



YANKTON BENELECTINES

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**Prioress
2017-2023**

Reflection from the Prioress - S. Maribeth Wentzlaff

Greetings, Friends of Sacred Heart Monastery! Our hearts are connected with all of you through this Covid-19 pandemic, even though we have not been able to accept visitors since mid-March. That has been so hard because it smacks against our Benedictine value of hospitality. However, this has given our Sisters great time for reflection on what is important in life and what we need to learn from this whole situation. This is perfect timing because this whole edition of Yankton Benedictines is on life-long learning and conversion of life. Several Sisters are featured in this issue sharing about life-lessons they have learned through their ministries or education.

I was asked to share what I have learned in the three years since I have been the Prioress of our community. This was a great reflection for me, and I could actually write a book and not just a couple of paragraphs! But, I believe that I could sum this up in three important points. Number One: You cannot live this way of life alone; you definitely need others! Number Two: Keep listening! And, Number Three: F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely On God!)

Time after time, I find myself in situations where I see the importance of having a loving community surround me. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, I say that when we talk about community, there is a principle that demonstrates that “1 + 1 = 3.” When we come together, we accomplish more and are greater than the sum of what we are as individuals. I am so grateful that I have a Monastery Council and an administrative team to share their wisdom to help me make better decisions. When the Covid-19 pandemic started, we developed a Committee to handle “all things Covid-19.” We included staff members from different departments and Sisters to be a part of this to provide an array of expertise. This provided extra light to travel dark paths ahead.

Secondly, I value the importance of listening more and more as my term as prioress advances. St. Benedict says that we should listen to even the youngest member of community because sometimes the Spirit reveals what is best to the younger. “Listen” is the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict. There is a reason for that. My dad always said that God gave us two ears and one mouth, and that meant that we should do twice as much listening as speaking. As much as I would like to think so, I do NOT have a corner on the market of wisdom, so I am constantly being called to growth by listening to my community members.

Finally, I have found that following the F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely on God) mentality puts all things into perspective. It is God alone that is in control of all things. If I try to step in, it messes up everything! I have learned many times to just do what I can and then get out of God’s way, and let God do the rest and the best! This truly is the most important learning of all because, in the end, God, our Good Shepherd, has our best interest at heart, and will lead us to greater and greener pastures.

Benedictines take a vow of “Conversion of Life.” This is a daily undertaking. We want to be a better person today than yesterday. If I continue to build on the three things I have learned as a prioress, this will help in my vow of “conversatio.” As you read the following articles from and about our Sisters, I challenge you to ask yourself, “What are the life-lessons that I have learned, and what impact have/do they have on my life now to make me a better person?” God bless your journeying!

*Your Sister in Christ,
Sister Maribeth*



CHARISM

We are Benedictine women of Yankton, South Dakota, sharing our gift of seeking God through our prayer, work, study and community life.

MISSION

Rooted in our rural heritage and growing in relationship with God and one another in monastic community, we live a life of prayer, work, and lectio by which we serve God and God’s people in our time and place.

CORE VALUES

*Christians follow Christ by bringing to life the values of the Gospel. We have gathered clusters of these values into these three: **Awareness of God, Community, and Hospitality.***

Growing Through Change by S. Kathy Burt

In the prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict, Benedict tells of the establishment of the school of the Lord's Service drawn up with regulations in hopes to set down nothing harsh or burdensome, yet prompting us to a little strictness to amend faults and safeguard love. Benedict further writes that this road to salvation is bound to be narrow at the onset, but as we progress in this life, our hearts will overflow with inexpressible delight of love (47-50). This statement encompasses all three of the vows I promised 24 years ago. In heeding the Benedictine vows of Conversatio, Stability, and Obedience, I have been called to be and to do more than I could have ever imagined. These vows have not only called, but stirred up a desire to be a lifelong learner ever listening for God's wisdom. I have found that sometimes in order to hear God's wisdom, my stony heart needs to be broken. This brokenness often occurs during times of transition and involves pain and loss.

Two years have passed since I changed from my ministry of teaching at Mount Marty College to my ministry as the clinical nurse educator at Avera Majestic Bluffs. The road indeed was narrow at the onset and my heart grieved. This change meant leaving a ministry I loved. This change meant admitting that this change meant starting something new, and I was afraid. "What if I do not fit in; What if I do not have the right skillset; What if ... Quoting my favorite literary character – Anne of Green Gables – "I was in the depths of despair" It was in that despair where I surrendered and asked God to create a new spirit within me and replace my heart of stone. One night as I was lamenting to God, I heard God say, "Rise up, walk, and trust."

