

Together Toward Tomorrow



Connecting
Point



Prioress Susan Hutchens Strives To Be a Joyful Servant

Sr. Susan Hutchens, OSB, has succeeded Sr. Sandra Brunenn, OSB, to become the 14th prioress of St. Mary Monastery. She is the fourth prioress to serve in Rock Island since St. Mary Monastery's relocation in 2001 from Nauvoo, IL. The election took place on Sunday, June 14 after a discernment process by the community.

Raised in Munster, Indiana, Sr. Susan attended parish grade school at St. Thomas More, where the Benedictine Sisters staffed the school from its founding. "What I loved most was their ability to enjoy life and have fun – they simply enjoyed one another," said Sr. Susan. She loved their prayer life, too.

Even though she started thinking about consecrated life at the age of seven, the thought faded by the time Sr. Susan attended Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College to earn a bachelor's degree in math with a minor in secondary education. After graduation she returned to her alma mater to teach fifth and sixth grade math and was reacquainted with the Benedictines.

Halfway through her fourth year teaching at St. Thomas More, Sr. Susan moved from her parents' house to live with the Benedictines and entered the community at the end of 1973. She made her first profession in 1975 and her final profession in 1978.

Along the way, Sr. Susan earned a Master of Theology degree from Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. Her professional background includes 17 years of teaching and 32 years as community Treasurer and Organist.

Sr. Susan taught math and religion at St. Mary's Academy in Nauvoo from 1976 to 1983 and Bergan (now Notre Dame) High School in Peoria from 1983 to 1988. She also served as academic dean for two years and interim principal after the death of Robert Cleary in 1987.

In 1988, Sr. Susan was called home to St. Mary Monastery to be the treasurer, and prepared by studying finance for two summers at the University of Notre Dame. She has been Treasurer for 32 years, adding "I always wanted to study finance and have loved managing the community finances".

Over the years, Sr. Susan used her skills in math and finance to help other religious communities, too. She was a financial consultant for the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes – now known as the Resource Center for Religious Institutes – and served on the finance committee of the Federation of St. Benedict. She served as the Federation's President from 2009 to 2015.

Sr. Susan Hutchens, OSB
Prioress

"My primary vision is we will remain a community of joyful, hope-filled women who are faithful to God and our monastic way of life."

The prioress is a sign of the presence of Christ for the community.



Sr. Susan and Sr. Sandra

Within the St. Mary Monastery community, Sr. Susan has been on the Monastic Council, the Finance Board, Liturgy Committee, and the Vocation/Formation Committee. When the community relocated from Nauvoo to Rock Island, she managed the finances and was a member of the planning committee for the chapel.

As the community moves beyond its 145-year-history, the Sisters continue to expand relationships with others who share their mission. There are many initiatives for the community to consider, including evaluating the monastery's administration and operations, and increased awareness of world and local concerns through the monastery's prayer and ministry.

Sr. Susan is confident about the future, adding "We will go forward with courage knowing that Christ, our Emmanuel, is always with us and among us".



Middle: Sr. Susan at work.

Bottom: Sr. Susan and Sr. Sandra are joined by Federation President Sr. Kerry O'Reilly, OSB, Saint Benedict's Monastery, St Joseph, MN and Abbot Philip Davey, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, IL following Sr. Susan's election as Prioress.





Sr. Mary Jane Wallace's Vocation Video

A Vocations Update

By Sr. Stefanie MacDonald, OSB

The Coronavirus outbreak and the Illinois shelter in place order has provided a special opportunity to reinforce our 2020 community focus on prayer. In addition to our daily prayers, we began praying the Memorare at 5:30 p.m. each evening for containment of the Coronavirus and the care of all who are affected.

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, we cancelled Vocation programs through September. I've enjoyed spending more time with my Sisters at the monastery, and decided to launch a series of vocation videos, giving a glimpse into the fascinating story of the Sisters.

While working on Sr. Mary Jane's video, I learned she did not see herself as holy or good as she considered her choice to enter our community. I hear those feelings frequently, and remember thinking I was not holy enough to live this Benedictine life. Yet Sr. Mary Jane has been professed for 71 years and is an unwavering example of living a good Benedictine life. You can view Sr. Mary Jane's vocation video on our website under vocations homepage.

