

Lisle Benedictine Women

Vol. 46 No. 2

Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2023



*O Loving God, your Son,
Jesus Christ, came into the
world to do your Will and
leave us His Peace.*

*Through the intercession
and example of our Blessed
Mother Mary, Queen of
Peace, grant us the wisdom
and humility to reflect that
peace to the world. Inspire
our thoughts, words and
deeds to bear witness to
your presence in our
hearts.*

*May your Holy Spirit fill
us with every grace and
blessing so that we may
pursue what leads to peace
for all humanity. Amen*

Message from the Prioress...

Dear friends,

Good things are happening at Sacred Heart! Perhaps by now you have received our “Behold, we are doing something new” mailing. As stated in the memorandum, the discernment of this transition has led us to great peace of mind and less responsibilities for us. Although we have given over our property and buildings, we have chosen, for as long as we can, to take care of the Grotto and ministries in the Chapel.

Good things continue to happen. Along with Father Becket, our beloved chaplain for 24 years, and myself, John and Therese Zigmond are beginning a program called “Mission and Spirituality Committee” where we will be addressing ways we can meet the spiritual needs of the residents. Likewise, although we have had an active recycling program, residents and staff, urged on by Lorraine Pachankis and now assisted by Jack Flowers, are trying harder to respond to Pope Francis’ “Laudate Deum” plea to take care of our Common Home the Earth, now in a major climate crisis, by enhancing our recycling efforts.

During this Advent season, I urge all of us to pray for peace. I am proud to say that my family prayed the rosary almost daily - and most still do - as Our Blessed Mother asked of us. In my growing-up days, among our intentions was praying for the conversion of Russia, urged on by the appearance of Our Lady of Fatima. With the wars in Ukraine, Israel, and other parts of the world, the need for prayer has never been greater.

When I was a senior in a public high school in Fort Morgan, Colorado I remember hearing the phrase “I would rather be dead than be Red”. My English teacher challenged us by asking if we knew any Russian persons. We all said no. She then taught us not to categorize everyone, and that governments initiate wars not their citizens.

My daily Monastic prayer schedule gives lots of attention and time to a contemplative prayer process called Lectio Divina (reading and prayerfully reflecting on the scripture readings of the day, and challenging myself to an action), praying the Divine Office three times a day, and celebrating the Eucharist daily.

While praying the rosary is not a required activity for the Sisters, there are many opportunities to do so: praying individually, joining in any one of the three prayer groups where the residents gather daily, on a bench outside, at the Grotto, or as I do when driving in a car - with a Rosary CD to keep me and any passengers with me centered. I urge patience and prayer for an end to war, for a conversion of heart from those who view war as a necessary power struggle or even as a peacemaking event. War does not bring peace.



December is Mary’s month. Contemplating the celebration of her Immaculate Conception, her journey to Bethlehem, giving birth to our loving Savior and becoming an immigrant in Egypt are ways to learn from her that life is not without difficulties, but prayer will sustain us. Let us ask her to teach us to pray and help us to grow closer to her Son. May the celebration of His birth renew our hope in our own Resurrection.

A joy-filled Christmas and a hope-filled blessed New Year to all.

Sister Mary Bratsosky, O.S.B.

May She Rest in the Peace of the Lord



Sister Judith Ann Heble, OSB
May 11, 1942 – June 13, 2023

Excerpts from eulogy by Sister Helen Jilek, OSB:

I am straining forward with what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14)

Judith Ann's life was one of a pursuit of goals, with nothing too big or too hard for her to tackle. Along with her 3 brothers and 3 sisters, she received the basis of her faith and the importance of prayer in her life from her parents, Steve and Antoinette Heble. Being a farming family, faith and trust in the Lord was a constant, as they learned the discipline of daily work and a respect for nature and its cycles of life and death.

Judy's pursuit of learning started in a one-room elementary school where she graduated at the

age of twelve in 1954; she then attended and graduated from Sacred Heart Academy here in Lisle. After a year of college classes at St Procopius College, she entered Sacred Heart Monastery and made her Monastic Profession in 1961. She immediately began her 11-year teaching career in elementary Catholic Schools staffed by our Sisters. She loved teaching, and she was good at it! She especially liked to teach Grade 6 where she fell in love with the Old Testament. In 1972 she became the Director of Religious Education at St Joan of Arc in Lisle, a position she held for 11 years.

While teaching /working full time, Judy received a BS degree in History from the College of St Francis in Joliet in 1969, a Master's Degree in School Administration in 1973 from Loyola University in Chicago, and in 1982 a Master's Degree in Theological Studies with an emphasis on Scripture. This was followed by a semester studying in Israel, an experience that deepened her love of Scripture.

