



Lisle Benedictine Women

Vol. 43 No. 2

Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2020



All guests
are to be
welcomed
as Christ

*The Rule
of St. Benedict,
chapter 53*

Message from the Prioress...

Dear friends,

Who cannot begin a letter to you, our friends, without recognizing the effect the coronavirus has had and is having upon our world? Be it our economy, our joblessness, our lack of hospital visits, our educational systems, our political world and all, it has not kept us from being in touch with one another by phone, email, zoom, and FaceTime.

In spite of the pandemic, I am going to focus on our exciting 125th anniversary year.



Who would have thought that our long term goal in 2016 “to plan ways to celebrate in 2020” would have been so filled with joy and good things?

Who would have known then that the former auditorium of Sacred Heart Academy for girls would have turned into a wonderful gathering space called the “Great Room” in time for us to have a huge reception of guests after celebrating a Jubilee Mass on February 2, 2020, and listening to a homily by our Chaplain, Father Becket Franks, entitled “Flames of the Divine: A Homily on the Occasion of the 125 Anniversary of the Founding of Sacred Heart Monastery.”

It was in that homily, after summarizing the many ministries with which we had been involved, that Father Becket turned to us, the sisters, all seated together and said: “For 125 years, you looked out for us. He concluded by saying, “We-all-of-us-here-today, thank you.” You applauded. He went on to say, “**Now**, it is time that you look out for one another. **Now**, it is time to capture the moment to bear fruit with one another. At your zenith, you numbered about 175 sisters. Today you are a community of 17. In these, your golden years, the scriptures tell you how to look out for one another. I can tell you to put on the mind of Christ and look out for another’s interests. I can tell you to become flames of the Divine for one another.” Then he reminded us of suggestions by our foundress, Mother Nepomucene Jaeger, found in her bookmark “Learn to Forget.” You, our readers and friends, should know that with our diminishing numbers and our aging community we are “looking out for one another” by actively preparing for our “preferred future.”

Elsewhere in this issue, you will learn of some legacy gifts we have provided for our Chapel, our residents and ourselves: a logo window above our reliquary, adorned chapel doors, and a statue of our founder in front of Villa St. Benedict. Additionally, Kevin Gray (a nephew of Sister Carolyn) has crafted a spectacular prayerful reflection place made from a tree he cut down on our property.

Continue visiting our Website, Facebook or Instagram daily to follow our 125 years of history. Sister Carolyn and Sister Christine are the primary writers.

No one can foretell when our closing will be. However, between now and February 2, 2021, we will have celebrated the glorious prayer-filled time of the Advent/Christmas season. Time to reflect and be grateful and to continue praying for all of you to our God who gave His Son to us to show us how to live and by his death and Resurrection has given us eternal life.

Let us pray for each other and for a vaccine for this pandemic.

Sister Mary Bratsosky, O.S.B.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!

On October 2, Sister Lois Jean Jensik, OSB quietly celebrated 65 years of Monastic Profession with her community. Join us in wishing her continued blessings!

L ~ Stands for LOYAL. Lois Jean is known to stand by our Sisters, her family, and friends. She is LOYAL to all of them, keeps in touch with them and prays for them.

O ~ Stands for OBSERVING. Whenever things go amiss in her world or whenever someone's health wanes and then recovers or whenever someone becomes more reputable, Lois Jean notices which shows she has been OBSERVING.

I ~ Stands for INTERESTING. Lois Jean finds topics like the game show "Jeopardy" and biographical sketches like the "Chicken Soup" series very INTERESTING and has an INTERESTING way of relating the events or stories.

S ~ Stands for STORY-TELLING. STORY-TELLING is an art and Sister Lois Jean has a penchant and talent to tell the story in a way that captures the punch line to evoke the joke or the happy ending.

J ~ Stands for JOYFUL. Lois Jean finds the Joy of the Gospel, the Apostolic Exhortation written by Pope Francis a powerful reminder to be joyous because the Gospel is the most JOYFUL news ever written. Lois Jean knows Pope Francis teaches and practices what he preaches.

E ~ Stands for ENERGETIC. In her own way, Sister Lois Jean overcomes her bouts of sleepiness and always emerges from her slump to be present for our daily horarium of prayer and all community functions. This requires a mind-set of ENERGETIC practices such as her daily physical exercises.

A ~ Stands for AMIABLE. Did you know that a person with a curly head of hair is a sign of an AMIABLE person? That is Sister Lois Jean.

N ~ Stands for NEWS-INFORMER. Whenever we need to know when the next political debate will be or when the wake or funeral will be for someone we know, or when a special TV program is to be shown, our NEWS-INFORMER is . . . Sister Lois Jean!

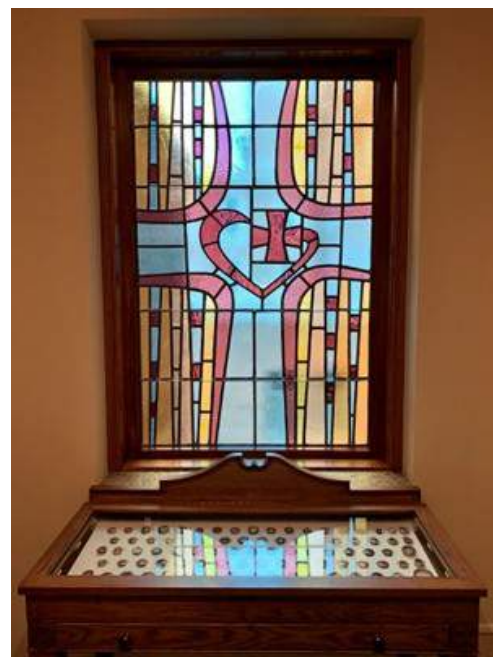


Acronym created by Sister Christine Kouba

Celebrating 125 years!

Our first jubilee gift to ourselves and those who enter our chapel was a stained glass window installed above our reliquary. The artwork was created by Sister Emmanuel Pieper, a Benedictine of St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, Kentucky. The stained glass was crafted by Marie Tatina, who had also created the windows in our monastic choir, as well as re-leaded the stained glass windows in our Chapel. Our maintenance employee Eric Shumaker carefully installed the window and varnished the frame.

The blessing took place on June 19, 2020, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We asked that those who pass by it on their way to Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel would find inspiration from the monastery's logo, the heart signed with a cross. May the cross remind us that Jesus gifted us with our salvation.



We blessed our newly installed chapel doors on September 17th, the feast of St. Hildegarde of Bingen, who, among her many gifts was known for putting her visions into spiritual thoughts and art. Suburban Door Check & Lock Service, Inc. ordered and installed these beautiful fire-rated doors, and John Caretti & Company repaired the terrazzo at the door opening. Mike Holtz of Der Holtzmacher designed the doors, stained and sealed the doors, and created and installed the grape and leaf design.

We prayed “Welcoming God, we open this Chapel Door as a sign of the warmth of our Benedictine and Your hospitality. As people come and go, may they experience the blessedness of Your gracious presence with us. Gracious God, may we be as open to others as You have welcomed us into Your heart.”

Daily posts (February 2, 2020 - February 2, 2021) continue on our website, Facebook and Instagram documenting our 125 years of history. Join us on our journey!



On September 21st, a sculpture of St. Benedict, created by Larry Johnson of LK Johnson Studio, was placed at the front entrance of the Villa Center. This “spot” had been prepared at the inception of Villa St. Benedict. Don Lupo, Lupo Masonry Restoration, was in charge of constructing the base, transporting and installing the statue.

The Sisters had commissioned this statue as a gift to Villa St. Benedict and worked with the artist to make sure the details expressed Benedict’s definition of hospitality: offering warmth, acceptance and joy when welcoming another. May all be received as Christ [RB 53].

The blessing of this statue will be planned for next spring. You can check out St. Benedict’s warm welcome from Subiaco Drive!

*(L-R) Eric Shumaker,
Sister Judith Ann Heble,
Don Lupo, Sister Helen Jilek,
Larry Johnson*



All-House Rosary

October 7th is the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Usually, and for many years on this day, we would all gather at the Grotto to pray the rosary.

This year at 3:00pm, we coordinated a Campus-wide Rosary while safely practicing our social distancing. Our special intention was expressed through Kerry Weber's "Prayer Amid an Epidemic."