We also created a five day virtual Discernment Retreat. This retreat introduces new ways to pray and listen to God's voice as women consider their life-long vocation, whether that be a calling to religious life, single or married life. Women can complete the retreat by finding an hour each day for prayer, readings and self-reflection.

Our next Come and See Weekend will be October 23rd through 25th. This retreat is a time for single, 18-48 year old Catholic women to meet and pray with the Sisters, to learn about our life, and to experience how we live together in community. If you know someone who seems interested in religious life, please invite them to this retreat.

The year 2020 has been very different, but I remain focused on building our Vocation programs with the expectancy of inviting others to visit our monastery and grounds soon!



Sisters of St. Benedict St. Mary Monastery

Rock Island, Illinois



Our Mission and Values

Under the leadership of Prioress Sandra Brunenn, the monastery began a future planning process in 2015, exploring how to share the Gospel and vision of St. Benedict in new ways. Leaning on more than 1,500 years of Benedictine history and a proven ability to adapt to changing times, the work began.

As a result of the planning process, the community sharpened its focus on the values of St. Mary Monastery. These five Benedictine values are Prayer, Community, Hospitality, Peace and Justice and Care of Creation. The community has chosen

to focus on one value each year, beginning with Prayer in 2020.

Using the skills and gifts of the community today, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Mary Monastery reflect a vitality and unwavering commitment to share the Gospel and their mission with others.

“Thank you for your ongoing support of the Benet House Retreat Center. Until we can meet in person, I hope you will consider joining us for a virtual retreat.”

SR. BOBBI BUSSAN, OSB



2020 Retreats

Ongoing Programs 2020-2021

NOTE: June, July, August and September will be virtual.

BOOKMARKS: NOUWEN READING GROUP

If you find Henri Nouwen's books help you strengthen your Christian faith and draw closer to the heart of God then join our monthly reading group. 1st Tuesdays: June 2, 2020-June 1, 2021; 1:30-3 pm; Fee: \$5/session.

CENTERING PRAYER

Join others in a weekly practice of this method for fostering a deeper relationship with God. Come as you are – no advance registration needed. Wednesdays all year: 1-2:30 pm; Fee: Free will offering.

BREAK-A-WAY: DAY OF PRAYER AND QUIET

Take time out from your busy day! Opening prayer and reflection at 9 am – closing prayer at 4 pm. 1st Wednesdays: June 3, 2020-June 2, 2021; 9 am-4 pm; Fee: \$10 (virtual); \$20 (if held at Benet House and includes lunch).

BOUNDLESS COMPASSION CIRCLES

Compassion Circle is a monthly gathering for anyone who has participated in the Boundless Compassion retreat, book study or DVD series. 2nd Wednesdays all year: 9:30-11am; Fee: Free will offering.

THE PSALMS: PRAYERS FOR ALL LIFE'S EXPERIENCES

The Psalms express a variety of life experiences including pain, anguish, joy and praise. Join Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB, each month for this mini retreat. 2nd Thursdays: July 2020-June 2021; 9:30-11:30 am; Fee: \$10/session.

THE WORD AMONG US

Read, reflect, pray and share with other committed Christians seeking to grow through the inspiration of Scripture in everyday life. 2nd and 4th Mondays at St. Mary Monastery: Sept. 14-May 10; 1-2:30 pm; Fee: \$50 for series or \$5/session plus cost of books.

TAIZÉ

Taizé is an ecumenical song and silent participatory prayer service designed to achieve a contemplative state through music, song and silence. 2nd Thursdays: Oct. 8-May 13; 6:30-7:30 pm; Fee: Free will offering.

Monthly Programs: July

*REFER TO ONGOING PROGRAMS FOR MONTHLY OFFERINGS.
All monthly programs listed July-Sept are virtual.

DIRECTED RETREAT: 3 OR 5 DAY

Retreatants will meet with a Spiritual Director daily. All retreatants and directors will meet Sunday, July 12, 7 pm for opening of retreat. Sun. July 12-Wed. July 15 (3 days retreat) or Sun. July 12-Fri. July 17 (5-day retreat). Fee: \$45/session: \$180 (3-day retreat) or \$270 (5-day retreat).



Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB. Initial meeting is Mon. Aug. 24, 7-8:30 pm

September

REFER TO ONGOING PROGRAMS FOR MONTHLY OFFERINGS.

DARE TO LEAD (FROM BRENÉ BROWN)

“Leadership is not about titles or the corner office. It’s about the willingness to step up, put yourself out there, and lean into courage. The world is desperate for braver leaders. It’s time for all of us to step up.” (Brené Brown). Teachings and materials are based on Brené Brown’s ‘Dare to Lead Hub’. Facilitators: Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB and Jane Trasowech. Introductory meeting: Mon. Sept. 21, 7-8:30 pm. Meeting dates will be determined by group. Fee: \$15/session

VOICES TO BE HEARD

At age 18, Maggie Doyne traveled to a remote village in Nepal, where she felt a deep sense of belonging. She began by sponsoring the education of one child. Maggie realized the children needed a place to live, and at age 23, she built a home and was mother to 30 children. Facilitator: Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB. Thurs. Sept. 17, 6:30-8:30 pm; Fee: \$10.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

It’s never easy to admit we are powerless over people places and things. We make the decision each day to take the road less traveled so that the Promises of AA will allow us to know a new freedom and happiness. May you make the decision to take the road less traveled. This retreat is for anyone involved in any twelve-step program (AA, Al-ANON, NA, OA etc.). Participants need to have had at least 3 months in recovery. Facilitator: Sr. Kerry Larkin. Fri. Sept. 25 (Retreat opening: 7 pm)–Sun. Sept. 27, 1 pm; Fee: Register and pay in full by Aug. 25: \$100. Registration and payment after Aug. 25: \$115.

Beginning in October, retreats will again be held in person at Benet House if health norms allow.

For more information or to register for a retreat: contact Sr. Jackie Walsh, OSB: (309) 283-2108 or retreats@smmsisters.org

August

REFER TO ONGOING PROGRAMS FOR MONTHLY OFFERINGS.

FROM SEEKER TO SAGE: JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWNABLE

This 5-week virtual retreat provides an opportunity to come together to reflect upon

- Our personal spiritual journey; from Seeker to Sage:
- Exploring stages and seasons of the various paths we have traveled
- Realization that we have been led by a loving, mysterious God

Join us as we move through the different stages of our spiritual journey from awakening moments, through our seeking and gradual movement to transformation. Presenter: Susan Komis. Wednesdays: Aug. 19, 26; Sept. 2, 9, 16; 1-3 pm; Fee: \$150 for series.

VOICES TO BE HEARD

Teach Me to Be WILD explores the work of Wildlife Associates founded by Steve Karlin. The sanctuary, in Northern California, is where injured, non-releasable wild animals become Wild Teachers and are helping heal generations of hurt children. Facilitator: Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB. Thurs. Aug 13, 6:30-8:30 pm; Fee: \$10.

WISDOM WOMEN OF BENET HOUSE

Consider being a part of Wisdom Women to nurture your inner wisdom, engage with other women and their wisdom and discover ways to share our Wisdom. Be refreshed in your Wisdom and your Spirit. Facilitator:

We Remember

Sr. Rosemary Murphy, OSB, 1924-2020 **Long-time Educator**



Sr. Rosemary Murphy, OSB
75th Jubilee, 2020

Sr. Rosemary Murphy, OSB, died May 28 at the monastery. Rosemary was born August 7, 1924 in Keokuk, Iowa, a daughter of Miles and Rose (McNally) Murphy. She attended Lincoln School, Carthage, IL and St. Mary's Academy, Nauvoo, IL. She continued her education at Marycrest College, Davenport, Iowa, and received her master's degree from the University of Illinois, Champaign, IL.

Sr. Rosemary entered the Benedictine community on September 8, 1943, and made her final profession on August 23, 1948.

Sr. Rosemary's ministry included many years serving as teacher and Dean of Students at St. Mary's Academy, St. Mary's Grade School, Nauvoo, Bergan High School, Peoria, IL, and as Monastery Kitchen Manager. She also served as Principal at St. Peter & Paul Grade School, Nauvoo, and as house mother for a sorority at Bradley University, Peoria.

Sr. Rosemary celebrated her 75th Jubilee in March. She is survived by her sisters, Sr. Margaret Murphy, OSB, and Patricia Gaughan; and many nieces and nephews.

Sr. Anne Newcomer, OSB, 1928-2020 **Food Service and Pastoral Care Worker**



Sr. Anne Newcomer, OSB
70th Jubilee, 2020

Sr. Anne Newcomer, OSB, died Friday, May 15 at the monastery. Anne was born January 26, 1928 in Rockford, Illinois, a daughter of George and Anna (Streib) Newcomer. She attended Irving Grade School and the Academy of Our Lady, both in Peoria, IL.

Sr. Anne entered the Benedictine community on August 1, 1948, and made her final profession as a Benedictine sister on August 23, 1954.

Sr. Anne's ministry included many years in food service at St. Mary Monastery and St. Mary's Academy, Nauvoo, IL. Most recently she volunteered at the Botanical Garden and Sacred Heart Food Pantry, both in Rock Island, Sacred Heart Clothing Store, Davenport, Iowa, and the Evening Meal Site at Rock Island Township.

Sr. Anne celebrated her 70th Jubilee in March. She was a master gardener who loved her dogs and being outdoors. "It's a wonderful life, if you listen for God's whisper."

Benedictine Magazine

Sr. Susan Hutchens' presentation on the topic of "Waiting in Joyful Hope", Part 2, was published in the June issue of Benedictines Magazine. The presentation was originally given at St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, Alabama in February 2019 to the Joint Conference of Abbots and Prioresses of Benedictine Congregations and Federations based in America.

Intercongregational Days

Sr. Marlene Miller attended the RoundTable meeting of the Upper Mississippi Valley Region at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, IA.

Srs. Sandra Brunenn and Sheila McGrath attended a gathering in Dubuque of Congregation leaders from Davenport, Clinton, Eldridge, Sinsinawa and Dubuque, IA.



Catholic Care Packs

Volunteers including **Marsha Boldt** and **Barb Senatra** continue our project to supply Catholic Care Packs for the Moline Police department to give to people in need.

Congratulations Graduates

For graduation celebrations, the sisters videotaped a message and sang a blessing to the Alleman Class of 2020.

Mardi Gras

Sr. Ruth Ksycki planned a Mardi Gras Party enjoyed in the sisters' dining room. There were word games, prizes and refreshments, including Sr. Ruth's famous snack mix. Colored beads and masks were the dress for the evening.



Earth Day and Laudato Si'

We honored the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis's On Care for Our Common Home -Laudato Si'. The sisters gathered for a prayer of solidarity and a video produced by the Catholic Climate Covenant.

COVID-19 Victim Remembrance Day

For Victim Remembrance Day on May 8th, the sisters gathered at the bell tower as our bells rang in remembrance of those who died from the Coronavirus in the Quad Cities area. The initiative was sponsored by Quad City Interfaith and "One Human Family".

Vigil for Peace and Justice

On June 5th the Sisters participated in a vigil to remember George Floyd who died at the hands of a policeman in Minnesota, and all victims who have suffered due to systemic injustice.

Alumni Spotlight: St. Mary's Alum Michelle Reed-Spitzer



Michelle Reed-Spitzer

"I especially remember my art teacher, Sr. Veronica who inspired and encouraged me. She was a tough instructor, and I still have a clay vase from her class. I felt so proud when she gave me an 'A' and put my vase on display."

Arriving at St. Mary's Academy during her sophomore year of 1983, Michelle remembers feeling scared and lonely. Her parents struggled with a rebellious teenager needing discipline and structure, and decided Michelle would attend St. Mary's Academy in Nauvoo, IL.

Michelle shares, "I was shocked when my parents drove me through the middle of farm country with my suitcase hidden in the trunk, then left me without any warning".

