



Our Bells Call Us to Prayer



**Connecting
Point**



Sr. Sandra Brunenn, OSB
Prioress

Speaking of Prayer...

In late fall when I was a Junior in high school, our family moved from Springfield, IL to Indianapolis. To ease the school transition, my sister and I began the academic year in a boarding school, Our Lady of Grace Academy in Beech Grove. Every evening we would have study hall and then proceed to the chapel to join the sisters for Night Prayer. This was my first introduction to Benedictine prayer, and was likely a strong element in the formation of my religious vocation.

Prayer at its core is a stance of opening our minds and hearts to the presence of God, the incredible mystery at the heart of life. We acknowledge the Divine Presence that permeates all creation. For us as Benedictines, prayer takes on a specific pattern: it is regular, communal, and Biblically focused.

The tower bells call us to gather together each morning, noon, and evening. We pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* composed of hymns, Psalms, and readings from Scripture. We offer this prayer in the name of all God's people; indeed, in the name of all creation. This symphony of praise continues unceasingly around our planet as Benedictine monasteries make time holy in common prayer. What a powerful contrast and antidote this is to the violence and negativity that encompasses us.

St. Benedict also calls his followers to set aside time each day for *lectio divina*, reflection on the Holy Scriptures. Over time this loving attention to the Word of God transforms the heart. We grow in 'contemplative vision', a new way of seeing – seeing with the heart of Christ. We recognize the sacredness of all of life and discover new energy to support the most vulnerable among us. Other practices such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, spiritual reading and centering prayer are adopted by individual sisters to support their spiritual journey.

At St. Mary Monastery, we are blessed to celebrate the Eucharist several times a week, uniting our lives with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the previous issue, I shared that the sisters have recently sharpened our focus on the five Benedictine values of Prayer, Community, Hospitality, Peace and Justice and Care of Creation. For 2020, we are placing special emphasis on the value of prayer.

Prayer transforms our lives, the church, our communities and the world. As we continue to pray for you, please also pray for the Sisters of St. Mary Monastery. As the community approaches the election of a new Prioress in April, we want our hearts and minds to be open to a new season, "that in all things God may be glorified!"



Sr. Stefanie teaching at Our Lady of Grace Academy

Invite Others to Consider Religious Life!

By Sister Stefanie MacDonald, OSB

As vocation director and a younger member of the community, I'm often asked, "Is there a future for religious life? Is the lifestyle out of date and no longer needed?" My response is always that religious life is more than a lifestyle – it is a calling with a purpose now, and into the future.

From the 1940's through the 1960's, the Catholic church witnessed large numbers of men and women entering religious communities. Although the numbers will always fluctuate, we are experiencing an uptick of men and women entering religious life across monastic communities.

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) conducts research about people entering religious communities, and their recent statistics reinforce this positive trend. In 2015, 136 people made perpetual profession, and in 2018, the number grew to 240 people making perpetual profession.

Half of the people who make perpetual profession began considering religious life at the age of 19.

Key characteristics that attract newer members to join a specific community are the spirituality of the community, the community life and mission.

Two primary ways people choose a specific community are by serving in an institution where members of that community served, and by the recommendation of a friend or advisor.

As a teacher at Our Lady of Grace Academy, how I behave in the classroom reflects on who we are as a community. We also know that young people are nearly twice as likely to consider a vocation when encouraged by another person. Although I had considered religious life, it was a personal invitation to a 'Come and See Weekend' from a family friend that began my discernment journey. Ten years later, I found my home as a Benedictine sister.

When a friend, daughter or neighbor seems interested in religious life, tell them about St. Mary Monastery! Your invitation is a powerful part of continuing our community's mission in the Quad Cities and beyond.



Blessing of group prior to departure

Our Benedictine Journey to Italy

By Sister Bobbi Bussan, OSB

I have visited Rome twice, and wanted to share my love for Italy and Benedictine spirituality with Oblates and volunteers of St. Mary Monastery. Together with Father Ronald Margherio from Saint Bede Abbey in Peru, IL, we created a 14-day pilgrimage to Italy. Last September, nineteen members of our community traveled throughout Italy in the footsteps of St. Benedict.

After a heartfelt blessing from our sisters in Rock Island, our group arrived in Rome and we visited four main basilicas. St. John Lateran, built in 311 AD, is the oldest church in Europe. St. Mary Major is the largest Catholic church in Rome, and St. Paul Outside the Walls is the presumed burial place of St. Paul. The visit to St. Peter's Basilica included one of four private Masses held on the trip, followed by a tour of the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Museum.

