

YANKTON BENELECTINES

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Reflection from the Prioress

Greetings, friends of Sacred Heart Monastery! We hope that this finds you “Covid 19-free” and staying healthy. For our friends who have had the misfortune of contracting this, we pray that you are on the mend and are starting to feel better. Every day our Sisters pray for those who have died from this and pray that there will soon be a vaccine to end this pandemic.

It isn’t even winter, and Yankton has already had two beautiful snow events. I love to watch it snow from my office windows. Sometimes, it is so delicate and light, and other times the wind whips those flakes into a real whirl! I always believe that it is a reminder that God is in charge!

We have all heard that no two snowflakes are alike. I believe some scientists have proven that incorrect, but, in reality, the probability of two of them being exactly alike is slim. That has been the source of my reflections for this edition of the Yankton Benedictines. I am so amazed at how God has created us all to be unique individuals—and no two the same—not even identical twins. That is a true miracle. We have each been given gifts that are peculiarly our own.

I think that this is true of each religious order. For one, our Benedictine roots, traced back to the 5th century from St. Benedict, offers those who follow this way of life something different from what the rest of the world experiences. In Chapter 4 of the Rule of St. Benedict, he says, “Your way of acting should be different from the world’s way; the love of Christ must come before all else.” Therefore, all Benedictines step aside and live certain values that may not seem “normal” for the rest of society. For example, we value silence, humility, obedience, hospitality, balance, prayer, manual labor, community, listening to others, and the list goes on from here.

At our sponsored institution, Mount Marty University, the freshmen are required to take a class called “Wisdom of Benedict.” During this class, they learn how to incorporate the above values into their own lives today. For some, this is very hard because they have not had the opportunities to experience these in a loud and clamorous world. One of the exercises I do with the students is to take them to the Oratory on campus, and I have them sit in silence for 15 minutes. Some were about ready to crawl out of their skin after 5 minutes. But, they persevered, and afterwards, most said how grateful they were to have that experience of quiet in the busyness of their lives.

In this issue, you will find some articles on silence, humility, and simplicity. You will also hear how some of our living groups celebrate Advent/Christmas. Many people rush the season of Christmas at this time, but here at the Monastery, “our way of acting is different than the world’s way.” We take the full time of celebrating the season of Advent and waiting, so we can truly enjoy the birth of our Savior at Christmas.

We want to wish all of you a very blessed Advent season, and a Merry Christmas. Take the time to enjoy the people around you and recognize that God is the center of all of our activities! Enjoy that we are all uniquely and marvelously God’s work of art—just like each snowflake! God bless from Sacred Heart Monastery!

*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.

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Joy Among Pandemic... S. Theresa McGinn's Monastic Profession

Monastic profession is a special time in the life of our community. It marks the time when a novice has completed her required studies, has faithfully lived the communal life, and has received the affirmation of the community to become a member. It's a joyful, sacred time as the community witnesses the promises of the one making profession. The Sister promises obedience, stability and fidelity to the monastic way of life in this Benedictine community. It truly is a communal celebration as the Sister's family and friends are welcomed and join in the special occasion.

In the spring of this year as Novice Theresa McGinn prepared to make her monastic profession, the pandemic arrived on the scene and changed the plans for this special event. Theresa is from Florida and was looking forward to having her family here as she makes her 1st profession. Theresa is the daughter of Betty and the late Frank McGinn. She has a sister, Mary (Frank) and a brother Michael (Tara) and five nieces. The seriousness of the COVID 19 virus was unknown at first, and then it turned into a pandemic. Originally, it was thought that, by August, the pandemic would have subsided, and Theresa would be able to have her family with her on this special occasion. But the pandemic continued on....

Novice Theresa's profession did take place as scheduled on August 2nd when the community gathered for evening prayer. She made her promises in the presence of S. Maribeth, prioress, and the whole monastic community. Theresa's family sent pictures of her family, and they were displayed on a picture board in the Chapel. Although her family wasn't able to be physically present, they were present with her in a special way on this solemn occasion. A video of the ceremony was made and sent to the family. Following



the ceremony, the community continued to celebrate with S. Theresa at a festive dinner held in the monastic dining room.

S. Theresa said, "It was disappointing to realize that my family was not going to be able to attend. This is such a sacred ceremony in the beginning of religious life. They were so excited to be able to see the monastery, where I work, live, and pray. I realized, though, that all through life these situations can come up that are out of our hands, and you do the best you can. My brother did the sweetest thing; he sent me an email copy of a letter my father wrote to me when I graduated from high school (40 years ago). It made my father present in such a blessed, special way. The sisters of my community ARE family too, and all of them made it the most wonderful and spirit-filled day."

