

# *Lisle Benedictine Women*

Vol. 44 No. 2

Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2021



Dear Friends of the Benedictine Sisters,

With our grateful thanks for your love and kindness,  
we remember you in a Novena of Masses celebrated in our chapel  
December 24, 2021 – January 1, 2022



# Message from the Prioress...

## The power of the word "WORD" in Sacred Scripture

When I was growing up before Vatican II, Masses always ended with the recitation of the proclamation from the Gospel of John Chapter 1.

I confess, when I heard that long ending at Mass, I didn't "get" the powerful meaning of the theology of John's words. I now know and appreciate that the WORD is God incarnate, the fulfillment of the protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15.

Among the many teachings found in this Chapter, I want to reflect on God's WORD, His Promises, His enduring love, and that the darkness of the world cannot defeat the WORD.

I share with you these verses: "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was in God's presence and the WORD was God." John 1:1

"The WORD became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory: the glory of an only begotten Son, coming from the Father, filled with **enduring love**." John 1:14

Unlike "I give you my word" or "I promise" statements that are often broken or taken lightly, God's WORD, spoken or written is irreversible. Why? Because God is God, not human.

A short time ago, reflecting on the Good Shepherd parable, Bishop Robert Barron asks: Who would be so crazy as to leave 99 sheep in danger to go find the lost one? Then he answers: God. That is God's nature. That is what

He does. Bishop Barron quotes **Catherine of Siena who writes that God is *pazzo d'amore* (crazy in love). God is as crazy in love for you as if you were the only one in the world.**

In the midst of a world filled with darkness and tensions, The WORD can and will fill it with Hope. He has done it many times before. Recall Isaiah 9:2: "The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light." Know that the darkness of the world cannot defeat the WORD (John 1:5) because the WORD created the world and understands everything that has gone into it. (John 1:3)

Pope Francis is challenging us to do our part to live in light, not darkness, by beginning preparations for a World Wide Synod, a world-wide listening tour. I encourage you to let the goals of the World Wide Synod be enhanced because of your involvement. Let us together experience a great light!

**May this Advent/Christmas season find you falling more in love with this crazy lover who sent His son to show us how to live and die so that we can have life eternally with Him as He promised.**

**A blessed Advent, a Merry Christmas and a Hope-filled New Year be yours!**

*Sister Mary Bratsonsky, O.S.B.*



# May She Rest in the Peace of the Lord



**Sister Rosalie Marie Major, OSB  
(a.k.a. Sister Mary Bernice)  
September 26, 1917 – May 16, 2021**

*Written by Sister Christine Kouba, OSB*

Sister Rosalie Marie Major was born in Chicago on September 26, 1917 to Albert and Zofia Major. She was baptized “Rosalie” at St. Adalbert’s Church on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7th. (Marie was her confirmation name.) She was the fifth child in a family of seven siblings, one of whom was adopted at three months of age after a train wreck left him orphaned.

Rosalie attended a Chicago public elementary school in her neighborhood and took ballet and folk dance lessons with a dance instructor in a distant Chicago neighborhood. However, as a youngster, she was able to travel by

herself on the streetcar across town to meet her trainer. Later, with her brother Tony she learned acrobatics and the two of them performed regularly wherever invited, in theaters or public parks. She was immensely proud of her parents, who came from Poland with an enterprising spirit and were successful in business owning a variety store in the Harrison Park area. She enjoyed her life in Chicago and felt grateful for the many opportunities she had there.

Being a lively teenager who loved meeting new people, she became friends with a young group at St. Vitus parish who spoke highly of Father Hilary Jurica, OSB, the weekend assistant priest from St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle. Her friends were captivated by him because of his interest in engaging youth to take Saturday adventure trips to the Chicago zoo, museums, parks or even places of vocational interest. She began to join her new friends, and Father Hilary became her mentor as well as being influential in introducing her to the Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Lisle. This connection set her on the path in becoming interested in religious life. She enrolled at Sacred Heart Academy for her high school education, and after graduating in 1936 she entered Sacred Heart Monastery to discern her vocation by living the traditions of the Rule of St. Benedict with the Benedictine Sisters. After two years she decided to stay on, trusting in God’s love and mercy by professing her first vows in 1938 and final vows in 1941.



Sister Rosalie received her B.A. degree in elementary education from DePaul University in Chicago, but continued to do course work along with teaching wherever she was assigned.