Other stops in Rome included the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Roman Forum and Mass at Santa Maria Minerva. We joined the Community of Sant'Egidio for Vespers. This lay Catholic association is dedicated to social service in the areas of prayer, serving the poor and peace.

After two days in Assisi, we arrived at Sacro Speco (Sacred Cave) in Subiaco. This is where St. Benedict lived and formed the first Benedictine community. Following Mass, we celebrated Diane Hanson's Final Rite of Oblation. We walked the beautiful monastery grounds before concluding our visit with a tour of the Abbey of Saint Scholastica.

"I treasure making my Final Rite of Oblation in Subiaco, and remember the trip daily with great love and peace in my heart."

DIANE HANSON

We began the next day with Lauds before arriving at Montecassino Abbey. This is where Benedict completed the final copy of The Rule, and where he and Saint Scholastica are buried. The museum includes multiple copies of The Rule, magnificent paintings, and stunning views of the countryside. We ended our time in Montecassino with a Mass and prayers at the tombs of Benedict and Scholastica.

“The cave where Benedict lived is a holy space for me. Here Benedict began his deeper journey into Christ, and drew others to join him in community. More than 1,500 years later, his message is still vital.”

SISTER BOBBI BUSSAN, OSB



“I’ve traveled to Italy many times, however, this was my first Benedictine pilgrimage. What I will remember were the daily Oblate reflections given at Masses and Lauds,” said Father Ron Margherio.

Spectacular views of the Amalfi coast welcomed us to the last days of an unforgettable experience. We visited Pompei and enjoyed tours of the Isle of Capri and Paestum. Linda Clewell shared, “The views, the sights, and the pilgrimage were beautiful, and most especially the pilgrims!”

A final blessing at the Cathedral of San Andrea signaled an end to our sacred journey. It was wonderful to travel with our Oblates and volunteers to locations vital to our Benedictine history. I feel blessed to combine my love for Italy and Benedict with people very dear to our community.

“Traveling with other Oblates on the Benedictine pilgrimage opened my spirit to growth and awareness that I had not suspected. Seeing how each of us individually live out The Rule was interesting, enlightening and affirming.”

CYNTHIA SMITH



Diane Hanson Oblation, Subiaco



Sacro Speco, Subiaco



*Group photo, the Amalfi Coast:
 Back Row: Sr. Gretchen Johnson, OSB; Michael and Cathy
 Coleman; Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB; Father Stephen Page;
 Diane Kennedy; Linda Clewell; Janet Eggleston;
 Maureen Bennett*

*Middle Row: Jean Edmunds; Cynthia Smith; Sr. Lisa
 Maurer; Denise Kemper; Anne Lilius; Lori Carroll;
 Father Ron Margherio; Diane Hanson; Ann Anderson*

*Front Row: Susan Ramiro; Cora Naval;
 Sr. Stefanie MacDonald, OSB*

*This statue represents the heart of
 Benedictine community.
 We pray and lift each other up,
 even unto death.*

SISTER BOBBI BUSSAN, OSB

*Statue commemorating St. Benedict's death, in the
 courtyard at Montecassino Abbey*





*Left: St. Peter's, Rome
Right: Tree of Life Mosaic, Montecassino*

In the Steps of St. Benedict

By Sister Stefanie MacDonald, OSB

My heart is full of gratitude as I reflect on my trip to Italy. This was my first time to visit Italy and experience our church history and the roots of Benedictine monasticism.

It was incredible to walk where Peter and Paul walked, to sit in front of the San Damiano Cross in Assisi, and to pray at the tombs of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica at Montecassino.

I had three profound experiences during this pilgrimage that I want to share. My first profound experience happened at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, where the sense of history and people who had walked in these very steps overtook me. As I walked up to the large altar and chair of St. Peter, the first leader of the church, I stood in sacred silence and prayer.

My second profound experience occurred in Assisi, at the Church of St. Clare. I sat in front of the San Damiano Cross and listened to the sisters pray and sing. Sister Marilyn Ring was on my heart, because her funeral was being held at our monastery that day. I prayed and lit a candle for Sister Marilyn and my community.

My last and most profound experience happened in Montecassino. This was the location where St. Benedict completed writing *The Rule*, and where he and St. Scholastica are buried.

