

Call



Celebrating Monastic Life

Sisters of the
Order of Saint Benedict 

Fall 2025

From the *Prioress*

Karen Rose, OSB, Prioress

What does it mean to be a Christian today? I think Matthew 7:12 answers that question: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

I often feel very sad and burdened by so much that goes on in the world today. The recent shooting of children from Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, Minn., while they were attending Eucharist encapsulated that hopeless, helpless feeling. How can anyone do such a thing? And then, of course, I think about what is happening in Gaza, the plight of the Israeli hostages, the way immigrants are living in fear, the lack of respect for life, for fact and truth that seems so prevalent today, and I despair that we can never make things right.

Then I read *Call* magazine, and I felt somewhat comforted by the various actions different people are taking to counter the prevalent culture of not caring for others. Whether it's our sisters' prayerful discernment about moving to our retirement facility (pp. 18–19) or the passion of those who walked on the recent Benedictine Pilgrimage of Hope (pp. 14–15), I saw people living out Christ's command in action; they are truly trying to do for others what they would like others to do for them. That's what it means to be a Christian today.

Pope Leo has a universal job, and as our sisters are hoping and praying (pp. 4–5), he is making a good start to his papacy by highlighting that the treatment of those who are marginalized and at risk is a priority for all Catholics. He is teaching us what it means to be a Christian today. The lives of our jubilarians teach us what it means to be a Christian (pp. 6–10). The ministry of our foundress, Mother Benedicta Riepp (pp. 12–13), S. Nancy Bauer's call to continue the work of the Spirit by constantly adapting to change through a Christian lens (pp. 16–17), the dedication of our oblates to living a Benedictine life in the broader community (pp. 22–24), and your support and partnership with our community (p. 25) all show us what it means to be a Christian today.

Thanks to everyone featured in this magazine for making me feel that there is cause for hope.

With a hopeful, grateful heart,



Karen Rose, OSB, Prioress

Call
Number 10 – Fall 2025

Karen Rose, OSB
Prioress, Consultant Editor

Amanda Hackett
Editor, Graphic Designer

Alyssa Tasto
Assistant Editor

Renée Domeier, OSB
Proofreader

On the Cover:
Sisters Joyce McNerney (front) and Lois Wedl pray during Liturgy of the Hours. Taken by Andra Johnson.

Photos:
Carleen Schomer, OSB, Karen Streveler, OSB, Marina Schlangen, OSB, Nancy Bauer, OSB, unless otherwise noted or supplied by individual sisters or Saint Benedict's Monastery Archives.

Printing:
Palmer Printing

Our Mission

We, the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., are a monastic community of women who seek God in our daily lives according to the Gospel and the *Rule of Benedict*. Through our ministry of prayer, work and community living, we listen and respond to the needs of the Church and the world.

Call is published annually by the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn., and celebrates the sisters' call and commitment to monastic life.

2025 Jubilarians: Sisters Mary Weidner, Kathleen Rademacher, Janet Thielges, Bernadette Weber and Karen Streveler with Prioress Sister Karen Rose (left to right).



In this issue:

Welcoming Pope Leo.....	4-5	Benedictine Pilgrimage of Hope	14-15
75th Jubilee: Bernadette Weber, OSB	6	"Aggiornamento"	16-17
75th Jubilee: Janet Thielges, OSB	7	"Going East"	18-19
75th Jubilee: Kathleen Rademacher, OSB	8	25 Years of Wonders	20-21
60th Jubilee: Mary Weidner, OSB	9	Choosing the Oblate Way of Life	22-24
50th Jubilee: Karen Streveler, OSB	10	Gratitude By the Numbers	25
In Memoriam	11	Behind the Scenes Under the Dome.....	26
An Uncommon Friendship.....	12-13	Vocation Vignettes	27

Welcoming Pope Leo

Cardinal Robert Prevost was elected as the 267th pope on May 8, 2025, choosing the name Pope Leo XIV. Born in Chicago, Ill., he is making history as the first American pope. The sisters of Saint Benedict's Monastery embrace his papal leadership with hope, anticipation and gratitude.

Carol Berg, OSB



"When I heard that our newly elected pope chose the name Leo XIV, I was thrilled, knowing that he was an admirer and follower of Pope Leo XIII, who was noted for his strong stance on social justice. It also indicated that this latest Leo would advance most, if not all, of Pope Francis' programs.

Already clear from his oral and written statements, Pope Leo is a champion for the poor and all vulnerable peoples. An article about him in the May 2025 issue of *Commonweal* cites him as being 'synodal and pastoral.' His record as a priest, bishop and cardinal has demonstrated a caring, compassionate and learned man who, like Francis, wants to 'build bridges, not walls.'

Pope Leo shows great concern over the plight of immigrants, environmental protection and equitable distribution of resources in pursuit of harmony and peace. In a recent online post, he called for 'a shared vision inspired by the common good.' We have renewed hope."

Julie Schleper, OSB



"Each morning as I walk past the photo of Pope Leo XIV on my way to Liturgy of the Hours, I pause and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for choosing Cardinal Robert Prevost to guide our church. His first words after his election, 'Peace be with all of you,' ring true to his every word and action. He is a clear moral voice speaking on behalf of international peace, condemning war and speaking against nuclear warfare. Being a strong advocate for humane treatment and care of migrants, as well as expressing concern for the environment and working for a synodal church, reflect his following in Pope Francis' footsteps.

I am grateful that he clearly witnesses to his love of Christ for the global church and society. He has said that, 'Our first duty is to communicate the beauty and joy of knowing Jesus.' Doing this well himself, he has requested that his nuncios be 'bridge-builders' of Christ's love and commitment to peace. May all of us be bridge-builders in our joy and witness of Jesus Christ!"

Christian Morris, OSB



"In addition to being a tennis-playing White Sox fan from Chicago, there is hopeful anticipation of our new pope. In these few short months since his election, Pope Leo XIV has demonstrated his commitment to the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church. Echoing Pope Francis, Pope Leo's first words to the world, 'Peace be with all of you,' as well as his urgent call for an end to the violence and suffering wreaking havoc in Gaza and Ukraine, give evidence of this.

In his 22-year ministry in Peru, Pope Leo lived alongside people who suffered extreme poverty, injustice and violence. His extensive work with church leaders and others called for courage, decisiveness, community building and pastoral care.

In both 'worlds,' Pope Leo showed his belief in the dignity of every human person and the sacredness of all creation.

What kind of pope will Leo be? No one, including Pope Leo, knows. What he does know, and we too believe—only the Holy Spirit knows the answer!"

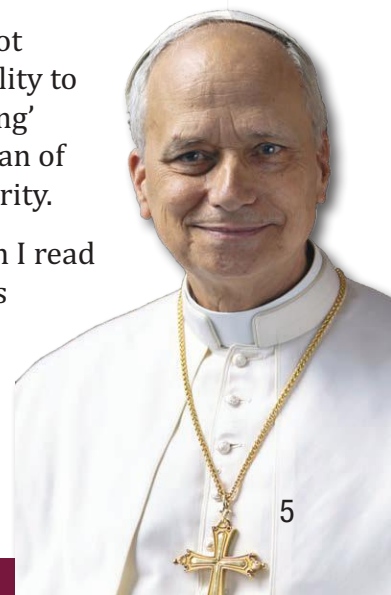
Cynthia Schmit, OSB



"I studied the biographies of several cardinals before the conclave to select a new pope began. I was impressed by the qualities of a U.S. cardinal, Robert Prevost, a member of the Augustinian Order. He became a Peruvian citizen having spent 20 years ministering there. I felt his global experience would be valuable for a person to lead 1.4 billion Roman Catholics as pope, given the diversity of the Catholic population.