With renewed energy and enthusiasm, I began my new ministry. This ministry has given me the opportunity to share my great love for the care of the elderly with men and women starting out in their healthcare careers. It has ignited my passion for caring for others. It daily calls me outside my comfort zone with new challenges. My new motto is "I am changing the world one certified nursing assistant at a time." My heart has been opened to new possibilities. The road indeed was narrow in the beginning, but now my heart is overflowing with delight, love, and anticipation of what God has planned for me next.



What We Learned about Life in Education and Nursing



When I was growing up I was trying to decide whether I wanted to be a teacher or a nurse. It wasn't until I began teaching at Mount Marty in the Nursing Program that I was able to do both, my life's dream. Working as a nurse I realized how important it is that we take care of the whole person, not just his or her's physical needs. In the Rule of

Benedict it states: "Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ." (RB 36.1) What a difference this makes when caring for the healthcare needs of a person. I have tried to incorporate this into my role as a nursing instructor, helping students to come to know the sacredness of their ministry in seeing the person of Christ as they provide care to their patients.

At Sacred Heart Monastery, we're privileged to have Mount Marty College students as prayer partners. I have been a prayer partner with Paige Cordell, a senior nursing student, for the last four years. As prayer partners, the Sisters get to know the students on a personal level, and include them and their needs and concerns in our daily prayers. We can be a support and encouragement to them. The Sisters not only pray for our prayer partners but also invite them to evening prayer, social gatherings and game night at the monastery. Our prayer partners also keep us in prayer. I have found having student prayer partners to be a great experience and a wonderful way to be connected and supportive of the individual students at the college.

-S. Sharon Ann Haas

My experiences at Mount Marty have taught me that I have the potential to learn something new every single day. I have come to value even more the idea of approaching each day with an open mind and heart. One of my most cherished memories through Mount Marty was being able to go on a mission trip to Haiti. I would not have guessed that this would have been the place in the world where I discovered what pure joy is, but it truly was. I learned about myself and others and how we all play a much bigger role in this life and that we have the capability to do remarkable things. I met individuals who are incredibly kind-hearted that have left an everlasting impact on my heart and soul. I feel like this trip was the icing on the cake of my time spent at Mount Marty where I did become a student who is shaped by the core values of our community. I learned so much during my time here about myself and others and how much impact we can have in just one person's life. Here at Mount Marty there is always someone offering support or simply a smile or hello everywhere you look. The support system at Mount Marty has been key throughout my years of college and I know I wouldn't be where I am today without these very special individuals. Mount Marty has helped me break out of my shell to discover a new world of learning about myself and my potential. Mount Marty's core values of life-long learning, community, hospitality, and awareness of God have opened me to a new world of learning to prepare me for my future career, all while growing in my relationships with faculty, staff, family, friends, and God.

-Paige Cordell



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Life Lessons from Gardening, by S. Mary Jo Polak

When I was a kid on our farm in Nebraska, I hated working in the garden. It meant being hot, sweaty and itchy. We gardened and canned because we had to save money.

However, I did like my flower patch. Some years I had morning glories in the corner by the fence and the garage, and I spent hours training the tendrils to climb up twine, up to the roof of the garage. Although I may not have thought about the Gospel of the vine and the branches, I did learn that, with patience, you can direct growth. You can't force, but, slowly and easily, you can channel the energy that is already there. In my years as a music teacher, my best work was when I relied on that style of interaction with the students, when I would guide them in working with their own creative ideas.

As an adult, I did very little gardening until my Dad died in 1995. My good friends offered to plant a tree in memory of Dad on our monastery grounds. Being a Nebraskan, I chose a cottonwood. I also made a circular flower bed around the tree, and planted flowers in the colors of the Lakota Medicine Wheel. Tending those flowers was like going to my Dad's grave.

My Dad was a farmer who loved and cared for the land, and took over the gardening from Mom in his retirement years. Gardening was no longer a matter of sustenance – it was something he enjoyed. He would delight in a funny shaped potato, or the taste of a vine-ripened tomato. There was gratitude for the gift of God's creation. Those were the lessons I also learned, tending flowers underneath Dad's memorial cottonwood tree, thinking of him as "the tree planted besides running waters" (Psalm 1).

My choice of flowers are hardy tubers and bulbs which you leave in the ground; then, they are total gift when they pop up on their own in the springtime. I can't hurry them; it all depends on the sunshine and rain they are receiving. I continue learning that life is gift, just like my flowers.

