

# Lisle Benedictine Women

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Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2024



*A shoot  
will grow  
from the  
branch of  
Jesse,  
and a  
branch  
from his  
roots will  
bear fruit.  
The  
Spirit of  
the Lord  
will rest  
on him.*

*Isaiah 11:1-2*

# Message from the Prioress...

Roots!

Tis the season to be grateful - but when isn't there a time to be grateful? As I write this reflection we are celebrating Thanksgiving. What a powerful national holiday to remind us of the need to be thankful. How many of us gather, enjoy traditional foods, and ponder our roots by sharing stories? Often these family reflections are about members who are no longer alive, but recalling their roots continues to give us new life and reasons for which we are grateful.



Speaking of roots, the fall bulbs planted in our Grotto are becoming comfortable with the rain, cold and coming snow. Gardening, too, is a lesson in life. Seeds or bulbs need lots of care from their beginning and throughout their life to grow their best. When one thinks of the cycle of planting, watering, weeding, sunshine, rain and pruning, one can relate to the cycle of growth and death.

The liturgical readings during Advent often speak of death and destruction as we await the readings of the joys of the coming of the Christ Child. And St. Benedict reminds us to keep death daily before our eyes.

Here at Sacred Heart Monastery and Villa St. Benedict, we experience death somewhat frequently. It gives us a touching opportunity to witness a caring spouse or family member tending to the needs of their dying family member. This summer, I had the opportunity of being physically present to my dying brother, Tom. Our family was immersed in the life, death and Resurrection cycle of our family roots.

Advent also provides a time to grow deeper in our awareness of our religious roots. At our Monastery, we add to our prayer the rituals of celebrating our roots as we dress our Jesse tree with ornaments depicting stories of our ancestors and proclaiming the Messiah by singing the O Antiphons: O Wisdom, Adonai, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Daystar, King of Kings and Emmanuel - which means God is with us ... the "Word became flesh and dwells among us."

Amidst the many traditions and events of your Christmas, my prayer is that you and I would be grateful for our ancestors, especially the Word made flesh Who dwells among us, loves us and wants us to be His presence as we continue His work of building the Kingdom He created.

Merry Christmas and a blessed hope-filled New Year!

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

# Traditions: the Jesse Tree

Roots are important parts of a tree. As people, it's helpful to know our roots and reflect on where we have been and where we are heading.

A Jesse tree is a bare branch or tree that holds symbols that represent the people, prophecies and events leading up to the birth of Jesus. These ornaments mark the journey of the people of God through the Old Testament and trace the ancestors of Jesus.



There are different versions of which Biblical readings and which symbols are used for decorating a Jesse tree. The following are those that the Benedictine Sisters in Lisle use:

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Symbol</u>
The Jesse Tree	1 Samuel 16:1-7, 10-13	the Jesse Tree itself
Creation of Life	Genesis 1:24-28	the world
Adam & Eve	Genesis 3:1-19	apple with serpent
Noah & the Flood	Genesis 6:13-14, 17, 18; 7:1, 5, 17, 22-23, 24 8:1, 15-16, 18-22	rainbow & dove
Abraham's Call	Genesis 12:1-7	camel
Isaac & the Ram	Genesis 22: 1-3, 9-14	ram
Jacob & his Dream	Genesis 28:10-19a	ladder
Prophecy	Isaiah 9:1-6	Advent Rose
Moses & the Law	Exodus 20:1-17	the tablets
Blessing of Aaron	Leviticus 8:1-4, 6-7, 10, 12	hand raised in blessing
Samuel & the Word of the Lord	1 Samuel 3:1-10	lamp
Joseph	Genesis 37:3-8, 19-22, 28b-36	coat of many colors
David	1 Samuel 16:14-23	harp
The Magnificat	Luke 1:39-56	image of Mary
The Shepherd	Psalms 23	shepherd's staff
Wisdom of Solomon	1 Kings 3:5-15	crown
Elijah & the Raven	1 Kings 17:1-6	raven
Elisha and Healing	2 Kings 5:9-15	hand of healing
Isaiah	Isaiah 6:1-8	scroll
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 31:31-34	the Word of God
Nehemiah the Builder	Nehemiah 13:11-14, 22	work of the builder
Angels	letter to the Hebrews 1:1-5a, 13-14	angel
Zachariah & Elizabeth	Luke 1:5-25	handwriting "John"
Virgin Mary	Luke 1:26-38	lily
Birth of John the Baptist	Luke 1:57-66, 80	angel & baptismal shell
Joseph of Nazareth	Matthew 1:18-25	carpenter's tool(s)
Bethlehem	Matthew 2:1-12	star
Birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-20	Madonna & child
Christ the Lord	John 1:1-18	Chi Rho

*continued on next page*

*The Jesse Tree, continued*

Since Advent can be as short as 23 days or as long as 29 days, some of the readings are omitted when Advent has fewer days.

