and energy conservation.

So why should you support the Erie Benedictine community now and in the future?

Because for many, many years the Benedictine Sisters of Erie have led the way through their contemporary spirituality and their stands on women in the church, peace and justice, and feminism. They have challenged others – locally, nationally, and internationally – to reject the status quo and to live according to the Rule of Benedict, carrying the ancient Benedictine motto of Pax (peace) into all areas of their lives. They have taken public stands on many issues from war, to poverty, to injustice against

women and children. I believe it's this prophetic witness that continues to attract thousands of visitors to the monastery from all over the world, as well as attracting women who seek to join the sisters in community.

As a Benedictine oblate who left her home in London, England, to come to Erie and see what this community was about, I can tell you in all certainty the Benedictine Sisters of Erie have a future full of hope! Why do I say this? Because young women are drawn to Erie 30 years later for exactly the same reasons as I was ... to find community, purpose, and meaning in life, with the belief

that we can change the world for the better. Individually it would be almost impossible to challenge the injustices that surround us; however, with the support and energy of like-minded people, the vision of welcoming all as Christ is becoming a reality.

It is a return to the monastery, to daily prayer, where creativity, energy, and common philosophy take root. It is at the monastery where one gathers the strength, resilience, and faith to respond with hope. When women in the Church and society care about, work for and stand by the marginalized, anything is possible.

The sisters' lives are also enriched by the more than 250 oblates who play an integral role in so many and varied ways: through friendship, involvement in ministries, participation in prayer, financial support and more. These seekers give hope, excitement, and energy to all in the community.

While none of us know what the future will look like, the sisters remain committed to "listening with the ear of their hearts." Together we can be relevant in contemporary society. This is where we need your help. A financial gift to the sisters will help meet their needs so that we can address the overwhelming challenges of our society. You help us so we can help others.





However, as we move forward, we have to care for our elder sisters who have always put others first. I know that many of you have deep relationships and fond memories of the sisters. Perhaps they were your teachers, mentors, prayed for you, inspired you, or were there whenever you needed someone to listen to you ... they were just always there. Now we ask you to consider giving back to these amazing women with a financial gift. You will be helping to build a community for the 21st century and beyond, whatever that may look like.

The challenges are not small. We have to realistically look at the rising costs of healthcare, providing for the elder sisters by building up the community's retirement fund that is 65% underfunded. We also need to support the more than 40 sisters who are involved in ministries that encompass the community's hopes for a world that is more compassionate, just, and forgiving.

Your help and financial gift will:

- provide for the continued care of the sisters as they age.
- promote environmental sustainability through building maintenance. The conservation of existing community buildings helps create neighborhoods where families and businesses can grow and prosper.
- preserve the monastery as a center of spirituality; a place where seekers can get away from the stresses of modern life; a holy place where guests can spend a short respite to find meaning and purpose in a world often dominated by the isolation of modern technology.
- assist the ministries so they can make a difference in the lives of thousands of women, children, and men of all faiths.
- help with the education and formation of the newest women in the community.

HOW TO GIVE

Use the enclosed remittance envelope or go online to ErieBenedictines.org and make a gift on our secure website. You might also like the convenience of joining our Monthly Companions program. A recurring monthly gift will be automatically deducted from your credit or debit card, or through an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). For more information, call Patti Eichen at 814-899-0614, ext. 2442.

THANK YOU for supporting the sisters and **THANK YOU** for being a part of this Benedictine Family.

P.S. If you would like to learn more about our hopes and dreams for the future and how you can help, call me at 814-899-0614, ext. 2281; or email me at joclarke@mtstbenedict.org, and I will send you our Case Statement.



THANK YOU TO SPONSORS BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE CHARITY FUNDRAISER GOLF TOURNAMENT

\$10,000--Honorary Chairs

- Betsy and Bill Vorsheck
- PNC Bank

\$5,000

- Friend of the Monastery (anonymous)

\$2,500

- McManis & Monsalve Associates
- Windsor Beach Technologies, Inc.
- Great Lakes Insurance
- Vicary Insurance Agency
- Frontier General Contracting, Inc.
- Little Caesars/ Lynn and Dale McBrier

\$1,000

- Erie Community Foundation
- HBKS Wealth Advisors
- Kownacki Family
- AVT, Inc.
- Curtze Food Service
- Maloney, Reed, Scarpitti & Co. LLP
- American Tinning & Galvanizing Company
- Gail Grossman Freyne
- A grateful SBA Alum
- J. J. Agnello Htg & A/C, Inc.
- Hagan Business Machines, Inc.
- Betsy and Marco Monsalve, Oblates
- Velocity Network
- Murray Insurance LLC

\$500

- Saint Benedict Academy Alumnae Association
- Auto Express KIA
- Marge and Neil Himber
- Doyle H. Kennedy in honor of Therese T. Walter
- Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield



\$200

- Panache Salon and Spa
- TBAer Wealth Management
- Kathy and Dan Dahlkemper
- Mayor Joe Schember in honor of his mother, Helen
- Larese Floral Design
- Becky and John Kathman
- Duskas Funeral Home, Inc.
- McDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton LLP
- Housing Authority of the City of Erie
- Tennessee Backporch
- Erie News Now
- In honor of the sisters of the SBA faculty by Mary Alice Ozechoski
- E.T.G. Communications
- In memory of Sister Maureen Tobin by family & friends
- Steve and Kathy Danch
- Knights of St. George Club
- Northwest Restoration, Inc.
- Margaret Kloecker
- UPMC Hamot

*Sponsor names available at press deadline.



Photo: (L-R) Committee Members: Patti Eichen, Sr. Linda Romey, Sr. Mary Miller, Nancy Sabol, Sister Anne Wambach, Jo Clarke, Sr. Mary Jane Vergotz, Sr. Mary Lou Kownacki

Committee Members unable to be present for the photo: Mary Hoffman, Joseph Kownacki, and Karen Bukowski, PGA

The Absence of Divine Presence

By Joan Chittister, OSB

“We believe that the divine presence is everywhere.” Chapter 19, Rule of Benedict

One of my favorite stories never grows old. I tell it to myself over and over again: Tommy, the three year old, seemed agitated. He insisted on being alone with the infant brother who had now come into the family. He was so intent on it that the parents began to question his behavior. Was it love or was it jealousy? Would he hurt the baby if he were left alone with him? So they set up a baby monitor by the crib and left the room to watch for signs of distress.

Sure enough, as soon as he was alone with the baby, Tommy went straight to the crib, shook the baby awake and said, “Eddie, I’m your big brother Tommy. I want you to tell me what God looks like. You know because you just came from there but I’m three now and I’m beginning to forget....”

The awareness of Divine Presence is almost a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, we have a language for it that is clear, concise and seldom used as more than a series of clichés rather than with real intent. For instance, we say “God bless you,” when we sneeze. At Christmas time we sing, “Emmanuel, God with us,” at least in church. Sometimes

we even say “God love you” instead of “Thank you.” Every once in a while, in our concern for others, it slips out: “God help them,” we say under our breath.

In extremis we plead, “God, be with me”—often more out of pain than as a sign of deep down conscious awareness that all other salvation has already been abolished in our lives.

Hardly ever now, but still a bit, we hear someone—usually someone older than we—venture into this entirely other way of looking at life. Even now. Even in the midst of rampant secularism. Even here, in this country where cursing is common but blessings are rare.

Too often, in fact, we say “God bless you” ourselves and feel a little embarrassed for having allowed it to slip out. I do it, I know, when I thank the young man who carries the large boxes downstairs for me. Or, I hear myself say it as the last word I toss back at the cab driver. Or as my final personal word to the one who’s leaving the office after a deep and private conversation. Or I do it to the child whose blond curls I’ve just tousled.

And, of course, the prioress of the monastery says it over the community after every prayer period of the day.

But most of us have learned not to say those words much anymore. I don’t remember how that happened. As far as I know, no one made it a proscription but, little by little, it has become improper to commend anyone to God outside of formal prayer.

Yet, this string of leftover phrases from another age remains as a kind of silent proof that the consciousness of God is still wired into our hearts, embedded in our souls, struggling for attention in our very rational brains.

And that, I think, is a hopeful sign. Maybe the Divine Presence can arise again to make a highly technological society conscious of the fact that in the end it will not be technology that saves us.