Settling into a new school was difficult, and Michelle was very shy. She felt angry, even writing letters home with a return address of "St. Mary's Prison, Nauvoo, IL". However, it wasn't long before Michelle began making good friends and even enjoying her new life. Michelle's mother, Meriam Reed, noticed Michelle learning to evaluate the consequences of her decisions and the importance of living a meaningful life.

By her junior year, Michelle's parents allowed her to return home. Michelle missed St. Mary's Academy and chose to return as a senior, graduating with high honors in 1986.

Michelle landed her first job, only to lose the work a few years later. She decided to make a fresh start in Naples, Florida where her parents were living, and enrolled at Hodges University to complete her education. Her first assignment from Dr. Gene Landrum (founder of the Chuck E. Cheese franchise), was to write a business plan. Already cleaning homes to earn money, Michelle created a plan for her company that became *Michelle's Classy Cleaning*.

Michelle learned about a MaidPro franchise opportunity and shared, "I was three months pregnant with my first child, and my child became my reason to embrace this new opportunity". Michelle got the franchise, and like any new business venture, she experienced bumps in the road as the business grew. She learned to keep a rainy day savings account, allowing her business to recover quickly from challenges like COVID-19 and Florida hurricanes.

Her multi-million dollar business in south Florida has been the top revenue producing MaidPro franchise for the past 20 consecutive years. "I am very grateful for my time as a student at St. Mary's Academy. During a very formative time in my life, the sisters truly cared for me and reflected a commitment to their mission of prayer, work and community."

Michelle, her two teenagers and one college student continue to live in the Naples, Florida area. We are proud of Alum Michelle Reed-Spitzer!

Please share your Alum Story! Share your email address!
jgull@smmsisters.org

A Monk Praying

An Oblate Reflection

Chris and I recently spent time in the United Kingdom, and a highlight was visiting the Exeter Cathedral in Devon. I was drawn to this statue of a monk praying – a beloved presence at the end of the choir stalls. This monk has continued for centuries to perhaps beseech God, or to offer himself, or to ponder silently our current burning question: why is all this happening?

Perhaps this is a visual rendition of “Listen carefully, my child to my instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” (RB Prologue, Verse 1)

OBLATE MADELEINE CALLAHAN
Bloomington, IL



Exeter Cathedral

In Memoriam . . .

Mary Amann, mother of **Jane Amann Wolgemuth '65**, died March 15.

John Corbett, husband of **Andrea Abrams, '65** died February 29.

Frances “Franny” Cupp Wolfe '60, sister of St. Mary Monastery Sister Germaine Cupp, OSB, deceased, and Mary Cupp Castrey '54, died March 24.

Claire Butler Davis '48, died March 29.

Hubbard Page, husband of **Jeanette Bucher Page '59**, died May 1.

Mary Eileen Rowley Barnwell '46, died February 21.

Jean Margaret (Arndt) Ward '48, mother of Jane Ward and Jim Ward, died on May 1.

Alum Gathering



Members of SMA Class of 1965 met at Starved Rock State Park.
From left: Sue Schierer, Andy Corbett, Barb Bryzgaliski, Marie McHarry,
Shirley Mcelvain, Linda Owens, Mary Buysse



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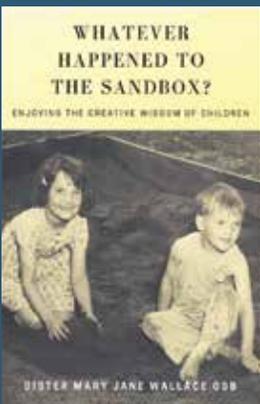
Whatever Happened to the Sandbox?

Enjoying the Creative Wisdom of Children

St. Mary Monastery is pleased to announce that Sister Mary Jane Wallace has published a book! After teaching early childhood education for over 60 years, *Whatever Happened to the Sandbox* is a resource created to encourage parents to allow unstructured play time for their children.

Across six decades of teaching, Sister Mary Jane was continually surprised by and grateful for the curiosity, creativity and innocent wonder of children. "It's all about keeping an open mind and having a playful spirit at any age."

Books are \$14 each including tax or \$18 each shipped to you. To order, call (309) 283-2100 or email benedictines@smmsisters.org.



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digital copy of Connecting Point?**

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