Teaching primary children would be her life's major ministry, as she proved to be a conscientious teacher who focused on the well-being of each child. Her teaching in parochial schools spanned twenty-five years in Illinois schools: St. Michael, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Vitus in Chicago, St. Joseph Orphanage and St. Joan of Arc in Lisle, St. Ambrose in Crest Hill, as well as St. Paul School in Fort Worth, Texas.

After her parochial school experience, she ventured into preparing herself for the Montessori method of education. She began taking correspondence courses for her certification from the Saint Nicholas Training Center with faculties in London, England and Edinburgh, Scotland. She continued at the Lausanne Montessori School in Memphis, Tennessee, completing laboratory practice of the Montessori method. In 1968, with her academic background, she was ready to teach and was hired for the Montessori Schools in Winfield and Elmhurst.

In 1970, the Montessori School method attracted interest from families in Lisle and plans were made to rent unused space in our monastery

building for the first phase of the school operation. Sister Rosalie was chosen to be the directress. When the school was gradually in full session, it showed signs of superior achievement with Sister Rosalie in charge. President Howard Reese of Reese Group, Inc., who had two children in the school, wrote a letter of congratulations to the board of directors, stating: "Sister Rosalie has provided a needed and rare combination of many talents. She was respected by all factions involved in our struggles during the time we were attempting to create a new Montessori learning environment. Her goal was to provide the focus on the students' welfare which was clearly instrumental in the success of the school."

Sister Rosalie continued to be the directress until 1975, when the school



moved from our monastery location with plans for new construction and expansion. Sister did not relocate to the new place, but due to her outstanding leadership, Lisle Montessori School was renamed Rose

Hill Montessori in honor of Sister Rosalie. Rose Hill is still thriving today at 1203 Lisle Place, giving 3-6 year olds a strong academic foundation for lifelong learning.

Though Sister Rosalie's formal classroom teaching was completed, she would continue with other important ministries in her future with ready

enthusiasm. As a loving and charitable religious sister, she was able to touch many people in various needs everywhere she went. Dr. Enas was searching for a receptionist who would welcome patients as well as handle office work. He was pleased to find Sister Rosalie, who did her work with such joy and energy that everyone there took on the same spirit. A few years after hiring her as office manager, Dr. Enas left his practice to research cardiac disease internationally. Sister Rosalie came to take over miscellaneous duties in the monastery with a willing heart. Her first desire was to learn to use the computer to be able to email her relatives in Poland. Then she began taking charge of monastery guests, taught Francisco how to use the dish machine and helped him wash dishes, made welcome banners for new residents' doors and visited new residents, led the residents in praying the rosary every afternoon in the chapel, became a companion to the residents for Bingo games, taught our international Sister-students American protocol, and found other ways to be active. When she could no longer walk easily, she luckily inherited a motorized scooter and would go speeding through the long hallways to resident rooms. Though she never drove a car in her life, she became a competent scooter driver and loved it. She even ventured to drive outside in the summer months, always arriving at our Lady of Lourdes Grotto with confidence.

May 16, 2021, on the glorious feast day of the Ascension of our Lord, she too rose to the heights of Heaven to be with God for all eternity. How blessed and joyful her soul must be now after suffering earthly pain of her body. At a hundred and three and a half years old, she is leaving us a legacy of Benedictine hospitality. As St. Benedict says: "All guests who present

themselves are to be welcomed as Christ." Well, that is exactly what she did for she knew that Christ would say to her when she died: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matt 25:35). In her dying moments, friends and family members would tell us how much she meant to them and how much they appreciated her hospitality, always wondering if they were fed and had a place to stay, consoling them at times of suffering, carrying them in prayer with a tender heart. How often she told us community members: "We have so many blessings here at Sacred Heart Monastery." We all agreed, knowing that she herself was one of our most gracious blessings.



## “Your Fantastic Mind” - Emmy Award Winner!

“Your Fantastic Mind”, a television series partnership between the Emory Brain Health Center at Emory University and Georgia Public Broadcasting, was recently honored with six Emmy Awards from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Southeast Chapter. The Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, Illinois, received one of these prestigious Emmy Awards for their role in the Religious category.

The Sisters in Lisle have been part of the Chicago based Rush Religious Orders Study since the year 2000. The study actually started taking shape in 1993 when the Religious Orders of sisters, brothers and priests in the United States were asked to join this study, chosen for the regularity of their life style. Since then, over 1400 Religious have signed up as participants. The Lisle Benedictine Sisters were eager to participate, having hopes of stemming

this uncontrolled fast-growing Alzheimer’s disease. Requirements for participants are participation in mental and physical tests each year, and brain donation after death, to enable further studies.