Maybe those very words will remind me of the holiness of spirit in the person whose presence is annoying me right now.

Maybe calling it regularly to mind will release again the spiritual sensitivities that a largely material world has managed to drown out.

Perhaps we will, with Tommy, remember again Who really brought us here and depends on us to go on leavening the world around us with Spirit.

And so, until then...God bless you.

This article, taken from the *April 2019 Monastic Way*, a Benetvision publication written by Joan Chittister, OSB, is printed with permission. She explains: “I write *The Monastic Way* for people who lead busy lives, but long for greater spiritual depth. Thousands of people can attest that using *The Monastic Way* is a simple spiritual practice that only takes minutes from your day but gives meaning to last a lifetime.”

Visit benetvision.org/monasticway.html to learn more or to order a subscription to this monthly publication. In addition to a printed version, *The Monastic Way* is now available in digital form for easier and less expensive access.

Art Work by Marcy Hall, an artist from Erie, PA, whose vibrant, whimsical, yet deeply reflective paintings have sold worldwide. Her work is available at www.etsy.com/people/rabbitroomarts.



OBLATE WAY OF LIFE

Oblates Make a Difference

An Environmental Approach to Toxins

By Harry Finkbone, Oblate

The Erie Benedictine Corporate Commitment includes the issues of sustainability, peace, and justice. As an oblate of the community, I make an annual commitment that includes how I will support the Corporate Commitment in my life.

With the gifts God has given me, I have also vowed to “apply my professional talents as an industrial toxicologist to the task of informing corporate and social consciousness regarding the potential adverse effects of chemical and physical agents on the ecosystem, including humans.” However, I no longer actively practice toxicology and product safety as a board-certified toxicologist in industry. I am presently a part-time pastor of a small United Methodist Church and have a spiritual direction practice. Nonetheless, I continue to make contributions to my commitment, and I believe these contributions help support peace, justice, and sustainability.

Perhaps the most important way I attend to my commitment is through my influence on my two granddaughters, Katelyn and Madelyn. From the time they were tall enough to stand on a stepstool and peer over the edge of our kitchen island, I have been teaching the girls what I call “kitchen chemistry.” We do small things like learning the difference between an acid and a

base—vinegar and baking soda—by making tiny volcanoes with moistened baking soda formed into a mountain with a hole in the middle. When we fill the hole with white vinegar dyed red, we have a small volcano. Then, if we place the volcano in the middle of a lake of red-cabbage juice, we can watch the outflow of the erupting volcano change colors, another chemical reaction.

I try to teach them that chemicals are not inherently good or bad. Our entire body is made up of wondrous chemicals that allow us to utilize the many good foods (also made of chemicals) that provide us with health and vitality. I introduce them to the basic axiom of toxicology: “The dose makes the poison.” Even sugar, salt, or water, all chemicals necessary to sustain life, can become toxins if administered in the wrong amount, for an inappropriate time, or to a person whose normal function is compromised. This does not make these chemicals bad.

On the other hand, there are some chemicals that are so hazardous that their use must be highly regulated. A good example of this is the drug Diprivan, a.k.a., propofol. While this substance has been a great aid in the conduct of safe surgery, in the hands of the uninformed, it poses a grave danger, including immediate death or long-term addiction. Michael Jackson’s death is a sad example of the misuse of this drug. The chemical is neither good nor bad. It is the dose and the conditions of use that differentiate between a therapy and a poison.

I apply these same basic tenets to helping my parishioners gain a better understanding of medical conditions and treatments, especially those that can require the taking of prescription drugs. Most adults have a rudimentary understanding of bodily structures and functions and virtually no understanding of the way in which chemicals interact with these. Unfortunately, medical practitioners often do not take the time to educate their patients. So, someone like me, or my wife May Ann, a nurse, can play a role helping these folks better understand how such chemicals might affect them. Too many people falsely think that all drugs are dangerous and bad. We live in an amazing time in which terrific medications can improve the quality and length of life. It is also true that we are in a constant threat of overexposure to environmental hazards that can and do interact with the good chemicals with which God has elected to form our bodies and the environment.