My flowers have connections – people and stories transplanted with them. I have purple and white irises from our farm. I have yellow irises which came from a Nebraska cemetery (don't tell!). My sister also loves irises and has shared many of her beauties with me, so she is in the garden with me. I prayerfully think of people from Missouri, Nebraska, and Colorado who gave us tubers as I await the blooms of different heights and colors. All are different, each beautiful in its own way, and each a gift, just like the people behind them. We are all flowers in a God's garden.

Thoughts from the Chicken Whisperer by S. Carmy Luke

Since entering the community in the fall of 1999, I have spent at least some of my summer months each year in the monastery's garden and orchard. I assist in the planting, tending, and harvesting of the fruits and vegetables in the garden and our orchard, filled with a variety of fruit trees. In recent years, we have added the care of chickens to this endeavor. Since I was raised on a farm, being able to work outdoors in nature is really a gift.

The raising of chickens came about as a project for our elderly Sisters to enjoy. They are able to witness the hatching of the chicks, watch them begin to grow, and then later enjoy great chicken soup. For me, working with the chickens has been another way to keep close to the circle of life that happens all around us in nature. I find comfort in caring for God's creatures, and they help me to stay grounded in my rural heritage. I've always loved animals, and as a girl, I would spend countless hours in the barn "talking" to the cats and cows. This is probably why I've become known as the Chicken Whisperer. I like to spend time just sitting with the chickens and sharing my heart with them. I think they, in turn, are great listeners. Much of what I observe in the chickens, I can relate to life in my religious community. The chickens also have to learn to live together and sometimes it isn't easy, but each night they make amends for any hurt they have caused, and they settle down together to await the new day. They also remind me to laugh at life, especially when one of them "flies the coop" and we end up having a chicken roundup! I know that many wonder why I can find such creatures so comforting and why I want to spend time with them. I have a deep sense that each year caring for them brings me a little bit closer to God.

Even though the chickens are not pets, I have to admit that some of them have become pretty special to me. None is more special than the chicken I affectionately named Blindy. Blindy was born with an infection in one of her eyes which appeared to have taken her sight in that eye. Whenever Blindy's eye would get sore, I would hold Blindy while S. Virginia would treat her eye with antibiotic ointment. I have a weak spot for the special creatures, and Blindy was surely special to me.



Chicks hatched
April 2020.



Into Eternal Peace



S. Francine Streff OSB, 68, died on Friday, November 1, 2019. Francine was born December 17, 1950 the oldest of six children to LeRoy and Betty (Tuschen) Streff of Salem, South Dakota. She grew up on the farm and through the responsibilities given to her on the farm, she was instilled with the ability to creatively solve problems. She attended St. Mary's School in Salem and was a part of the last graduating class of St. Mary's High School. She continued her education at Mount Marty College in Yankton South Dakota where she received a BA in education and began teaching. She later received a Masters from the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. She was also involved in Democratic Party politics during her young adult life and worked on several campaigns. While teaching, she also developed skills in painting, calligraphy, and weaving. Rainbow colored thread became her signature for her woven creations.

S. Francine entered Sacred Heart Monastery on August 23, 1992, and entered the novitiate on August 5, 1993. She made her first profession on August 7, 1994 and her final profession

on August 2, 1997. During her years of ministry, she taught at Sacred Heart School in Yankton and Christ the King and St. Michael's in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. After leaving teaching, she was in the public relations office at the monastery for a while and later ran the Monastery Gift Shop. She was also a spiritual director and initiator of the Monastery's annual Holiday Fair.

S. Francine was a determined person who did not let disability hold her back. She used her creative spirit to design her life with ingenuity and rainbow splendor. She was devoted to her family and encouraged her nieces, nephews and students to be the best they could be.

S. Francine is survived by her Benedictine community, her brothers Rodney, Dan, Steve and Ray, her sister Paulette and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her father and mother.