Rush Alzheimer’s Research Study Supervisor Tracey Nowakowski, MA presents the Emmy Award to Sisters Christine, De Paul, Lois Jean and Mary.

On the test dates of August 2019, Kenny Hamilton from Emory University in Atlanta approached the Sisters to ask if he could film them during their Rush program testing. Kenny also covered the Sisters fulfilling daily activities, including participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. Jaye Watson, Kenny’s wife, was also involved, as co-executive producer, host and writer of the video, as well as narrator in the film. She brought a graceful touch to the setting making the Sisters comfortable, and both Kenny and Jaye appreciated the Sisters’ light-hearted, life-giving ways. The Sisters know that their cooperation in this study will serve the common good of humanity. They are grateful to be able to provide some significant data, a resourceful tool for scientists to learn more about the

properties of the brain as they search for the cause of Alzheimer’s disease. You can watch the film “Your Fantastic Mind” on this comprehensive study at <https://video.gpb.org/video/memory-qwrgkm/>

The Current Sacred Heart Monastery Participants in the study are:

Sisters Mary Bratrsovsky, Lois Jean Jensik, Christine Kouba, DePaul Stava and Regina Ann Weissmann.

The Deceased Participants were:

Sisters Margaret Bebb, Patricia Fallon, Benita Jasurda, Andrea Kallus, Angelica Kallus, Josephine Kallus, Mary Agnes Kallus, Virginia Kallus, Roberta Knakal and Celine Laketek.



Sister De Paul with the Emmy

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## *Congratulations and blessings!*

This year our Jubilarians privately and quietly celebrated their profession anniversaries:



Sister Margaret Mary Schima, OSB  
70 years



Sister De Paul Stave, OSB  
70 years



Sister Carolyn Sieg, OSB  
65 years



Sister Judith Ann Heble, OSB  
60 years

## *Around the grounds*



St. Scholastica's cemetery received caring attention: trees and undergrowth trimmed, statues cleaned and restored, and the sign repainted. Much gratitude to our maintenance employee Eric Shumaker for his focus on detail and diligent hard work!

In honor of Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7), we gathered with Villa residents to pray at the Grotto, as has been our custom for many years.



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*Around  
the grounds*



# Queen of Heaven Monastery

Our Sisters in Warren, Ohio

## Sister Mary Martha Kacmarek

December 4, 1932 ~ September 2, 2021

(age 88)

Villa Marie, PA - Sister Mary Martha Kacmarek, OSB, 88, of Warren passed away Thursday evening, September 2, 2021 at Villa Maria Community Center in Villa Marie, PA.

Sister Martha was born on December 4, 1932 in Chicago, the daughter of Joseph Kacmarek and Mary (Gorel) Kacmarek.

In 1954 Sr. Mary Martha graduated from St. Xavier College in Chicago, earning her bachelor's degree. Shortly after, she entered into formation in religious life with the Sisters of St. Basil in the late 1950's. For health reasons, she was unable to continue with the Sisters of St. Basil, which led her to the Sisters of Saint Benedict. She entered into formation on June 29, 1966 and made her Final Profession into the Order on June 5, 1971 at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Warren. In 1974, Sister earned her Master's of Science in mathematics degree from the University of Notre Dame.



Over the years, Sr. Mary Martha served in many different roles, most notably as an ECF teacher and math teacher at various schools and as the Treasurer for her Community. Her most significant role came as a hospice volunteer, where she found her true ministry. She tried to live her life according to the psalm, "One thing I ask of the Lord, that I will seek after: To live in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." Psalm 27:4. In 2018, she celebrated 50 years, her Golden Jubilee. Sr. Mary Martha was loved and cherished by many and will be deeply missed by her Community, her family and all those whose lives she touched.

Sister Mary Martha was preceded in death by 7 of her siblings. She is survived by her oldest brother, Joseph Kacey of Chicago, his wife Sally, sister-in-law Mary Ann Kacmarek and many nieces, nephews and cousins of whom she was very fond and with whom she corresponded frequently.

A Liturgical Service for Sister Mary Martha was held on September 7, 2021 at Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Warren, with Very Rev. Richard Lambert and Rev. Kevin Marks presiding. Arrangements were entrusted to the professional care of Sinchak & Sons Funeral Home of Warren.

## Here and There . . .



We are thankful that each year volunteers take time to assist Sister Mary in Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto at Sacred Heart Monastery. This fall we had two groups of helpers: a group from Benedictine University during Orientation Week in September (*left*) and nursing students from Lewis University in October (*above*).