In an online article, Cardinal Prevost was criticized for not having the 'charm' our previous pope had. I consider his ability to listen to each person with respect and interest to be a 'charming' quality and necessary for a pope. He has been characterized as a man of few words—someone whose words are wise and come out of his life of faith and charity.

My hope that Cardinal Prevost would become pope was further strengthened when I read his definition of a leader: 'A brother and/or sister among brothers and sisters.' In this definition, I see a bond between all persons seeking God. I am confident that Pope Leo XIV will lead us closer to God, and I rejoice to be his 'sister!'"





At her 50th Jubilee celebration, Sister Bernadette Weber stated, “The community has called me forth to be who I am and to recognize and share my gifts ... open to any service needed.” Scanning her years

in community, it is obvious that S. Bernadette held those words wholeheartedly and lived them devotedly. Undoubtedly, her upbringing in the large Weber family from St. Martin, Minn., where she was the fifth of 12 children, helped form her to live the Benedictine life. In her oral history, she notes that, “It was a faith-filled family,” one living the Benedictine values—especially of community, prayer and work.

Born December 7, 1929, S. Bernadette came to Saint Benedict’s High School in St. Joseph, Minn., in 1946. She entered the novitiate in 1949, making first vows in 1950. S. Bernadette then began a long ministry in the field of education with a focus on students with special needs. She graduated from the College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, in 1963 with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and English and philosophy minors. In 1965, she began studies at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, Wis., to earn a degree in special education. She received her master’s degree in 1971.

Working with developmentally challenged persons remained her special concern after being assigned in 1957 to teach with Sister Elizabeth Ann Widmer at St. Gertrude School in the Institute Building in St. Cloud, Minn. When the building

was demolished in 1971, she taught her class at John XXIII School for two years. Seeing the need for Special Religious Education, S. Bernadette set up release-time religion programs for them in the Diocese of St. Cloud, helping prepare both children and adults for Holy Communion and confirmation. She also worked with persons who were hearing impaired, taking sign language classes to better engage them.

S. Bernadette’s varied ministries span several decades and include:

- » Teaching parochial elementary education for six years.
- » Teaching mentally handicapped students for 15 years.
- » Serving as a diocesan consultant for Special Religious Education for 11 years.
- » Heading the diocesan RENEW program for two years.
- » Working at Mother Terese Home in Cold Spring, Minn., for 11 years.
- » Writing columns for the *St. Cloud Visitor*, the diocesan newspaper, while working in the diocese. The columns, written intermittently during the 1980s and ‘90s, emphasized outreach to the mentally and physically handicapped.

In 2020, at age 90, S. Bernadette moved to Saint Scholastica Convent, our retirement community in St. Cloud. She had served in various roles there from 1997–2006; now she was ready for a change of pace but with desire for continued service. While her main task is managing the gift shop, she also embroiders dish towels and helps fold and distribute laundry.

Congratulations and thanks to you, S. Bernadette, as you continue living out your Benedictine values.

S. Bernadette with students





Sister Janet Thielges knew from a very young age that she wanted to be a sister. Her aunt, Sister Norita Dittberner, was a sister at Saint Benedict's

Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. S. Janet remembers her

home visits as "lots of fun," and she received some guidance in prayer from her. Notre Dame sisters taught in the local Catholic school, and the pastor often prayed for vocations, so S. Janet dreamed of being a sister early on. Her mother encouraged this budding vocation, and her father gave a "silent OK."

Baptized as Elizabeth, S. Janet learned to live in community through work and prayer as the ninth child of Adam and Bertha Thielges' 15 children while growing up on a farm near St. Leo, Minn. In addition to economic struggles during the Depression years, hardship hit the Thielges family in the death of a child. Close family ties, prayer and play knit the family together through these tough times.

S. Janet fondly remarks that she received her love of practical jokes and fishing from her father. Her multiple talents sustained her through more than 40 years in educational ministry—22 years as elementary teacher and 22 years as principal in a variety of school settings. S. Janet remarked, "I loved teaching. It was in my bones." When Mother Henrita Osendorf, prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery from 1961–1973, assigned her to be a supervising elementary principal, S. Janet, open to a challenge, was delighted.

When an employee of Bremer Bank encouraged S. Janet to apply for a grant, she ended up

receiving funding for the school's outdoor playground equipment. That was a first! After leaving her ministry in education, S. Janet served both the monastery and the St. Cloud Hospital in St. Cloud, Minn., as a grant proposal writer. She also worked at the St. Cloud Hospital's Elder Network program and volunteered with peace and social justice events.

Now S. Janet continues to be actively involved in life at Saint Scholastica Convent, our retirement community in St. Cloud.

Is there a party? S. Janet will be there.

Is there a creative art class? S. Janet will be there.

Is there a political election coming up? S. Janet will enlist a member of the League of Women Voters to inform the sisters about the candidates and encourage them to vote.

Is it time for community prayer, meals or meetings? S. Janet will be present.

Thank you, S. Janet, for living life fully with a joke, story, smile and grateful heart!



S. Janet serving as principal



S. Janet fishing



*I*f I could choose one quality that describes Sister Kathy Rademacher's life, it would be "attentiveness." She would have all people be part of the world—God's family. There would be no outsiders, only insiders:

black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian ... all belong. S. Kathy would be the first to notice if anyone was left out, and if so, she would make sure that person would be included. **She is attentive!**

S. Kathy served as a teacher for 22 years and as a faith formation director for 44 years. After those 66 years in ministry, she is still attentive. Here at Saint Scholastica Convent (SSC), our retirement community, she is soft-spoken and unobtrusive as she serves the hot beverages at our meals, decorates the table places of sisters celebrating birthdays, creates beautiful greeting cards to send and sell, participates in liturgical ministries, drives sisters to appointments, writes thank-you cards to our donors, prepares the rooms for our overnight guests, and decorates the Benedictine Values tree which is painted on the wall and holds a different Benedictine value each month. She also serves as the contact person for her living group. **She is attentive!**

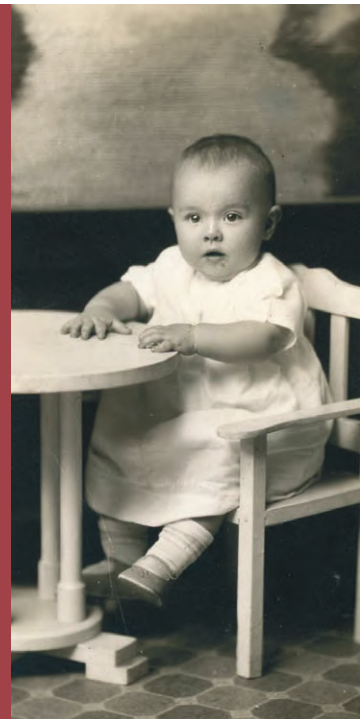
Thoughtful in her demeanor and speech, S. Kathy enjoys reading books from our library, playing cards, has a great sense of humor, and marvels at the former students, parishioners and relatives who visit her. She is 95 years old and in her 75th year as an inspiring monastic. She would heartily agree with Jesus who said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all to me." Not some, but all!