After touring Montecassino Abbey, I walked down the stairs to the crypt. Kneeling to pray in front of the tombs of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, I felt a sacred peace. A flood of emotions surfaced when I considered the past, present and future of Benedictine life.

In 1852, our Foundress Mother Benedict Riepp traveled from Eichstätt, Bavaria to St Marys, Pennsylvania to establish the first convent of Benedictine Sisters. She shared her vision of a tree bringing life to the new world. As we face changes in our present life as Benedictines, I pondered what new growth will spring forth from the trees of our past and begin to grow anew.

This trip deepened my own spiritual journey, and I enjoyed experiencing my Benedictine roots with the Oblates and volunteers of St. Mary Monastery.

Sister Janet Marks 55 Years in Catholic Education



Sr. Janet Cassidy, OSB

Photo courtesy of The Catholic Post

When Sister Janet Cassidy entered the Benedictine community in 1961, she was willing to do whatever was asked of her. She just wanted to be a Sister.

Recently Sister Janet shared, “I look back and I can see God’s hand in everything that I have done. I’m so blessed.”

The daughter of James and Dorothy (Darling) Cassidy, Sister Janet was born in Peoria on Jan. 21, 1943, and is the second oldest of six children. She received a rich Irish and Catholic heritage filled with love and faith.

Sister Janet attended St. Bernard School in Peoria, staffed by the Sinsinawa Dominicans, and graduated from St. Mary Academy in 1961. She entered the community and made her first profession on June 15, 1963, and her final profession on June 15, 1968.

Sister Janet taught at St. Anthony School in Atkinson (1965-67), followed by Sts. Peter and Paul School in Nauvoo (1967-69), St. Thomas More School in Munster, Indiana, (1969-74), and Holy Family School in Peoria (1974-82). She taught at Seton Catholic School from 1982 until she retired in 2016, but that didn’t last long.

*“I have jobs at the monastery,
but the kids keep you going.
They keep you young.”*

SISTER JANET CASSIDY, OSB

When she approached Seton Catholic about coming back, Sister Janet didn’t want a classroom. “I just wanted to be of assistance.” For the last four years she has been working half days, providing help in math for students in kindergarten, first, second and third grade.

“It’s a great responsibility and privilege to influence a child’s moral compass at that age. It’s awe inspiring. If I died right now, I would have no regrets,” Sister Janet said. “My life has been blessed.”



Benedictine Briefs

Conference of Benedictine Prioresses

Sister Sandra Brunenn attended the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses held at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD, from January 29 – February 4, 2020. The theme was “Called to Serve: Pray, Listen, Lead” and Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB, was keynote speaker.

Volunteer and Employee Meetings - St. Mary Monastery

As part of the strategic planning process, the monastery initiated three meetings a year with employees and one meeting per year with volunteers. Sister Sandra Brunenn led meetings to engage employees and volunteers in a deeper understanding of St. Mary Monastery’s mission and values.

Employee Appreciation Dinner - St. Mary Monastery

The sisters hosted an annual Employee Appreciation Dinner that included festive appetizers and a catered dinner. The sisters ended the evening with a song of blessing and employee recognition awards.

Women’s Interfaith Dialogue

Sr. Marianne Burkhard attended a planning committee of the Women’s Interfaith Dialogue at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Bettendorf. The group of women is organized by Muslim, Jewish and Catholic women, and this year’s topic is “From Faith to Action”.

Intercongregational Day

Sister Marlene Miller attended Round Table meetings to prepare for the Intercongregational Day in October 2020. The Round Table is a group of sisters and laywomen who meet to discuss issues and share solutions. The meetings were hosted by the Dubuque Presentations and the Blessed Virgin Mary communities.

National Catholic Youth Conference

Sister Stefanie MacDonald attended the NCYC conference in Indianapolis, a three-day experience of prayer, community and empowerment for Catholic teenagers and their adult chaperones. Sister Stefanie helped with activities in the Inspiration Nook for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) and spoke with students and adults about religious life.

10th Annual Untold Nauvoo Stories Symposium

Sister Mary Jane Wallace presented “The History of Benet Hall” at this annual symposium in Nauvoo, IL. The conference celebrates Nauvoo’s legacy, including the contributions of the Sisters of St. Mary Monastery.

125th Anniversary - Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart Monastery

Sisters Sheila McGrath, Susan Hutchens and Marlene Miller attended the 125th anniversary of this Benedictine congregation in Lisle, IL. Sister Susan serves as a member of the Investment Board.