I will never not be a biologist and a teacher. Teachers, excuse my use of a double negative! I will always work to educate about the wonders of living organisms, ecosystems, and the ways in which chemicals interact with each other and with the living world. Today, I just do this in a more limited scope and environment—home, church, and community. I pray the effect will be the same, that God might be glorified and that we all learn how better to live with one another on this fragile planet we affectionately call Earth.

Pilgrims for LGBTQI Equality at the Vatican's World Youth Day in Panama

By Breanna Mekuly, Oblate

In late January, we walked around Panama City streets jammed with young Catholics while wearing rainbow sashes and buttons, carrying a sign that read “Faithful Catholics committed to full equality for LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) persons.”

We were a group of pilgrims from Equally Blessed, a coalition of three organizations committed to LGBTQI justice in the Catholic Church: DignityUSA, New Ways Ministry, and Call to Action. We attended World Youth Day, a gathering of more than 500,000 Catholics between the ages of 18 and 35, to celebrate faith through prayer services, teachings, and fiestas. We were there for two reasons: to raise awareness that there are folk* who identify as both LGBTQI and Catholic; and to work for full acceptance of the LGBTQI community in our Church.

Our group was continuously stopped as participants asked to take pictures with us or for one of the rainbow buttons we were handing out. Many people engaged us in conversation, too.

The first day, we found ourselves in a mall looking for something to eat, surrounded by hundreds of other pilgrims waving their countries' flags and chanting their native songs. As we stood in the food line, a young woman came up and asked where we were from; after all, the rainbow flag stood out against the sea of national flags. “We’re from the USA,” we responded in the manner that would soon become very familiar, “but we’re here with Equally Blessed, a group that supports the full inclusion for all people in the faith, especially the LGBTQI community.” Her eyes opened



wide and a smile spread across her face. “Hold on a second,” she said and ran into the crowd. A few minutes later, she came back with a friend, Maddie.

Once Maddie caught sight of us, a group of young adults affirming our Catholic identity with our sexual orientations and gender identities, she burst into tears. “I didn’t know there was a group like you all,” she said, pulling out a miniature rainbow flag from her backpack. Through tears, she explained to us that earlier that morning a priest had made some homophobic comments that



made her feel sick to her stomach. But seeing us was a renewal of her faith; she could still be Catholic because there are Catholic people – the Church is not just the hierarchy – who support the LGBTQI community. If we only reached Maddie on this trip, that would be enough.

But it was important for us to be seen by the hierarchy, too, and I was nervous about that because the hierarchy often uphold official Church doctrine that LGBTQI people are “intrinsically disordered.” Despite anxiety about the reaction we might experience, we stood our ground and held our banner during prayer services and when we encountered Church officials.



**folx: an alternative spelling of the word “folks”, is a gender neutral collective noun used to address a group of people; an umbrella term for people with a non-normative sexual orientation or identity.*

Contributed photos: Harry Finkbone and Breanna Mekuly

We were graciously welcomed by a few priests and nuns. One sister from Chile stopped us as we paraded by in rainbow swag and told us that she is in charge of the sexual diversity group back home. She thanked us for what we were doing. Another priest came up to us and exchanged his rainbow cross pin for one of our buttons that said, “It’s Our Church, Too,” which he promptly put on his shirt.

A powerful experience for me was being interviewed by the Vatican Radio. (Though they did not publish the article.) I was thrilled that a representative of the Vatican took time to greet us and ask questions about what it means to be Catholic and LGBTQI. We talked about how pastoral associates and youth ministers have been fired from parish jobs because of their LGBTQI identity. And we talked about how others have been denied the Eucharist by priests or others who feel they have the power to choose who can receive Christ based on assumptions of which sexual acts one may have performed. The Vatican representative appeared shocked, like she had never heard of this sort of oppression happening within the Church. She promised that even if the article wasn’t approved for publication, she would continue working to spread our message because the LGBTQI community is “near and dear to her heart.”

Overall, the experience in Panama gave me hope for the future of our Church because so many of my peers from around the world are already accepting of LGBTQI persons. Maybe in the future the hierarchy will notice this and change its teachings to encompass the love its people are living out. Regardless of what happens, the Church I experienced at the Vatican-sponsored World Youth Day in Panama is a Church of welcoming the marginalized, loving all people, and delighting in the joy of another.