S. Matthew Wehri, OSB, 85, died on Sunday, November 24, 2019. Carol Ann Wehri was born April 18, 1934 to Frank and Kathryn (Roether) Wehri of Hebron, North Dakota. She was the second of four children and attended St. Clements Catholic grade school in Hebron and St. Mary's High School in Richardton, North Dakota graduating in May 1953. Carol Ann entered Sacred Heart Monastery on September 6, 1954. On June 28, 1955, she became a novice and received the name Matthew. She made first profession on June 29, 1956 and final profession on June 29, 1959. S. Matthew was schooled daily in the Lord's service for the remainder of her religious life and was known by the work of her hands. She learned her ministry by watching others or just by doing what needed to be done. Her hands became proficient in housekeeping, drape-making, doing laundry, upholstering, growing flowers and plants, baking, Christmas decorating, sewing for the Sisters in the Care Center, driving for appointments and much more. She began ministry sewing in the Vestment Department in Yankton; followed by housekeeping in Lincoln, Nebraska; at Stephan Indian Mission and

the Bishop's house in South Dakota. In 1969, she returned to Yankton and worked once more at the Monastery. She then served as housekeeping supervisor at Mount Marty for 24 years. After stepping down from this supervisory position, she continued caring for the flower beds and plants at Mount Marty until her retirement. S. Matthew was also known for her recycling efforts and care for various canine friends over the years. She was a resourceful practical person. She enjoyed many hobbies such as wine making, crocheting, cake decorating and baking rose petal bread to name a few. She loved Christmas, and would spend time decorating inside and out around campus. For her, there was never too much when it came to decorating for Christmas. S. Matthew is survived by her Benedictine community, her brother, Frederick (Fritz) (Laura), her sister, Eileen (Larry) and several nieces and a nephew. She was preceded in death by her parents and brother, Fr. Francis, OSB.





S. Margretta Doyle OSB, 85, died on Monday, December 2, 2019. Kathleen was born on November 21, 1934, the second child of John and Irene (O'Connor) Doyle of Tyler, Minnesota. Her family later moved to Lennox, South Dakota and operated the movie theater. She went to Lennox Public School and graduated in 1952. After receiving a two-year teaching certificate, she taught at Sisseton Public School for a year. Kathleen entered Sacred Heart Monastery on August 21, 1955 and was invested as a novice on June 28, 1956 receiving the name Margretta. She made first profession on June 29, 1957 and continued her education at Mount Marty College graduating in 1958. She celebrated final profession on June 29, 1960. S. Margretta spent her first years of ministry teaching primary grades in Albion, Nebraska; Yankton, Vermillion and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. During these years, she received her MAT in Religious Education from Webster College in St. Louis. After ministering one year (1978-79) at Mount Marty College's Bookstore in Yankton, she was asked to work as a Pastoral Minister in the newly started St. Michael's Parish in Sioux Falls,

South Dakota. She later worked as a Pastoral Minister at St. Mary's Parish until she retired to the monastery. S. Margretta spent 40 years serving God's people in Sioux Falls parishes. At the monastery, she ministered by working at the gift shop and switchboard, tutoring people with disabilities, and driving for appointments. S. Margretta was a maternally gentle and joyful person who loved to be with people. She was an avid reader, traveler and card game player. She easily laughed until she cried and could mesmerize small children by imitating the voice of Donald Duck. Her Irish heritage was her trademark: St. Patrick's Day was a high holy day of celebration, and she was honored to be named Grand Marshal for the Sioux Falls St. Patrick's Day parade. She enjoyed traveling (including a few trips to Ireland), and even tried parasailing, snorkeling, and hot air ballooning while she was in her 70's. S. Margretta is survived by her Benedictine community, her brother Monsignor James Doyle, and her many friends in Sioux Falls. She was preceded in death by her parents.

News Notes



Forty-six Benedictine Prioresses from monasteries in the US and one each from Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas held a conference at SHM the last week of January.



The new Bishop, Donald E. DeGrood, visited Sacred Heart Monastery on February 19th.



On February 23, S. Wilma celebrated her 100th birthday. May she continue to be blessed as she continues life's journey at 100 years young!



During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Sisters work together to make masks. Some of them were donated to Avera Sacred Heart Hospital and others were used by our Monastery employees.



The photo to the left is of some of the new organ pipes replacing the old ones. The organ pipes were manufactured shortly after WWII and contain a lot of lead which over time has caused the pipes to collapse and bend. Please join us in this restoration project to carry on the legacy of music and prayer at Sacred Heart Monastery.

Important Notice

Unfortunately during this time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we are unable to receive guests. However, we want you to know that we are holding you in our thoughts and prayers. Please follow us on social media for further updates.

Social Media



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Blog: <https://yanktonbenedictines.org/sacred-heart-monastery-blog/>

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Benedictine Peace Center

Spiritual Refreshment Opportunities
at a Monastic RETREAT CENTER

We're here for you!

While you're at home we invite you to creative connections online to deepen your relationship with God.

Spiritual Direction
Study Group on
a Focus Topic Discussion



OUR *Hearts* ARE *Restless* FOR *God*

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