



Lisle Benedictine Women

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Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2022

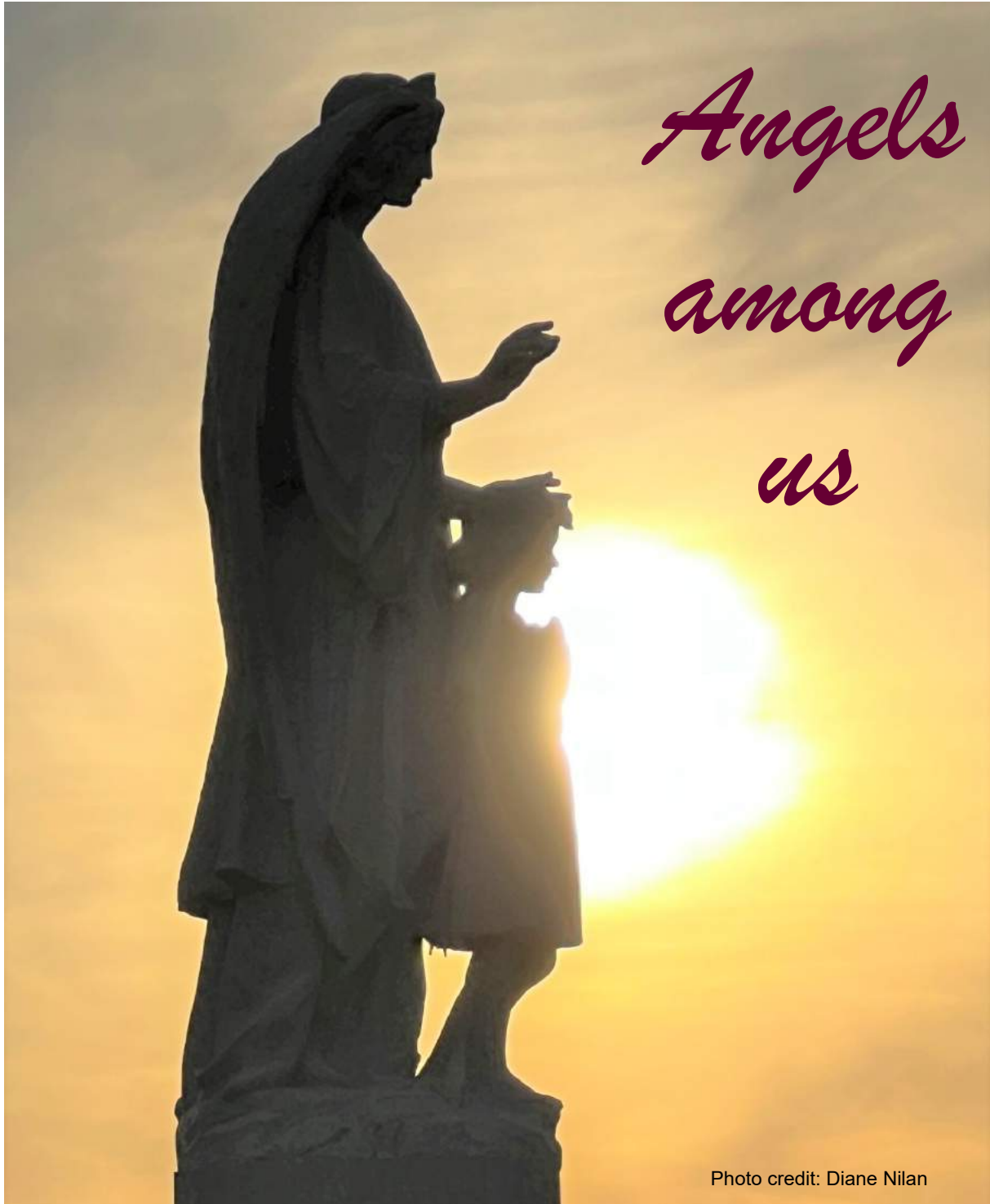


Photo credit: Diane Nilan

Message from the Prioress...