Congratulations to Oblate Malinda Bostick

Oblate Malinda Bostick was selected by the Mercy Center for Women as one of this year’s “Women making History.” She and 12 other Erie women were honored at a special event on Wednesday, March 6, held at the Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center, Mercyhurst University. Malinda was chosen because during her life she has demonstrated a commitment to personal growth and development, dedicated service to her community, strong moral values, and the courage of her convictions. “When Malinda had to tell some of the things she does for her community and parish, she listed, among many other areas of service that she was a Benedictine oblate,” said Oblate Director Sister Dianne Sabol. “We are grateful for all that Malinda does for the greater Erie community and especially grateful that she chooses to be a committed oblate with our community.”

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.



Stand Against Racism Social Media Campaign

At the invitation of the Global Concerns Committee of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the Benedictine Sisters of Erie participated in the **Standing Against Racism social media campaign from April 3—May 15, 2019**. The campaign was created to help facilitate the resolution of LCWR to “go deeper into the critical work of creating communion, examining the root causes of injustice and our own complicity, and purging ourselves, our communities, and our country of the sin of racism and its destructive effects.” (Excerpt from 2018 Statement of Recommitment)

May God have mercy . . .

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie are appalled at the act of violence hurled against innocent Muslims in New Zealand who were defenseless as they prayed to their God.

“We offer support and compassion to our Muslim sisters and brothers, especially to the victims and their families in Christchurch” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “We pray for God’s mercy and we hope that we will never lose sight of the human vulnerability that unites us as one family in this world that we share.”



Build bridges, not walls

In keeping with our Corporate Commitment, the Gospel of peace and justice and the Rule of Benedict that urges us to welcome all as Christ did, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie remain opposed to a border wall.

We object to the announcement of a national emergency that allows the transfer and irresponsible use of public funds to construct it. A border wall is unethical; it hurts people and damages the environment. The continued dehumanization of migrants, human beings in search of protection from violence and oppression, work and a better life is immoral.

We support building bridges that unite, rather than walls that divide—bridges paved in reverence and respect for all of God’s people, supported by principles of justice and equal rights for all, and painted with love and compassion.



Happenings...



2019 Prophet of Peace

Edwina Gateley is a poet, theologian, artist, writer, and lay minister. She is a single mom and has been described as a modern day mystic and prophet. The Benedictine Sisters of Erie named her the 2019 Prophet of Peace because of the extraordinary manner in which she uses her gifts for the good of others. Edwina was acknowledged as a woman whose commitment to justice, peace and women's issues is reflected in the responsible and caring mission that she daily embraces. "Edwina's efforts are clearly aligned with the Corporate Commitment of the Erie Benedictines," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "She has given her life working for women and raising the issues of sexism and racism in church and society internationally, nationally, and locally. We are pleased to honor her."

Sisters Phyllis Schleicher and Mary Hoffman Honored

Sisters Phyllis Schleicher and Mary Hoffman, founders of Catholic Rural Ministry of the Bradford Deanery, were celebrated for 15 years of service to the PA Department of Aging Ombudsman Program—a program designed to support and empower consumers by resolving individual complaints involving long-term care service. "It's been an honor for us to advocate for those who can't and support those who can," said Sister Phyllis. "As Benedictine Sisters we believe the life and dignity of every person is to be revered and this program has provided a unique opportunity for us to do just that." Included among the guests was Jan Brown, Ombudsman Specialist for the PA Department of Aging who spoke of the dedication Sisters Phyllis and Mary have shown to this volunteer work: "I would like to thank Sister Phyllis and Sister Mary. Through generous giving of time, empathetic listening and compassionate help they have planted seeds of love in countless lives . . . you both have shown that you are here to serve, not to be served. Well done, faithful servants."



(Standing) Barbara Busch, Lead Ombudsman for Potter County and Isaac Musser, Deputy Administrator: Potter County Area Agency on Aging

(Seated) Sister Mary Hoffman (left) and Sister Phyllis Schleicher

Photo: Marian Wehler, OSB



Bless the Land

East side Erie residents gathered in the Joyce A. Savocchio Business Park, named for Erie's first and only woman mayor (1990-2002), to bless the land that is primed for true community development benefiting minorities and New Americans living in Erie's urban core. Benedictine Sisters were among those present on April 4. Gary Horton, Director of the UECD (Urban Economic Development Corporation) and overseer of development initiatives, led the service which included moments of prayer, song and silence. "It was a very touching moment when all gathered joined in singing *Let There Be Peace On Earth*," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "We are hopeful that this effort to re-energize neighborhoods in the central east side of the city and create jobs by the development of this business park will be successful."