The Sisters incorporate their Jesse tree tradition into evening prayer, starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Vespers of the First Sunday of Advent (prayed the evening prior, on Saturday) through the 1<sup>st</sup> Vespers of Christmas (prayed on December 24th).

The photo on the cover of this newsletter is of the Jesse tree that the Sisters displayed for many years in their own dining room during Advent. Readings were then proclaimed during the evening meal. For years, the tree was adorned with ceramic ornaments created by Sister Joanne Williams, who fired the clay symbols in a kiln.



As the Sisters now share a dining room with residents, they have incorporated the Jesse tree tradition into their prayer space. The readings and placing of ornaments are now part of the Divine Office when the Sisters gather in the evening for vespers.

The people who waited and prepared for Jesus and who make up our family of faith tell us much about who we are and how we are related to God, as we reflect on the great people of faith upon whose shoulder we stand.

*Sisters Jo Anne Form, Helen Jilek and Mary Bratrsovsky unpack the new Jesse tree that will be used in their prayer space during Advent.*

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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, 2024 –  
January 1, 2025



## A Retreat for the Sisters and Oblates

Sister Judith Sutera led our 2024 yearly retreat from June 10-14. Sister Judith is a Benedictine Sister from Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas. She has a remarkable background in psychology, sociology and monastic spirituality and is the author of several books. Sister Judith gives presentations, retreats and workshops for monastic communities, academic conferences and formation groups across the United States, as well as abroad.



This was the first time that our Benedictine Oblates were invited to attend the retreat along with the Sisters. We enjoyed being together to hear Sister Judith's presentation "Through the Desert with Abba Antony."

Abba Antony, an early desert monastic, lived in solitude in the Egyptian desert in the third century, many years before the time of St. Benedict. Though fraught with set-backs, Antony kept seeking wisdom to the core of his inner self overcoming the harshness of his life. He attracted a community of disciples intent on following his humble and loving ways. His epic journey has been recorded as a story of heroic promise of faith for those who want to be moved to living a holy life.

The retreat closed with the Sisters renewing their Monastic Profession / Vows during the Celebration of the Eucharist.



A few weeks after our retreat, Sister Karen Nykiel attended the biennial conference of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors held at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, Nebraska. Cathy Lentz, a Sacred Heart oblate, accompanied her. They had the pleasure of interacting again with Sister Judith Sutera, who was one of the speakers at the gathering. The theme of the conference was "carrying wisdom across the threshold".

*L-R: Cathy Lentz, Sister Judith Sutera, Sister Karen Nykiel*

# *Congratulations and blessings!*

## **Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, OSB Celebrating 60 years!**

Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, OSB, Prioress of Sacred Heart Monastery, was honored at an intimate community gathering on October 11th on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her vowed life. Present for the joyous occasion were the ten Sisters that live at Sacred Heart Monastery, the three international student Sisters who live with them, our Chaplain - Father Becket Franks, the Sisters' employees - Cathy Cawiezel and Beth Hemzacek, and faithful volunteers - Arlene Malloy, Ellen Rodman and Renata Marroum.

Sister Mary preferred to have a simple celebration with a close group of people. (She was willing to let the occasion slip by unnoticed, but the Sisters insisted on acknowledging her years of commitment.) We enjoyed a pizza party and merriment, especially the festive rendition of the African Student Sisters singing their "Happy Feast Day" signature song.

This was followed by everyone sharing comments about what they appreciate most about Mary. Her leadership is genuinely inspirational, consultative and humble; she is keen to be totally present as she listens to each person, and she willingly gives of her time and energy to anyone who is sick or needs encouragement. This includes not only members of our Community, but extends to the residents of Villa St. Benedict, those who volunteer with her at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, her contacts at Daybreak of Lisle and Benet Academy, and just about anyone with whom she crosses paths.

Weather permitting, Sister Mary spends much of her time tending to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. She is pictured here with volunteer Arlene Malloy.



## Sister Regina Ann Weissmann, OSB Made religious vows 65 years ago



Sister Regina Ann Weissmann, OSB, made her religious vows 65 years ago. Unfortunately, due to her debilitated health condition as a total care patient at St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville, even a simple celebration within the community was not possible.

When visiting her at St. Patrick's, our Sisters find her unable to respond verbally; however, her smile seems to imply her recognition of who they are.

The Carmelite Sisters, who are on staff at St. Patrick's, have told our Sisters that when they bring Holy Communion to Regina Ann, she recognizes their role. She sits up and folds her hands, seeming fully aware that it is Jesus who has arrived.