The Life Enrichment Team and Benedale residents prayed at the Grotto



The residents of the Villa homes met with prayer leaders in 4 separate neighborhoods





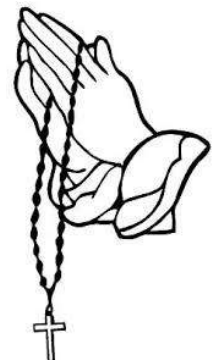
The independent living residents of Villa St. Benedict gathered in the Great Room



Staff prayed the rosary outside

The Benedictine Sisters prayed the rosary in their Chapter room

Participation was impressive and the prayers fervent!



A Community Project

As Sister Carolyn Sieg was reviewing the book Pleading, Cursing, Praising: Conversing With God Through the Psalms, authored by Sister Irene Nowell, OSB, she was intrigued by Sister Irene's statement that Psalm 150 is an unfinished psalm. The Psalm praises the Lord and says where and how to praise God, but does not say why. Sister Irene then encouraged her readers to write their own psalm with personal reasons for God's praise as a continuation of Psalm 150.

Sister Carolyn saw this as an opportunity to have the community participate in telling their story of praise in gratitude for our Benedictine lives, to remember our 125th Anniversary. Every Sister had a chance to participate. Sister Carolyn asked Sisters Jo Anne Form and Christine Kouba to join her in compiling similar thoughts of the Sisters to form a final version of our own Psalm 150.

Psalm 150

*Praise God in the holy sanctuary;
give praise in the mighty dome of
heaven.*

*Give praise for God's mighty deeds,
praise for God's great majesty.
Give praise with blasts upon the
horn, praise with harp and lyre.*

*Give praise with tambourines and
dance, praise with flutes and strings.
Give praise with crashing symbols,
praise with sounding cymbals.*

*Let everything that has breath
give praise to the LORD! Alleluia!*

Psalm 150

*Composed by the Lisle Benedictine Sisters
for their 125th Anniversary*

Praise the Lord for the founders of this community who set the pace and fulfilled God's plan. They had the courage to remain faithful to their monastic profession even in the midst of hardship and uncertainty, always trusting in God's faithful presence with them.

Praise the Lord for the generations of Sisters before us who planned well for the future which was always on their mind. Now we are the beneficiaries of what they sacrificed in order to provide for us.

Praise the Lord for the Council Planning Team who are stewarding our resources. The quality time, effort and involvement with outside experts have comforted the community with peace and hope for the continuation of our Benedictine Charism in the future.

Praise the Lord for the Monks of St. Procopius Abbey who from the beginning of the poverty-stricken years of our founding, upheld our community with their brotherly encouragement and financial support, and through these 125 years have maintained a brother/sister relationship with us similar to that of Saints Benedict and Scholastica.

Praise the Lord for all our benefactors: our families, friends, volunteers, as well as our Villa St. Benedict Residents whose friendship and financial support are a blessing to us.

Praise the Lord for the ongoing developments of Vatican II: in the Liturgy, in promoting justice issues related to the role of women and in the call to all religious communities to be a discerning presence in our alienated world.

Praise the Lord for the great rewards of living in our Benedictine community as we strive to live in fidelity to prayer and work with joy and hope as we share our time and talents with each other.

Praise the Lord for the daily rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours. How meaningful these precious, sacred times have become as we chant the Divine Office, uniting our hearts and minds with the universal church on earth and in heaven.

Praise the Lord for our place of worship, our chapel. Its adorned environment has surrounded us with the inspiration, peace and beauty that is needed to be aware of the magnificent presence of God and to focus on Jesus in the Eucharist.

Praise God for our chaplain whose ministry involves administering the sacraments, giving personal, pastoral care to each of us and for his relevant words of wisdom as he challenges us to become witnesses of the Gospel.

Praise the Lord for our devoted families, employees and volunteers. Their vital service and care extends and revitalizes our worthy Benedictine charism.

Praise the Lord for our beautiful grounds as we enjoy nature walks in the changing seasons and see God's beauty all around us.

Praise the Lord for the UNKNOWN challenges of our preferred future while in retrospect, we know that God is already in that future with us. ALLELUIA!

Praise the Lord for our involvement with our international students with whom we share our Benedictine life.