S. Theresa continues to co-direct the Monastery Gift Shop, help with Care Center activities, and is furthering her studies in the formation program. She looks forward to the time when the pandemic is over, and she can invite her entire family for a visit and a belated celebration of her profession.

"The sisters of my community ARE family too, and all of them made it the most wonderful and spirit-filled day."



Silence. The Unexpected Gift -S. Carol Jean Vandenhemel

Saint Benedict calls monastics to share silence as a gift for each sister and guest. This is more than being quiet in the monastery, a simple absence of sound. Silence in the monastery is an invitation to reflection, relationship, and prayer. "Therefore, since the spirit of silence is so important...the disciple's part is to be silent and to listen" (RB 6).

My journey from simply being quiet to observing and welcoming silence, was gradual. At first, I experienced the quiet as too empty; it impeded my interaction with the sisters. Slowly, I began to listen to my heart within the quiet and found the silence. The difference? Seeing the gift that silence offered.

As a Postulant and Novice, I was frustrated with household quiet during retreat and Triduum, irritated by the quiet breakfast during Advent and Lent. There were stories to tell, traditions to explain, and the quiet kept me

from asking questions. Silence kept offering the gift, kept inviting me deeper.

The gradual move into silence was revealed when those moments that had left me wanting were now welcomed. Household silence allows for reflecting and praying, witnessing loving actions of sisters in the daily, connecting those to the Church's sacred seasons. Refectory silence pulls me into relationship with my sisters and guests, reminding me to be attentive to their needs before they ask, being present to their hearts and praying for them.

Silence. The unexpected gift that each disciple is called to share. How will you live it?



Benedict's Christian Way To Holiness (Simplicity and Humility) -S. Mildred Busch

The Holy Rule, St. Benedict's Rule, is a masterpiece of writing to show all people "a way of life". The Rule is an attempt to help people grow a distinctive Christian faith which is less, "What should I believe?" and more, "How should I live?" The Prologue to the Rule answers the question of "How should I live?" with four simple elements of simplicity—listen, receive, labor, and return. Living simply and nurturing the faith is the call that holds one steady and sees oneself in a loving relationship with God. Benedict shows us the way to re-assess our relationship

with the surrounding culture. Simplify your lives... Benedict told the people of Rome in the 6th century... we must be ready to hear this message again. We need to simplify our lives by less accumulation of goods, slowing down and building relationships, assessing our love of the fast-paced, achievement-oriented and money-worshipping in the culture in which we live. Benedict continues to teach simplicity of life throughout the Rule.

Benedict spends an entire (rather lengthy) chapter on the virtue of humility and its twelve steps to holiness. He opens Chapter 7 with "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted"; and he ends the Chapter on Humility with, "When then the monk shall have ascended all these steps in humility, he will presently arrive at that of God which, being perfect, puts all fear aside." In between step one and step twelve is life! The virtue of humility is a genuine gratitude, a lack of arrogance, and a modest view of one's self; a virtue lived and acted out by Jesus and his whole life. To reach the pinnacle of humility, one must be wrapped up in God, who gives us a deep sense that all is okay and that our humility is fragile. During our lifetime, we work at submitting our wills to God and wrapping ourselves in His love and mercy. Benedict shares the way to humility that will be walked by staying on the path. These steps are to be mindful of God always, love God's will, be obedient to one's superior, keep patience, reveal one's faults, be content with the worst of everything, know that you are the lowliest, obey the common rule, speak when necessary to further the Kingdom of God, be not quickly moved to laughter, and be humble of heart.

WAITING AND WELCOMING *Traditions*



A week or so before Christmas, the **Shalom** group puts on the Christmas music and decorates our living room. We do the tree in reds and golds, hang lovely quilted Christmas stockings, and put up the crèche, a lovely ceramic set made in days of yore by Srs. Madeleine and Ruth. After we decorate we enjoy a treat of egg nog and rum.

For the past few years, instead of giving each other gifts, we have pooled our money and contributed it to a local charity. Our gift to the other groups is a jar of homemade hot fudge sauce made by Sr. Jeanne Weber.

Up until this past year, our

traditional Christmas dinner has been homemade soup, bread, and pie, along with a little wine, of course. This past year, at the request of Srs. Denette and Kit, who were newcomers to the group, we went out for breakfast instead. Who knows, perhaps we'll make a tradition of alternating these fun and festive ways of celebrating.