Canisius students remain ever faithful

For six students and their adult mentor, winter break meant a trip to Erie. Once again our relationship with Canisius College was made even stronger when the group arrived for an alternative winter break ministry trip in January 2019. The group lived at the monastery and worked with the sisters in various Benedictine ministries. Sister Marilyn Schauble, Vocation Director, coordinated everything with Kaitlyn Buehlmann, associate Campus Minister at Canisius. "We have been hosting this service trip for many years," said Sister Marilyn. "We love having the students come and share their enthusiasm, energy and willingness to get to know and work with us. It never fails to be a great experience."

New Program at St. Benedict Community Center: Indoor Wheelchair Basketball

"February 21 is a night I will remember for a long time to come," said Sister Dianne Sabol, Director of St. Benedict Community Center. "Indoor wheelchair basketball got off to a great start."

Wheelchair basketball is played by people with different levels of physical challenges that prevent running, jumping and pivoting. Now available at St. Benedict Community Center the sport promotes healthy competition, constructive time use, positive social interactions and valuable life skills. This new initiative continued through April 11 and as Sister Dianne explained: My hope is that this program will grow to include a variety of adaptive sports and games....so stay tuned!"



**JOAN CHITTISTER:
HER STORY,
MY STORY,
OUR STORY.**

Joan Chittister ... Her Story, My Story, Our Story

The D'Angelo Performing Arts Center was at full capacity for the one woman play "Joan Chittister ... Her Story, My Story, Our Story" presented as part the Joan D. Chittister Lecture Series at Mercyhurst University on Friday evening, May 3. The play was written and performed by Teri Bays, a professional actress and performer from Arizona who explained, "It is about intersecting lives of women facing adversity, abuse and injustice." The mothers of both Sister Joan and Teri were childhood friends who experienced domestic abuse as children and the play addresses the experience and ramifications of that abuse. Following the performance Sister Joan spoke to the audience and urged them to ask questions and resist being silent about issues that need to be addressed. She challenged all present to speak up courageously for justice for all, especially women and children. "The play was very well received. You could feel the intent listening of the audience to a story that very possibly rang true for many," said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. "It was an inspirational and memorable evening."

Happenings...

Wisdom Tradition comes alive with Sister Dianne Bergant, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes

Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA is the Carroll Stuhlmueller Distinguished Professor Emerita of Biblical Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. As part of the April Community Weekend she shared her scripture expertise with the community and oblates in several sessions dedicated to the Old Testament Wisdom Tradition. She explained that wisdom results from reflecting on personal experience and the wise person is the one who has survived life. "Wisdom tradition begins with human experience and that becomes clear as Job struggles with questions of human suffering and justice," said Sister Dianne. "But God refocuses Job's attention to the splendor and magnificence of natural creation." Though it is often patience we associate with Job Sister Dianne told how Job is really only patient in a couple of the book's chapters and the rest of the time he is impatient and questions God. Using examples from nature and animals, Sister Dianne discussed human limitation and the reality that there are some things humans are not able to control or understand. She pointed out that "ultimately, humans are challenged to simply trust God."



Poetry Grant will make Poems on State Street possible



The Writing Studio at Saint Mary's: A Space to Create, directed by Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, aims to bring beauty and poetry to the people of Erie. A \$2500 grant from Erie Arts and Culture which was awarded in December, will enable the Studio to begin a new project, a permanent art installation called Poems on State Street. This spring and summer, the funding from the grant will be used to pay local artists to beautify the

busy sidewalks that line State Street by painting uplifting verses of poems and illustrating them. When completed, these poems will cover much of the downtown area, reaching people from all walks of life.

As Sister Mary Lou said, "This is a simple way to offer a moment of delight, right in the middle of the city. These poems will be accessible to all people and illustrated in a bright and beautiful way that speaks to the human spirit."