Praise God for the example of our residents who are loyal and grateful supporters of our ministries. By their presence and friendship they keep us energized in our hospitality.

Praise the Lord for our monastic life which requires us to stay at the table, facing the tears, joys and sorrows of our daily lives without looking for greener pastures but persevering on our journey toward our desired home.

Praise the Lord for our community as we continue to be a support to one another on this monastic journey as God's faithful, joyful, hopeful followers of Jesus in our transformation stage.

Praise the Lord for the success of Villa St. Benedict as our corporate ministry, for Benedictine (formerly BHS) from Duluth who co-sponsor Villa St. Benedict and for the Duluth Benedictine Sisters who remain the spiritual advisors promoting the core values of hospitability, respect, stewardship and justice: hallmarks for the compassionate care the Sisters advocate.

Gratitude statement from the International Sisters to the Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery:
Praise the Lord for the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery who have welcomed us, as students, to live our Benedictine life with them. The Sisters not only provide us with food and shelter and other necessities but help us with our studies. How grateful we are to live with them in this foreign country and yet feel at home here in the USA.



Queen of Heaven Monastery

Sister Barbara Pavlik, OSB

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever! Greetings from Warren, Ohio!

The year 2020 has been a year none of us will ever forget! It has brought about many changes in our lives. This pandemic, and mostly the “aging process,” have also affected the lives of the sisters. There has been a steady decline in the health of our sisters. Caregivers were and are a necessity.

In chapter 36 of his Rule, St. Benedict says that “before all things and above all things care is to be taken of the sick (and elderly), so that they may be served in every deed as Christ Himself.”

Queen of Heaven Monastery has four members remaining (Sister Agnes Knapik, Sister Mary Martha Kacmarek, Sister Marion Dobos and Sister Barbara Pavlik). This past year, we met many times to discuss the options open to us to determine our future. We agreed that we want to stay together as a community. We want to remain relatively close to Warren. Also, in our last days, we want to live and be cared for “at home” (wherever “home” may be).

In August, after discernment and much prayer, and with the blessing of our prioress, Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, Sister Barbara contacted the Humility of Mary Sisters, to inquire about our living with them, in their assisted living area at their motherhouse in Villa Maria, PA. Without a moment’s hesitation, their answer was an absolute “yes.” All of our requests were honored, and even more was offered to us at the Villa. That was really a blessing from God and pure evidence that His hand is guiding the process.

Sisters Agnes and Mary Martha were in need of the most assistance at this time. They moved to the Villa on September 22nd. (Sister Marion and Sister Barbara will remain at the Monastery at Infant of Prague Manor, continuing in their ministries at the present time.)

All change has its difficult moments. The greatest difficulty for the sisters was to leave the people at SS. Peter and Paul Church, where they have served in a labor of love for over 50 years. The sisters developed many friendships in the parish family and in St. Benedict’s Auxiliary. Both Sister Agnes and Sister Mary Martha have special ties with the Oblates of St. Benedict, because they have been the moderators of that organization for many years. It is hard to say “goodbye” to such wonderful people, with whom such close friendships that have developed over that 50 year period.

The parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul wanted to make certain that they would not be forgotten. Sister Agnes and Sister Mary Martha each received a bedspread with a Byzantine Cross sewn in the middle of the spread. The parishioners then signed their names and their greetings on the lower parts of the spread. Every day, when they see their unique gift, the sisters are reminded of the love and the prayers of the people they have served for so many years.

(continued on next page)



(Queen of Heaven continued)

The sisters receive excellent care and are adjusting to their new environment. Sister Mary Martha has even begun to play the piano again and the other sisters love her “concerts”. The sisters send their love and good wishes and are happy in their new home.



Retirement Fund for Religious December 13, 2020 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



The Blessing of Bushes on September 30th included plantings in memory of Sister Barbara Ann Svec, OSB and Sister Mary Agnes Kallus, OSB, as former employees of Villa St. Benedict.

in loving memory:

- Felino R. Adion
- Bobby Baunto
- Carmen Benes
- Marion Burnett
- Shashi Chandra, MD
- Marthe Cine-Pierre
- Gilbert Damayo
- Choupette Darbonne
- Stojanka Gorgevska
- Betty Hays
- Sister Mary Agnes Kallus, OSB
- Thelma A. Kolar
- Justino Leal
- Jesus Monarrez
- Jim Nickel
- Tom Norris
- Bernard Plucinski
- Juan Rodriguez
- Sister Barbara Ann Svec, OSB



Another blessing to celebrate 125 years!