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### Retirement Fund for Religious December 11-12, 2021 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 creation and blessing of St. Benedict statue*

On July 11th—the Feast of St. Benedict, the statue of St. Benedict that the Sisters gifted to Villa St. Benedict was blessed.

Heaven provided its own blessing that day in the form of rain.

Larry Johnson, who created this magnificent sculpture, provided a most interesting presentation to the Sisters, residents and employees on the process, from the statue's inception to its installation on September 23, 2020. He elaborated on the meaning of the statue and the process of its fabrication.



Larry Johnson  
*photo credit:  
Judi Egan*



# Here and There ...

## SYNOD 2021 -2023

On October 17, 2021, the Bishop of Joliet, Bishop Ronald J. Hicks, opened the Synod for the Joliet Diocese at a Mass in St. Raymond's Cathedral. Sisters Mary Bratrsovsky and Christine Kouba represented the SHM community.

The Synod that Pope Francis proposes is a gathering of all the people of God who will be "Vademecum" or "journeying together" to their eternal home. This involves listening to the Holy Spirit, who enlightens every person, and listening to each other as we begin to hear all voices included in the Body of Christ. This is a new meaning of "church" for us, but actually is a concept rooted in the early biblical Christian way of worship, sharing its mission in a worldwide body of being holy, missionary and universally inclusive. All God's people are called to be missionary disciples.

You are welcome to view and listen to Bishop Ronald Hicks' homily from this Mass: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission" as he wonderfully explains the meaning of the Synod: <https://youtu.be/MH0Y1jCGkiY>

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### "Essentials of Monastic Life"

The Sisters' annual retreat in June was led by Father Joseph Feders, OSB of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN.

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### Virtual Homecoming

While Covid precautions kept us from meeting in person, a group of Sacred Heart Academy Alumnae did gather via Zoom on October 16th! Classes from 1946 through 1964 were represented at this reunion.



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](https://facebook.com/fr.becket)



We plan to resume our offerings of spirituality programs — Tuesday Night with the Sisters, classes and presentations — when it is determined safe to do so.

# Villa St. Benedict

Nicole Rich

Looking back at the past year and a half, most people would agree that the capacity for human beings to adapt and change is amazing. When we look at the past six months, the pandemic (which we all prayed would be over) remains front and center while we also navigate other events that happen during normal times. However, these events can feel less normal and more impactful during a pandemic!

We watched the professional careers of multiple people come to a beautiful conclusion: retirement. Kathy DiCristina, Karen Kramer, and Judi Egan all wished their VSB family a fond farewell as they began their next life chapter. As one chapter concludes, a new one is written: this one welcomes Nicole Rich as Executive Director and Helen Schroot as Business Office Manager, while congratulating Abby Rodriguez on her promotion to Housekeeping Supervisor.

It is also nice to embrace moments of normalcy that help others: VSB residents and staff worked together to fundraise to help fund the search for a cure for Alzheimer's. The annual Alzheimer's Walk raised over \$4,000.00! It was a wonderful way to wrap up celebrating National Assisted Living Week, which also included a pet parade, Aztec dancers, and a car show.

Normal life continued in more mundane, but important, ways too: the roof was replaced and renovation of the Country Kitchen and the Gathering Place began in Benedale. We are excited to see and enjoy the results of these projects as we continue moving forward into our future: may it be bright and blessed for all of us!





# ALZ WALK 2021

VILLA ST. BENEDICT



# CAR SHOW

Villa Saint Benedict



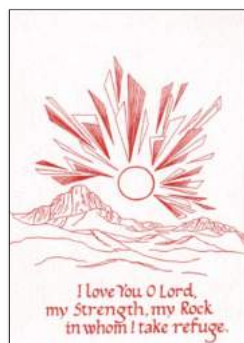
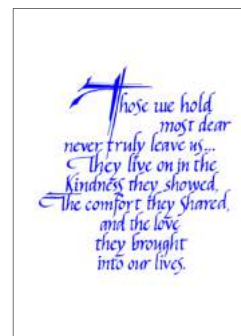
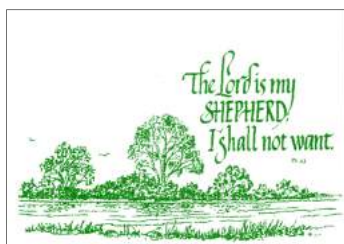


*Lisle Benedictine Women*

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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](http://www.shmlisle.org)

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