

the Mount

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ERIE



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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.



Come and be Light . . .

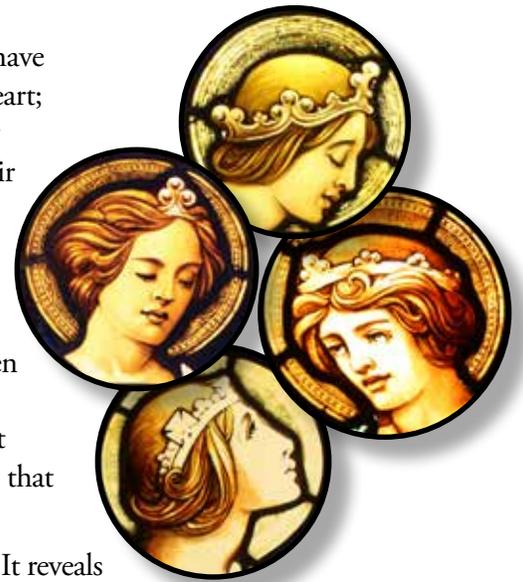
For the past four years we have featured an angel on the cover of the Fall/Winter magazine, known to many as the Christmas issue of *The Mount*. This year we show all four angels together to bring to fullness what I have deemed the “Angel Series.” These four angels are stained glass windows from the original motherhouse chapel. Last year at this time the cover featured *Angel with Harp*, the window that had been lost then found, the window in need of repair. Recently the window was restored (see page 15) and now has a home in the monastery along with the other three windows: *Angel with Book*, *Angel Kneeling in Prayer*, and *Angel with Incense*.

I have come to love these angels. They have fed my imagination and warmed my heart; they have uplifted me with their energy and softened me with their beauty. Their messages have challenged me: embrace the Word, kneel in prayer, offer self as incense, and sing praise to God. Their light, color, and uniqueness have enlivened me. Over and over, I have seen the essence of God reflected through them as light. They have taught me that when God’s light inhabits you it is then that you can be light for others.

I think that is the gift of this magazine. It reveals God’s light through the various stories in its pages: new members and commitments, accomplishments and awards, celebrations and memorials, hospitality and outreach, kindness shared and blessing received.

May these stories inspire and invite you to allow the light of God to inhabit you more and more deeply so that, with new levels of clarity and purpose you, too, will be light for others.

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB



Cover Photos: *Angel Series* by Jo Clarke, Oblate

The **Angel Series** is available as a package of four notecards. Go to eriebenedictines.org/angel-cards for more information.



BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT

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

From the Prioress

Finding Christ in color and light

The 16 floor-to-ceiling stained-glass windows that frame our chapel capture the attention of most visitors to the monastery with their play of color and light that can easily lift the spirit of any one of us. I don't think there has ever been a photographer who has visited us and hasn't chosen these stunning windows as a backdrop, trying to catch their ephemeral beauty as the sun moves across them.

The symbols portrayed in the stained glass add to their beauty and inspiration. In this issue of *The Mount*, I'd like to reflect on the windows that include angels in their design—in particular, I'd like to reflect on angels as messengers and some of the messages shared through our windows.

The main focus of one window is an angel kneeling in prayer. Another, one of the tallest, depicts uplifted hands and a *Chi-Rho* (an ancient Christian symbol). Both of these remind us of the importance of prayer, communal and personal. Certainly as Benedictines the center of our days is our sung, chanted Liturgy of the Hours—the three times each day when we gather in the chapel for community prayer.

A window on the north side shows a flaming lamp, filled perhaps with incense, a ritual sign of adoration. One of the angels is in an adoration pose, also, with her burning incense bowl in front of her. We burn incense at the Vigil of Sunday prayer every Saturday evening, watching the smoke slowly curl upwards as a reminder that we are lifting our hearts and minds in praise to God.

The smallest window on the south side of chapel includes a beautiful little harp; the newly-restored window from our East Ninth Street motherhouse also displays an angel harpist (see page 15). Both remind us of the significant place of music in our Benedictine community and in our worship. We are blessed with many musicians who assist us as we raise our voices in prayer during each liturgical season.

Finally, one of the angels is holding a book. I would pair her with the windows in the Blessed Sacrament chapel that were placed there eight years ago when we renovated the monastery chapel. The entire east wall of this small room is a triptych of stained glass containing a phrase from Chapter 43 of the *Rule of Benedict*, "Prefer nothing to the Work of God." This particular phrase is a favorite mantra of many of us who follow of the *Rule of Benedict*.

The Advent and Christmas seasons bring with them a heightened awareness of angel messengers, of light, love and longing. May our stained-glass angels remind you that Christ comes into the world as hope and light, in music and message, incense and prayer, through you and me, and all things beautiful.

Anne Wambach, OSB

Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie



Follow The Path

By Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director



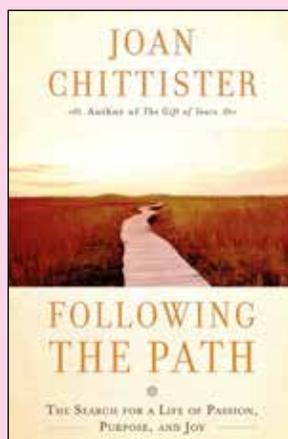
I have learned that the most important thing a vocation director does is accompany someone as they discern where and to what God is calling them.

My experience reminds me of the Bible story about the call of Samuel. Samuel, the answer to a barren woman's

prayer for a child, was dedicated to God under the mentorship of Eli the priest. While in the care of Eli, a voice called to Samuel while he was sleeping. The voice wakened Samuel not once but three times. Each time he went to Eli, presuming it was the priest who had called out his name. The first two times Eli simply said, "It's not me calling you; go back to sleep." The third time Eli's response was different. "If you hear the voice again," Eli said, "tell the voice, 'Speak, your servant is listening.'"

Like Eli, my ministry as a vocation director is to help seekers discern that to which God is calling them. I encourage those who express interest in the Benedictine way of life to listen for God's call with an open heart. Paying attention myself to Benedict's admonition to "Listen," the very first word of the *Rule of Benedict*, has sustained me for many years. And that attentive listening is what led to a new vocation venture this year: *Following the Path – Vocation Discernment Retreat*.

Finding where God calls us and responding to our own personal vocation is key to our happiness. That was precisely the focus of the *Following the Path* retreat and it was a wonderful start to what I hope will become an annual event.



Ten women responded to the invitation to attend the first *Following the Path – Vocation Discernment Retreat* held at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in July. During the weekend retreat, Sister Joan Chittister engaged the women in an exploration of texts from her book, *Following the Path: The Search for a Life of Passion, Purpose, and Joy*. Sister Joan was clear: "Deciding what we must do to be happy ourselves so that we can be a gift to the world around us is the central question of life."

The women came from seven states: Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin and ranged in ages from mid-20s to early 50s. I found myself profoundly grateful and very hope-filled to be in the presence of women who have a strong desire to listen and respond to God's call. Their insights, questions and ponderings revealed them to be seekers of God, not just for themselves but also for the betterment of the world.

The retreat culminated with the Sunday celebration of Eucharist followed by a group gathering during which the participants shared wisdom gleaned from the experience. Molly said, "The retreat was a wonderful and insightful experience. I will hold

close the lessons I learned from the weekend and continue looking for more." Kirsten added, "I feel liberated and have more courage from this experience to pursue the path of life that is meant for me." Paula shared, "I have been a seeker for a long time. I keep looking for what will stretch me to be the person I am called to be."

From my experience with the women who participated in *Following the Path* I have learned, yet again, that vocation is a gift to be received and the first step to receiving the gift is listening to God with the ear of the heart.



Retreatants and sisters celebrate Compline on the shore of Lake Erie, part of the community's property.



NEW POSTULANTS WELCOMED

Dina Lauricella, a motorcycle safety instructor from Lusby, MD, learned about the Benedictine Sisters of Erie from the community's website and after almost two years of reflection, consideration and visiting various monasteries she decided to seek God with the Erie community. "The love and commitment for Christ that I have seen demonstrated by the sisters in the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, their sharing of community life and ministering to the needs of others, has left an impression on me," said Dina. "They are making a difference in the lives of the people in one small town and in the world."



Dina Lauricella



Karen Oprechok

Karen Oprechok is from Windsor, Canada. She was an office worker for the Canadian Federal Government and for four

years observed the Erie Benedictines through the website. "By visiting many communities, Benedictine or not, women's or not, and with much prayer, I learned a great deal about the type of life I was seeking," she said. "After a few attempts to come to Erie fizzled I began to wonder if I was even meant to visit and I am so glad I did! The community is so full of life! I knew quite soon into that first weekend that I was home."

Both women began the postulancy in a ritual ceremony, Dina on October 12 and Karen on November 2. As part of the rite the seeker knocks on the monastery door and is then led into the monastery by Sister Marilyn Schauble who, as Vocation Director, journeyed with them

during their vocation discernment. "We are very fortunate to have these women knocking on our door," Sister Marilyn said. "It has been an honor and privilege for me to walk with them and it is a blessing to welcome them as women who wish to seek God with us in community."

With the reassurance of community support, each woman was given a Benedictine cross as a sign of her willingness to follow Christ with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. In addition they were given an important message from Sister Anne Wambach, prioress: "We welcome you to this community. We thank you for responding to God's call. May you serve God with the gifts you have been given so that in all things God may be glorified."

Director of Monastic Formation, Sister Stephanie Schmidt, serves as Postulant Director. She will offer guidance to Dina and Karen as each of them deepens her understanding of and commitment to monastic life.

*"We welcome you to this community.
We thank you for responding to God's call.
May you serve God with the gifts you have been given
so that in all things God may be glorified."*

—Anne Wambach, OSB, Prioress



SEASON OF BLESSINGS

By Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Formation Director

Rites of Passage

Monastic Profession

The Erie Benedictines celebrated the first monastic profession of Sister Pat Witulski with great joy at Evening Praise on August 7. Surrounded by her sisters in community, oblates and friends, Pat freely promised to follow God in this monastic way of life for the next three years. After proclaiming this promise for all to hear, Pat placed the document of profession, written in her own hand, on the altar as a sign that she is offering her life to God.

“The day of my First Profession was a blessing beyond words. It is my hope that I continue each day, with God’s assistance, to live this path of love that I discovered during my novitiate,” said Sister Pat of her special day.

St. Benedict himself established the Benedictine monastic profession formula in Chapter 58 of the *Rule of Benedict*: “When she is to be received, she comes before the whole community and promises stability, fidelity to monastic life (*conversatio morum*), and obedience.” This formula predates by several centuries the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience professed by most other religious congregations. Stability is the promise to live life together and to seek God with and within a

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasure of living with you forever.

Psalm 16:11

particular community of women or men. Fidelity to monastic life commits one to a life of continual conversion of heart through immersion in community life and the Scriptures. Obedience is a commitment to daily listening to the voice of God in the prioress, in one another, in *lectio*, in nature, and in world events. These vows give Benedictine life its distinctive character. In choosing to be faithful to these monastic practices the new member commits to a lifelong process of transformation.

In her reflections during the ceremony, Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, reminded us: “Commitment is a two-way process. Surely Pat is making a commitment to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. But, we, too, are making a commitment to her. The whole community is on this path as one.”

Pat entered a new stage of monastic formation with her profession. She is now a scholastic and will focus on the process of deeper integration into the monastic community. Sister Diane Rabe, the Director of Scholastics, will guide Pat through these next three years.

Now that her novitiate year of study and prayer is concluded, Pat has returned to full-time ministry. She has chosen to work at Emmaus Ministries, helping in the food pantry and soup kitchen, as a way to follow the call of her heart to be closer to the poor. During these next three years Pat will continue to discern her response to God’s call in this monastic community.

The vows are three facets of one single reality—one inclusive promise—to live like Christ lives on my way to God.

—Ephrem Hollerman, OSB



(left to right) Sisters Diane Rabe, Anne Wambach, Pat Witulski, Stephanie Schmidt



Postulant Received into the Novitiate

The Benedictine Sisters received postulant Ann Michaud into the novitiate, the second stage of monastic formation, at Evening Praise on November 15. During her year as a postulant Ann participated in community prayer and life as well as a program of study. She also ministered at Benetvision and St. Benedict Education Center. During the novitiate Ann will experience a year of intensive prayer and study, participating in classes on the *Rule of Benedict*, monastic history, psalms, liturgy and Scripture. She will minister within the monastery, which will give her the opportunity to come to know the sisters more deeply and learn from them.

"I feel very passionate about this community and about Benedictine monastic life as it is lived here," said Sister Ann. "And I realize I still have so very much to learn. The novitiate will be the next step in deepening this learning process."

Riepper Moves On

Susan Carpenter, participant in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program, celebrated the completion of her program



Susan Carpenter (left) with Sister Helen Heher, Wellness Director

at a community gathering on September 28. For the past eight months she lived with the community at the monastery, working at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House and with the senior sisters in the infirmary. "Susan has played with us and prayed with us as she immersed

herself in our monastic life," said Sister Stephanie Schmidt, director of the program.

Susan traveled from Erie to New York for a ten-week training session with the Maryknoll Missions. In December she will move to Tanzania where she will minister for at least three years. She is fulfilling a lifelong dream to be a lay missionary and viewed her time in Erie as an excellent way to prepare and deepen her spirituality.

The community sang a farewell blessing to Susan, after which she surprised the sisters by presenting an individual blessing to each one. "Many meal-time table conversations were enhanced by Susan's gift of storytelling," Sister Stephanie shared. "We look forward to the stories yet to come."

Monastic Formation Events

Novice and Director Institute

Novice Sister Pat Witulski and formation director Sister Stephanie Schmidt travelled to Immaculata Monastery in Norfolk, NE, this past May to attend the Novice and Director Institute (NADI). This annual two-week gathering, sponsored by the American Benedictine Formation Conference (ABFC), offers novices from Benedictine communities around the country the opportunity to interact and deepen their understanding of the

Continued page 8



Continued from page 7

essential elements of Benedictine life and also provides them with peer support. Directors attend the gathering to support the novices during the experience and to dialogue, share resources, and network with other directors. This year 17 Benedictine communities were represented with 20 novices and 17 directors participating.

“It was a time of sacred sharing for me,” said Sister Pat. “My two weeks there solidified my resolve to move forward in my desire to consecrate my life to God in this community and opened my heart to ponder God’s ongoing invitation to love.”

The institute began with each novice sharing a brief history and a visual profile of her community. Both novices and directors then participated in classes on the *Rule of Benedict*, change and transition, community living skills, humility, hospitality, music and prayer. A day of service was spent at Mercy Meals, an organization that packs and ships meals to famine-stricken countries around the world.

“This entire event was a wonderful way to get to know the variety of expressions of Benedictine life in our country today, a true experience of unity and diversity,” shared Sister Stephanie.

ABFC Core Team Meets in Erie

The American Benedictine Formation Conference (ABFC) Core Team travelled to Erie for their annual planning meeting September 17-20. The team is responsible for planning and implementing the biennial symposium that will be held in Schuyler, Nebraska, in April 2015. The theme for the conference, which brings together Benedictine vocation and formation directors from around the country, will be “Transitions: A Journey of Formation.”



ABFC Core Team: Sisters Jennifer Horner, Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, IN; Gabrielle Oestreich, Immaculata Monastery, Norfolk, NE; Stephanie Schimdt, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA; Marie Therese Long, St. Joseph Monastery, Tulsa, OK; and Kimberly Prohaska, St. Scholastica Monastery, Fort Smith, AK

Since this was the first visit to Mount St. Benedict Monastery for most of the team, host Sister Stephanie Schmidt scheduled some local field trips. The participants enjoyed local scenery with tours of Presque Isle, the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, Lake Erie sunsets, and the Northeast vineyards. The “Benedictine Block,” an inner-city Erie block that is home to five Benedictine ministries and 11 sisters was the highlight. They were amazed at the variety and extensiveness of the Erie Benedictine ministries with the poor.

The visiting team members traveled from monasteries in the Midwest (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Indiana, Nebraska).



(front to back) Pat Witulski, Dina Lauricella, Ann Michaud

Monastic Formation Gathering

Scholastic Sister Pat Witulski and postulants Ann Michaud and Dina Lauricella along with Sister Stephanie Schmidt, formation director, traveled to St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, VA, to participate in the East Coast Benedictine Formation Conference. Twenty sisters gathered from Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania for the October gathering. Sisters Patricia Kirk, OSB and Kathy McNany, OSB, both from Emmanuel Monastery, Lutherville, MD, facilitated the weekend around the theme, “Forgiveness and Good Zeal: Tools for Monastic Living.”

“The Southern hospitality was outstanding and we all came away with some new sisterly connections,” said Sister Stephanie. Ann Michaud, who has since become a novice, added, “It was a wonderful, uplifting experience and a great opportunity to meet sisters in monastic formation from other communities.”

Full Circle

Mount St. Benedict Monastery was the second Benedictine foundation in the United States. Four years earlier, in 1852, St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys, Pennsylvania, became the first foundation when four sisters from Eichstätt, Bavaria, Germany, arrived to teach the children of German immigrants. Sisters from St. Marys later founded the Erie community. With the recent closing of the monastery at St. Marys, Sister Mary Bernard Lander and Sister Kathleen Warner, two sisters from that first foundation, are transferring their vows to Mount St. Benedict. Sometimes life comes full circle.

The decision to close St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys after 162 years was not an easy one. With the reality of a climbing median age and no new members entering the community, the closure was inevitable. The 17 remaining sisters moved to other monasteries including Sister Mary Bernard and Kathleen who visited Erie, discerned a move with Sister Anne Wambach, Erie prioress, and eventually chose to transfer their vows to the Erie community.

The decision of Sisters Mary Bernard and Kathleen to become members of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie was ritualized at a special Evening Prayer during which the sisters stated their desire to begin the process of transferring their vows.

“The beginning of this process is a bittersweet moment,” said Sister Anne Wambach. “Adjustment to something new can be challenging, especially when it means leaving the home you have known and loved for many, many years.”

Sisters Mary Bernard and Kathleen traveled from St. Marys to Erie just as their foremothers did in 1856. Though the reasons are different it is nonetheless an uprooting that has the potential to grow into something good and beautiful for them and for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. In the words of Sister Anne, “We hope that Sisters Mary Bernard and Kathleen know that it is a privilege and a blessing for us to welcome them into our community.”



Sisters Kathleen Warner (left), Anne Wambach, and Mary Bernard Lander

Sister Kathleen Warner has been a Benedictine Sister for 68 years, having made her first profession of vows in 1946. For most of her religious life she ministered in the field of education, both as an elementary and high school teacher and elementary school principal. In addition she has worked as a parish pastoral minister. She also did formation work for her monastic community at St. Marys and served briefly as subprioress. “I value group and personal prayer,” said Sister Kathleen, “and I feel an inner spring of happiness as a Benedictine sister.” She now devotes her energy and strength to the ministry of prayer and presence with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

Sister Mary Bernard Lander professed her first vows in August of 1947. In her 67 years as Benedictine of St. Marys, Sister Mary Bernard’s ministry has been at the monastery in a variety of areas. Kitchen work, housekeeping, farm work and recycling filled her days to overflowing and are a testament to the faithfulness that she brings with her to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. “I welcome the opportunity to become part of the Erie Benedictines,” said Sister Mary B, as she is affectionately known in the monastery. “I am happy to help in the ways I can.” Like Sister Kathleen, Sister Mary B has embraced the ministry of prayer and presence at the monastery.



**Oblate Co-Directors:
Sisters Audrey Steff (left)
and Ann Hoffman**

Oblate Commitment 2014

“Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of our God!” These words of the David Haas song, “We Are Called,” began the Oblate Commitment Ceremony that was celebrated at Mount St. Benedict Monastery on Saturday, October 25. Oblates, numbering 294 women and men, renewed their commitment with more than 100 present in the chapel.

During the ceremony seven new oblates and one transferring oblate made their initial commitment to the common goal of all the oblates: to seek God through a life based on the *Rule of Benedict*. Each new initiate received a copy of the Rule of Benedict from Sister Anne Wambach, prioress.

“We are blessed to have women and men who commit themselves to a relationship with God, with our community, with all humanity, and with all creation,” said Sister Anne in her reflections. “Together with us, our oblates stand with the poor, and work to embrace justice, act with integrity and love inclusively.”

Sister Ann Hoffman, oblate co-director, said, “The Oblates of Mount Saint Benedict are truly amazing people. Their witness to the way of life that Benedict sets forth is edifying.” Sister Audrey Steff, also oblate co-director, added, “Because of who they are and how they live Benedictine values the world is a better place.”

Some oblates who live in the Erie area work or volunteer in Benedictine ministries and visit the monastery frequently. Others live at a distance and travel to Erie for special gatherings, programs and celebrations. Whether near or far, oblates strive to bring Benedictine values of simplicity, respect, hospitality, and reverence of all life to their families, neighborhoods and work places.

Oblates and Erie’s Climate Control Rally



Oblates Neil Himber, Marge Himber, Janice Etchison, Barbara Roseborough, Sister Marlene Bertke, OSB; Missing from photo, BFP member Kathleen Kutz

Benedictine oblates brought a strong presence to the planning committee for Erie’s Climate Control Rally: *MY HOME—OUR PLANET—THE FUTURE? Commit to Make a Difference.*

The committee, under the auspices of Benedictines for Peace, held Erie’s rally on September 21, the same day various faith



Back row (L-R): Sister Anne Wambach, (Prioress), Jackie Burns (Delaware, OH—transfer), Beverly Hume (London, OH), Sisters Audrey Steff and Ann Hoffman (Co-Directors of the Oblate Program). Front row (L-R): Kylie Mack (Williamsville, NY), Nancy Tomassoni (Warren, PA), Barbara Bennett (Vineyard Haven, MA), Malinda Bostick (Erie, PA), Patricia Whitehill (Erie, PA). Missing from photo: Marie Kenote (Nanuet, NY)



and environmental groups came together in New York for the People's Climate March, a large-scale movement to advocate global action against climate change. The timing was intentional: just days before many of the world's leaders met on September 23 to debate environmental action at the United Nations Climate Summit.

At the Erie rally, more than 250 people gathered at the Yehl Ballroom in Gannon University's Waldron Center. Participants experienced a variety of activities, speakers and entertainment focused on bringing greater awareness to the reality that each person has a responsibility to help create a more sustainable world for future generations. Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, emcee for the program, remarked, "It only takes a small group to make a change. Today we had a large group and we are very grateful."

Mission of Friendship, Here We Come

Since 1976 there has been a Benedictine presence in Mexico's Yucatán peninsula: many Erie Benedictine sisters and oblates have visited and ministered at the *Misión de Armistad* or Mission of Friendship. The Mission was established in the city of Mérida by a cooperative relationship between the Erie Diocese and the Archdiocese of Yucatán in 1971. It provides Erie lay and religious volunteers with an opportunity to form Christian community, to grow in faith and love with the people of the Yucatán, and to share their gifts and talents with those in need.

The Erie Benedictine community welcomed its first oblates from Mérida in 1988. Through the years the initial group of five has grown to 15. A number of oblates from Mexico have been able to visit Erie at different times to participate in special community events.

Oblate Janice Etchison thought it might be a nice idea to repay the visit. "I can't give you any particular reason why the idea to plan a trip to Mérida entered my head, just that it did," she said. "Perhaps I thought that there might be oblates here who would like to plan a trip, an oblate-to-oblate 'mission of friendship' trip so to speak."

Cari Serafin and Marilyn Randolph, oblates who each served more than 30 years at the Mission of Friendship, were absolutely delighted to present the idea to the oblates in Mexico. When they returned from a six-week trip to Mérida

in early 2014, they brought news from the Mexican oblates: "Yes, we would be honored to welcome a group of oblates from the U.S." Sisters Ann Hoffman and Audrey Steff, co-directors of the Oblate Way of Life program, presented the idea to oblates in Erie. "As a result, the idea quickly turned into reality," said Janice, "The excitement was contagious."

Janice tapped into the expertise of Sister Claire Hudert, who herself served long-term at the Mission and has since organized many diocesan trips to the Mérida. With her help the Erie trip took shape: on January 8 Sister Claire will accompany 13 Erie oblates to Mérida for the 10-day trip. In preparation, each Erie oblate is paired with a Mérida oblate as a prayer partner. "We have already begun praying for each other," said Janice. "Visiting their homes and participating in an oblate renewal ceremony are sure to be high points of the trip. We also have plans to visit ministries sponsored by the Mission of Friendship and to tour historic Mayan villages and ruins. And of course we will party and share a group meal at a hacienda and shop for souvenirs. We are truly looking forward to this trip."



(Back Row, left to right) Cari Serafin, Janice Etchison, Janet Houk, Marge and Neil Hember (Front Row, left to right) Marilyn Randolph, Sister Claire Hudert, Sheila McLaughlin, Jackie Burns



Monasteries of the Heart

a new movement for a new world



The Webinar: Monasteries of the Heart's New Venture

*"How can I forgive a person who betrayed me?"
"Everyone is telling me to get over the hurt and move on, but I can't." "I know a Christian should be compassionate like God, but I can't forgive and it fills me with guilt." "Are reconciliation and forgiveness the same thing?"*

Almost 3,000 people from around the world signed in to view Erie Benedictine Joan Chittister explore these topics in the first-ever live-streamed webinar hosted by Monasteries of the Heart, a web-based movement sharing Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers.



The webinar, "Love, Forgiveness and Compassion: A Call to Full Humanity," was done in partnership with WQLN, Erie's PBS station.

"My hope was that this kind of discussion would be a good event, a real learning experience, a genuine spiritual moment, for all those who

joined us," explained Sister Joan.

From comments that came in from viewers, her hopes were realized:

- "This was my first webinar ever – brilliant organization and presentation!"
- "The step-by-step walk through the maze of damaged human relationships in such a humane way has given me great hope."
- "I'm so grateful that Joan placed special emphasis on the 'self' and real vs. cheap forgiveness and reconciliation."
- "Thank you for being a wonderful teacher and a healing presence in our world, Joan!"



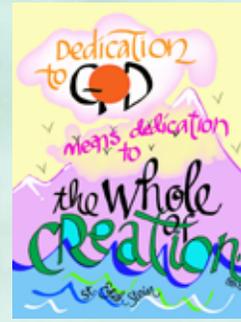
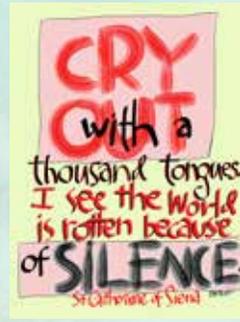
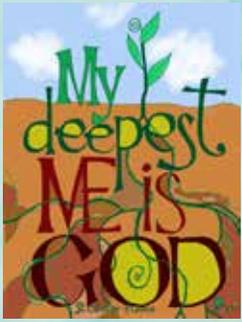
With the sisters, (front, left to right) Anne McCarthy, Mary Ellen Plumb, Joan Chittister, (middle) Mary Lou Kownacki and Linda Romey, WQLN technical assistants Curtis and Bill and multimedia manager DaWayne Cleckley

"The webinar far exceeded our expectations," explained MOH staff member Sister Mary Plumb. "Not only did Sister Joan draw 3,000 live viewers but hundreds more accessed the archived video in the two weeks following the webinar."

Special participants in the webinar included over 100 members of Monasteries of the Heart who are enrolled in a six-month pilot program, *Listen with the Heart: Becoming a Benedictine Leader*. The study program, funded by a combined \$20,000 grant from the Fetzer Institute and the University of Notre Dame Institute for Church Life, seeks to integrate Benedictine leadership principles into any professional setting or social structure. The program will culminate in 2015 with a weekend retreat for all participants.

Monasteries of the Heart is open to all seekers at monasteriesoftheheart.org





The Monastic Way:

A SMALL PUBLICATION THAT DELIVERS A GIANT IMPACT

By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

“Do you think that’s true?” I asked. “And, if it’s true, who would those people be?”

I was asking the question to the four sisters who live on our inner city block and gather to pray each morning. Sister Mary had just finished the daily reading from *The Monastic Way* by Joan Chittister and I was thinking aloud about it. This was the reading:

Tuesday, Sept. 23: “The power of the personality is one of the greatest powers on earth. Ask any government that has been overcome by a charismatic person without a sword.”

“Lech Walesa in Poland.” “Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma.” “Mahatma Gandhi in India” were the first three responses.

We talked a little bit more about the power of nonviolence in overthrowing oppressive government and then finished prayer.

A short sharing after we read from *The Monastic Way* is not a daily occurrence, but it is a regular one. And so is the habit of my thinking about the quote during the rest of the day. I found myself going back over all those great figures who challenged unjust authority without a sword — Susan B. Anthony in the United States, Mairead Corrigan in Ireland, Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia, Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States, Rigoberta Menchu in Guatemala, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Corazon Aquino in the Philippines...to name a few. It was a worthwhile spiritual practice that day.

Subscribers often write to Benetvision, publishers of the monthly, and tell us how they use *The Monastic Way*. Most use it for daily personal reflection. Spouses discuss it over morning coffee. Small groups meet for monthly discussions around it. And men and women in prison post them on the walls of their cells, meet with

chaplains to share ideas, and journal each day with *The Monastic Way*. For such a small publication, it delivers a giant impact on the spiritual lives of thousands. And it’s done so for 23 years.

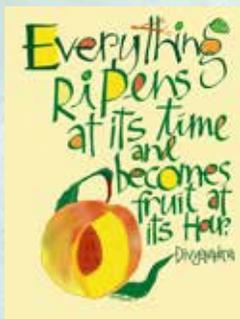
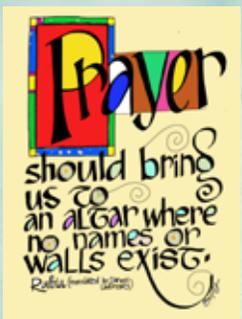
Benetvision is especially enthused about the 2015 *Monastic Way* that brings together best-selling author Sister Joan Chittister and award-winning artist Brother Mickey McGrath. Brother Mickey, who also did the art for the 2015 *Joan Chittister Calendar*, presents an artistic rendering of a quote by a great spiritual figure and Sister Joan explores how those words can bring us to spiritual maturity. Featured in the 2015 publication are quotations from such luminaries as Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Teresa of Avila, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, Saint Augustine, and Saint Edith Stein.

In addition to a printed version, *The Monastic Way* is now available in digital form for easier and less expensive access.

“I write *The Monastic Way* for people who lead busy lives, but long for greater spiritual depth,” explains Joan Chittister. 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.

Whether or not you’re familiar with *The Monastic Way*, you might want to look at what’s coming in 2015 — it’s more than just a new look: benetvision.org/monasticway.html

Erie Benedictine Sister Mary Lou Kownacki is director of Benetvision, a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality, and of Monasteries of the Heart, a web-based movement sharing Benedictine spirituality with contemporary seekers.



Joan Chittister: The essence of her work captured in one volume

Joan Chittister: Essential Writings, is a recent addition to the prestigious Modern Spiritual Masters Series from Orbis Books, a series that has gathered together the writings of some 53 major spiritual figures from many religious traditions, including Thomas Merton, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Simone Weil, the Dalai Lama, St. Therese of Lisieux, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Flannery O'Connor. When asked by *America* magazine interviewer, Sean Salai, S.J., how she felt when the publication was released, Sister Joan responded: "It was a very sobering moment. It was also an overwhelming one. The ancients said, '*Sola scriptura manet*'—Only the written word remains. To see this collection bound made me very conscious of what it means to be a writer. It is a deeply spiritual responsibility. I would like some day to be worthy of that."¹

The book was a collaborative effort of Erie Benedictine, Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, and Mercyhurst University professor, Dr. Mary Hembrow Snyder. "When Mary and I were asked to select the essential from Sister Joan's voluminous body of work, the theme we traced through all her writings was passion," Sister Mary Lou explained. "So we made our choices around the three passions that drive Joan's life: passion for God, passion for life and passion for justice." Sister Joan remarked, "I think that the editors got it just right. When I see it in print, I know that these two editors, Sister Mary Lou Kownacki and Dr. Mary Hembrow Snyder, read the heart of the material as well as the content. For me, it's all been about the search for God and the renewal of religious life, justice for all and the joy of living. Their very precise choice of materials makes those themes startlingly clear."²

The book is available for purchase from Benetvision (<http://www.benetvision.org/>).

¹Chittister, Joan. Interview with Sean Sali, S. J. IN ALL THINGS, (A group blog by the editors, columnists and frequent contributors to *America*), September 10, 2014.

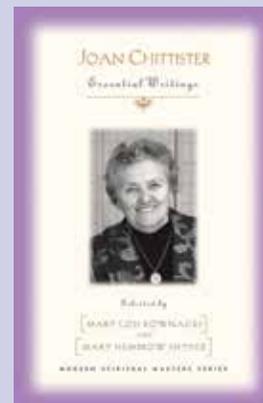
²Ibid.



(left to right) Sisters Mary Lou Kownacki, Joan Chittister and Dr. Mary Hembrow Snyder

Review of *Joan Chittister: Essential Writings*

by Ann Michaud, Novice,
Benedictine Sisters of Erie



Joan Chittister: Essential Writings is packed with disclosive admissions, profoundly brilliant spiritual insights, amusing and thought-provoking witticisms, and enough wisdom to satisfy the appetite of any reader. This is true from the opening lines to the closing words of the book. It is a text that demands action and offers inspiration: "When all the stages of life have passed us by, these things alone remain: the spiritual treasure that stretches our souls to see what our eyes cannot, the remembrance of how beautiful life really is...and the love of those around us who make the journey gentle as we go."

The work is divided into three segments: Passion for God, Passion for Life, and Passion for Justice, along with a brilliant introduction by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, and A Final Word. Excerpts from Sister Joan's writings, selected by Sister Mary Lou and Dr. Mary Hembrow Snyder of Mercyhurst University, are taken from her more than 50 books, 700 articles and columns, and chapters in 100 additional works.

Personal involvement in the very heart of life gives Sister Joan a unique perspective. In Syria as part of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, speaking with a group of Iraqi refugees, she apologized for the war on behalf of those Americans who were working to end the fighting. "Suddenly, a woman pushed forward... 'I accept your apology,' she said quietly. 'I accept your love.'" Together they wept. Sister Joan recounts, "I had never seen the faces of my victims before and they had not seen the face of the enemy who was not an enemy. It was a profound moment for all of us."

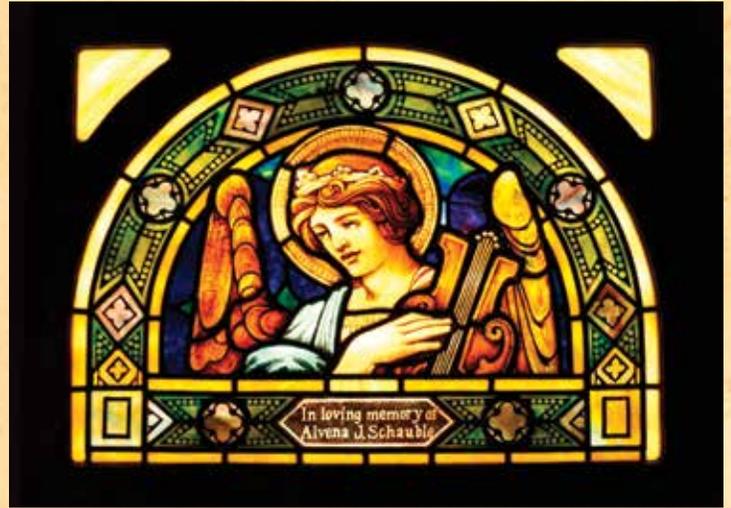
The passion that burns within Joan Chittister is one that kindles fire in the reader. "God... is fierce but formless presence, undying light in darkness, eternal limitlessness, common consciousness in all creation, an inclusiveness greater than doctrines or denominations, who calls me beyond and out of my limits." But Sister Joan does not stop with astonishing descriptives. She challenges her readers to dig deep and stir up the fire within. "Going into ourselves we see the whole world at war within us and begin to end the conflict. To understand ourselves, then, is to understand everyone else as well."

Joan Chittister is not afraid to articulate oft ignored truths. She dares to ask uncomfortable questions because "the function of the prophet is to expose whatever cancers fester beneath the surface so that what is loved can be saved while there is yet time."

Speaking out on behalf of women in the church is one of Sister Joan's passions: a passion for justice. Why? "For the sake of the church, what women wanted had to be said in public because there was nowhere else for a woman to say it...no women ever get behind the closed doors [of the Vatican]."

Joan Chittister: Essential Writings is a compendium of a lifetime of lived truth, of learned courage, of sometimes painfully assimilated realities, and most of all of deep and intense "listening with the ear of the heart" to a God who is light and life and compassion and justice for all. You cannot read this book and not be changed.

A PERFECT GIFT



When Alvena Pastore and Earl Schauble became high school sweethearts in 1936 they knew they were meant for each other. What they didn't know was that they would share 73 happy years of married life. On February 25, six months shy of their 74th wedding anniversary, Alvena passed away after an extended illness. Their marriage was a testament to the love that they shared. "I miss Alvena every day," says Earl. "We shared something very special." Anyone who knew them would agree.

Alvena and Earl enjoyed many holiday dinners at Mount St. Benedict with their daughter, Sister Marilyn Schauble, and all the sisters knew Mom and Dad Schauble. "To see them come in walking hand-in-hand always made me smile," said Sister

Mary Louis Eichenlaub. "Their faithfulness and love were contagious."

It was not surprising that Earl wanted to do something at the monastery to honor Alvena. After her death he remembered the story from last year's Christmas issue of *The Mount* magazine about the lost angel window that had been found but was in need of restoration. It was the *Angel with Harp*, the music angel. "The more I thought about it the more I knew that to have that window restored in Alvena's honor would be perfect," he said. "Alvena loved music and our daughter Marilyn has the voice of an angel."

"It was a match made in heaven," said Jo Clarke, Director of Annual Giving. "When I received the inquiry from Mr. Schauble, I put together a packet of information and pictures. When Earl saw it he simply nodded his head and said 'Yes.' It was very touching."

Thanks to Earl's desire to honor his wife's memory and his generosity, the window has been restored. It now hangs in the monastery dining room where both Alvena and Earl shared many happy memories with the community. "It's just beautiful," said Sister Marilyn. "My mother wasn't one for having a fuss made over her but she appreciated all things of beauty and I know this would have pleased her. In fact, I believe she is well pleased and enjoying the angel's beauty as much as we are."

Earl and Sister Marilyn view window and thank Jo Clarke, Director of Annual Giving, who was instrumental in providing the necessary information for the window restoration.

The window was restored by Michael Hirt of Tirpak Building and Stained Glass experts (not pictured). Gary Good, Sister Charles Marie and Dan Welsh, monastery maintenance staff, collaborated on the back lighting and placement of the window.



Golden Jubilee:

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD!

Golden Jubilarians, Sisters Mary Miller, Helen Heber, Christine Kosin, Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski and Marian Wehler, renewed their monastic vows during a special Vigil Prayer celebrated on September 13. It was a memorable day in many ways.



From start to finish, the Jubilee was breath-taking around every corner: planning, designing, contacting, hosting. On another level, the Jubilee was soul-searching: re-committing & re-connecting; ruminations & moral imperatives.

In the new now, I am overcome with joy.

Sister Helen Heber



When we ended the liturgy with dancing, Jubilee 2014 was a clear connection for me of my earlier profession!

To quote the recessional song of my final profession – *dance, dance wherever you may be* – I am grateful for 50 years of being called to dance.

Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski

I loved our jubilee celebration. The rich colors of the environment, the heartfelt blessings and greetings from the sisters, my family and friends – all filled me with deep joy. The moment of renewing vows with four committed monastics was Golden!

An alleluia experience!

Sister Christine Kosin



Jubilee has been an incredible blessing! And it continues to unfold with joyful celebrations, surprises and loving connections. I am so grateful to all who have touched my life.

Sister Marian Wehler

A wise person once wrote:

Sometimes you will never know the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory. For me this is true, and so I am very grateful to all who made this “moment” such a touching, beautiful, uplifting and even funny memory for me.

Sister Mary Miller



(See the Spring/Summer 2014 issue of The Mount at eriebenedictines.org/mount for each jubilarians's story.)

You help us give hope to those in need

By Patti Eichen, Development Staff

The lyrics to the late John Lennon's song, "Imagine," have always struck a chord with me.

It is a song with a powerful message that I never tire of hearing, a song of hope for humankind. John Lennon believed that the world would be much better if we all would imagine a place where things that divide people — excessive wealth, greed, religious divisions, war — did not exist. He asks us to believe that we can actually make that dream come true. So where do we begin to imagine this great expectation of people living in a more peaceful world?

It starts every day with each and every one of us.

During this holiday season, we are reminded that through God's presence and healing love, this image of living in peace and harmony can indeed be real. When we work together toward one common goal, much can be accomplished. It does not have to be complicated — each day we have the opportunity to touch someone's life in a unique way, whether small or great.

I witness the good in people day after day as I work in a Benedictine ministry where inner-city children tell me that they feel safe, appreciated and encouraged while attending classes at the Neighborhood Art House. It's even clearer when they return as young adults to volunteer, to help make an impact on the lives of their younger peers.

A low-income elder living at the Benedictine community's Benetwood Apartments says, "Living here has helped me to overcome fear and isolation. I have friends and activities here to exercise my mind, body and spirit."

A mother of two young children tells me that she feels comforted knowing that, when she goes to work, her children are in a safe, caring, learning environment at St. Benedict Child Development Center.

I invite you to walk the halls of Saint Benedict Education Center and encounter immigrants from refugee camps, from war-torn, impoverished countries, who are learning the skills that will make a better life for themselves and their families. This is reality as it is lived by the people the center serves.

Without you, the Benedictine Sisters would be unable to continue to give hope to those in need.

Let us take time this holiday season to reflect on the advantages we enjoy, the good in ourselves and in the world, and to share our plenty with all of humankind, every single person. Then, someday, we truly will live as one.



Patti Eichen

Imagine...



THANK YOU ALL – FROM ALL OF US FOR MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE!

By Jo Clarke, Oblate, Director of Annual Giving

Let us pause before the Child of Bethlehem....let us ask him to help us to be peacemakers each day, in our life, in our families, in our cities and nations, in the whole world. Let us allow ourselves to be moved by God's goodness. — Pope Francis

The belief that we can change the world is the theme our prioress, Sister Anne Wambach, chose for the Christmas Appeal that you received a short while ago. My words are a follow-up to her letter — I hope they will perhaps persuade you, if you haven't already done so, to send the sisters a donation this Christmas — because your gift can make a difference in simple yet profound ways.

The words of Pope Francis *to be peacemakers every day* are very challenging! However, I believe that together you, the

sisters, and I can meet that challenge one person at a time. If I look at the world as a whole I might say I can't do anything. But it's also true that I may never know how I touch another's life through what I say, how I act, and as a result of the decisions I make.

Both the Muslim and Jewish traditions share a similar philosophy of peacemaking with Pope Francis: that if you save the life of one person you save the life of the whole human race.





What a beautiful thought for those who wish to be peacemakers—and that is just what you do every day when you support the Benedictine Sisters with a financial gift. Whenever you touch a life that needs help, you touch the lives of countless others. It's a domino effect with far reaching consequences.

Christmas is a time when I let my imagination run free and believe in the impossible, in angels, in peace to all humankind. It's a time when I want to bring joy to others. It really does bring out the best in all of us. Luciano de Crescenzo says, "We are each of us angels with only one wing and we can only fly by embracing each other."

Angels are a huge part of the Christmas message. They were the first to announce the birth of Jesus, and proclaim the message of joy and peace to all the earth. You are all angels because you continue to embrace others and bring the message of joy to countless people.

Your financial gift makes incredible things happen not just at Christmas but every day of the year. Each one of you embraces all of humanity right here in Erie, PA. Your gift ensures that:

- ✝ hungry families are fed everyday;
- ✝ inner-city children are kept out of trouble after school;
- ✝ migrant workers have a safe place to leave their infants while they work in the vineyards;
- ✝ refugees from all corners of the world are given hope and the skills to succeed in a strange land;
- ✝ Sister Santa can help children experience the magic of Christmas with a gift;

- ✝ hospitality is offered to the stranger;
- ✝ and the sisters are able to pay their bills and continue to put a roof over their heads.

You have continued to bring hope to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, oblates, staff, and those to whom we minister. It's your belief that we can indeed make a difference that enables the sisters to continue their ministries and their lives of hope and prayer as monastics.

Please be as generous as you can this Christmas. Your gift, whether it's \$5 or \$5,000, will help change the lives of many people, from those in their cradles to our elders. Because of you the world will be a better place not only here and now but also for future generations.

As Pope Francis says:

Let us pause before the Child of Bethlehem....let us ask him to help us to be peacemakers each day, in our life, in our families, in our cities and nations, in the whole world. Let us allow ourselves to be moved by God's goodness.

Thank you for joining with the sisters, whose photos surround these pages, and their oblates, friends, and families in believing that we can make the world a better place through trying to be peacemakers each day. And THANK YOU – your financial gift does make a difference.





HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE NOW

PUT US ON YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST

Go online to our secure website, ErieBenedictines.org and click on **Donate Now**. You can also write a check, complete the information on the enclosed remittance envelope, and return it to us via postal mail.

AVOID THE CROWDS

I'm sure you know many people who share your beliefs, hopes, and dreams. What better way to celebrate them than a gift that will help change the world and touch countless lives. An alternative gift, a donation to the sisters, to celebrate/honor someone who is dear to you, whether alive or deceased, will bring positive change to the lives of the sisters and those to whom they minister. One example of the transformative power of such a gift is through Benedictine ministries that give inner-city children access to the arts and teaches refugees English. As you know, access to education is crucial in fighting poverty.

FORWARD OUR APPEAL TO A FRIEND ELECTRONICALLY

Go online and send our appeal to friends of yours who also want to make a difference. Encourage them to take a look at our website and see all the wonderful stories and how their gift could help right now.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF GENERATIONS TO COME and join *The Benedictine Legacy Society*

If you are interested in remembering the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in your will please call Sister Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Development Director, at 814-899-0614, ext. 2409 or email her at smaryjane@mtstbenedict.org. She will be more than happy to sit down and talk with you about your vision for the future.

CALL US

We always love to talk with you, our supporters, and get feedback on what you think we are doing right. If you ever have any questions please feel free to call us. Also, if you would like a tour of our Monastery or a particular ministry, call the Development Office, [814-899-0614](tel:814-899-0614), ext. 2281 for me, Jo Clarke, Director of Annual Giving, email joclarke@mtstbenedict.org, or ext. 2242 for Patti Eichen, Development Staff, email peichen@mtstbenedict.org.

THANK YOU ALL!





FOR THE LOVE OF FUNDRAISING



By Jo Clarke, Oblate, Director of Annual Giving

As an Oblate with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, I try my best to live the *Rule of Benedict* in a secular world. Every year, I make a commitment to be in relationship with this community that is grounded in hope, "...hope for the transformation of each other and ultimately the transformation of the world." For me, fundraising to help bring about this transformation is a natural extension of my commitment.

The social inequality that surrounds us every day is something that I believe we all want to change and it is you, our supporters, who can bring about that change.

You constantly accept that challenge through your financial support and actively participate in the vision of the sisters — a commitment to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children.

The *Rule of Benedict* says, "goods should be distributed according to need," — quite a radical philosophy in a world that often measures success by the amount of money we possess. In Erie, we are surrounded by poverty and inequalities that are quite extreme. When I ask you, a friend or donor, to share your financial resources with those who need help, I am inviting you to be a part of a world in which Benedict says, "all should be greeted as Christ." This ideal and philosophy is the cornerstone of this Benedictine community. When you say "yes" to such a request your dollars guarantee that all who are touched by you and the sisters, with love, hope, peace, and compassion, are indeed treated like Christ.

I have a sign on my office door that says, "No Begging." Many people find it amusing because that is how they see fundraising. Nothing could be further from the truth...asking people for financial help is NOT begging and definitely nothing to be ashamed of. When I ask a donor for a gift, I'm asking them to become a partner, to be in a mutual relationship where they are a crucial part of something bigger than all of us.

It never ceases to amaze me the many very close friends I have made over my nearly 30 years of raising money... some who can give millions and some who can give one dollar. However, I believe we all have one thing in common: the desire to be in relationship and be a part of a community that is grounded in hope, "...hope for the transformation of each other and ultimately the transformation of the world." I get so excited when people - YOU - send us gifts. I'm humbled and moved when I read the notes that accompany these gifts. It means that you are part of my worldview. You share many of my beliefs. The day I stop getting excited is the day I should hang up my hat in this ministry. One thing is true...if we don't ask, we don't receive - and this applies to both sides of the relationship!



St. Benedict Child Development Center:

"The administration, teaching staff and families of Saint Benedict Center are all to be congratulated for continuing to uphold the mark of quality represented by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation system. On behalf of NAEYC, and specifically the NAEYC Academy of Early Childhood Accreditation, I commend your program's outstanding efforts..." read the accreditation renewal letter to Saint Benedict Child Development Center.

Sister Diane Rabe, the Center's director, Jill Varner, the assistant director who co-led the NAEYC evaluation process, and the staff worked hard to achieve this well-deserved commendation. "Accreditation lets the world know how hardworking and committed our staff, families and children are," said Jill. "We are very proud of quality learning at our Center."



Sister Diane Rabe

"The heart of NAEYC accreditation focuses on the child's experience," said Sister Diane. "All aspects of the programs, including health and safety, staffing, staff qualifications, and physical environment, are taken into consideration. Our main efforts go into making sure the child always comes first. This is what helps assure an optimum environment in which the child can grow intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally."

The Center was the brainchild of Erie Benedictine Sister Alice Schierberl (d. 1994), who set out to provide an early childhood educational opportunity for children of inner-city Erie. It has operated since 1969 and Sister Diane has been the guiding force behind its success since 1991. Selfless hours of work have gone into creating a place where children are assured excellent care from devoted, degreed teachers and experienced staff.

"By applying the specific components of its various offerings into a single program for all of the children the Center has developed an amazing, blended program," said Sister Diane. The high quality standards of both the East Coast Migrant Head Start Project which serves the families of migrant workers and the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program which emphasizes school readiness for three- and four-year-olds together form the foundation for the Center's academic program. Joining these enrollees are children sponsored by Migrant Education (Intermediate Unit #5), Erie's Future Fund (Erie Together), Early Intervention Services (School District of the City of Erie) and children of families with subsidized child care.



Shirley Jovanovich, who has witnessed the Center's evolution for more than two decades, shared, "Our blended program does more than give children an education. It gives them a sense of family or belonging. It gives them a sense of value and security."





"Our blended program does more than give children an education. It gives them a sense of family or belonging. It gives them a sense of value and security." - Shirley Jovanovich



A Chance for Children to Succeed



NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous, voluntary process by which early childhood programs demonstrate that they have met national standards of excellence. St. Benedict Center scored 100% in seven of 10 areas of met criteria with the remaining percentages in the high 90s. These scores attest to the ongoing effort of the Center to maintain the standard of excellence for which it is well known throughout the city. "Meeting these standards also requires many hours of work and years of dedication from a staff. Over two-thirds of our 39 staff members have worked at the Center five years or longer," said Sister Diane. "Fourteen staff members have devoted over 10 years to the education of little ones at Saint Benedict Center. An experienced faculty provides parents with the current 'best practices' in educating their children."

Saint Benedict Child Development Center is located in the heart of downtown Erie. It currently serves 110 culturally diverse children ranging in age from two months to five years. To better address the developmental needs of children whose primary language is Spanish or Nepali, the curriculum plan, with specific goals and objectives, is delivered in a bilingual setting with either English/Spanish or English/Nepali teachers in each room. Pre-school literacy and kindergarten readiness actually begin in the infant/toddler room and develop organically throughout the child's time at the Center.

A huge outdoor playground and spacious classrooms support optimum conditions for learning. Free breakfasts, hot lunches and afternoon snacks served family style engage the children in friendly eating experiences while providing good nutrition in support of active minds. "We do what we do every day to give children a chance... a chance to experience new ideas and activities, to develop new skills, to learn new concepts, to belong to a new group of friends and have fun," said Jill. "What we do gives them a chance to move into school ready to succeed!"

Parents are always welcome to visit the Center. "It's a great center! Everyone is friendly and they acknowledge my child," said Lorena Urbieto, parent and assistant teacher. "I like to work here. I enjoy the positive environment."



If you are interested in learning more about St. Benedict Child Development Center and the programs it offers, or the volunteer opportunities it provides, or to offer a gift or kindness that will insure that the Center is able to continue its work, contact Sister Diane Rabe at 814-454-4514 or admin@stbenedictctr.com.



FORMER Prioress, Sister Christine Vlad

Sister Christine Vladimiroff was a strong woman, a woman of courage with a straightforward manner and the ability and determination to see any problem through to its resolution. When she died last September after a 14-month battle with cancer more than one person wondered, Why? Why was the life of a woman with such potential and so many accomplishments cut short?



A woman who spoke her truth with authority, Sister Christine touched the lives of many in her ministry commitments through the years. But, first and foremost, she was a

Benedictine sister, a woman who lived the vowed monastic life for more than 50 years and that is how she wanted to be remembered. In her remarks at Sister Christine's funeral, Sister Diane Cook said, "Sister Christine wanted to be remembered as a good community member, nothing else. She was unwavering in her commitment to and love for her community, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie."



No matter the ministry in which she was involved, Sister Christine was devoted to giving her all and doing her best. Whether as teacher or principal, administrator or CEO, prioress or simply, sister, Christine "took up the challenge and gave her heart and soul to it," said Sister Diane. From Erie to Cleveland to Chicago and back to Erie, Sister Christine's steadfast acceptance of challenge never wavered. As Sister Diane said, "Her steadfastness and 'true grit' were gifts to be shared and were recognized by many and in particular, her own community who elected her prioress, the women religious



who called her to the presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) as well as her Benedictine sisters across the country who elected her president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses."



Sister Christine was indeed a leader; she was a woman whose vision transformed purpose into action. She leaves a legacy of care and concern for the poor, including the immigrant population of Erie; dedication to education, especially for women; inspiration and insight for many through retreats and presentations and writing. But more importantly, she leaves a legacy of having been a Benedictine Sister of Erie who committed herself to be a "healing presence and prophetic witness for peace" (Corporate Commitment) and a woman whose primary desire was to seek God in the communal life and respond in prayer and ministry. As Sister Christine herself said, "What's important is that we're faithful to who we are, that we live the Gospel, that we reach out to others in terms of compassion, care and justice.

That's what is important to us [Benedictines]."



VLADIMIROFF, REMEMBERED



Former Prioresses (back row, left to right) Sisters Joan Chittister, Phyllis Schleicher, Christine Vladimiroff; (front row) Former Prioress Sister Mary Margaret Kraus (left) and Sister Anne Wambach, present Prioress

“Christine modeled faithfulness for us,” said Sister Diane, “and although the model is gone I am reminded of what Christina Baker Kline says in her book, *The Orphan Train*:

The people who matter in our lives stay with us, haunting our most ordinary moments. They’re with us in the grocery store, as we turn a corner, chat with a friend. They rise up through the pavement; we absorb them through our soles.

While it is true that Sister Christine’s mission on earth is completed, it is equally true that we who are still here can live the legacy she left us as we embrace the teaching of the *Rule of Benedict* to: “Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life.” (*Rule of Benedict* 72: 11-12)



GOOD ZEAL By Katherine Horan, OSB



Many times over the course of Christine’s last year of life she said to me, “I have lived a good life, no regrets.” She was speaking in reference to Chapter 72 in the *Rule of Benedict*: The Good Zeal of Monastics. According to Benedict, it is good zeal — respect, support, patience, care, love, humility, fidelity — that leads to God and eternal life.

Christine spoke many times of this chapter from the Rule of Benedict. As she drew close to death she reminded me that the real test of life is in the final days: to be able to faithfully live all the values of the Benedictine life right up to the end.

She lived her final days well with the good zeal that was so important to her and that is so essential to all Benedictines. Her final hope was a simple prayer for her sisters: “Give them good zeal which leads to everlasting life with you, O God. Let them prefer nothing to the love of Christ who leads them in the path of eternal life and glory.”

In Memoriam



Gracious God,
our sister, Veronica,
ever faithful and always true,
now knows eternal life.

She has found her completion in you,
the God whom she loved and sought
with fervent constancy
and persistent dedication.

Veronica took pleasure
in the blessings of creation
and delighted in all things beautiful.
She recognized that everything on earth
is filled with sacred presence
and she found peace in the glory of nature.

God of all blessing,
may the memory of Veronica
and the simplicity she embodied
inspire us to savor the sweetness of life
with a transparent heart and a free spirit,
now and evermore.

Amen!

... as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. —Rule of Benedict: Prologue 49

Sister Veronica Byer

Sister Veronica Byer, OSB, died on Sunday, June 15, 2014, at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA. Born to Mary (Ksiazkiewicz) and Victor Byer on April 7, 1919, in Mahanoy City, PA, she was 95 at the time of her death and in the 67th year of her religious life.

In 1947 Sister Veronica entered St. Mary's Priory, Victoria, British Columbia where she professed first vows in 1949 and perpetual vows in 1953. She transferred to St. Benedict Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota in 1963. In 1969, Sister Veronica moved to Erie to be closer to her aging mother and decided to begin the transfer process to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1971. During this time she celebrated her Silver Jubilee (1974). The transfer was completed in 1975. Her Golden Jubilee was celebrated in 1999 and in 2009 Sister Veronica marked the 60th anniversary of her profession.

After spending 10 years as a nurse aide at St. Mary's Home, Erie, Sister Veronica was engaged in internal ministry at the monastery. She undertook household duties and support services and was also a Benet Press staff member. Most recently, Sister Veronica embraced the ministry of prayer and presence at the monastery. She was faithful to prayer and was never without her rosary as she walked the halls or the grounds.

Sister Veronica took great pleasure in God's creation and all things beautiful. She was an artist and was well known for the cloth dolls she sewed and dressed with carefully chosen outfits purchased from the Salvation Army or Good Will. Each doll was unique with a charming, hand painted face. In addition Sister Veronica was a master of illustration and rarely signed her name to a card or letter without the inclusion of a meaningful drawing.

In addition to her parents, Sister Veronica was preceded in death by five brothers and four sisters. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her brother, Victor, her sister, Kate (Stanley) Minarski, her sister-in-law, Shirley, and nieces and nephews.

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

— *Rule of Benedict*: Prologue 19-20

Sister Rita Pruchniewski

Sister Rita Pruchniewski, OSB, 87, died on August 16, 2014, surrounded by community members and family. Sister Rita, formerly known as Sister Charles, was one of two daughters of the late Charles and Helen Pruchniewski. She attended both Holy Trinity and St. Hedwig parishes in Erie. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on June 30, 1943 and pronounced her perpetual vows on August 28, 1947. On August 5, 2014 she renewed her vows in celebration of 70 years of monastic profession.

Sister Rita held a Bachelor of Sacred Music from Manhattanville College and a Masters in Music, with a concentration in voice, from Duquesne University. She was an accomplished vocalist and violinist. Her ministry in music spanned 40 years and extended to many schools: Sacred Heart and St. Joseph, Sharon; St. Joseph and St. Stephen, Oil City; St. Gregory, North East; Immaculate Conception, Clarion; and St. Benedict Academy in Erie. She also shared her musical expertise as a member of the Erie Philharmonic Chorus and Erie Chamber Orchestra.

Accounting was another forte of hers and she put her skills to use in the Business Office at Mount St. Benedict Monastery from 1973-1981 and as the bookkeeper at Benetwood Apartments from 1981-1991. In 1991 she became a reading instructor at St. Benedict Education Center, a ministry she continued until 1995. During these years Sister Rita also held a number of community positions including local superior at various mission houses and member of the community liturgy committee. From 1983-1995 she served as Director of Oblates.

Most recently, as an infirmary resident, Sister Rita was engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. She took pleasure in visits from sisters, family members and friends, graciously extending hospitality and welcome to all with whom she came in contact.

Sister Rita was pre-deceased by her sister, Betty Jo Marz, in 2012, and brother-in-law, Bob Marz in 2014. She is survived by her Benedictine community, her nephew, Bob Marz and his wife Gerry; two nieces and their husbands: Rosemary and Bernard Niebauer and Helen and Robert Titus; and several great and great-great nieces and nephews.



God of all kindness,
our sister, Rita, has returned to you.
With effortless surrender and gracious acceptance
she passed from this life to the next,
where wholeness is found and peace is known.

Rita kept a smile on her face and a song in her heart.
She took delight in her community, her family and her friends.
She was enlivened and energized by the bonds of love.

Rita enjoyed the sweetness of life
and reveled in simple pleasures.
She was generous with kindness
and quick with compassion.
Gratitude was her stronghold,
a childlike wonder her charm,
a pleasant presence her appeal.

Gentle and gracious God,
we hold dear the memory of this sister
who has found her contentment in you.
May we who mourn her passing
find joy in her good fortune
and join with her in giving you glory
now and evermore.

Amen!

Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life. — Rule of Benedict 72: 11-12



God of the harvest, loving God,
our sister, Christine, who has served your people
and who has served you in your people,
has now come to you.

Bright, strong and accomplished,
she used her uncommon gifts uncommonly well.
She taught us to do the right thing
in the right way at the right time
with grace, with courage.
She taught for the good of those she served:
students, refugees, the poor, the hungry
and, always and above all, her community.
She taught that life is to be lived to the hilt
for the sake of the reign of God
and always with joy.

She knew how to laugh
and she laughed in good times
and she laughed in hard times,
all the while making them good times.
We are grateful for her and to her
as she teaches us this last lesson.

Peace, Christine, and joy.

Sister Christine Vladimiroff

Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, 74, died at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA, on Thursday, September 25, 2014, after a long illness.

A native of Erie, she was the eldest child of the late John and Agnes Olszewski Vladimiroff. She received her early education at St. Ann's parish school and St. Benedict Academy in Erie, PA. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 1957 and pronounced her perpetual monastic vows in 1962. In 2009 she celebrated her golden jubilee.

Sister Christine was a born teacher whose studies began at Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA, culminated in the Doctor of Philosophy degree awarded by the Universidad Internacional, Mexico City, Mexico and included post-graduate study at several universities, among them Fordham, Georgetown, Edinboro, St. Bonaventure and Gannon.

She taught at the elementary, secondary, and college levels, and was, as well, an administrator at those levels. This experience led to her appointment, first, as multicultural coordinator (1981) and later as secretary of education for the Diocese of Cleveland (1983), a position she held until 1991.

Concern for the hungry, springing from her care for her students, gave rise to Sister Christine's appointment as president and CEO of the Second Harvest National Food Bank Network, Chicago, IL, in 1991. She remained in that position until her religious community, recognizing her gifts, elected her prioress in 1998.

After completing her term of office in 2010, Sister Christine became the executive director of St. Benedict Education Center where a variety of programs provide the job and language skills that participants, often refugees, need to build for themselves prosperous and peaceful lives.

Beyond her community, Sister Christine served as president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses (2009-2013), The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (president: 2004-2005; leadership team: 2003-2006) and was a delegate to the International Organization of Benedictine women, *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum*.

In addition to numerous professional memberships and affiliations throughout her many years of ministry and service, Sister Christine received various types of recognition: Hunger Hero (Bread for the World, 2004); Distinguished Pennsylvanian (Gannon University, 2001); Archbishop Oscar Romero Award (Mercyhurst University, 1999); Leadership Award, Second Harvest National Network (1998); Distinguished Alumna, Sister Carolyn Hermann Award for Outstanding Community Service (Mercyhurst University, 1997); Catholic Woman of Achievement Award (College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, NJ, 1997); Adrian Dominican Educational Leadership Award (Barry University, Miami, FL, 1990). Most recently, Sister Christine was honored as a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania (Governor's Award, 2013).

Bright, strong and accomplished, Sister Christine used her uncommon gifts uncommonly well. She taught by example to do the right thing in the right way at the right time with grace, with courage. She taught for the good of those she served: students, refugees, the poor, the hungry and, always and above all, her community. She taught that life is to be lived fully for the sake of the reign of God and always with joy.

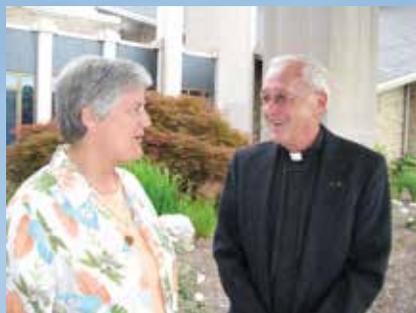
Sister Christine is survived by her Benedictine community, and by her sisters: Elaine Retzlaff (Klaus) and her family, of Binghamton, NY and Joan Psillas (Thomas) and her family of Milford, Michigan.

HAPPENINGS

Enrichment Series:

July: The Early Church 30 AD – 130 AD: From a Jewish Messianic Sect to the Body of Christ

Father Casimir Wozniak presented the July Enrichment Series at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. He outlined how the early Church moved from being a Jewish messianic sect to being the Body of Christ by a thorough explanation of how the first Christians ultimately separated from their Jewish community as a result of their faith in the Risen Jesus as the promised Messiah. "The Church is more than an institution," explained Father Cas. "The Church is the Body of Christ . . . this is the Church to which Christians have committed their lives."



Sister Stephanie Schmidt with Father Wozniak

Father Wozniak is a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie. Currently he is an Assistant Professor of Theology and an Instructor in the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies Program at Gannon University. In addition, Father Wozniak is a weekend sacramental assistant at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, Erie.

September: Castle of the Soul: A Contemplative Prayer Experience



"Into the quiet God calls you . . ." was the invitation issued by the concert choir and dance group from St. Noel Church in Willoughby Hills, OH, as they opened their presentation of *Castle of the Soul*, a contemplative prayer experience. Under

the direction of Agnieszka Duda-Bieniek (Aga) they invited the participation of the audience in the singing of various musical refrains intertwined with readings from Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Augustine, Teresa of Calcutta, Thomas Merton and Cardinal Suenens. "It was so moving," remarked Sister Mary Louis Eichenlaub. "I feel blessed and enriched. One message I take with me is that 'We can do no great things, only small things with great love' (words of Teresa of Calcutta)."

The Enrichment Series began in 2012 with the goal of inviting the local Erie community to the monastery to share some of the community's educational and inspirational opportunities on a broader scale. The events are announced on the community website, eriebenedictines.org, and anyone is invited to attend.

Sisters Attend Peoples Climate March

Erie Benedictines Sisters Lucia and Marie Claire Surmik attended the Peoples Climate March in New York City on September 21. Hundreds of thousands of concerned citizens marched through New York with 2,646 solidarity marches taking place in 162 countries around the world, making it the largest climate demonstration in history.



Sisters Lucia Marie and Claire Marie Surmik

"We support people from all over the world who are concerned about climate change and the ill effects of fossil fuels on our planet," they said about their participation. "We attended because we are concerned about all of nature and the welfare of the earth." Sister Claire Marie and Sister Lucia have actively learned about and addressed climate change issues for some time. For them, climate change is really a moral issue, one that impacts the health and welfare of the entire planet.

With two small homemade signs that read, "Benedictines of Erie, PA" and "Clean Air Now!" they walked the 2.6 mile march route and gave their support to those gathered. People noticed their signs, too, and thanked them for participating.

After the march, they joined Religions for the Earth, people from a range of faiths and traditions, who gathered at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for a ritual of covenant and a commission service for the future of the earth. "What we experienced and what we were witnesses to is, 'hope,'" they said. "The message was loud and clear. God's people are marching to save God's earth. We need climate action NOW."

A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way

UPMC Hamot Hospital's radiation pediatric patients receive a Beanie Baby to relieve their anxiety and stress during



procedures, thanks to Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub. With the help of her niece, Kathy McClintock, a UPMC Hamot employee, a pristine collection of 150 Beanie Babies belonging to Aunt Mamie (Sister Mary Therese) was donated to the hospital. "Each Beanie Baby arrived intact with its special name tag," reported the Hamot Aid Society newsletter. "It was very exciting to begin distributing them to comfort and entertain the children."

Sister Mary Therese was thrilled as she explained, "After the procedure a nurse brings a basket of Beanie Babies and the child chooses one. The nurses have told me that the parents are just as delighted as the children."

HAPPENINGS

Sister Mary Therese has an additional outreach as well. Since 2011 she has been collecting, washing and distributing the “disposable” socks worn by patients at UPMC Hamot Surgery Center. Each week Sister Mary Therese picks up the used socks, launders them, seals them by pair in zip-lock bags and shares them with clients of Emmaus Ministries Soup Kitchen and the immigrants at St. Benedict Education Center. “The clients are so grateful,” said Sister Mary Therese. “A little kindness goes a long way and helping keep someone’s feet warm is a good start.”

CAC Recognizes Sister Pat Lupo for 26 Years of Service

The Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recognized Sister Pat Lupo for 26 years of dedicated service. Pat served continuously on Council since her initial appointment by Governor Robert P. Casey in 1988.

“Pat’s longstanding commitment to the CAC and its mission is unprecedented,”

Terry Dayton, CAC Chairman, stated. “Her leadership on environmental education, stewardship and conservation, based on her experience in Northwest Pennsylvania, were vital in guiding Council’s priorities. Council will miss her enthusiasm and dedication which influenced a number of important Council initiatives.”

Pat has been involved in environmental issues in Pennsylvania for over 40 years. She taught more than 20 years at the elementary and high school levels before beginning her involvement in a number of non-profit environmental organizations, including Environment Erie, where she served as Education Director. In addition to her service to the CAC, Pat has served on many boards of environmental organizations and has been recognized at the local, state, national and international levels for her work in environmental education and conservation.

“We are very proud of Pat and her many accomplishments,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress. “Her commitment to environmental advocacy has been exceptional and it continues to advance the quality and opportunities of environmental education in Pennsylvania.”

Sister Pat Lupo is presently an environmental educator at the Neighborhood Art House.



St. Joseph Parish, Oil City, Honors the Benedictine Sisters

In 1875 four Erie Benedictines traveled to Oil City, PA, to begin their ministry of teaching the children of Irish and German immigrants. It was their first assignment outside the motherhouse at Erie and was the start of a long relationship with a parish and a people who welcomed the sisters with open arms. St. Joseph Parish, Oil City, on the occasion of their 150th Anniversary Year honored that beginning with a mass and reception in gratitude to the Erie Benedictines for their service to the parish through the years.

Sister Laura Beichner, one of the attendees and a native daughter of the parish enjoyed the event. “It was so good for the sisters to get reacquainted with parents and former students and to meet their families,” she said. “We had a great time. The parish did a wonderful job of expressing their gratitude. It was very special.”

As part of the celebration, Sister Joan Chittister was honored with the Bishop McManaman Medal for living out the ideals and virtues exemplified in his motto, “To Serve Christ.” Bishop McManaman was a beloved pastor of the parish who died unexpectedly at the age of 64 in 1964. The award was presented by Father Justin Pino, pastor, who acknowledged and thanked Sister Joan for her “outstanding dedication, extraordinary service and continued support of St. Joseph Parish.”

Presently, Benedictine Sister Marian Wehler ministers in the Oil City Deanery as part of Catholic Rural Ministries of Clarion and Venango counties. It is a ministry that provides pastoral care by helping to meet the needs of the area parish communities and provide spiritual support.

Phyllis Tickle: The Times We Find Ourselves in as 21st Century Christians

“You are a brilliant scholar, a true teacher and a woman of God,” said Sister Stephanie Schmidt, formation director, as she introduced Phyllis Tickle, one of the world’s most respected authorities on religion. During the community’s October Weekend, Phyllis, author and lecturer on contemporary Christianity, engaged sisters and oblates in an appreciation for “The Times We Find Ourselves in as 21st Century Christians.”

In her presentation, she identified the time in which we now live as the Great Emergence and described how Christianity has



been shaped by this new era. Her point: Christianity is currently undergoing a massive upheaval as part of a regular pattern that occurs every 500 years in which something new emerges.

“Christianity is a mighty river and a new tributary has opened up: Emergence Christianity,” said Phyllis as she used history to demonstrate how Christianity has been re-shaped through the years. In addition she made connections between faith and society and also remarked on the hallmarks of emergence Christians.

“I especially liked what Phyllis said about a spirituality based on Micah 6:8 as being one of the hallmarks,” shared one participant. “To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God is what I try to do as a Benedictine oblate.”

One of the final points that Phyllis made was in regard to the role of the Spirit in Christianity moving forward. “The future of faith lies in the investigation and the intimacy and the welcoming of the Holy Spirit,” she said. And as one of the sisters remarked, “May the Spirit guide us to move joyfully into the future so that in all things God may be glorified!”

Project Pajamas, Unaccompanied Children at the Borders

Thanks to Susan Carpenter, recent participant in the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program, the members of the This and That Club* undertook a special service project born out of their concern for the hundreds of unaccompanied children at the nation’s southern border. In addition to prayer for the children they initiated a project that Susan suggested and designed: *Project Pajamas, Unaccompanied Children at the Border*.

“According to Dallas, TX Catholic Charities the border children are in need of pajamas, among other things,” explained Susan. The This and That Club members were willing to donate money and hoped other sisters and monastery guests might



Back row (left to right): Susan Carpenter, Sisters Rita Zattosky, Cecilia Sullivan and Helen Heher; Front row (left to right): Sisters Mary Louis Eichenlaub, Phyllis Weaver, Bernadette Lorei, and Andrea Weidle

also contribute. They prepared a special sign replete with donation jar.

Their efforts were successful: Sister Phyllis Weaver acted as treasurer and reported that a total of \$211.70 was raised. The money, along with the pajamas for children, was sent to Dallas Catholic Charities.

“I really feel good about this project,” said Sister Mary Louis Eichenlaub. “What may seem small to us is big to children in need. It’s great that we could make a monetary contribution. You can be assured that it is accompanied by our ongoing support in prayer.”

*The This and That Club is a weekly gathering organized by Sister Rita Zattosky with the help of Sister Helen Heher, Director of Wellness Services at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. Sisters from the Infirmary and Assisted Living wings come together for movement activities, book discussions, movies, outreach projects or information sessions, and always conversation and refreshments. All of the “this and that” contributes to wholeness and well-being.

AIM Board Gathers at Mount St. Benedict



Standing (left to right) Karen Joseph, OSB (Ferdinand, IN), Susan Hutchens, OSB (Rock Island, IL) Pia Portmann, OSB (Norfolk, NE), Anne Shepard, OSB (Atchison, KS) and, Theresa Zoky, OSB (Erie, PA); Seated (left to right): John Brahill, OSB (Aurora, IL), Anne Wambach, OSB (Erie, PA), John Klassen, OSB (Collegeville, MN), Mary White, OSB (St. Paul, MN), John Denburger, OCSO (Genesee, NY)

Sister Theresa Zoky, Executive Director of AIM USA (Alliance for International Monasticism) hosted the annual meeting of the AIM Board of Trustees at Mount St. Benedict Monastery with the help of her staff, Sister Therese Glass and Oblate Sheila McLaughlin. “It was a pleasure to get to know and work with these dedicated people to further assist mission monasteries throughout the world,” said Sister Theresa. “We are always looking for ways to expand alliances with developing monasteries and to make others cognizant of their needs.”

HAPPENINGS

AIM USA is an organization composed of 150 communities of men and women in the United States and Canada who follow the *Rule of Benedict* and over 400 English-speaking monasteries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It provides spiritual, educational, formation and building assistance to monasteries in developing countries to enable them to be centers of life for others. Monasteries in Africa, Asia and Latin America enrich their brothers and sisters in the United States with global vision, fresh insights into monastic life, cultural diversity and gospel witness of service to the poor.

Long-Standing Traditions

Annual Benedictine-Benetwood Dinner

In keeping with a long-standing tradition, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie hosted the annual Evening Prayer and dinner for their neighbors, the residents of Benetwood Apartments.

"This is one of my favorite events," said Lois, one of the guests. "It's always nice to connect with the sisters I know."

Treva, a longtime resident at Benetwood who is no stranger to the monastery, shared, "The dinner was delicious as usual. It is a special evening for all of us."

Benetwood Apartments, a community ministry that offers monastic hospitality to low income, elderly, and handicapped persons, is located on property adjacent to the monastery. The 75-unit apartment building is a government subsidized non-profit facility administrated by Sister Patricia Hause. Her staff includes Benedictine Sisters Marla Bleil, Audrey Berdis and Ann Hoffman.

Annual Appreciation Dinner for Volunteer Fairfield Hose Company



Winners of door prizes gather with Sister Marcia Sigler (right)

"This is one event none of us wants to miss," said Jim Hawryliw, captain of the Fairfield Hose Company. "We look forward to it and always have a great time."

Members of the Fairfield Hose Company were guests at the annual appreciation dinner hosted by the Benedictine

Sisters as an expression of gratitude for the volunteer fire company which has been serving the neighborhood since 1945. Sister Marcia Sigler, having served for 10 years as an active volunteer EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), is considered

an honorary member of the company and helps to make the event a memorable one, including the organization of the table decorations and door prizes.

The menu of spaghetti and meatballs and make-your-own-ice cream sundaes has become a tradition. "Saying thank you to these volunteers has always been important to our community and this pleasant, fun-filled evening is a small gesture on our part to do just that," said Sister Marcia. "I am already starting to plan for next year!"

Sister Joan Receives Dignitas Award

The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie awarded Sister Joan Chittister their fourth annual Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award as part of the Society's annual Global Summit. The award honors an Erie citizen who has made a significant contribution towards maintaining

American values. Thomas Hagen, for whom the award is named, said when introducing Sister Joan, "This award goes to a woman who has brought great honor to the community, a woman who is courageous, passionate and charged with energy."

After receiving a standing ovation Sister Joan looked at the audience of 500 and said, "You are my board of conscience. I accept this award as a mandate to keep on moving. It is a call to do more and more to fashion a world where a universal voice is known and heard. Nothing we do changes the past; everything we do changes the future."

"We could not be more proud of Joan," said prioress, Sister Anne Wambach. "I know this award means a great deal to her. It is true that she has received many recognitions and awards throughout the years but this one comes from the city she calls home. What could be better than that?"

The Global Summit brings national speakers to Erie to discuss and analyze a broad range of important global issues. A nationally and internationally known speaker herself, Sister Joan's presentation to her hometown audience, given after the award presentation, was "The Role of Citizens in a Just World Power."



Treva Bartels (left) and Lois Downing



Sister Anne Wambach, prioress (left) and Sister Joan Chittister

From the **Director**

By Ann Comstock, Oblate

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

“When hearts listen, angels sing.”

I like this anonymous quote. Looking back on the year 2014 I think this phenomenon occurred often, especially in regards to the Saint Benedict Academy Alumnae Association. In fulfilling our purpose – to support the ministries of the Benedictine Sisters and to promote Catholic education – the alumnae did listen. We listened with our hearts and acted.

We supported the sisters in their work for the poor, the needy, the underpaid and the homeless. We joined with the sisters in attempting to make the world a better place. Our efforts this past year helped to fund the Saint Benedict Education Center’s *Refugee Settlement Program* through monies raised at our Annual Christmas Party.



We awarded \$5,000 in scholarships to relatives of alumnae members attending Catholic schools. We donated financially to the appeals made by the sisters on behalf of one or more of their ministries. Alumnae members volunteered, donated services and items where needed and prayed for the sisters and the success of their work.

Hopefully our work added a few notes to the angelic score.

Mark the Date:

Spring Luncheon and Marketplace

Saturday, May 30, 2015

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Ambassador Conference Center



The Class of 1965’s 50th Class Reunion will be held at the Spring Luncheon. For further information, please call Pat Zimmerman Flagella ‘65 at 814-864-8521.

In March 2015 a mailing of future spring/summer events and dates will be coming your way. Included in this mailing will be the nomination form for the Catholic schools scholarship awards.

**“SPIRIT OF SBA”
IS ALIVE AND WELL.**

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

- Sister Rita Pruchniewski, OSB ‘43
- Myrtle Jean Weil Dodsworth ‘45
- Jean M. Lawson Herbst ‘45
- Leona A. Rydzewski Radomski ‘45
- Dorothy Wisniewski Whipple ‘46
- Joann Whelpley Baltes ‘50
- Joan M. Carney McCallion..... ‘51
- Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB ‘57
- Susan K. Wells Fratarcangeli ‘61
- Joan Martha Measel Sonnenberg ‘61
- Rose Marie Krupinski Mello 70
- Kathleen Morphy Kinnane ‘71
- Lorraine E. Matson Sauers ‘77

Reunions

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

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



*“We are each of us angels
with only one wing,
and we can only fly by
embracing one another”.*

– Luciano De Crescenzo



*We thank thee
for thy guiding care
And all we've learned
from thee
To fill our hearts
with higher power
And opportunity;
To make the best
of everything,
Meet troubles
with a smile,
To hold aloft
our highest aim,
And hail thee
all the while.*

SBA School Song

*St. Benedict's,
St. Benedict's,
We'll always
hail thy halls;
We'll always come
to thee again
When
Alma Mater
calls.*



Please visit our Website

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

Christmas 2013



Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery
6101 East Lake Road
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The Benedictine Sisters of Erie
unite with the voices of God's angels
to wish you Christmas peace.

As we celebrate the coming of Christ
to a world in need of God's presence
we rejoice in the faith, hope and love
that your relationship inspires in us
and we give thanks for the
support, friendship and care
that you so generously extend.

You will be remembered
at our Christmas Liturgy:
Christmas Eve at 8:30 p.m.
Christmas Day at 9:30 a.m.
We invite you to join us.

*May you and your family be filled with
the gladness of Christmas which is hope;
the spirit of Christmas which is peace;
the heart of Christmas which is love.*