Kevin Gray, nephew of Sister Carolyn Sieg, OSB and owner of Undercutter Tree Services, combined his scientific knowledge of trees, carpentry and artistic design skills to preserve and transform a tree from our grounds into a beautiful memorial gift for our 125th anniversary. Removing the tree three years ago, he meticulously counted rings to determine that the red oak had graced our campus since 1834 - the oldest tree on the grounds.



Despite health challenges, Kevin was inspired to create a memorial on the holy ground where the tree once grew. He constructed the table from a cross slice of the tree, leaving the bark encasing its natural shape of a heart. This heart makes its appearance within the tree trunk shortly before the Sisters purchased the land in 1905. Logs reclaimed from the tree were also formed and sculpted into a bench. While devoting himself to this project, Kevin's artistic eye also discerned angel wings (signifying God's protection) and a Tao cross in the wood.

Our Sisters are thrilled and grateful to Kevin for this magnificent treasure he so thoughtfully created for us!

(L-R) S. Jo Anne Form, S. Mary Bratrsovsky, Kevin Gray, S. Carolyn Sieg

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, 2020 –
January 1, 2021



Villa St. Benedict

Kathy DiCristina

Villa St. Benedict continues to address the challenges of keeping residents safe, healthy, and happy during the pandemic, and the measures we have in place are working. Wearing masks, taking temperatures, and social distancing are everyday occurrences. The resiliency of our residents and staff to adapt to new ways of operating is evident in the many exciting, safe activities that keep spirits high and residents engaged virtually and interacting safely.

Considering face-to-face social interaction was inhibited by the pandemic, Happy Hour took on new meaning as residents gathered outside their homes while the culinary team and other staff drove the golf cart to hand-deliver libations to a thirsty crowd.



Zumba in the street kept residents moving and grooving.

Certainly, a three-wheeled bicycle ice cream cart satisfied everyone's sweet tooth.





While our annual Alzheimer's Walk was limited, residents shared their talents and commitment to end Alzheimer's Disease by crafting posters with meaningful messages to inspire the walkers.

Of course, COVID-19 has changed everything we do, and our clinical staff is instrumental in maintaining a routine, lessening disruption, and creating a calming environment when life may be chaotic and confusing. This past May and June, Nurses Week and CNA Week were opportunities to celebrate their work and dedication to keeping our residents safe, peaceful and happy.

Looking ahead: opening Benedale, our assisted living, and Abbey Lane, our memory care, to families and friends is reliant on numerous factors outlined by the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. However, in the meantime, our residents are discovering unique ways to socialize, enjoy their day, and give back, all while staying safe.

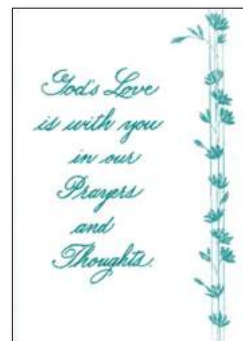
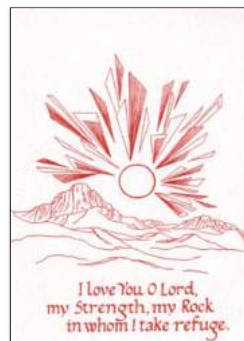
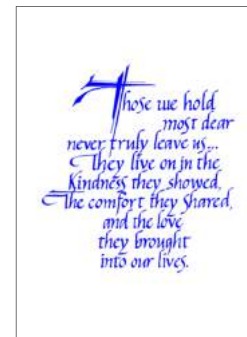
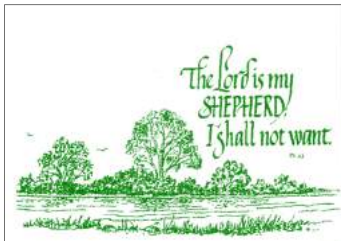




Lisle Benedictine Women

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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