In **Jericho** we celebrate Advent and Christmas intentionally by preparing our prayer environment, group room, and our hearts for each season. We have a central prayer table decorated with a simple

Advent wreath with greens from our property. We decorate our group room about a week before Christmas with lights and trees and a crèche. We like to give a small gift to the other groups in the house and provide some material gift for the poor, and then we enjoy a nice Christmas meal together.



The **Carmel** Tradition over the years has been to make & distribute to the groups Sr. Matthew's rose petal pull apart bread. We plan to continue this tradition.



The Advent/Christmas season is a very special time for us in **Emmaus**. Advent is a time of remembering, waiting and preparing. At evening prayer during the Advent season we add a name to the Jesse tree as we read from scripture or tell something about that person and how s/he is a witness to Advent longing. We alternate annually between remembering persons of faith from the Old Testament, from deceased community members, or from deceased family members who have been sources of inspiration for us. We prepare for the Christmas season also by drawing names in our group. Each sister indicates with one or two letters what she would appreciate receiving. So as we prepare our gifts we keep that person in prayer and try to guess what she might like. We limit the amount to be spent on this so creativity is a priority. Opening our gifts during the Christmas season provides lots of laughter about the creativity involved using the given letters. We also select a charitable group for whom we make a donation as a way of remembering with gratitude our many blessings and provide help for the needy.



Our group, **Subiaco**, especially loves Advent. The scripture readings at daily and Sunday mass are full of hope, promise, and longing. There we open gifts, sing Christmas carols, and enjoy treats,

Having exchanged names in our group in early December, we have our own

group celebration to open our gifts and guess who our secret Santa is. We usually fix a special meal for this occasion or do a pot luck.

We feel very blessed in so many ways. Thus we do several projects to help others have a joyful and peaceful Christmas. A couple weeks before Christmas we all do some baking and prepare plates of 'goodies.' We distribute these to our college prayer partners, to single people who have few people in their lives, and to others who are needy. We also provide a festive and substantial meal to a needy family through an organization in town. We also send Christmas cards to our families and numerous friends who have helped our group in some way.



Dayspring enjoys the scent of fresh greens cut from monastery grounds and homemade candles made by S.

Marcine to begin the Advent season. An Advent prayer table graces the center of our living room, and when Christmas comes new greens are brought in with a shining new candle to celebrate the presence of the Christ child in our lives. Our gifts given to the other groups are often canned goods from the monastery garden or orchard. If we do anything, it is



homemade and the work of our hands given as gift. We decorate our group with tree, crib, lights and socks. The socks are receptacles of small tokens of love given to each sister from every sister in the group. Every sister has the option of giving a practical group gift so there are surprises under the tree. We also give a charitable donation in honor of the Administration and chaplains to a local organization each year. We have a special dinner in our group to celebrate Christmas and another dinner to celebrate S. Michaelleen whose birthday is December 25th. Cards are also sent from the group to mission sisters who will not be home.

Jordan's first Christmas as a newly-formed living group was, at the instigation of Sr. Martin, a four-hour event! We all dressed up and began with a leisurely "happy hour" around the tree. Thanks to her special fired-clay roaster, we discovered the heavenly taste and texture of roasted garlic, among other things! Each person contributed food or decor for a lovely dinner, during which we shared family Christmas memories and traditions. After washing (unavoidable!) dishes, we had a short Christmas prayer and exchanged gifts around the tree, topped off with hot cocoa and a dash of peppermint schnapps. And of course, there were photos along the way! Today our celebrations are simpler, and each year we contribute in some way to the less fortunate. We have done so through Heifer International, by donating items to a needy family known to a group member, or making a cash donation to a local cause.



Anawim, which means, "a poor person who abandons oneself to God," has continued to celebrate Advent and Christmas in a simple way, as we keep the less fortunate in our hearts and minds, recalling the way Jesus came into the world.

As we prayerfully begin the "waiting," our Advent wreath is placed on our group prayer table. Praying the "O" Antiphons on December 17, reminds us to joyfully enter the Christmas Season.

After an evening prayer, we gather to decorate a small tree with lights and various red and gold balls. Some Christmas bows and hangings adorn our open doors. Lastly, we replace the Advent wreath with the Crèche and its all-white figurines, again in the center of the room. These decorations are there until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

In the spirit of Christmas, we donate funds to needy organizations in

honor of our administration, the other monastic living groups and each other. A card is designed telling where these funds have been shared. Such organizations are Heifer International, Habitat for Humanity and a religious community in Italy after an earthquake. An evening, after prayer together, we go to each group with our gift, singing, "We wish you a Merry Christmas."