Annual Council Meeting of the Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM)

Sister Ann Hoffman (pictured front center), is the Executive Director of AIM USA which means she also serves as a member of the AIM Council. She joined the group for its annual meeting, held for the first time in Rome at the Benedictine headquarters of Sant'Anselmo, in November 2018. While its primary task is to supervise the work of AIM, the Council also provides a great platform for discussing matters of common interest among all Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists.





Earth Pledge



Ribbon Trees

Earth Care

Sisters Marian Wehler, OSB and Tina Geiger, RSM, of Catholic Rural Ministry in the Oil City Deanery, have been working with the teachers and students in the area's Catholic schools to foster environmental awareness. They are helping to deepen the students' understanding of the responsibility everyone shares for the care of the earth. Recent actions included the decorating of earth ribbon trees as a reminder to reverence the world that surrounds us and participation in Earth Day 2019 which resulted in a proclamation of the Earth Pledge:

*I pledge allegiance to the Earth,
to its mountains, rivers, soil and sky:
One planet, irreplaceable,
to be cherished and protected by all.*

Spring Concert at the Monastery



Directors: Sister Marilyn Schauble (left)
and Nancy Bowers

The monastery chapel was full for the North East Choral Club (NECC) spring concert hosted this year by the Erie Benedictines. The program was comprised of songs from a variety of mid to late 20th century genres sung by the women's group under the direction of Nancy Bowers. Also included were performances by the Monastery Schola and Handbell Choir directed by Sister Marilyn Schauble who has been part of NECC for more than 10 years. A special treat was the musical offering of *Da Pacem*. "The combined efforts of the two groups singing together as one was beautiful and inspiring," said Sister Marilyn. "The text translates: Give peace, O God in our time. We hope that our singing invited the audience into the prayer that is our wish for the world in which we live."





From the **Director**

By Ann Comstock, Oblate

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



The viability of any organization depends on several key factors such as the integrity and timeliness of its goals, the effectiveness of its members in achieving those goals and the quality of its endeavors toward those goals. I am pleased to announce that considering those factors, the Spirit of SBA is alive and well.

The purpose of the Saint Benedict Academy Alumnae Association is to promote and maintain the bond of the members, support the ministries of the Benedictine Sisters, promote Catholic education and uphold and encourage members in their service to ministries that promote Benedictine values and traditions.

The success of our alumnae association is due to the hard work and dedication of the many Board members and alumnae who help keep the spirit alive through their work on events and fundraisers and through volunteering on behalf of the association and the sisters. SBA Alumnae members routinely comprise one of the largest blocs of donors to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Our alumnae association remains viable and successful because of you.

To all of you – **THANK YOU**

SBA Executive Board 2019-2020

The Executive Board welcomed three new members this year: Sue Andrews Zill '65, Sheila Warner '73 and Cheryl Vargo Zingelewicz '65. The 10 members of the Executive Board meet five times a year and are responsible for planning and maintaining the many social events that the SBA Alumnae Association sponsors annually. With their help and support, the Annual Christmas Party, the Spring Luncheon and our Cash Bingos have been very successful. The Alumnae Executive Board is tasked with keeping the bonds among alumnae strong while helping to support the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and their ministries. All the Board members are and have been unbelievably generous with their time and efforts. We are so thankful for their help and dedication. God bless the "friends we never can forget."



Seated (L-R): Mary Jane Vergotz OSB '66, Development Director; Rosanne Loneck OSB '61, Community Liaison; Mary Ellen Plumb OSB '71; Katie Shewan Young '87, Executive Board President.

Standing (L-R): Marcella (Sue) Andrews Zill '65; Cheryl Vargo Zingelewicz '65; Ann Comstock '64, Alumnae Coordinator; Darlene Harkness Kerstetter '82; Valerie Joint Purzycki '88; Susan Skrzypczak Chase '82. Not present for photograph, Sheila Warner '73.

Save the Dates



SBA BINGO

April 28th, July 14th, August 18th,
September 22nd, October 13th,
November 10th

Polish Falcons

431 East 3rd Street

Doors open at Noon

*Come with your friends and have
some fun!*



SBA Annual Christmas Party

Tuesday December 3, 2019

Ambassador Conference Center

7794 Peach St, Erie, PA

A FEW THINGS HAVE CHANGED...