How appropriate to choose “Angels Among Us” as our theme and or refecton for this edition of our LBW. Why? One reason is that our friend and guest, Diane Nilan, took some interesting photos of our guardian angel statue located in our sunken garden facing our building. This statue is a gift from our foundresses who made it possible for the Benedictine Sisters, our Sacred Heart Academy Students, and now our Villa Residents to be inspired by knowing that our guardian angel is protecting us.



Photo credit: Diane Nilan

A second reason is that as a Benet Academy teacher, I participated in their senior retreat program, “Logos”. At times I used the song “Angels Among Us” (recorded by the band Alabama and released in 1993) to highlight an event when I felt the experience of an angel’s presence in my life.

The chorus words are:

**Oh I believe there are angels among us
Sent down to us from somewhere up above
They come to you and me in our darkest hours
To show us how to live, to teach us how to give
To guide us with the light of love**

(Songwriters: Don Goodman / Becky Hobbs)

My story, often shared, occurred when driving west on I 80 to Colorado. The car that I was in hit a bridge crossing sign, veered across the highway without hitting another car, and landed below the bridge, about 10 feet from a large body of water. A retired paramedic, observing from a distance, called 911 and then drove to unstrap us from our seatbelts and waited for two ambulances to safely transport us to a hospital. To be sure, there were lots of angels present during and after this accident.

Sharing our stories allows us to revisit those moments with gratitude, and also opens the way for others to share their experiences. Although not all examples need to be as dramatic as mine, many of us have “Angels Among Us” experiences. Angels come into our lives as “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) ... as guests, as volunteers, as those who brighten our lives and lift us up with smiles, encouragement, assistance, kind gestures, or a listening ear when needed most.

A third reason: recently, our chaplain Father Becket, residents Jack and Rose Ann Flowers, Theresa and John Zigmond, and Cindy Power (now deceased) and I started a follow-up to our Synod Meetings. One of the Synod goals is to create “listening conversations”. We began by asking participants to share their “Angels Among Us” experiences. These were powerful stories and great ways to get to know each of us better.

The plan is to continue four times a year by gathering and sharing conversations on further topics. I take this opportunity to invite all to come to the Great Room when “Sharing Conversations” is on the calendar or tune in to channel 1901 on our TV screen.



A fourth reason: this theme is so appropriate as we approach the Christmas season, where the angels are seen on high singing “Glory to God in the Highest” as we celebrate the reality that Our Savior has been born into our world:

**To show us how to live, to teach us how to give
To guide us with the light of love**

Merry Christmas and a blessed, peace-filled New Year!

Sister Mary Bratsosky, O.S.B.

Congratulations and blessings!

Sister Christine Kouba, OSB Celebrating 70 years!

Sister Christine entered the monastery shortly after graduating from Sacred Heart Academy. She began her ministry teaching in a number of grade schools in the Chicago area and in Texas.

As her parents aged alone on their family farm in Hillsboro, Wisconsin, Sister felt the need to be closer to them, as her siblings Lawrence, Marie and Cecile were committed with families and employment. She was able to teach 4th grade at St. Mary's School in Richland Center, WI while living with Benedictine Sisters from Eau Claire, WI, for 4.5 years. Her Salvatorian priest brother, Father John, ministered to his parents during the week, and Sister Christine would spend weekends with them.

Desiring to better care for her parents, she enrolled into a 12-month LPN nursing program at Wisconsin Technical Institute in LaCrosse, WI, staying with Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in LaCrosse.

Within four weeks in early 1978, Sister Christine's mother died, the LPN program concluded, and her father died. She returned to Sacred Heart Monastery and started work at Hinsdale Hospital. Her first two years there were focused on mothers and babies, a welcome change while still grieving her parents.

When notified that the hospital was phasing out LPNs, she committed to the RN program at Little Company of Mary Hospital School. There she stayed with the Little Company of Mary Sisters during the week and returned to Sacred Heart on weekends. She then continued her nursing work at Hinsdale Hospital for another 9 years as RN on Medical Surgical floor and with St. Thomas Hospice Home Care program.

In 1989 Sister Christine received permission to work in the clinic at Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Our Little Brothers and Sisters) orphanage in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The Mexican people, children, culture and music touched her heart, and she still lights up when talking about her experience there.

After returning to Lisle, Sister volunteered with People's Resource Center doing clinical work several times a week, and then served as nurse for the Sisters here in the Care Center. Additionally, she was the Vocation Director for Sacred Heart Monastery.

Sister Christine still tries to attend Spanish Mass in the area whenever possible, as well as proclaiming the Gospel in Spanish at Taizé service once a month.

Sister's role models are St. Martin de Porres, for nursing the sick, and Mother Teresa of



(... continued on next page)

(Sister Christine, continued)

Calcutta, for her example of treating people like Jesus.

Sister Christine feels she's been led by the Spirit when thinking of all the directions and experiences in her life. She is very happy with her varied life and grateful to God.

She particularly enjoyed the quiet, small gathering this year to celebrate her Jubilee with her Benedictine Community and those who work in the Monastery.

Her community appreciates her gentle and nurturing spirit and shared stories of how touched they've been with her loving care.



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, 2022 –
January 1, 2023



While access to Sacred Heart Chapel is still restricted, you may join us for Sunday Mass on-line: livestream at 10:00am or view the video later. Available on our chaplain Father Becket's Facebook page at facebook.com/fr.becket

Congratulations and blessings!



Sister Helen Jilek, OSB Celebrating 60 years!

Sister Helen grew up on a farm in Haugen, Wisconsin. She came to Lisle to enter the Community, spending her senior year as a Postulant at Sacred Heart Academy.

Like most of the Sisters, Sister Helen began her ministry as a grade school teacher, and then as Physical Education teacher at Benet Academy and St. Joan of Arc.

From here, Sister Helen's career became more varied, and she says each position and experience has its own special sweet spot for her.

Because it sounded interesting, Sister Helen began seven years of working as a Dispatcher for the Lisle Police Department. Ready for a change, she then served as Youth Minister at St. Joan of Arc Parish for five years before moving to emergency services at Catholic Charities.

In 1989, she began eight years as Coordinator for DuPage PADS, and was quite happy working with that program. However, her Community had need of her talent and her eye for detail as their Treasurer, and she has served in that position now for over 25 years.

Her ministry of serving the poor and homeless continues through her board positions of Daybreak of Lisle, HEAR US, and Friends of Imiliwaha - benefitting the Benedictine Sisters of St. Gertrude in Tanzania.

Sister Helen is very involved with the International Sisters that Sacred Heart Monastery sponsors. She tends to necessary and practical matters such as insurance, renewing visas, and shopping for necessities. But she also makes sure that they are involved in excursions such as blueberry picking or traveling to Washington DC for the Homeless Remembrance Blanket Project on the West Lawn of the Capitol this December 21st.

She has maintained close relationships with the International Sisters who have since returned to their homeland, travelling twice to Tanzania - in 2013 and in 2019!

Sister Helen loves the outdoors and has fond memories of canoeing and camping with Diane Nilan over the years. And we can't skip over the fact that she is an avid Green Bay Packers fan!

Her community particularly appreciates the way Sister Helen embodies the Benedictine value of stewardship as she oversees the upkeep of the monastery and its grounds.

Angels among us . . .



Martha Hennessey- Granddaughter of Dorothy Day

It was a surprise and a privilege to welcome Martha Hennessey, the granddaughter of Dorothy Day. Being invited to speak at Benedictine University about her grandmother, Martha was our house guest from September 20-29. She spoke as well to our Sisters, the Residents of Villa St. Benedict and the Monks at St. Procopius Abbey. She was particularly linked to the Abbey since her grandmother was an Oblate of St. Benedict there.

Dorothy Day, a woman who is remembered for leading Christianity to a new sense of social justice, is now soon to be canonized. A convert to Catholicism, Dorothy founded the Catholic Worker Movement in defense of the poor, forsaken, hungry and homeless. The Houses of Hospitality which she created continue to thrive today here in the United States as well as abroad. The video: “Entertaining Angels” chronicles her radical life from an unconventional life style to a living saint.

Unconventional Help for Homeless Families

For the past 18 years, the Lisle Benedictine Sisters have extended an unusual version of their hallmark hospitality to Diane Nilan, founder and one-woman staff of HEAR US Inc. (www.hearus.us), dedicated to giving voice and visibility to families and youth experiencing homelessness.

Instead of their traditional accommodations, Diane, who lives full-time in her camper-van, finds a place to park and plug in while in the Lisle area. Proximity to a shower, laundry and electricity makes it possible for her to do her film editing, writing, and manage her unconventional nonprofit.

When not parked in Lisle, she travels across the country filming interviews of invisible kids and parents with nowhere to live. Her films, books and talks give an inside view of what life is like for millions of families and young people.



Diane met Sister Helen Jilek, OSB, when they both worked at Catholic Charities in the mid-80s. Helen, a founder member of HEAR US, serves as the board treasurer. This connection has made Diane’s unusual, but vital, mission possible.



We are thankful that each year volunteers take time to assist Sister Mary in Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto at Sacred Heart Monastery. Pictured is a group of 1st year students from **Benedictine University** during Orientation Week in August.

Grief Workshop

On September 7-8, the Sisters were welcomed to an enlightening workshop on the nature of grief by Sister Loretta McGuire O.S.B. from Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, Kansas. Sister Loretta, an experienced grief counselor, social worker and hospice minister encouraged the Sisters to reflect deeply about their own losses or deaths, as well as reminding them how important it is to listen to those who suffer grief with every or any kind of loss or death. The grieving person needs the help of someone to respond lovingly and allow the person to talk while listening in a non-judgmental way. Each person grieves in their own way but everyone needs a listening consoler for his/her mental health. Sister Loretta reminded the Sisters that loss, particularly death, can be life-giving: as the beginning of the fullness of an awesome, joyful life in the presence of a gracious God who holds everyone in love forever.



Sisters, residents and staff gathered in Sacred Heart Chapel on August 19th for a special memorial prayer service led by Sister Mary Bratrsovsky. Recently deceased Villa St. Benedict residents were lovingly and gratefully remembered as those gathered shared prayers, reflections and memories.

On November 2nd, we observe the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. Traditionally, the Sisters gather on this day for a prayer service in St. Scholastica Cemetery on the monastery grounds. This year gifted us with glorious weather for the gathering.



In the 11th century, Saint Odilo, abbot of Cluny, France, decreed that Cluniac monasteries offer special prayers and sing the Office for the Dead on November 2, the day after the feast of All Saints. The custom spread and was eventually adopted throughout the Roman Catholic Church.

The Sisters remember our beloved deceased throughout the month of November during our daily Liturgy of the Hours. Our friends are also invited to share names of loved ones for whom the Sisters pray. Pictured is the basket which holds all those prayer intentions received.



Our Byzantine Sisters

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land by Sister Marion Dobos, OSB

From the earliest of times, pilgrimages have been an important part of the religious life of people. A pilgrimage is a journey to a shrine or a holy place. In the Old Testament, people went on pilgrimage to the various places where God had manifested himself or his power. Normally, people would build a shrine to mark the spot and to visit such a place was to participate, in some manner, in the event which had taken place there.

The New Testament does not speak much about pilgrimages, since the writers were focused more on the presence of Jesus in their midst.

In the development of the Christian Tradition, Jerusalem and the places associated with the life and presence of Jesus became popular places of pilgrimages. The various sites that were sanctified by the presence and sufferings of Jesus became the new Christian shrines. Often churches or chapels were built over these places, and people would then come to visit and pray, thus allowing them to enter more deeply into the events associated with the sites.

Prayer is at the heart of every pilgrimage and a time of renewing our commitments. When people would visit a shrine, it was a time of returning to their origins to renew their covenants or commitments to God. It can also be a time of renewal, to be surrounded by a large group of people at prayer, to be a witness of such demonstration of faith and participate in moving services.

There are major differences between going to the Holy Land as a pilgrim, and going as a tourist. This basic vision that distinguishes a pilgrim from a tourist is summed up by St. Paul, "Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, sink your roots deep in him, build your faith upon him, and overflow with thanksgiving." (Col 2:6)

My trip in visiting the Holy Land has been a remarkable and an intensely spiritual experience for which I am deeply grateful. If you have an opportunity to visit the Holy Land take it, and before the trip...invest in a good pair of walking shoes!

Sister Marion is in the bottom row, 8th from the left. The city of Jerusalem is in the background.



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

COMMUNITY HISTORY, part 1

by Sister Mary Bratrsovsky

The birth, growth, ministries and the coming to fulfillment of The Benedictine Sisters of the Byzantine Rite trace their beginnings to 1951 when two Byzantine Rite women from SS. Peter and Paul Church in Minersville, Pennsylvania entered the Latin Rite community of Benedictine Sisters at Sacred Heart Convent in Lisle, Illinois. They were received there with the understanding that eventually a Byzantine Rite Benedictine Foundation would be established from that Priory to serve the needs of the Byzantine Ruthenian parishes in the United States.

In 1954, the Community Chapter of the Lisle Benedictine Sisters formally voted to establish a Byzantine Rite Foundation of Sisters at SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Warren, Ohio. The pastor there, Father Sylvester Hladky, had asked the Lisle Sisters to open a school for the Warren Byzantine Rite Parish. As 1954 was the Marian Year, the Warren convent was named Queen of Heaven Convent in honor of the Mother of God.



women from Minersville, Pennsylvania, were assigned to teach at SS. Peter and Paul School in the fall of 1954. Together with Sister Mary Juliana Konopka, O.S.B., their superior, they opened the first Benedictine Convent of the Byzantine Rite in Warren that summer.



On August 24, 1955, in Sacred Heart Chapel the Foundation Cross was blessed and the departure service took place. The Foundation Cross was given to Sister Juliana Konopka. Sisters Miriam and Mary Judith Konkus, O.S.B., the two Byzantine Rite



S. Judith Konkus

S. Juliana Konopka

S. Miriam Konkus

Their first dwelling place was a home on East Market Street, and was blessed on August 27, 1955 with Father Prior Theodore Seginak, O.S.B. officiating.

The number of Byzantine Rite Sisters in the Lisle Benedictine community continued to grow. In April 1965, they formally petitioned Cardinal Testa, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Church in Rome, for the right to function as a Byzantine Rite Community. Bishop Nicholas T. Elko of the Byzantine Rite Diocese of Pittsburgh, and Monsignor Sylvester Hladky, Dean of the Youngstown Byzantine Rite Deanery and Pastor of SS. Peter and Paul Parish, both sent letters to Rome in favor of the Sisters' petition. Cardinal



Cicognani at the Vatican gave his personal attention to this matter. As a result, all the Byzantine Rite Sisters in the Lisle Benedictine Community were sent to Warren in June 1965, and the community of Queen of Heaven Convent was given the opportunity to function as an independent house for a period of three years. During this time, more young women continued to join the new Byzantine Rite Benedictine Community in Warren.

Final steps to complete the establishment of this Byzantine Rite Foundation were taken in the summer of 1968. On November 19, 1968 a decree was received from Rome stating that the Foundation of

Queen of Heaven Convent was granted its independence and could function thereafter as an independent Priory. The formal Founding Ceremonies and Election of the first Prioress took place on February 2, 1969.

(to be continued in a future LBW issue)



Bottom row, left to right: Sr. Margaret Chuma; Sr. Judith Konkus; Sr. Assumpta (Margaret Mary) Schima; Most Rev. Nicholas T. Elko; Sr. Ambrose Chuchvara; Sr. Miriam Konkus; Sr. Mary Francesca (Barbara) Pavlik.

Top row: Sr. Theodore (Julia) Rohaly; Sr. Alexandra Belak; Sr. Daniel Zentkovich; Sr. Stephen Marie (Agnes) Knapik; Sr. Mary George (Marion) Dobos; Sr. Andre Repasky; Sr. Thecla (Helen) Labosh

Here and There . . .

On February 25, 2022 our Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica (of which there are now **17 Communities**) celebrated its **100th birthday!** Happy birthday to us! On that day in 1922, the Vatican Sacred Congregation of Affairs of Religious issued a decree granting temporary approbation, approving the constitutions and erecting the Congregation of St. Scholastica.

From June 15-25 the members of this Congregation gathered in Atchison, Kansas for a General Chapter followed by a colloquium. Besides a business meeting we had talks and discussions on the theme of Radical Hospitality in the Rule of Benedict.

The colloquium, or talks prepared by a number of sisters and oblates (and opened to Oblates), unfortunately was moved to Zoom format after one sister tested positive for Covid.

The sisters in attendance from Sacred Heart were Sisters Christine Kouba, Helen Jilek, Judith Ann Heble, and Mary Bratrsovsky.



Sister Mary enjoying “Kentucky Derby Night” at the annual Benedictine Convention in Duluth, Minnesota, which was hosting a fundraiser. The event included virtual horse racing and southern food. Pictured here is Kevin Rymanowski, CFO at Benedictine, and Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, Prioress of Sacred Heart Monastery.





Sisters participating
in the 2022
Alzheimers walk:

(left) Sister
Susanne Thome

(right) Sister Lois
Jean Jensik

(below)
Sister Irene Jasien



Retirement Fund for Religious December 10-11, 2022 at most local Catholic parishes

The Retirement Fund for Religious provides support for thousands of elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

By 2027, it is projected that religious past age 70 will outnumber those under age 70 by three to one. You can make a difference in the life of an elderly religious.

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

We thank you for your continued generous support of the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Donations by mail: Retirement Fund for Religious
National Religious Retirement Office
PO Box 96988
Washington, DC 20090-6988

Villa St. Benedict

Photo credits: Emily Turner, Marketing Coordinator



(left)
Music and Movement Class

(below)
Music and Movement with Assisted Living



Mailbox decorating



(below) National Night Out, August 2, 2022



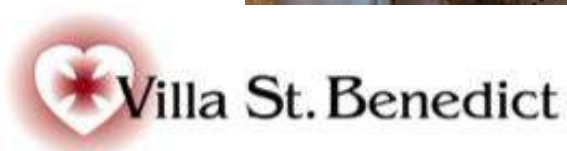


Alzheimers Walk 2022



(left)
Visit with Peanut
the dog

(right)
Gifting flowers to
the staff at
Benedale

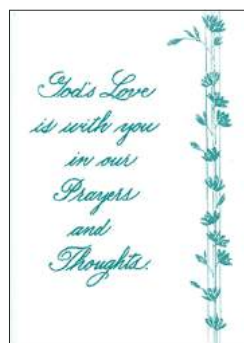
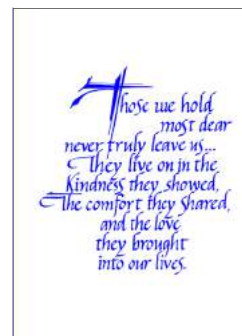
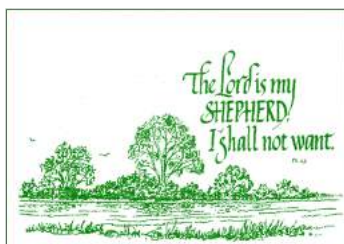




Lisle Benedictine Women

Sacred Heart Monastery
1910 Maple Avenue
Lisle, IL 60532-2164
(630) 725-6000
www.shmlisle.org

Prayer Cards are available for all occasions
from the Benedictine Sisters



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