The **Riverview** group members pitch in \$5.00 each for a charity of our choosing. This year it goes to a family from the Sacred Heart School system.

Giving a gift to each group in



the house is a tradition that Riverview began. Our gift for several years is to make goodies to share with the groups. We also send Christmas cards to the sisters on mission and a card to a family member of those in our group. In the past, we would buy a \$5.00 gift for someone in the group; this year we are re-instating our Christmas socks, giving something to each member.

Our group celebration includes a dinner. In recent years that means going out to eat. This year because of Covid, we will order in.

Into Eternal Peace



S. Kevin Irwin died on Sunday, June 14, 2020.

Patricia Ann was born September 23, 1929 in Redfield, South Dakota, to Bernard and Edna (Naughton) Irwin, the oldest of three daughters. She grew up on a farm south of Rockham, South Dakota and went to a country school, then to boarding school in Zell and to Mount Marty High School in Yankton, South Dakota. She and her sisters enjoyed dances on Saturday nights and other social activities, especially after the family moved to Rockham when she was in high school. Her interest in music grew by taking piano and violin lessons while boarding in Zell.

Patricia entered Sacred Heart Monastery September 1947. She became a novice on June 23, 1948 and was given the name Kevin. She made temporary profession on June 24, 1949 and final profession on June 29, 1952. In May 1954, she graduated from Mount Marty College with a Bachelor of Music Education degree and in 1956, she earned a Masters degree from the University of South Dakota in Music.

S. Kevin taught in Dimock, Stephan and Yankton, South Dakota. She served as Dean of Students at Mount Marty, 1962-1968. From 1968-1972, she was at the Newman Center in Vermillion and took classes in counseling. She then ministered in Student Life at Mount Marty until 1978 and began her work with the Divorced, Separated and Widowed group in the Yankton area. She practiced counseling at Benedictine Family Services until it closed in 1992; following that she ministered fifteen years as Volunteer Coordinator & Pastoral Minister at Sacred Heart Parish in Yankton, retiring in 2007. She continued to volunteer with communion calls and visits as well as volunteering at the Yankton Area Banquet. She was also the Director of Novices from 1985 to 1986 and Director of Formation from 1889 to 1992.

S. Kevin was an avid reader and kept up with local and world news. Sewing and baking were also hobbies, and she loved traveling to new places. She was an optimistic person with a good sense of humor, aging gracefully with a spirit of gratitude blessing her and those around her.

S. Kevin is survived by her Benedictine community, her sisters and brothers-in-law, Sharon (Deane) Munro and Mary Dawn (Harlan) Vesely, and her nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents.

News Notes

- A special thanks to **S. Virginia Pieper** and crew who picked the sweet corn, and to all those



who shucked the corn, washed it and those who helped with the corn party. The report is that we were able to freeze 28 pans of corn.

- Congratulations to **S. Terry Lafferty** who gave the Mother Jerome Schmitt Lecture.

- **S. Bonita Gacnik** received the "Mount Marty University Distinguished Faculty Service Award" because of all the care and patient work she did to help her colleagues deliver remotely during the pandemic. The Division of Natural Sciences at MMU, including Sister Bonita and all the faculty in this division, received the Distinguished Leadership Award for their leadership and dedication to their students, their program, and to MMU.

- **S. Jeanne Weber's** article, "Benedictine Leadership: Different From the World's Way," was published in the Spring/Summer issue, 2020, of the "Benedictine" magazine.

- **S. Kathy Burt** received the "Avera Sacred Heart Quarterly Patient Safety Award," in recognition for her efforts to promote safety of the residents and employees at Majestic Bluffs, Yankton, SD, during this time of the pandemic.

- A bench has been placed outside the front door of the monastery for people to enjoy. It is dedicated to **S. Kathryn Easley's brother, Robert Easley.**





Celebration of Diamond Jubilarians

S. Jaquelyn Ernster, OSB 60th Jubilee

S. Jaquelyn is a native of Salem, SD and the daughter of the late John Ernster and Eleanor Ernster Ingalls. She attended St. Mary's Elementary and St. Mary's High School in Salem.

AS. Jaquelyn says that a number of people were influential in her call to the Benedictine way of life. "Seeing others serve and benefiting from the wisdom of the elders' also have been important aspects of her call.