In 1983 she became Director of Adult Education at St Joan of Arc, a position she held for 11 years. She ran the RCIA Program, taught Scripture Classes in the parish and at Benedictine University, and introduced and facilitated Holy Thursday Seder Meal in the Parish and then in our Community. Life in the parish was more than running programs or teaching; Sister Judith Ann and Sister Carolyn would comment on how they lovingly schooled the Pastor and Associates on what it means to be pastoral to all parishioners at St Joan of Arc.

Her leadership qualities were evident from the very beginning of community living. She served many terms on our Monastic Council, during which time she was the Director of On-Going Formation for our Community. She was Sub-Prioress for 4 years. Comments by community members in 1992 on why the Spirit was calling

(Sister Judith Ann, continued)

Sister Judith Ann to be our next Prioress included these words: visionary; futuristic; good leadership skills; God conscious; scripturally and monastically minded; deep commitment and involvement in monasticism; lived the Benedictine Values; thoroughly dedicated woman; grounded in Scripture. She was elected and on January 3, 1993 became the seventh Prioress of our Community, using all those qualities as our Prioress for 18 years.

In 1996 Judy's leadership and planning skills were put in high gear as the Community needed to do future planning for the entire campus. Judy called together a Task Force and hired a consultant to assist in determining who could help us with extensive strategic planning. After Benedictine Health System was hired to partner with us, the consultant was told by Judy in so many words, "Thank you... we don't need you anymore, we can finish this". And Judy did! Villa St Benedict was built, and a Capital Campaign initiated to help renovate the Monastery and Chapel. This beautiful campus was completed by the strong leadership of Judith Ann. And every major decision was brought to the Community for approval; she knew it was a Community Project! She wanted all of us to know what was going on and to make final decisions - a defining characteristic of a true leader.

While all our planning was going on, in 1997 Judy was elected President of the Conference of Benedictine Prioress, an organization of Benedictine Prioresses in USA, Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Mexico. She held this position for 12 years. This position made her a Delegate to an international conference of Benedictine Women, later known as CIB - Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum. Initially a Delegate and then Council member for 8 years, Judy - with her foot in the door and her excellent leadership and organizational skills - was elected Moderator for this international organization in 2006 and held that position for 12 years. With international trips 2-3 times a year to Monasteries throughout the world, many long-lasting friendships were made. She loved the work, meeting, greeting and

growing with Benedictines from all over the world. The CIB sponsors a Symposium in Rome every four years, with Judy and her Administrative Council hosting in 2010, 2014, 2018. Jim and Patrice Lia were helpers/ guides for Benedictine Sisters attending the last 2 Symposiums led by Judy and her Council. Patrice commented "Watching her lead all the Benedictine Sisters in Rome during the CIB Symposium in 2014 and 2018 was inspiring. She was a force".

In addition, Judy became a Trustee at Benedictine University in 1995. She held the position of Chairperson of the Mission Committee and constantly reminded the Board of Mission and Benedictine Values. On May 14th, President Charlie Gregory addressed the Ben U graduates: "You will have moments when you feel uncertain, afraid, and over your head....in those times you have to recall those who held you up on their shoulders as well as in their prayers...It was a Nun who said, Never worry, we are a community and will hold you in our prayers in your darkest moments ... it was a Benedictine Nun who regularly checked on me to offer support, prayers and kind words of encouragement ... she taught me how to grow my faith and that

faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen." Judy is that Benedictine Nun. At a ceremony on May 25th the Neff Farmhouse, located by the entrance to Benedictine University, was dedicated to house the "Sr Judith Ann Heble Center for Benedictine Values" - the first ever such "Center" on any



Benedictine College or University Campus in the nation. A great honor for a well-deserved person. Judy, your words of Mission and Benedictine Values were heard and will continue to be heard.

As a Trustee at Benedictine University, Judy arranged for Tuition Scholarships for International Sisters from Africa. When asked if the Lisle Benedictine Sisters could sponsor one Sister from Africa, Judy said no, we'll take two! We welcomed the first 2 Sisters from Tanzania in June 2003; since then we've had 2-3 international sisters living with us as they earn undergraduate and master's degree from Benedictine University. We currently have Hyacintha and Celestine from Namibia and Alberta from South Africa. They have been and continue to be a blessing to our community. One of their gifts to us is their beautiful singing voices, helping us with Morning and Evening Prayers. Judy taught them to be cantors; now they do the singing acapella. On March 18th, Hyacintha convinced Judy, while home from the hospital, to practice a chant she would be singing. This was the last time Judy played the piano.