World Relief Annual Fundraiser - St. Ambrose University

Six sisters and our communications director attended the World Relief Annual Fundraiser held at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, IA. The “Passport to Journey” event provides support to continue welcoming refugees and helping them rebuild their lives.

We Remember

Sister Irene Krogmeier, OSB 1922 - 2019



Sr. Irene Krogmeier, OSB

Sister Irene Krogmeier (Loretta Theresa), OSB, died Tuesday, December 10, 2019, at St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island. Born in Ft. Madison, Iowa on December 5, 1922, Sr. Irene was the daughter of John and Mary Ann (Brinkschroeder) Krogmeier. Sister Irene attended Sacred Heart School in Ft. Madison, IA, and St. Mary's Academy in Nauvoo, IL.

She entered the Benedictine community in September 1944 and made final profession on July 11, 1949. Sister Irene's ministry included working in food service, infirmary, housekeeping and maintenance at St. Mary's Academy, Nauvoo, IL., St. Mary Monastery and Benet House Retreat Center, Rock Island, IL., Holy Family, Peoria, IL., St. Mary's, Moline, IL and St. Joseph's, Ivesdale, IL.

Sister Irene was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, John Krogmeier. Sister is survived by her Benedictine Sisters; a niece and husband, Debbie and Bruce Corlew; a nephew and spouse, John and Kathy Krogmeier.

The Bell's Story Beautiful Nauvoo

By Sister Margaret Murphy, OSB



Ringin', in violet dawn
Prayer, work, reading
Organ tones, singing, chanting
Catching the echoes
Swishing of long garbs,
Ripe grapes,
Boiling and bubbling

Bread baking
Ringin' in muggy midday
Angelus, prayers, meals
Rushing feet, giggling girls
Barges passing with blarin' horns
Trucks rumblin' through,
With aging cheese, nose wrinkl' smell

Chorus billowin' their songs of Joseph,
Fills the summer evening
Hammers poundin', cement grindin'
New bells ringin'
Ringin' out over blazin' streaks of sunset
Reflected on endless waves

Reunion Announcements

Class of 1959: October 8, 9, 10, 11, 2020

Class of 1962: September 18, 19, 20, 2020

Class of 1970: August 28, 29, 30, 2020

Class of 1975: March 27, 28, 29, 2020

Class of 1985: July 24, 25, 26, 2020



Employee 10 Year Anniversary

Emilie Hoover celebrated her 10 year anniversary as an employee of St. Mary Monastery. She was hired in 2009, shortly after arriving in Milan from the Philippines. “From my first day of work, the Sisters were loving and accepting of me. I began in Housekeeping, and they encouraged me to go to school and become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).”

After a few years, the sisters allowed Emilie to adjust her time, and she earned her CNA in 2014. Sister Marlene Miller shared, “Emilie is a hard worker who truly cares for us. She brings such joy to everything she does.” Emilie was recognized at the Monastery’s annual Employee Appreciation Dinner, and she received a beautiful clock for her 10 years of service.

In Memoriam . . .

Laura Callahan Hazard '99, daughter of Oblates Chris and Madeleine Callahan, died on Dec 23, 2019.

James Nuellen, father of **Kellianne Nuellen-Melnick '82** died September 16, 2019.

Theresa Salerno Paterno '47 died in January, sister to **Rosaria Salerno '52** and sister to **Joanne Salerno**.

Craig Smith, son of **Norma Hecks Smith '56** died November 14, 2019.

Dorothy Staszak Jones, mother of **Sylvia Staszak, '62** died October 2019.



Benet House

Ongoing Programs

Bookmarks: Henri Nouwen Reading Group (1st Tuesday of the month)

Break-a-way: Day of Prayer and Quiet (1st Wednesday of the month)

The Word Among Us (2nd and 4th Monday of the month)

Centering Prayer (every Wednesday)

Taize (2nd Thursday of the month)

Retreats

Voices to Be Heard: Women Activists
Thurs, Mar. 19

Working with the Sacred Medicine Wheel
Sat., Mar. 21

Centering Prayer Retreat: Christ Our Center
Thurs., Apr. 2 – Sun., Apr. 5

Prayer and Poetry – a 24 Hour Retreat
Fri., May 29 – Sat., May 30

Voices to Be Heard: Silent Killer
Thurs., May 21

Men’s Retreat: Being Men of Hope
Fri., June 26 – Sun., June 28



Sisters of St. