

Lisle Benedictine Women

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Sacred Heart Monastery

June 2025

Pax Aeterna



Peace Garden: A Sacred Space for Prayer

In our daily Mass and Rosary, we continually offer intentions for peace and for those who work tirelessly to bring it about. Seeing the profound need for peace in today's world, we Sisters have dedicated a portion of our land as sacred space - a **Peace Garden** - inviting all to pray for and experience *PAX AETERNA*.

(article on p. 3)

Message from the Prioress...

I begin this greeting on the Feast of the Solemnity of Pentecost, elated to reflect on the joys of the Gospel through the lens of our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. Those of you in Chicagoland may already know that our chaplain, Father Becket Franks, OSB, attended St. Augustine Seminary High School at the same time as Pope Leo - then simply "Bob." In fact, his yearbook is fondly signed by him.



On Easter, I vividly recall Father Becket challenging us to "Easter" - to live out the Good News of the Resurrection, just as Mary of Magdala and the Apostles did after the Resurrection and Pentecost. It struck me how Pope Francis lived that very challenge when, despite illness, he rose from his bed on Easter Day to proclaim that Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection offer us the gift of salvation. What a profound gift Pope Francis has been to the Church and to the world - and now, what a gift we have in Pope Leo. Their Christian witness calls us to walk in peace, serve with love, and care deeply for the world entrusted to us.

The fifty days of Easter assure us that Jesus truly died and rose again, and that the Holy Spirit now dwells among us, guiding and sustaining our lives. The teachings of Pope Francis and now Pope Leo continue to spread this living message of hope and transformation.

And yet, we find ourselves in a world marked by deep religious and political division. The messages of Pope Francis, Pope Leo, and other faith leaders are sometimes seen as conflicting with Church tradition or the teachings of Jesus. This, too, echoes Christ's experience. He lived in a divided world, where His message was often in tension with prevailing religious and social norms. His claim to be the Son of God was too radical for many - and ultimately led to His crucifixion.

But the story did not end there. After encountering the risen Christ, the Apostle Paul gave his life to proclaiming the Easter message and ultimately died for it. Early Christian martyrs were also put to death for their unwavering faith in Jesus's teachings. We, too, are called to proclaim and live this truth with courage.

There are good and faithful people on all sides of the religious and political spectrum. I, for one, live in a Benedictine faith community, and my own journey - shaped by my education at Loyola University and its grounding in Vatican II theology - continues to be nurtured by the teachings of Popes John XXIII and Francis, and now I am deeply hopeful and energized to see Pope Leo XIV continue in their footsteps.

As Pope Leo reminds us:

"The Spirit inspires the contemplative dimension of life that rejects self-assertion, complaining, rivalry, and the temptation to control consciences and resources."

The Holy Spirit changes the world - because the Holy Spirit changes hearts.

Jesus is Risen. Indeed, He is Risen!

His message continues to open hearts around the world.

May visiting the *PAX AETERNA* statue and walking in the footsteps of Mary, our Mother, bring blessings and lead us all to live as true children of God.

Sister Mary Bratsosky, O.S.B.

Pax Aeterna

- Cathy Cawiezel

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Years ago, the Benedictine Sisters' Stewardship Committee identified a goal: create a peace garden on their grounds. When? Someday.

Last year the stars aligned. The delighted community and their guests gathered in the splendor of the new garden to bless it on Friday, May 30, 2025.



Situated near the east entrance to the monastery, the welcoming space perfectly manifests the Benedictine charism of hospitality. The focal point is peace personified in the dynamic statue *Pax Aeterna* created by sculptor Larry Johnson, proprietor of LK Johnson Studio.

It was Sister Helen Jilek, Stewardship Committee Chairman, who found the path to achieve the goal. She and the late Sister Judith Ann Heble developed a friendship with the sculptor some six years ago when they commissioned him to make a statue of St. Benedict as a gift to Villa St. Benedict for the west entrance. Fortuitously, last year he mentioned to Sister Helen that he had designed a statue he named *Pax Aeterna*. Those Latin words mean Peace Everlasting. When Sister Helen heard the name and saw his drawing, she knew she had found the centerpiece for a peace garden.

Mr. Johnson included Sister Helen throughout his process of honing the clay, inviting her to recommend “edits.” He also had her select the patina.

Matt Haber, Design Director at Western DuPage Landscaping, planned the beautiful plantings. His design showcases not only the statue, but the stonework that was already in place. That includes a gentle waterfall, a bridge, paths, and seating. Don Lupo, of Lupo Masonry, Inc., designed and installed the stone pedestal for the statue.

At the dedication ceremony, the Benedictine Sisters formally gifted the garden to Villa St. Benedict. Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, Prioress, created a deeply meaningful prayer service for the occasion. It was replete with words of peace: scripture readings, Popes' messages, and petitions. Many members of the community participated in the readings. Grateful acknowledgements are due Sister Jo Anne Form for her skillful design of the pamphlet, Sister Alberta Khwela for power washing all the stonework, and Nick and Nick of Nick & Sons Landscaping for installing the water feature and mulch.

(more photos on next page)



Sister Helen, Joe Kellogg and Sister Mary



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Sister Helen, Cathy Cawiezel, Don Lupo,
Mary Jane Johnson, Larry Johnson and Sister Mary



(above) Sister Alberta; (below) Nick & Nick



Congratulations!

Sister Mary Inducted into the Hall of Honor

Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, OSB was inducted into the Hall of Honor at Benet Academy on February 15, 2025. This event was the first to honor former members of the Benet community for their achievements of excellence. Categories of honor included: Professional Distinction, Fine Arts, Athletics, and Faith & Service. Sister Mary was honored for her faith and service contribution. She had been a faculty member for thirty-seven years, actively involved as a religion teacher and chair of the Religion Department. In those roles, she helped introduce student retreats, and took interest in each student's spiritual growth. She spoke with urgency to her students about their need to support justice for all as a Biblical imperative. Sister Mary continues to be actively involved in the pursuit of Justice and serves Benet Academy as a Board Member, always encouraging Catholic faith to be in the foreground and to invigorate its hallmark virtue of justice.

Congratulations, Sister Celestine Shakungu!

In May, Sister Celestine returned to Lisle for Benedictine University's graduation ceremony and received her diploma for Bachelor of Theology. She had completed her requirements at BenU in December and then moved to Washington DC to pursue her Master's at Catholic University of America. We had a quick weekend to catch up, enjoy time together and celebrate with her!



May She Rest in the Peace of the Lord



Sr. Regina Ann Weissmann, OSB
May 20, 1935 – January 31, 2025

By Sister Christine Kouba, OSB

Sister Regina Ann was born in Chicago on May 20, 1935 to Henry and Martha Walovich Weissmann and was baptized Nancy at St. Michael's Church in Chicago on June 2, 1935. She was graciously raised by her Aunt Agnes, as her parents were both employed. A few years later, she became big sister to Arline and again to her brother Robert, making her family circle complete.

She attended St. Michael's School from kindergarten through eighth grade. The Benedictine Sisters taught there, and her heart was attracted to their way of life. She had hoped to attend the girls boarding high school at Sacred Heart Academy in Lisle, but lack of finances kept her at Lourdes High School, close to home. She remembers herself as a "tomboy" in her younger years, but in high school she focused on her studies. She was an excellent student, named to the National Honor Society, and hoped to go on to college. However, college was not affordable, so she found employment in advertising at a publishing company. This gave her a solid foothold in learning the basics of marketing as well as professionalism, creative writing and public speaking.

In 1958, at age 23, she writes: I REALLY FELT GOD CALLING ME SO I ENTERED THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY IN LISLE, ILLINOIS." This statement was not only firm and decisive, but also showed a clear desire to follow Jesus. She started by listening carefully with the ear of her heart. Throughout her formation she felt very enriched in practicing the basics of the Rule of Benedict, the Divine Office of prayer, study of Scripture, the mission of the Church and living the Benedictine community life. On August 29, 1960, she made her first Benedictine vows of Stability, Conversion of Morals and Obedience, and later made her perpetual profession on July 26, 1963. After making her first vows she joined other Sisters teaching in parochial schools: St. Mary Immaculate School in Dallas, St. Cyril & Methodius in Joliet, Holy Mount in Cicero and St. Joan of Arc in Lisle, later becoming principal at Our Lady Queen of Peace School in Wichita Falls, Texas.

She also worked for a short period of time at the Monastery. An undated letter of gratitude was found in Sister Regina Ann's file. Sister Mary Regina Dubina, the Prioress at that time, wrote: "Dear Sister Regina Ann, There is no adequate way of telling you how much we appreciated the fantastic job you did for our community as a house coordinator. Your kind and compassionate approach showed us how well you look out for the Sisters and we want you to know we appreciate how hard you worked at it."

With her caring, mission-minded background, she was sent to St. Benedict's College/St. John's University in Collegeville, MN in 1969 where she pursued a B.A. in Psychology. She then continued for her Master's degree at Loyola University in Chicago.

After graduation, Sister Regina Ann was ready to be a skilled psychotherapist and qualified as a Family Life and Teen-Age Adjustment Counselor. She chose the Inter-Faith Family Life Center at Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Naperville, where she worked for eight years. She was highly regarded in her position and enriched her background with further knowledge. She took courses such as Clinical

Study in Pastoral Care, as well as Prevention and Rehabilitation of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

In 1977, she unexpectedly suffered an overpowering headache, diagnosed as a double brain aneurism, for which she needed high-risk brain surgery. The Benedictine community, family and friends prayed fervently for her recovery. With prayer and therapy, she was able to regain her speech and active participation in life's events. Her recovery was quite miraculous as she returned to apply her interest and skill to counseling. She worked as Director of Adult Formation and Pastoral Care at St. Scholastica's Parish in Woodridge, where she was highly respected. She did marriage counseling and especially loved teaching the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) Program to those interested in becoming members of the Catholic Church.

In 2010, with the development of Villa St. Benedict here in Lisle, CEO Kathy DiCristina was happy to have Sister Regina Ann fill a need in helping residents, especially newcomers, adjust to their new environment. Providing pastoral care, she trained those who wanted to be Eucharistic ministers and lectors at Mass, while remaining available for counseling any private concerns. Again, she was very happy doing this work.

After several years with good health, she became noticeably debilitated. Fracturing her ankle in a fall, she was hospitalized, and gradually suffered from

depression and then symptoms of dementia. She was accepted at St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville, where she remained for several years. There she was lovingly cared for by the Carmelite Sisters and their efficient staff, and later by Angel Care Hospice.

Often times we wonder why some sick people, like Sister Regina Ann, linger for years without having a seeming purpose in life. Yet, in God's eyes, her life was unimaginably precious and held a value that could not be measured by numerical calculations. Not one ounce of the love, time and attention given to her was wasted, and she returned that love and gratitude with a smile. Carmelite Sisters Kathleen and Raphael said that when they brought her Holy Communion, Regina Ann would sit up in bed, fold her hands and smile in anticipation. She must have been very aware of Jesus' presence in the Holy Eucharist.

Angel Care Hospice nurses Susan and Liz and hospice volunteer Liza were thrilled to receive a loving smile whenever they entered her room at St. Patrick's Residence. This all speaks of the peace she must have had in her heart. As she lived so she died, presenting herself to God in gratitude for the gift of life on January 31, 2025.

Having participated in the Rush Religious Alzheimer's Study Program since 2000, she donated her brain for further research at death. This too was her life-giving benefit to others.



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*Words and lists cannot express adequately how very grateful the
Sisters are for all our friends who give so freely to us.*

*We are especially blessed by the generosity shown by Villa
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With grateful thanks

We sincerely regret any omission or errors in our acknowledgements, and have also done our best to honor our friends' wishes to give anonymously with such generosity. Please call the Development Office (630.725.6013) with any questions or corrections.

PLANNED GIVING

Benefits of making a Planned Gift, which include wills, bequests, life insurance and other estate plans:

- Provide a lasting tribute that offers ongoing support for the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.
- Make a gift today without spending current income or retirement resources.
- Realize income tax and future estate tax advantages while providing for your heirs.
- Become a partner in ministry with the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.
- Be remembered in the prayers of the Sisters each day.

The Sisters thank you for considering a bequest to the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.

By virtue of our listing in the Official Catholic Directory, the Treasury of the United States has ruled that contributions to the Sisters fully qualify for federal income, estate and gift tax deduction purposes as provided within the law.

The legal title of our monastic community is:
Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Our FEIN is 36-2169170

Persons interested in making special gifts or bequests are asked to contact:

Development Office
Sacred Heart Monastery
1910 Maple Ave. Lisle, IL 60532
630 725-6013
development@shmlisle.org

Here and There ...

Visitors from Tanzania!

In December we had the pleasure of three Benedictine Sisters from Tanzania visiting. We welcomed back two cherished friends and quickly made a new one. The Sisters were here to meet with friends and donors and inspire continued support for their schools.

Afra Mgwama first came to Lisle in 2003. She lived with our community while studying at Benedictine University, where she earned her Bachelor's degree and two Master's degrees – in Leadership & Administration and Curriculum & Instruction. Sister Afra returned to Tanzania in February 2013, entrusted to build and develop an elementary school for pre-kindergarten to 7th grade in Sumbawanga.

Fausta Mtweve arrived in Lisle in 2012 and lived as part of our community for 7 years while pursuing her undergraduate and graduate degrees at Benedictine University. After earning her Master of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior, she returned to Tanzania in 2019. Sister Fausta has been positioned as principal at St. Gertrude Pre & Primary School in Kilimahewa, south of Dar Es Salaam.

Sister Mecktridis is the head mistress of St. Gertrude secondary school in Imiliwaha. Her school is located by the main convent of the African Benedictine Sisters of St. Gertrude. Benet Academy in Lisle maintains a connection and offers support to their “Sister High School” in Tanzania.

The three schools are thriving under the strong leadership of these amazing women and have an outstanding reputation for quality education. Their students - many of whom are boarders, and some in poverty or orphaned - score exceptionally high on national achievement exams.

For more information on the Sisters' work and accomplishments in Tanzania, visit www.friendsofimliwaha.org or Friends of Imiliwaha on Facebook.



Sisters Mecktridis, Fausta and Afra (front) enjoy Christmas spirit with Santa and Sister Helen Jilek



Sisters Mecktridis, Fausta and Afra



Sister Fausta's wish for snow in Lisle was fulfilled.



The Sisters hosted their traditional celebration with employees and non-resident volunteers. Here are some happy memories from February 23rd!





Volunteers at Sacred Heart Monastery

The Sisters are blessed with many friends who volunteer time and talents to assist us on our Board, and with our Chapel and Monastery needs.

The Sisters have certainly felt enriched and uplifted by your love and support in 2024.

We are ever grateful, and say, Thank You.

Judy Arcy
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Our Byzantine Sisters

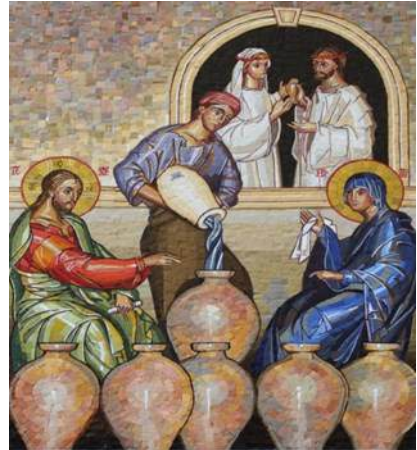
- Sr. Marion Dobos

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

“Do Whatever He Tells You” (Jn. 2:11)

Most Christians are familiar with the first miracle of Jesus at the Wedding Feast of Cana. The dialogue between mother and son continues to baffle spiritual writers as we try to break open the conversation, specific directions and definitely, non-verbal communication.

On Saturday, May 17, 2025 women came together at Kearns Spirituality Center, Allison Park, PA to reflect on this Gospel passage. Rev. Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister of Christian Associates of Southwest PA guided the group by addressing three themes: *“Noticing,” “The Exchange”* and *“Following Directions.”* The miracle of the wine was great, but greater still is the miracle of Mary’s persistence. Rev. Liddy’s reflection helped the attendees gain greater insight into the depth of a mother’s heart and who Mary must be in God’s eyes if she has such persuasiveness.



The afternoon included two presenters: Father Thomas Bailey, OSB, a member of the Benedictine Marmion Abbey in Aurora, IL and Director of Human Formation at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS Cyril & Methodius and Amanda Singel. Amanda is the Business Manager for *God With Us Publications* and Assistant to the Office of Religious Education. The title of Fr. Bailey’s talk was *“From Empty Jars to Overflowing Grace.”* He reminded participants that we are “empty jars” overflowing with grace in our loving interactions with others. Using examples from the lives of holy women we can see them as models and enjoy the benefits of their experiences during their time here on earth. Among the many examples shared, Fr. Bailey acquainted the group with the story of St. Benedict and his twin sister, St. Scholastica, which is another example of “persuasiveness” and how God works in our lives. If you are not familiar with this story, check it out.

We know wine is mentioned several times in the Bible. So is cheese. (Job 10:10, 1 Sam. 17:18, & 2 Sam. 17:29.) The day ended with an experience to *“Taste and See That the Lord is Good.”* Thank you to Amanda Singel for preparing a delightful activity on pairing wine & cheese.

This program could not have been accomplished without the help of a loving and supportive committee, the intercession of Mary and all the holy women who remind us that the spiritual does not go against having a good time!

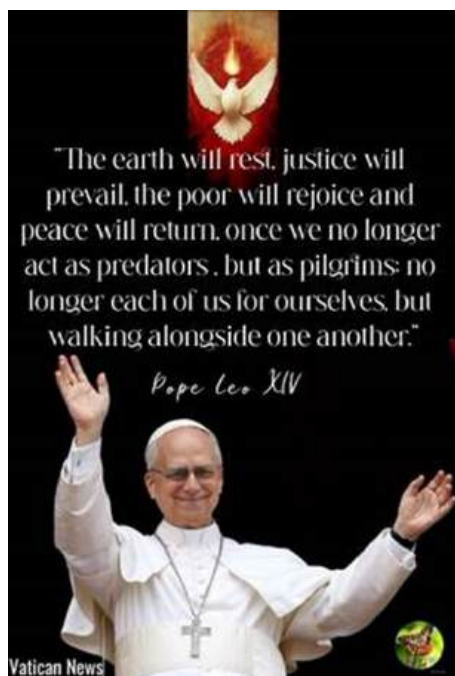
Unity in Diversity

All of us are trying to wrap our brain around a new Pope who speaks English without an accent! How grateful we are for Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost from Chicago who said, “Yes” to God’s call in accepting a responsibility that is beyond our comprehension.

Eastern Catholics especially are being mesmerized by our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. Various symbols of Eastern Catholicism began to appear at his Inauguration Mass celebrated at St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on May 18, 2025, showing that the “East” is very much a part of the Church. The Gospel at the Mass was proclaimed in two languages, Latin & Greek, reminding us that the Church breathes with two lungs, East & West. The beautiful icon of **Our Lady of Good Council** was noticeably visible. This Byzantine style Madonna, a favorite of Pope Leo’s, speaks to us about his devotion to Mary and his appreciation of icons as “windows into heaven.” At the consecration of the Mass, the pope held over the Eucharistic bread an “asterisk.” This is a star-shaped symbol placed on the paten (diskos) symbolizing the star of Bethlehem. This symbol recalls the hidden and early life of God. Before the homily Pope Leo greeted his audience with the Paschal greeting used for forty days in the Eastern Churches, “Christ is Risen! He is Truly Risen!”

A relationship with Eastern Christians is a focus of Pope Leo XIV’s pontificate. He already held an audience with participants in the Jubilee of the Eastern Catholic Churches on May 14, 2025. We look forward for more to come because there is **one church, one altar and one Lord**.

Let us continue to hold Pope Leo XIV and his ministry in our prayers.



Sacred Heart Academy Alumnae

We are searching for all of our Alumnae. If you received this issue of the LBW, but did not receive the March ~~Edho~~, or invitations to our last October Homecoming, you are on our mailing list, but not coded as a Sacred Heart Academy alumna.

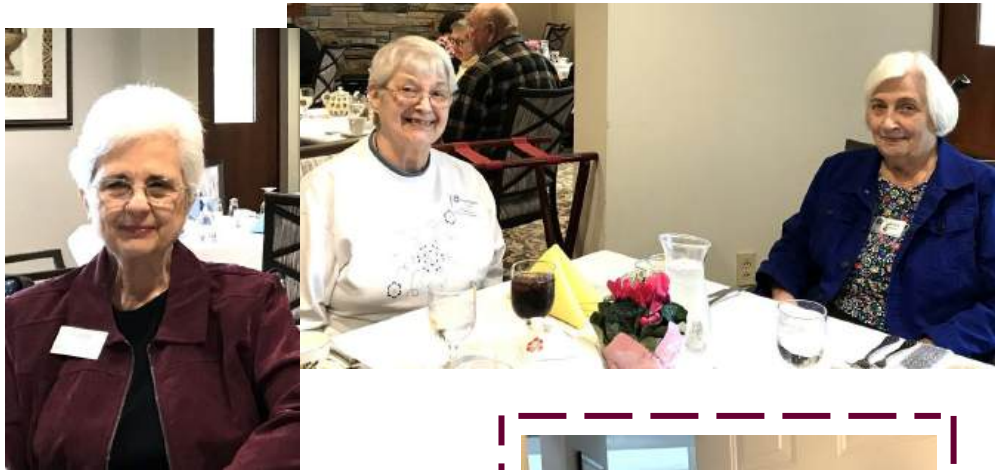
Please help us update our records by contacting Beth Hemzacek at ehemzacek@shmlisle.org, or send a note to Benedictine Sisters attn.: SHA Alumnae, 1910 Maple Ave, Lisle, IL 60532.