Our Community has been gifted with a woman with great vision and futuristic insight. During our planning for the election of a Prioress in 2016, it was Judith Ann who coined the phrase "to Determine our Preferred Future" as our Goal for the next 6 years. She realized way before the rest of us that the Lisle Benedictine Community would be coming to completion in a few years. This became our mantra ... to determine our preferred future. She led us through the process of what we needed to do: documents to be reviewed, engagements to be made, agreements to be signed. Never lacking in Leadership skills, she has brought us to the final moments of that preferred future.

And now the final chapter of Judy's earthly life. In early January, Judy said to me "Helen, I'm having a hard time finding my words" and my answer was "yeah, me too!" Little did I know the

seriousness of her condition. As she continued all her community work, including playing the piano for our prayers, she became less communicative. After Ellen, our retired nurse, assessed her situation, she contacted her doctor and was told to go to the Emergency Room. She agreed to go after receiving a return call from another doctor. When I looked for her a couple hours later, she was sitting in Chapel, waiting to light the candles for Mass. When asked about going to the Emergency Room, she said "I have to do Mass first!" Community Prayers and Mass were her daily ritual.

On January 30th she was diagnosed with several brain tumors, beginning her long run of hospital stays. When told of her diagnosis of Lymphoma in her brain, she said to her oncologist "I just want my brain back!" Determined to do whatever necessary, she tried her hardest by doing everything asked of her ... heavy chemo drugs and then radiation treatments in Rush Hospital, all keeping her away from her community. In the last 4 and a half months she hardly spent time with the community she loved and worked so hard for. On one of the last days we spent with her at the rehab center, Judy said "Helen, don't forget that I want to be on that list"; when I asked what list, Hyacintha heard her say "the list to heaven". As Judy wanted her brain back; her God wanted her more! God took her as she was doing Physical Therapy, with a couple of pulmonary embolisms. This she could not overcome.

We as a Community and the worldwide community of Benedictine Sisters/Nuns have lost a community member, friend, great leader, mentor and visionary. Her family has lost an important person in their lives. She now prays for all of us as we continue ... our pursuit of that goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

Thank you, Judith Ann, for your many years of dedicated service to your God and our Community and all Benedictines. Be at peace!

“If you seek Sister Judith Ann’s monument, look around you!

To begin, I am not a person who believes in coincidences. I believe there are “God Incidences” that take place all around us. What a God Incidence that Sister Judith Ann passed into eternity the week of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. What a God Incidence that God calls her home this very month of June, the same month that Sacred Heart Monastery hands over sponsorship of Villa St. Benedict to Benedictine of Duluth. Sister Judith Ann’s Villa leadership concluded full circle as she passed into the loving arms of her Redeemer.”

- from Father Becket Franks’ homily at Sister Judith’s funeral Mass



Dear Friends of the Benedictine Sisters,

With our grateful thanks
for your love and kindness,
we will remember you in a Novena of
Masses celebrated in our chapel

December 24, 2023 –
January 1, 2024



Transitions

Transitions occur in every human life. In monastic life, transitions or life changing events are to be more intentionally embodied as sacred times of God's loving presence.

This June 26-30, 2023 during the Sisters annual retreat, Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration from Clyde, Missouri served as the retreat leader. She encouraged the Sisters to be conscious of transitions involving biblical people as recorded in Genesis, the Psalms and the Gospels, and to find those helpful to dwell on. With an amazing gift of storytelling, Sister Dawn delightfully enlightened the Sisters with her own exciting life examples as well.

All these narratives help identify the Sisters' own painful, sad, joyful or miraculous transitions they have already lived through, as well as those they are undergoing now and will experience in the future. Rehearsing events of their past transitions gives the Sisters a new perspective in approaching inevitable new transitions. The incentive to see the importance of a generous and patient approach to future transitions is helpful when one reflects on the statement Jesus made: "I am the way." (John 14:6) Along with Jesus, the Sisters are ready to walk the way helping each other toward the blessings of eternal life.



Signing the agreement between the Benedictine Sisters and Villa St. Benedict::



Board of Directors L-R: Sister Sharon Marie Stola, Vice President; Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, Prioress/President; Sister Helen Jilek, Treasurer

Congratulations and blessings!

Walking Together for 70 and 65 Honorable Years

Sister Mary Susanne Thome has been walking together with the other Benedictine Sisters and deserves to look back and thank God for her long life, as she professed her vows of Obedience, Conversion of Morals and Stability 70 years ago.

Also celebrating were Sisters Irene Jasien and Jo Anne Form, who professed their vows 65 years ago and have good reason to thank God and enjoy their jubilees.