The Benedictine Sisters are so grateful to the nursing staff at St. Patrick's for their loving attention given to Sister Regina Ann.

## Sister Celestine Shakungu, OSB graduates

Sister Celestine Shakungu will have completed her Bachelor's degree in Theology at Benedictine University in December. In January she will be moving to Washington DC to pursue her studies at Catholic University of America. After finishing 2 years for her Masters in Theology, she plans to continue there in Canon Law, hoping to teach perhaps in seminary.

While happy and excited to be continuing her studies, Sister Celestine is sad to be leaving Lisle. Sacred Heart has been a wonderful second home for her and has felt much like her own community in Namibia. She is very thankful for the residents and the Sisters, who provided everything she needed and took good care of her.

We've been blessed to have Sister Celestine as part of our Sacred Heart Community, and her presence will certainly be missed. We wish her all the best and God's blessings always. We look forward to seeing her in May when she returns to Lisle to walk for her diploma at BenU's graduation ceremony.



# Here and There ...

In early September, Sister Helen Jilek and Cathy Cawiezel attended the Communio Internationalis Benedictarum conference, where they enjoyed the hospitality of local Benedictines in Assisi, Italy. The CIB represents all communities of Benedictine women world-wide.

As CIB Treasurer and Accountant, Sister Helen and Cathy presented the budget at the gathering and used “dollars” that Sister Jo Anne Form created to make their presentation interactive. *(One of the attendees shows off the money in the photo at bottom right.)*

The attendees from the U.S. are pictured in the photo below left. Sister Helen is in the back row, 2nd from left. Cathy Cawiezel is in the front row, far right.





Doctor Sister Beatrice Kayombo, OSB was back in the United States to attend the Catholic Medical Association educational conference in Orlando, Florida in early September. Her focus was to learn more about palliative care, hospice, end of life care and medical ethics for the hospital in Dar Es Salaam, where she works as an oncologist.

We were very excited and pleased that she was able to visit us in Lisle after the conference.

Doctor Sister Beatrice lives in a house that also accommodates Sisters from her convent in Imiliwaha, Tanzania, who must travel to the hospital in Dar Es Salaam to undergo various treatments such as dialysis or chemotherapy. She is extremely dedicated to the care of these Sisters, looking after them attentively when not working full-time at the hospital.

*A more in-depth article was written about Sister Beatrice in our June 2023 LBW. Past issues of the LBW may be found on the Sisters' website: [shmlisle.org](http://shmlisle.org).*

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The major religious superiors of the Joliet Diocese held their annual meeting at Villa St. Benedict on September 5, 2024. Afterwards, Bishop Ronald Hicks served as celebrant at our daily Mass in Sacred Heart Chapel.

*Pictured, left to right:* Sister Helen Timothy, IBVM; Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, OSB; Father Carl Markelz, O.Carm; Sister Jeanne Bessette, OSF; Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, FSSH; Bishop Ronald Hicks; Sister Mary Lou Wirtz, OSF; Sister Mary Carton, IBVM; Brother Guy Jelinek, OSB, Administrator of St. Procopius; Sister Joyce Shanabarger, OSF, FSSH, Delegate for Religious; Fr. Richard Smith, Vicar General



# Our Byzantine Sisters

- Sr. Marion Dobos

## The Church Must Breathe with Two Lungs: EAST & WEST (St. John Paul II)

In 2020, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization published a *Directory for Catechesis*. The Directory included seven references to the Eastern Catholic Churches. In addition, the working document from the October 2023 Synodal Report, *Instrumentum Laboris*, addressed the question, “How can the Latin Church support and promote the identity of the Eastern Catholic Faithful?” (References found in Sections 3, 6 & 7.)

Very recently, the 2024 Synod on Synodality ended their month-long meetings in Rome. Once again, addressing the topics of Communion, Participation and Mission with all baptized Catholics, sincere dialogue and fraternal collaboration between the two Churches, East and West was shown. We know that dialogue and collaboration occurs when information is shared. Hopefully, this article will shed a little light on the Eastern Catholic Churches in the USA.

This past June, at the request of the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Committee on Evangelization & Catechesis, members of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh were asked to participate in contributing to a resource that would provide information on Doctrinal Guidance in Catechesis, including the Patrimony of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Participating in this project was Archbishop William C. Skurla - Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh, Sr. Marion Dobos, OSB - Director of Religious Education, Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and Helen Kennedy - Chair of the Board of Directors, Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril & Methodius. This new resource is entitled, “*Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process.*”

An Institute was held at St. Mary Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois, June, 17-20, 2024 to critique the draft for publication. In attendance were 175 participants. The agenda included a panel discussion to address questions and comments on diversity in the Church. This provided an opportunity for panel members Sr. Marion and Helen to clarify misconceptions regarding married clergy in the Eastern Catholic Churches and participation of our Eastern Catholic children in parochial schools.

The Eastern Catholic Churches recognize the authority of the pope of Rome, but have their own religious traditions. Married clergy is a time-honored tradition. For many years it was not permitted in the United States. The Vatican lifted its ban on married men being ordained to the priesthood in Eastern Catholic Churches on November 17, 2014. It is important to note that priests of the Eastern Catholic Churches do not marry. They must be married before being ordained and married only once. Bishops must be unmarried. (The Catholic Church considers the law of clerical celibacy to be a discipline, not a doctrine.)

Another tradition the Eastern Catholic Churches shared was the reception of the three

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. They are not separated. When a person is baptized regardless of age, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist is given. Yes, infants receive the Holy Eucharist. (Who is more worthy?) This was the practice of the early Church for centuries. Therefore, Eastern Catholic children attending parochial schools should not be denied the Holy Eucharist when attending Mass. They already made their “First Holy Communion.” At the end of the October 2024 Synod, Pope Francis quoted the French poet, Madeleine Delbrel: “There are places in which the Spirit breathes, but there is only one Spirit who breathes in all places.” Come Holy Spirit and dwell within us.



*Concluding banquet at the Institute. Second from left: Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization; far right: Helen Kennedy; top row far right: Archbishop William C. Skurla; Sr. Marion Dobos OSB; other guests are from the Diocese of Savannah, GA*

# Ever grateful ...



The Sisters would like to acknowledge and thank our volunteers on port duty, who graciously help answer the door and the phone here at Sacred Heart Monastery.

*Pictured clockwise, from top center:*

- June Haptas
- Janet O'Brien
- Annette Gambo
- Kathy DeMichael
- Joe Fosco
- Ann Beranek
- Phyllis Collins
- Rina Knight
- Barb Orth
- Adrienne Forstneger



# Here and There . . .

On October 7, to honor Our Lady of the Rosary, Sisters and residents held a special gathering outside at the Grotto to recite the rosary. On most days, two groups here at Villa St. Benedict meet indoors for the rosary.



Sisters Celestine Shakungu and Christine Kouba bring flowers in to adorn the Sisters' prayer room.



# Villa St. Benedict

Here at Villa St. Benedict, one of the aspects that makes this campus so special is the collaboration we have with the Benedictine Four Corners. This year, we've had the honor to host Scholar students from Benet Academy to perform and present for our residents in our Great Room. Along with students, Benedictine professors shared educational talks, and most recently, we partnered with Brother Kevin Coffey from St. Procopius Abbey for an art installation and pottery class.



Utilizing our local resources helps make our Living Fully, Living Well motto as meaningful as ever.

Br. Kevin has been creating art his entire life, mostly focusing on painting and drawing, but his newest work incorporates drawing into his pottery - a unique style that was showcased in our Piazza recently for our residents to experience. There were over 60 pottery pieces on display, representing months of hard work. Some of the individual pieces took several months to create, with many intricate layers and processes coming together to tell a story.



This collaboration continued with a pottery demo class, where our residents had the opportunity to each glaze a piece of pottery that Br. Kevin created in the kiln. It's wonderful that residents were able not only to view such marvelous artwork, but also to participate directly by glazing their own pieces - engaging with the process hands-on and leaving with a tangible reminder of the experience.

In the future, Br. Kevin will be back and we can look forward to workshops and continuing art education for our residents!



The partnership with Benet Academy, Benedictine professors, and local artists like Brother Kevin Coffey highlights how the community is enriched by its connections to the wider Benedictine tradition. Villa St. Benedict continues to provide our residents with a vibrant, fulfilling lifestyle and meaningful community connections where it matters most.



*Photo credits: Emily Turner,  
Marketing Coordinator*





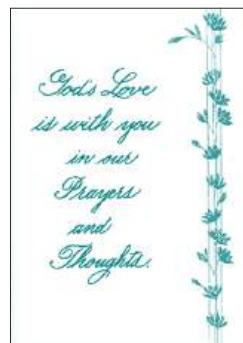
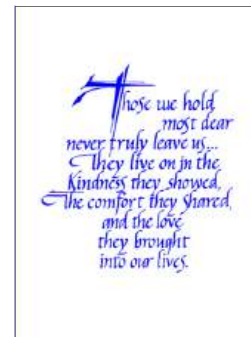
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### Prayer Cards are available for all occasions from the Benedictine Sisters



All information is available on our website: [www.shmlisle.org](http://www.shmlisle.org)

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