S. Kathy seeks to be attentive at SSC where she lives and where her heart still holds the poor and serves them when possible. Should you ask her how she herself is doing, her response will be, "I'm happy, blessed and grateful"—and she could add, **"Attentive!"**

Right: S. Kathy as a young child

Bottom Left: S. Kathy having fun with students

Bottom Right: S. Kathy sharing bread with a young student





“Never ... turn away when someone needs your love.” – Rule of Benedict 4:25–26

These words from the *Rule of St. Benedict* guided Sister Mary Weidner’s life during her more than 60 years in this Benedictine community, but her desire to love and serve others took root in her family. Mary is the youngest of Margaret and Rob Weidner’s seven children. They sang and played baseball together, had lively discussions where every opinion was respected, and welcomed to their home and table anyone who needed a roof or a meal. Mary brought these lessons of kindness and community with her to the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., where she earned a degree in elementary education in 1963. Wonderful teachers like Sisters Margretta Nathe and Paschal Otto became her mentors and friends and invited her to consider religious life, and she joined Saint Benedict’s Monastery in 1965.

S. Mary taught in grade schools for 16 years but then heard God’s call to parish ministry; this was work she loved even though she often wondered if she had the gifts to do the tasks that lay before her. She learned over and over that if she trusted in God’s help and in the guidance of wonderful friends and mentors, she would be able to do things she could not have even imagined. She worked with Hispanic migrants and loved to join them in their high-spirited celebrations. Most of all, she brought her deep love for liturgy, especially the Eucharist. She believes that the Eucharist is an abundant feast where everyone is welcome and that there is

no division between the words we sing at prayers and our work for social justice. She worked with people in crucial moments of their lives, helping them enter into liturgies that eased their sorrows and intensified their joys.

Following her community’s call, S. Mary earned a certificate in spiritual direction from the Center for Spiritual Development in Cambridge, Mass., and came back to Saint Benedict’s Monastery to serve in the Spirituality Center. Later, she became the director of the Spirituality Center, and under her leadership, she helped build relationships with newly arrived immigrants to this area, greater understanding between Catholics and Lutherans, and friendship and support among women working in various Christian churches. S. Mary was then called to be part of our community’s leadership team, serving as subprioress from 2017–2023.

S. Mary recently completed her service as assistant dean at Saint Scholastica Convent, our community’s retirement center in St. Cloud, Minn. There, too, she never turned away when someone needed her love, whatever form that need for love took. She would lend a listening ear, share a laugh, sit with a frightened sister in the emergency room or at a sick bed, and ferry sisters to appointments. S. Mary kept vigil with sisters as they made their last pilgrimage from this life to the next and welcomed families of the sisters who died and included their stories in the beautiful, personal memorial services.

A friend once gave S. Mary the song “For Good” from the musical “Wicked.” The line, **“Because I knew you, I have been changed for the good,”**

described S. Mary’s influence on her life. Many people would say that S. Mary’s honesty, humor, generosity and unshakable faith in God’s love have changed us for the good.

S. Mary playing music at a Lenten family retreat in 1983



50th Jubilee: Karen Streveler, OSB

Michaela Hedican, OSB, and Ruth Feeney, OSB



Sister Karen's quiet demeanor can be deceiving. She does not often speak about her many ministries, talents or interests—all of which are grounded in her early life. Working with her

mother in gardening gave her a love for nature which developed into an aptitude for photography. Her beautiful photographs became sought-after greeting cards and framed pictures.

The oldest of three, S. Karen learned responsibility by caring for her younger siblings. This included playing with them as well as helping with homework. She was a gifted teacher at a young age. S. Karen earned an elementary teaching degree with a minor in photography from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in Eau Claire, Wis., and for 30 years, she taught third-graders in diocesan schools throughout the Diocese of La Crosse and enjoys recounting humorous stories of her teaching experiences.

S. Karen paid for her education working nights at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire on a computer as large as a room. Her parents, Bernard and Pauline, were her first teachers: She learned domestic skills from her mother and practical skills from her father. This prepared her for food service management,

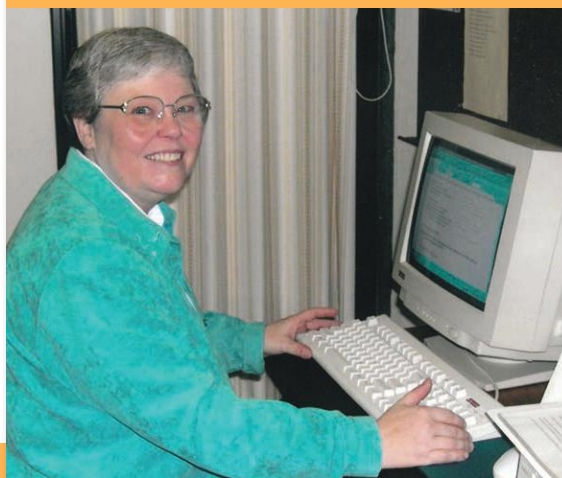
one of many roles at Saint Bede Monastery in Eau Claire where she entered after graduating from college. Drawn by her love for God, she pursued a graduate degree in spirituality from Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., with an emphasis in spiritual direction. This began a significant ministry of journeying with others seeking to grow closer to God.

Together with 28 members of Saint Bede Monastery, S. Karen transferred to Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn., in August 2010. Her life and professional experiences, combined with personal gifts, prepared her for varied ministries and leadership at both monasteries. They include full-time teacher, in vocation/formation ministry, community secretary, treasurer, archivist, committee member and photographer. Simultaneously, she supplied craft items for the monastery gift shop.

Presently, S. Karen resides at Saint Scholastica Convent, our retirement community in St. Cloud, Minn., where she joins her sisters in living Benedictine life, a communal life of prayer and work.

Left: S. Karen working as secretary of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Benedict

Right: S. Karen as a young child



In Memoriam



In loving memory of our dearly departed sisters who would have celebrated significant anniversaries in monastic life with this year's jubilee classes.

Class of 1950 (75 Years)

Ann (Virginia) Arceneau, OSB

Johanna (Lucille) Becker, OSB

Luke (Lucille) Hoschette, OSB

Phyllis (Dunstan) Plantenberg, OSB

Adriane (Adrian) Reuvers, OSB

Elaine (Elizabeth) Schindler, OSB

Patricia (Marilyn) Wallis, OSB

Christopher (Mary) Weber, OSB

An Uncommon Friendship

Ephrem Hollermann, OSB

This year, 2025, has given us at Saint Benedict's Monastery many occasions for remembering and celebrating! One outstanding event was our celebration of the 200th birthday of the foundress of Benedictine women in North America, including *our* very own monastery here in St. Joseph, Minn.—Mother Benedicta (Sybilla) Riepp, born in Waal, Bavaria, on June 28, 1825. She would go on to be credited with the foundation of 47 monasteries of Benedictine women in North America.

There is a sense in which M. Benedicta may have been “resurrected” for us in the 20th century with the publication of books by two of our sister-historians. Sister Grace McDonald wrote our centennial history, *With Lamps Burning* (1956), and Sister Incarnata Girgen expanded S. Grace's history in a work entitled *Behind the Beginnings* (1981). It seems that these works eventually led to the beginning of our community's lasting friendship with M. Benedicta's people in Waal. S. Grace's book gave us our first formal introduction to M. Benedicta, and S. Incarnata actually visited Waal in the late 1970s and introduced our community to some of the townspeople there.

These people were thrilled to know that a woman from Waal was famous for beginning many monasteries of women in the United States.

In 1987, a group of women and men from Waal, led by a woman named Maria Eberle, visited Saint Benedict's Monastery, desiring to visit the gravesite of M. Benedicta Riepp. Thus began a treasured friendship that has lasted up to the present day.

After their visit to the U.S., Maria interested her women's church group in the life and accomplishments of M. Benedicta Riepp, and she eventually proposed that they commission and fund a local sculptor to create a monument for their town in her honor. When Sisters Ephrem Hollermann and Eunice Antony visited Waal in July 1992, the monument being created by Otto Kobel was nearly completed.

By September of that same year, the Waalers (as they referred to themselves) scheduled an event to bless and place the monument in the churchyard of St. Nicholas, the town's earliest church. Representatives of Saint Benedict's Monastery were invited to attend, and we sent Sisters Mary Cecilia Kapsner and Andre Marthaler, both of whom were able to speak German. They reported that it was a glorious event. With this event, it seems, the friendship was sealed!

Periodically, delegations of Waalers have come to celebrate important events at Saint Benedict's Monastery. In 1994, the president of the Federation of Saint Benedict, now named the Monastic



Sisters and guests process from Sacred Heart Chapel to the monastery cemetery during the 200th birthday celebration

CALL

An oil painting of
M. Benedicta Riepp
by Sister Thomas
Carey



Sisters Andre Marthaler (left) and Mary Cecilia Kapsner (right) in Waal for the dedication of M. Benedicta's memorial in 1992



Sisters Nancy Bauer, Marlene Schwinghammer, Lynn McKenzie of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Ala., and Colleen Quinlivan (left to right) in Waal in 2025

Congregation of Saint Benedict, invited a delegation from Waal to come to St. Joseph to celebrate Heritage Day during the triennial meeting of the Federation Chapter at Saint Benedict's Monastery. Ten citizens of Waal accepted the invitation and came. Again, in 2007, a group from Waal came to Saint Benedict's Monastery to celebrate the 150th anniversary of our monastery's founding.

Periodically, the Waalers have their own celebrations at the site of the monument in their city, usually in the month of September, to remember M. Benedicta Riepp and the blessing of the monument in her honor. In 2025, upon Waal's invitation, three of our sisters traveled to Waal to celebrate the 200th birthday of Mother Benedicta Riepp at the monument site—Sisters Nancy Bauer, Marlene Schwinghammer and Colleen Quinlivan.

Long live this “uncommon friendship” between our monastery and the people of Waal, who love and honor their famous citizen who founded many Benedictine monasteries of women in North America!

Sisters Mary Weidner, Marlene Schwinghammer, JoAnne Backes and Nina Lasceski (left to right) at M. Benedicta's grave during the graveside service at her birthday celebration



Benedictine Pilgrimage of Hope



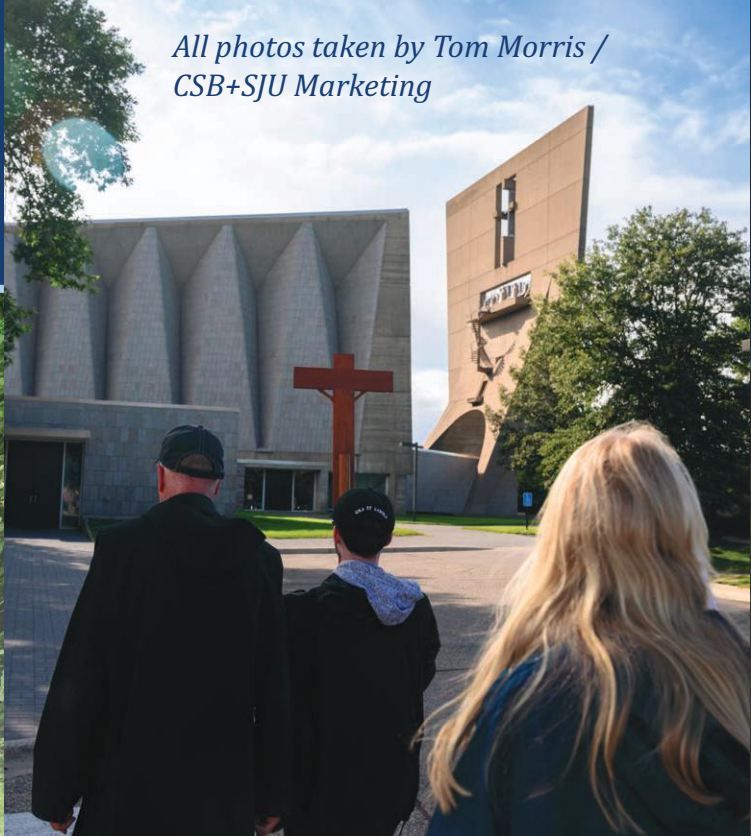
When Pope Francis declared this the Jubilee Year of Hope, he wrote, “Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful.” Throughout history, pilgrimages have played a significant role in all world religions, reflecting the fact that our life is a journey as we seek meaning, self-discovery, spiritual renewal and growth.

Just as Jesus traveled to the holy temple in Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph, we, too, make pilgrimages to renew, refresh and deepen our relationship with God. At times we make the journey by praying individually or with a group, or in a church, prayer space or outside in nature. Common pilgrimages for Christians include the Stations of the Cross, the Stations of the Resurrection, labyrinths and The Way of St. James or St. Benedict.

Making a pilgrimage, especially with others who are on the same quest, helps us gain greater insight

and a deeper awareness that God journeys with us in our suffering, difficulties and confusion as well as in our joys, hopes and dreams. Pilgrimages help us gain a different perspective on life, strengthen us in our faith journey, and give us hope for the future. With each step, we leave the old behind, opening ourselves to new possibilities. We grow in our connection with God, becoming more aware of God’s covenantal love and faithfulness; we grow in our connection with one another as we give and receive support from fellow pilgrims; and finally, we become more aware of our connection with creation.

As part of the Jubilee Year of Hope, Saint Benedict’s Monastery and Saint John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., partnered to host a pilgrimage between the two campuses on September 6, 2025. The goal was to unite the community—men, women, young and old—to pilgrimage from one sacred place to another.



Pilgrims were united in their journey of hope as they gathered for an opening prayer service in the monastery's Sacred Heart Chapel. Sister Karen Rose, prioress, welcomed one and all, emphasizing that the participants were making the pilgrimage on the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's encyclical on "Care for Our Common Home." The pilgrimage also took place during the Season of Creation, an ecumenical call to action to renew, repair and restore our relationship with God, one another and all of creation. The Season of Creation occurs annually, beginning on September 1 and ending on October 4, the feast day of St. Francis, the patron saint of ecology.

Bishop Patrick Neary, bishop of the Diocese of St. Cloud, was unable to attend the pilgrimage but did send a blessing, which was read during the opening prayer service. He wrote, "May the flame of hope burn ever brighter in our lives, guiding us along the path of mercy, justice and peace. With the

blessing of Saint John's Abbey and Saint Benedict's Monastery, may we always remember that we are not alone in this journey. We walk together as a family of faith, united in the love of Christ, the source of all hope."

Participants stayed together during the five-mile walk along the Wobegon Trail, and individuals took turns carrying a processional cross. Along the way, they made three prayer stops to read excerpts about hope, sing songs and share petitions. Upon arriving at Saint John's Abbey, they celebrated Eucharist in the Abbey church and then enjoyed an evening meal together.

As you pilgrimage through life, may you be supported by those around you and strengthened in your awareness that you are never alone, because God journeys with you every step of the way.

“Aggiornamento”

Nancy Bauer, OSB

Taken by Andra Johnson

“Aggiornamento.”

When is the last time you heard that word in church? If you were born after the 1960s, it may not be familiar to you at all. But Pope John XXIII made it a word heard ‘round the world on January 25, 1959, when he announced that he would call an ecumenical council.

“Aggiornamento” is Italian, and it means “to update.” When Pope John used it in reference to the then-upcoming Second Vatican Council, he meant that the Church needed to be updated. Specifically, the Church needed to adapt to the times. Pope Paul VI, who would continue the Council after Pope John’s death, called *aggiornamento* “the guiding principle of the Ecumenical Council.”

It is not surprising then that the terms “adapt” and “adaptation” appear frequently in the 16 documents of Vatican II. They show up most often in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* which is The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and in *Perfectae Caritatis* on the Adaptation (there’s that word) and Renewal of Religious Life. They can also be found in other documents, such as those on bishops, priests, the apostolate of the laity and the Church’s missionary activity. *Gaudium et Spes*, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, is all about adaptation.

When the council fathers called for adaptation, they were not advocating willy-nilly acceptance of every whim of the world. Nor were they advocating change in the unchangeable truths of the Christian

Creed. In fact, they often paired “aggiornamento” with another Italian word—“ressourcement.” “Ressourcement” in the Vatican II documents means the return to the ancient Christian sources, especially the Scriptures and other writings of the early Church. “Aggiornamento” cannot travel without “ressourcement.”

Thus, adaptation in the life of the Church, whether at the universal, national, diocesan, parish or family level, must always accord with authentic faith. According to the Vatican II documents, what is always adapted, but never abandoned, is the Church’s “venerable tradition,” its “ancient and venerable treasures.” These gifts are adapted to different times, groups, regions, customs, languages, peoples and circumstances. They are adapted for pastoral needs, for needs of the apostolate and evangelization and for effective renewal.

In the words of the council fathers, adaptations must be “useful,” “necessary,” “legitimate,” “suitable,” “genuine” and “wise.” They are to be made with “circumspection.” But sometimes, they are to be “profound” or even “radical.” They are always made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church.

Adaptation in the life of the Church is not a once and for all thing, and so it could be said that adaptability is a necessary characteristic of

a Catholic Christian, maybe even a virtue. Right now, various circumstances in our own diocese challenge us to be adaptable. For example, changing demographics is a major factor prompting adaptations in our parishes. Membership in some parishes is decreasing. Likewise, the number of priests able to minister in the parishes has declined. These realities contribute to necessary reconfigurations in parish structures. Adaptation.

Likewise, vocations to religious life began declining in some countries in the 1950s. By now, the membership of numerous religious communities is primarily elderly. Rather than put all their remaining energy into administrative tasks, these religious women and men have chosen to entrust those functions to other people and to focus instead on living their religious charism intensely until their last member enters eternal life. They call it “coming to completion” or “coming to fulfillment.” It is not what these religious envisioned for their communities when they were young, but they have adapted gracefully to the circumstances thrust upon them.

The world does not exclude any of us from changing circumstances. The Holy Spirit enables us to adapt to them and even emerge with renewed faith.

“Aggiornamento.” Embrace it for the life of the Church.

This article was originally published in The Central Minnesota Catholic, the official magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud, on May 27, 2025. It was reprinted with permission.

"Going East"



Taken by Andra Johnson

Saint Scholastica Convent (SSC) is our community's retirement facility in St. Cloud, Minn. Sisters move to this location when they "retire" or need more health care services than are available at Saint Benedict's Monastery. For some, the initial move is joyful; for others, it is accompanied by grief. For all, SSC proves to be a loving home in which to live out the Benedictine monastic way of life. Enjoy reflections from our sisters who have "gone east" and live abundantly in this vibrant community.

Agatha Zwilling, OSB

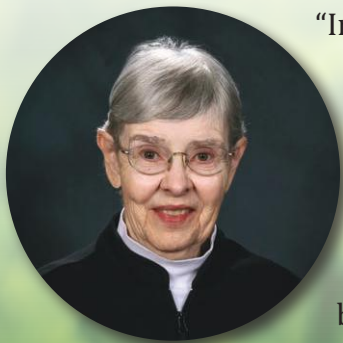


"I see you have finally gotten your way!" said my sister friend when she read the note I posted in 2023 to alert the sisters at Saint Benedict's Monastery that the prioress and I had made the decision that this was the time that SSC would be the more appropriate place for me.

The Michael Angel Wing group gave me a lovely welcome. Almost immediately I was on the schedule for both physical and occupational therapy. Both have been very helpful and are backed by the wellness staff, composed of four wonderful women, who help to keep me to an exercise routine, as well as supplying pampering services! For instance, each Monday morning, which I consider my spa day, starts with a whirlpool bath followed by exercises and a weekly foot massage with the wellness staff.

We have certified nursing assistants assigned to our Angel Wings 24 hours a day, so someone is always there to answer questions, even overnight. We also have a senior transition nurse practitioner who becomes our doctor and comes right to bedrooms for appointments. I have not told you how wonderfully we pray together here—come see! This is a really great place to retire!"

Marlene Meierhofer, OSB



"In late November 2015, I was diagnosed with epilepsy, and I needed to move to Saint Scholastica Convent, our health care facility. How could I be asked to leave Saint Benedict's Monastery? I thrived on being involved in all the activities that went on there. Could I leave that and all the vibrant connections to the students at the College of Saint Benedict? I had no choice, and I felt totally cut off from all that was central to me.

And guess what? By the third day of living at SSC, I was already overwhelmed by the spirit there. I loved the sisters, the care given by the staff, and the way

Reflections From Saint Scholastica Convent

the sisters cared for each other. It was great to be a part of gathering for Liturgy of the Hours and eating together three times a day. Yet, for several months I struggled intensely with two strong feelings—being cut off from the monastery and being overwhelmingly enlivened by the sisters, the many happenings and the beautiful surroundings at SSC.

Thanks to many caring, supportive people who listened to my struggles and the joy and energy I received from living at SSC, I was able to wholeheartedly embrace SSC as a wonderful home to live monastic life. Now, for the past 10 years and with the help of antiseizure medication, I have enjoyed good health and am so happy to be of assistance wherever needed. What an honor to be living among wise women, deeply committed to monastic life, and supporting each other through our different stages in the aging process!”

Mary Reuter, OSB



“‘I have moved.’ This is the message I emailed to my family and friends last March. I am now living at SSC in east St. Cloud.

A few months before moving, I gave significant attention and energy to discerning: “What’s next for me?” My back needed more physical and related therapies than I could receive at Saint Benedict’s Monastery. I could sense God was communicating to me through my body. After several weeks, my path became clear: I needed to move to SSC.

I continue to live my community life with sisters I’ve known throughout my Benedictine years. We pray and eat together. We share many life experiences, with parties and conversations at the top of the list. My life here has compensated for my loss of independence such as going where and when I want. Cancellation of my driver’s license last fall sealed the fate of my driving mobility. While losses have accumulated, new gifts have come my way.

My transition has been graced. I discerned and made the choice to live here. Benedictine life welcomed me. My sisters are truly my sisters, expressing care for each other, including me. I continue some ministries that give me purpose and joy: writing blogs and meditations for our website and companioning people through spiritual direction. I am learning to move to a slower pace of life. I recognize that I’m in some shifts in my vocation—how I think, transitioning to more reflection and rest, relishing nature around me, attending to the needs of my body, attending to my spiritual life and being with people. These shifts are both challenging and anchored in deep peace. I trust they will lead me deeper into the heart of God, now and through my final transition.”

25 Years of Wonders

Judith Kramer, OSB



St. George and the Dragon

Often, strange noises occur at the Art and Heritage Place! No surprise. For some 25 years, this has been the home of sacred, strange and wonderful records and pictures of hopes and happenings. The iron gate to Whitby Gift Shop, for example, howls and clanks when made to open or close. After all, it does guard precious, handcrafted and treasured items.

The names of the some 6,000 donors who helped to make this museum and gift shop a reality are

inscribed on the walls leading into the exhibit hall. Our records indicate that between 2,000 and 8,000 visitors come to the Art and Heritage Place every year.

The Art and Heritage Place was the dream of several forward-looking sisters who had, for years, tucked away precious items in a small room inside Teresa Hall at the College of Saint Benedict. Their dream was to include a gift shop where items made by the sisters, including monastery-made whole wheat and cinnamon bread, could be sold.

Large collections from the convent kitchen were early items to be sorted and accessioned in the museum. To this day, all sorts of sizes of Red Wing pottery line our shelves (think sauerkraut and pickles for over 1,000 people)! Early on, the treasures from foreign and faraway missions—China, Japan, Puerto Rico, Chile, Brazil, Africa, Israel, much of Europe and South America—came to live among the items where the sisters worked.

There have been more than 25 exhibits here, most lasting a year or two. Several of these exhibits included displays of the unique work from the monastery's art-needlework department, which operated from the 1920s until 1950 or so. Sets of silk, hand-embroidered liturgical vestments, accompanying pieces, images of saints, symbols, floral and abstract needle patterns are samples of art from needles and very patient hands of gifted sisters. Other exhibits displayed the work of the sisters in education, health care, pastoral ministry, music, sculpture, pottery, amazing crafts and more.

Outstanding and prize-winning was the 10th exhibit, "The Living Culture of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe)," about the Native peoples of Red Lake

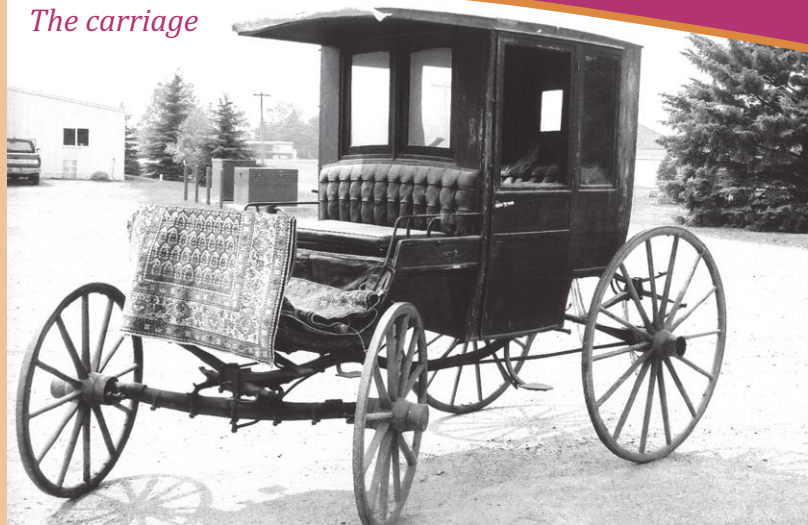
Celebrating the Art and Heritage Place

and White Earth in Minnesota. Our sisters have worked many years with these honored people. Due to the careful work of a large committee, which included many native peoples and sisters, and the great patience and diligence in search of the truth, this exhibit probably had the largest number of visitors in our history and received a well-deserved award from the American Association for State and Local History in 2005. The finest result of this exhibit has been lifelong friendships!

The most famous resident of the museum is St. George. The 24" x 36" hand-embroidered tapestry done by Sister Bernadita Brauckmann was created in 1930. George has a commanding presence in our storeroom. The front and back of the tapestry are exquisite, for the back is the perfect reversal of the front and not a knot is to be found! George has been displayed many times. He keeps his colors brilliant and from his white horse continues to win the battle over the evil dragon.

One other strange and unexpected treasure is our horse-drawn carriage. The vehicle is over 100 years old, and our information is scant. We don't know if the carriage was purchased or given to the sisters, but our evidence is that it was made in the late 1800s or early 1900s in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. Two adults could ride in the

The carriage



carriage which was powered by two horses. It seems originally it had been used to transport the bishop to important occasions. The sisters used the carriage to fetch students from the railroad station, and in the summertime, it often toted picnic supplies to the woods for outings. It probably served as transportation for the prioress to visit her sisters in the many parish schools where they taught.

The history of Saint Benedict's Monastery is mirrored on the walls and shelves of the Art and Heritage Place. It is with humility and gratitude for the support of so many that we mark a quarter of a century.



Left: "The Living Culture of the Anishinaabeg" exhibit

Right: Sisters Mariterese Woida (left) and Ruth Nierengarten setting up the exhibit



Choosing the *Oblate Way of Life*

*O*n September 21, 2024, eight men and women made their perpetual oblation, offering themselves to God as oblates of Saint Benedict's Monastery and promising to dedicate themselves to the service of God and all people according to the Rule of Benedict.

Dianne Schlichting, OblSB

"The desire for community is built into the fiber of my being. I am a wife, mother and grandmother, so I know that it is in community that growth is possible. Benedictine oblate life provides a vehicle in which I can grow, heal and experience joy. Becoming an oblate has been a journey that has introduced me to amazing people who, like me, value authentic relationships. As an oblate, I can rely on the strength of a group of committed sisters who welcome me and others 'home' whenever we enter the monastery grounds. I can also offer these sisters my friendship and help as we journey together to live faithfully the *Rule of St. Benedict*."

John Schlichting, OblSB

"Discernment for me involves hearing a sacred voice within say, 'Listen to your life.' I've learned that God speaks through our living. I felt a yearning for living with Spirit-guided people; a longing to experience the joy of a Christ-presence in others and in self. I've known community to be a place to work at hard things together with others who will be there when I fall, and to be there to pick me up when needed. Community encourages me to recognize Christ in a brother or sister and to want each to be loved. Being an oblate seemed like an opportunity to grow in my faith and promised hope to experience the quantum energy within the Body of Christ."

Patty Anderson, OblSB

"Throughout my adult life, I have pursued studies that fed my spiritual hunger including Celtic spirituality, interfaith dialogue and inner peace. In the last several years, I found myself longing for more than a workshop, class or book study.

As an oblate inquirer, then as an oblate candidate, I felt like the core Benedictine values were a solid foundation. I believe we each have our own unique experiences, given talents and painful sorrows, and we are unified in our service to God through Benedictine practices. I found stability. I am stronger in my conviction to hold space for both the goodness of life and the chaos of this world. Being an oblate offers me a sense of belonging and hope."



New oblates George Dupuy, Connie Scott, Rita Meyer, Reverend Molly Minnerath, Patty Anderson, Jolene Dickerman, Dianne Schlichting and John Schlichting (left to right) at Oblate Renewal Day 2024

Connie Scott, OblSB

“Becoming a Benedictine oblate was a transformative decision, made through faithful prayer for discernment. The *Rule of St. Benedict* appealed to me, with its emphasis on balance, prayer and work, with the imprint of spiritual intention. Through Benedictine spirituality, I saw an opportunity for stability and an inner rhythm to root me in both the divine and the ordinary. As someone who often felt the pull of distractions and rushed routines, embracing this daily discipline offered me the possibility of a spiritually renewed life through the practice of humility, hospitality and service.

Through the Benedictine tradition, the act of living itself becomes a form of prayer—in working, resting and serving others. This has helped me to be aware of the sacred in all things.”

Rita Meyer, OblSB

“Last September 24 was a blessed, milestone day for me. In addition to the deep-seated gratitude and joy of oblation, the breadth and depth of my commitment writ large. How to manifest daily life in relationship with God?

This year, I focused my attention on daily prayer/reading, realizing God’s presence in ordinary tasks, and daily using the Benedictine Values/Practices as developed by Sister Michaela Hedican. During oblate formation, I found high value in a chance selection of one of the 12 Values/Practices as my contemplative and actionable guide each day.

Though the flowering of Benedictine living has just begun for me, this year has been a testament to the profound and stabilizing merit of prayer; the quiet, attentive awareness necessary for inviting God’s presence; and the discernment and discipline essential to applying Benedictine wisdom to lay life.”

Continued on page 24

Choosing the *Oblate Way of Life*

Continued from page 23

Jolene Dickerman, OblSB

"The Benedictine values embodied by the sisters and other oblates drew me in ... with their hospitality, listening, awareness of God and balanced rhythm of prayer, work and leisure. I feel honored to call Saint Benedict's Monastery my spiritual home. I've found St. Benedict's *Rule* surprisingly flexible, compassionate, moderate and nurturing—more of a trellis to support and guide holistic growth, rather than a harsh rule.

Soaking in the psalms, *Rule* and Benedictine practices on the daily feels like God is weeding the garden of my soul. Softening, strengthening, transforming something deep within ... Deepening awareness of the Divine Presence everywhere—within me, others and the world ... Encouraging growth in forgiveness, humility, love and patience with myself and others, as I'm reminded of the inexhaustible mercy of God."

George Dupuy, OblSB

"When I made my perpetual oblation in September 2024, it was a meaningful step within a long journey. My wife and I started getting to know the Benedictines about 20 years ago, and St. Benedict has been tugging at our sleeves since that time (she is an oblate at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn.). I first came to love Saint Benedict's Monastery during a retreat in the hermitage in 2021. After that retreat, I was increasingly drawn back to the monastery grounds, and I eventually followed the Spirit's prompting to explore oblate inquiry. During my time of inquiry and formation with an extraordinary group of 'merry wanderers,' I found a home at Saint Ben's. I am grateful for the chance 'to see good days' with you all."

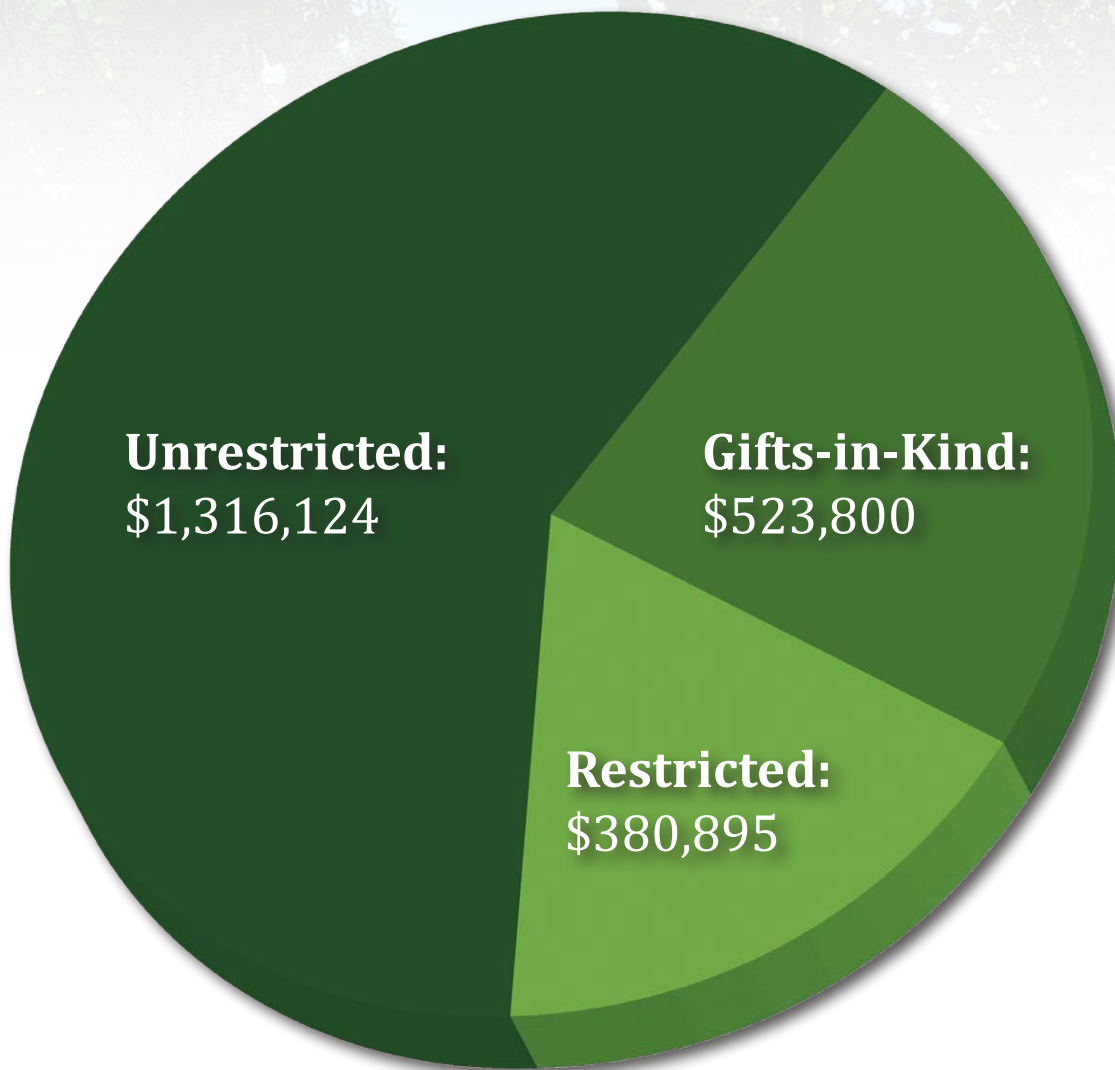
Reverend Molly Minnerath, OblSB

"I often describe Saint Benedict's Monastery and my relationship with the sisters as an important 'tether' that has helped me stay rooted to prayer, discernment and community throughout my life. So, after a lifetime of relationship with the sisters, becoming an oblate felt like a natural way to make this tether feel more official. It was a way I could commit, both externally and internally, to continuing to live the Benedictine way of life, with this special community, in a deeper way. Every time I engage in the Benedictine way of life or connect with the sisters and oblates, I feel buoyed, able to encounter all that is happening in my life with new grace and openness. I cherish all the gifts that come with being an oblate, and I am so grateful for the ways it has positively impacted my life!"

Interested in learning more about the oblate way of life? Visit www.sbm.osb.org/partnership/oblates/ or contact Mary Stommes, OblSB, oblate director, at oblatesbm@csbsju.edu or (320) 363-7053.

Gratitude By the Numbers

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025



4,606

Total Gifts

2,609

Total Donors

317

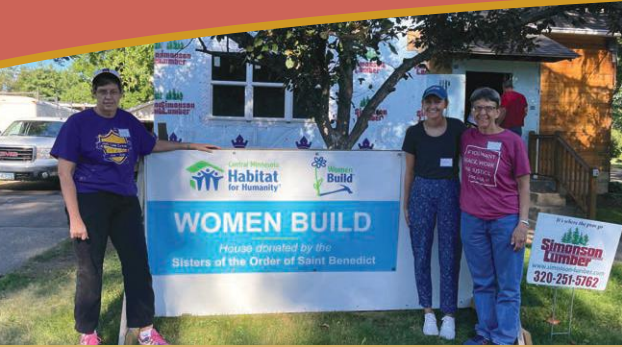
**Total
First-Time
Donors**

Total Amount in Donations: \$1,740,886

We are immensely grateful for your generosity and support! If you'd like to donate or learn more about opportunities to partner with us, visit www.sbm.osb.org/partnership/mission-advancement/.

Behind the Scenes Under the Dome

Alyssa Tasto



Left: Cheryl (left) at a Central Minnesota Habitat for Humanity house build with Sister Lisa Rose (right) and another volunteer

Right: Cheryl (right) enjoys a hike with Sisters Patricia Ruether, Patricia Sniezek and Lisa Rose (left to right)



Even for those who have followed different vocations in life, there is something special about spending time with a monastic community. The Benedictine Live-In Experience at Saint Benedict's Monastery provides an opportunity for Christian women to break away from the routine of daily life and refresh their spirituality by sharing in the prayer and work of the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict. Cheryl Cyert is a former math teacher living in Mauston, Wis., and an alumna of the College of Saint Benedict. She has participated in the Live-In Experience every summer since 2021.

"During 2023, I retired," Cheryl said as she recalled previous summers spent at Saint Benedict's Monastery. "I think that the third year was more like I needed just some place to recharge and think about what the next years are going to bring." She pondered what called her to keep returning to the monastery, saying, "I think ultimately, it's because I find the sisters very inspiring. There's something about serving the sisters that have served people for so many years ... that draws me back."

Cheryl arrived at the monastery June 12, 2025. On a typical day, Monday through Friday, she prayed with the sisters at 7 a.m., worked a morning shift, joined the sisters for Midday Prayer and lunch, and worked a second shift until 3:30 p.m.

She stayed with a living group of sisters and spent the evenings taking personal time or participating in activities with her living group such as watching game shows and movies, taking walks, and enjoying off-campus activities like birthday celebrations.

Through the Live-In Experience, Cheryl has worked in environmental services, the monastery kitchen, the guest house, the monastery Archives, and as a driver and helper to individual sisters. On Wednesdays, she worked at Saint Scholastica Convent, our community's retirement facility in St. Cloud, Minn. She personally requested to continue visiting Saint Scholastica Convent this year: "On Wednesdays, Sister Christian Morris does *lectio* on the memory care unit ... that's always very insightful to me."

Because of the nature of the Live-In Experience, it is possible that participants are present for uniquely special moments in the lives of the sisters. Cheryl is honored to have been present for the final professions of two sisters, Sisters Bridgette Powers and Laura Suhr, in 2022, as well as the passing of a sister at Saint Scholastica Convent.

Cheryl returned home to Wisconsin in early August. She looks forward with joyful anticipation to her next visit to Saint Benedict's Monastery—perhaps again as a Live-In volunteer next summer!

To learn more about participating in the Benedictine Live-In Experience, visit www.sbm.osb.org/ministry/live-in or contact Sister Mary Catherine Holicky, Live-In coordinator, at liveinex@csbsju.edu or (320) 363-7028.

Vocation Vignettes

The Benedictine ring each sister is given during her perpetual monastic profession



Julianne Gilbert, OSB



“My years as a Benedictine are a witness of the relentless perseverance of God’s pursuit of my heart and life. I dodged God’s nudging toward religious life for 15 years, until my fears and doubts were quieted enough to truly listen and discern with others and then answer the call. I am deeply grateful for God’s patience!

Our Benedictine life is a continual chorus of call and response, seek and explore, risk and trust. God asks my obedience, sometimes to things that seem beyond me, and then grants me the grace and grit to respond and show up through my sisters and our common commitment to daily Benedictine life.

We are moving into a future of great change, with both anticipation and trepidation, and I draw courage from knowing the God who persisted in getting me here will get me into whatever way we are meant to go next as a community. The journey may ramble a bit, but the path has been laid.”

Katherine Kraft, OSB



“My motivation for entering the monastery was mixed—not all that clear. It was a way to make a difference when women’s roles were narrowly defined. Here, I met a wide spectrum of talented women doing all sorts of things and spending a lot of time praying. Their love of learning, stewardship of the land, the arts and concern for others locally, nationally and globally impressed me. But what drew me most was their humanity, approachability and warmth. They seemed real, even ordinary. Deep down, I came and stayed because I found welcome and home here. Home is where we belong. Home is where we find God. I found God here.”



The Office of Mission Advancement
104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN 56374-0220
(320) 363-7100 • www.sbm.osb.org



Address Service Requested

Please help us keep our mailing list current.

- ☐ New address
- ☐ Please remove my name
- ☐ Receiving more than one copy (send all labels, indicating the correct one).



Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for **Thursday, November 20, 2025.**

Computer technology allows us to offer spiritual programs, events and opportunities virtually, among many other things.

Photo: Sister Mara Faulkner facilitates a Spirituality Center•Studium program on Zoom



We are excited to, once again, participate in Give to the Max Day, Minnesota's annual online giving day. Every year, we are reminded over and over again of the abundant generosity and support of you, our friends.

For this year's campaign, we're raising funds to purchase new computers and upgrade some of our current technological equipment. Effective October 2025, Microsoft will require computers to update to Windows 11, an operating system that is incompatible with what we currently have. Computer technology enables us to connect with and minister to the spiritually hungry, no matter where they live, and in order to meet these emerging technological needs, we need to replace more than 70 computers between Saint Benedict's Monastery and Saint Scholastica Convent.

Will you help? Visit www.sbm.osb.org for more details.