It was an honor to rejoice with these Sisters and show appreciation to them on October 6, 2023 at a lovely evening dinner prepared by the staff in Villa St. Benedict's Great Room.



During the meal there was an opportunity to share thoughts about each of the three Sisters. Mentioned are some of these worthy qualities of the jubilarians and why the community is so grateful for their contributions:



Sister Susanne Thome, OSB Celebrating 70 years!

We honor her example of being on time (usually the first) at the Divine Office hours and other community functions; the alert attention she gives to others; her patient endurance while she was a Covid 19 patient in her room for 10 days; her cheerful, lively, welcoming attitude wherever and whenever you meet her; and her willingness to offer a helping hand when someone is in need.



Sister Irene Jasien, OSB Celebrating 65 years!

We admire her perfection and organizational skills; her loving way of giving instructions; her friendship and delight with friends; her prayerful way when she speaks as well as her spiritual thoughts; her loving kindness, thoughtfulness and observance; her enjoyment in walking these awesome, inspiring grounds; her ability to encourage others, as well as convince someone to do something or buy something; and her dutiful way of working with the Villa residents and dedication in bringing them communion.

Sister Jo Anne Form, OSB Celebrating 65 years!

We applaud her artistic and creative talents in creating colorful, decorative and beautiful bulletin boards, cards and thank you notes, banners and liturgy aids; her expertise and willingness to help the Sisters with computer projects; her organization in preparing supplies for liturgies; her musical talent and her work with the cantors and organists; the help she gives to the International Sisters, including serving as their driver to College of DuPage and Benedictine University; and her admirable ability to focus on a new assignment immediately and follow it through to completion.



Our Byzantine Sisters

Benedictine Sisters of the Byzantine Rite Queen of Heaven Convent Now Members of Sacred Heart Monastery

COMMUNITY HISTORY, part 3 by Sister Mary Bratrsovsky

On May 6, 1989, Sister Barbara Pavlik was elected to succeed Sister Agnes. She was installed as the fourth Prioress of Queen of Heaven Monastery on June 3, 1989. In 1993, she was re-elected to a second 4-year term of office.



In 1997, Sister Margaret Mary Schima was elected by the Monastery Chapter to serve again as Prioress. Sister was re-elected in 2001, 2005, and again in 2009. Under her leadership, the Sisters strove to respond to the needs of the Church today, as they live out their Benedictine charism “to seek God in cenobitic life, prayer and ministry.” They praise God daily in the Divine Liturgy and the Liturgical hours of Matins and Vespers celebrated according to the Byzantine Rite. They pray especially for the needs of the Church, for their families, friends, and benefactors, as well as for the needs of all who ask for their prayers.

The Sisters were and have been engaged in various levels of educational work, hospital services, child care, pastoral care, parish ministry, retreat work, office work, and domestic service. In whatever ministries they chose to serve, they strove to integrate contemplative living and active ministry on behalf of others.

Their prayerful monastic life overflows into loving service to others. The Sisters have ministered in various Byzantine Catholic parishes in the states of Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. At present Sister Marion Dobos is the director of the Pittsburgh Archeparchy’s Office of Religious Education and Pastoral Field Formation at SS Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary.

And Sister Barbara Pavlik stays involved in pastoral ministry and education at St. Peter and Paul Byzantine's parish.

As their contribution to church unity, the Sisters give special attention to promoting knowledge and appreciation of the riches of the Eastern Christian Churches. They belong to and participate in the programs of the Saint John Chrysostom Society, a group that works for understanding and unity among the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. They also participate in the Oriental Lumen Conferences. They have welcomed people to their monastery home to pray the beautiful, Matins, Vespers, and Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine Catholic Church in their icon-adorned chapel. They sponsor Spirituality Days, open to the public, in which presentations on timely topics enrich all who attend. The monastery provided an environment of beauty and peace for persons needing time and space to experience Christ's healing presence.

A group of Oblates, both men and women, are attached to Queen of Heaven Monastery in order to promote their own spiritual growth by living according to the Rule of St. Benedict as their particular life circumstances permit. They held meetings on a monthly basis.

Another group, the St. Benedict Auxiliary, had generously assisted the Sisters over the years by sponsoring fund-raising projects for many of the furnishings needed in the Monastery. They also share in the spiritual life of the Sisters.

Wherever they serve and in whatever capacity they minister, the life of the Sisters centers on the desire, expressed in Scripture and repeated by Saint Benedict in his Rule, "that in all things, God may be glorified!"

(to be continued in a future LBW issue)



Sisters Alberta (left) and Celestine (right) decorate Sacred Heart Chapel in Lisle for Thanksgiving



Ever grateful ...

At the end of June, the Sisters honored three very special employees:

Eric Shumaker is a worker among workers - much appreciated for his kindness, steadfastness, exactness and dedication to quality. He began working Maintenance with the Sisters in October 2007, and devoted himself to the Sisters and their campus. Eric is able to figure out solutions for just about anything ... and certainly has been asked to do so!



Ana Hernandez is a beautiful, unassuming person who started working with the Sisters as a CNA in December 2012. She lovingly cared for the Sisters who were her patients. Later, as housekeeper, Ana focused that special care on the Sisters' rooms, facilities and guesthouses. Ana now works at Villa St. Benedict.



Armando Flores was working at Villa St. Benedict when the Sisters asked him to cover janitorial work for them in September 2018. He has now returned to VSB. Armando is a man willing to help wherever he can. His generosity, good cheer and patience will always be remembered with gratitude.

We are ever grateful to these three. God be with them and with us throughout our transitions.



The Sisters share our story "Creating a Legacy" with our oblates.

Here and There . . .



Sister Afra Mgwama, OSB came to visit the Benedictine Sisters and all her wonderful friends here in the Lisle area from October 16 - November 27, 2023. She wanted to show her appreciation as well as continue to seek resources in growing the support of her flourishing ministry in Tanzania.

In 2003, Sister Afra and Sister Beatrice Kayombo from St. Gertrude's convent in Imiliwaha, Tanzania arrived as the first two International Sisters sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters in Lisle under Sister Judith Ann Heble's initiative.

Over the next eight years Sister Afra graduated from Benedictine University and earned a Bachelor degree in Elementary Education, a Master of Education degree in Leadership and Administration and another Master in Curriculum and Instruction.

Back in Tanzania, Sister Afra was placed in charge of creating and developing a school in Sumbawanga. Now, ten years later, astounding progress has been made. Sister Afra started with a makeshift classroom with a few 4- and 5-year-old girls and boys. With the help of funds coming from the U.S. she built a vibrant center for learning, brick by brick. Today upwards of 300 students are enrolled pre-kindergarten to 7th grade at St. Gertrude's Pre and Primary School. Some of the children are in poverty or are orphans, and dozens stay in the girls' and boys' dorms. Her school staff pours out their efforts in stimulating their young minds by teaching them subject matter and strengthening their moral character.

In 2020 Benedictine University honored Sister Afra with the Visionary Alumni Achievement Award, for leadership and innovation in her career and personal dedication to philanthropic endeavors.

**For more information on Sister Afra's work and accomplishments in Tanzania , visit www.friendsofimiliwaha.org or Friends of Imiliwaha on Facebook*

*Commissioning of new
Extraordinary Ministers
of Communion in Sacred
Heart Chapel in October.*



Villa St. Benedict

- Joe Kellogg, Executive Director

As winter approaches we reflect on activities our residents have enjoyed over the past few months.

In August residents from Independent living, Assisted Living, and Memory Care enjoyed an outdoor Luau party. A Polynesian menu was created by our culinary staff for a delicious lunch, followed by tropical drinks and hula dancing.



During the month of September we dedicated a whole week to celebrate our assisted living residents. We had daily activities, including an ice cream truck fully stocked for all residents and staff to enjoy, a vintage car show and live entertainment.



Photo credits: Emily Turner,
Marketing Coordinator



We also took advantage of the beautiful September weather and hosted yet again another successful Alzheimer's Walk for residents, family, staff, and even our four-legged friends. We raised over \$6,500 for the foundation.



As weather cooled and leaves began to turn residents enjoyed mother nature's beauty here on campus.

To cap off the month of October residents enjoyed a SPOOKTACULAR Halloween party in the Great Room. The party kicked off with a Magician and was followed with delicious food and drink for all to enjoy.

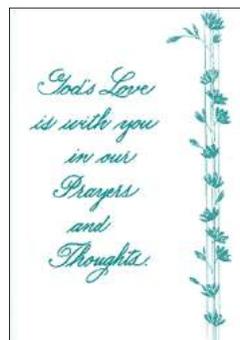
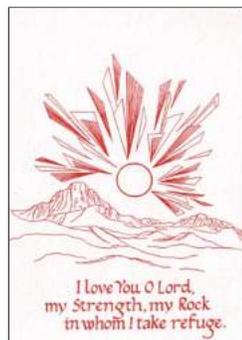




Lisle Benedictine Women

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Prayer Cards are available for all occasions
from the Benedictine Sisters



All information is available on our website: www.shmlisle.org