Education has been the focus of much of S. Jacquelyn's ministry, including secondary and college teaching and administration. She served as academic dean and president at Mount Marty College and also prioress from 1997-2005. S. Jacquelyn says that she believes passionately in the benefits of education, especially in women, and that in her ministry she has "a sense of being part of something bigger to make a difference in the world by using the tools I have been given to help others."

She has always been proud to be a Benedictine because of the emphasis on community, prayer, and peace-all of which are

such important witnesses in today's world. S. Jacquelyn also highly values the importance of liturgy in a Benedictine community. While she says she is not an expert on liturgy, it always makes her proud to be asked questions about liturgy because of the association many people make with Benedictines and liturgy.

S. Esther Holzbauer, OSB 60th Jubilee

S. Esther was born on the family farm near Wagner, SD during a raging blizzard. She is the daughter of the late Lawrence and Ida (Yaggie) Holzbauer.

After graduating from the Mount Marty High School, S. Esther felt called to join the Benedictine community of her high school teachers. She earned a BS degree in nursing from Mount Marty College and later a master's degree in nursing. Her ministry in health care has been at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Parkston, SD; Creighton Memorial St. Joseph Hospital, Omaha; Warm Springs Rehab Center, Warm Springs, GA; Berakhah House and

Children's Care Hospital and School in Sioux Falls.

She says, "My experience as a Benedictine has been a life long seeking of God in the people I lived and worked with in the places that I have ministered." S. Esther says that each person, place and event along her journey to God in significant-many in ways she may never realize the full meaning of.

She reflects, "My jubilee is a time to celebrate with gratitude those people, places and events in life that have brought me to this point in my journey to God."



**S. Doris Oberembt,
OSB-70th Jubilee**

I was a middle child in a large family of eleven children. I learned early on in life the joys, struggles and power for growth in that kind of experience. So I anticipated finding much the same in becoming a member of our large Benedictine community in Yankton. In many ways that assumption proved to be true, but in other ways the diversity of personalities, backgrounds, age differences, interests, education, life experiences, perceptions, values and expectations that make up my Benedictine Monastic community proved to be a much richer experience and gift than I had ever imagined.

As with every gift there are concurrent challenges, so with the many blessings I receive from my sisters there is also that gradual, but sometimes painful, letting go of my limited way of seeing the world and my expectations of others. The daily give and take of life in community challenges me to begin to learn to live in a more open and receptive way in order to be able to receive, affirm and relish the gifts of others. Daily I am inspired by the many acts of generosity, joy, compassion, and prayerfulness of my sisters. Even my inevitable struggles in relationships within community lead me to new understandings, new ways of seeing and living life with gratitude and compassion.

I believe that one of the greatest gifts we have to offer the Church and our world today as Benedictines is that of being a faith-filled, loving, joyful community of women in love with God and cherishing God's presence in our wounded but beautiful world.

That then spills over into the fruitful ministry of sharing the Good News of God's great love and the worth and dignity of each person.

**S. Marcine Quintus,
OSB 70th Jubilee**

Gertrude Mary was born May 24, 1926 the fourth child to Anton and Matilda (Wehri) Quintus of Hebron, North Dakota. She attended St. Clemens parochial school in Haymarsh, North Dakota and was greatly influenced by her grandparents' appreciation of the land and the belief in the providence of God. At eight-teen years of age, she worked a St. Joseph's Hospital in Dickinson, ND as a nurse's aide and at times a laboratory and x-ray assistant.



Gertrude entered Sacred Heart Monastery in the fall of 1948. She became a novice on June 23, 1949 and received the name Marcine. On June 24, 1950, she made first profession and on June 29, 1953, she professed her final vows.

S. Marcine began nursing school at Sacred Heart School of Nursing in 1951 and graduated in 1954 to work at Sacred Heart Hospital as nursing supervisor on the medical unit. She later attended Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska in 1957 and earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing a year later. In 1959, she began teaching at Sacred Heart School of Nursing until it closed in 1964. She stayed at Sacred Heart as a supervisor of the surgical unit for eight years. She earned a Masters' degree in nursing education from Columbia University in New York City, NY on May 12, 1974. Her teaching career at Mount Marty College began in 1974 and continued until 2000. During this time, she completed a doctoral degree from The Union in 1984. During her years of nursing ministry, S. Marcine found the technological advances challenging, however, caring continued to be an essential basic component of her nursing. After retirement from nursing, S. Marcine spends many years as the monastery baker.

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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