The SBA Alumnae Association Board has added a new event to our yearly roster – Cash Bingo! Beginning last November, the Alumnae Association has held a Cash Bingo every other month on a Sunday afternoon at the Polish Falcons Club on East 3rd Street in Erie. As word has spread, the Bingo has attracted bigger crowds and been more fun each time. Due to the success of this addition, we are able to award not 20, but 25 Catholic School Scholarships of \$250 to relatives of alumnae members attending a Catholic school for the 2019-2020 school year for a total of \$6,250! In addition, the Alumnae Association was able to offer a \$500 sponsorship for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie Charity Fundraiser Golf Tournament on June 17. The Alumnae Association is proud to support its members through Catholic School scholarships and to support the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

2019 Scholarship Winner List

We are pleased to announce that at the Spring Luncheon, held on May 4, 2019, 25 scholarships of \$250 were awarded to relatives of alumnae members who will be attending Catholic grade or high schools for the 2019-2020 school year. We are happy to be able to increase the amount awarded this year by \$1,250.

WINNER	SCHOOL	ALUMNAE	RELATIONSHIP
Antonio Bruni	St. James School	Eleanor Walker	Grandson
Courtney Kindle	Villa Maria Academy	Valerie Purzycki	Daughter
Nolan Lynch	Cathedral Prep	Sue Perry	Great Nephew
Faith Wisniewski	Villa Maria Academy	Susan Wettekin	Granddaughter
Sadie Messer	Mercyhurst Prep	Ann Krauza	Great Aunt
Gracie Murphy	St. Luke School	Connie Watt	Great Niece
Lyrisa Skolnik	Our Lady of Peace School	Ann Marie Skolnik	Granddaughter
Noah & Casey Wagner	St. James School	Nancy Ruffa	Grandsons
Jacob Sank	St. Gregory School	Kathy Mauro	Nephew
Taylor Rose Worsdale	St. Stephens Catholic School	Allene Kraus	Great Granddaughter
Rosalind Roark	St. Dominic School	Amy Roark	Daughter
Matthew D. Bond	Cathedral Prep	Jennifer Bond	Son
Sophia Skrzypczak	Villa Maria Academy	Susan Chase	Niece
Calvin Dunbar	St. Luke School	Margaret James	Grandson
Jordan Prescott	Mercyhurst Prep	Ann Michalski	Niece
Graham Hewitt	Our Lady of Peace School	Catherine Rieger	Grandson
Gianna Marie Corsi	Villa Maria Academy	Dolores Corsi	Granddaughter
Lia Macek	Mercyhurst Prep	Audrey Riazzi	Granddaughter
Amber Torrence	Mercyhurst Prep	Sandra Phillips	Great Niece
Claire Izbicki	Our Lady of Peace School	Sharon Slomski	Cousin
Collin J. Harris	St. James School	Kathleen Runser	Grandson
Emily Marz	Our Lady of Peace School	Helen Titus	Great Niece
Maura Payne	St. James Elementary	Lorraine Wellington	Great Niece
Amiya Husband	St. George School	Kim Balter	Granddaughter
Alisa Marie Bailey	Mercyhurst Prep	Patricia Whitehill	Great Niece



*"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.

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Marjorie E. Kelley Brown	'43
Julia Veronica Maciulewicz Falkewicz ...	'45
Mary Dolores Fessler	'46
Joan P. Gorny Ragen	'47
Claire M. Hanlin Gredler	'49
Audrey Ferrick Thomas	'54
Kathleen Keegan Haraczy	'56
Rose Marie "Dolly" Dumala Skrypek ...	'56
Janet P. Respecki Benovic	'57
Roberta C. Roach Rose	'58
Elizabeth "Betty" A. Dolan Pelletier	'60
Mary Pfadt Lombardozzi	'66
Patricia Lorence Paparelli Guthrie	'67
Patricia Heberle Gray	'69
Mary Rose Bernatowicz Szympruch	'69
Holly E. Miller Stephan	'76
Nancy "Annie" Makowski	'87

Benedictine ✠ Sisters of Erie

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the Mount



Let us bow down and worship.