Homecoming is planned for Saturday, October 18th at Villa St. Benedict. Invitations will be mailed in September.



The Sisters hosted their traditional High Tea luncheon on April 26th for Villa St. Benedict residents who volunteer their time and talents at Sacred Heart Monastery. Enjoy some images from that lovely gathering...





The Sisters distributed roses to the women at Villa St. Benedict for Mother's Day ... and in June gave out treats to the men for Father's Day.



Villa St. Benedict

Villa St. Benedict remains a unique senior living community, offering a continuum of care including independent living, assisted living, and memory care. Our mission, inspired by the Benedictine tradition of hospitality, guides each aspect of the care and service we provide.

This spring, in celebration of National Nurses Week, we hosted a meaningful event honoring our nursing staff and residents who devoted their careers to the nursing profession. It was a heartwarming occasion filled with shared stories over lunch and camaraderie—an annual tradition that continues to grow in significance as we celebrate the individuals who have dedicated their lives to caring for others.

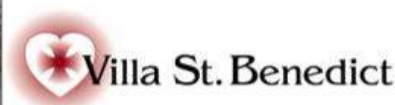
Our dedicated team members at Villa St. Benedict work diligently to care for our residents and lead with respect, warmth, and compassion. Our team members include staff from nursing, culinary, life enrichment and much more.



Residents at Villa St. Benedict enjoy access to a vibrant calendar of campus events. From themed happy hours, festive holiday celebrations, creative crafts and local excursions, there's always something happening. Our residents actively contribute their ideas, helping to shape a community life that is both engaging and fulfilling.

With a wide range of home styles in Independent and Assisted Living there are options to suit your lifestyle and provide

safety and socialization. We invite you to discover all that our vibrant campus has to offer. To schedule a personal tour or learn more about our living options and services, please contact one of our sales counselors at (630) 852-0345 or visit us online at www.villastben.org.



*Photo credits:
Emily Turner, Marketing Coordinator*

Come and Be Oblates of St. Benedict

Are you searching for more on your spiritual journey? Is your workload or busyness in competition with your relationship with God? Have you found some distance between you and Church?

Consider becoming an Oblate, sustained by the way of life presented in the Rule of Benedict.

Oblates are men and women, married or single, who hunger for a deeper experience of God. Join others in prayer, Lectio Divina, and work in the context of an extended Community.

To date we have had 40+ women and men make an Oblation (a Promise) to Sacred Heart Monastery. We meet once a month to socialize, reflect on Lectio Divina, and share the values taught in the Rule of Benedict and how these values have enhanced our lives. Oblates volunteer to assist here at the Monastery with garden work, as receptionists, praying with us at Lauds and/or Vespers, and in our Eucharistic ministries. Needless to say, they also share in the needs of their local communities.

See for yourself how your spiritual life can include a new depth and comradeship as you continue to journey through life.

Sister Karen Nykiel, O.S.B.
630-632-2216
knykiel@shmlisle.org





Lisle Benedictine Women

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Corporate Mission of the Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart is Hospitality. Directed by the Gospel and the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict, the mission is based on a commitment to use time, talent and resources of the Community for those in need.

We, the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, Illinois, proclaim hospitality to be our corporate commitment. This mandate, found in the Hebrew scriptures, the Gospels, and reiterated by Benedict to be the cornerstone for our interaction with one another (Rule of Benedict, Chapter 72) and our reception of strangers & guests (RB 53), is our particular corporate response to the needs of this 21st century.

We are proclaiming our commitment to hospitality as one significant way of being

counter-cultural in the midst of global fear and mistrust. We are determined to create an environment of non-violence among ourselves that will allow our own members to experience gentle warmth and reverence for the gift each is to the community. We will create an atmosphere in which the stranger will be recognized as a guest - received as Christ Himself - the gift of God among us.

We are willing to risk and model that strangers, coming together as friends, can nourish one another in the prayerful atmosphere of cenobitic community, can share resources, can host and reverence the other as sacred. In the act of "opening our door" to the other, we in fact open our hearts - emptying ourselves of ourselves. This will be our gift to those "who knock." With open hands, we receive the gift they are to us.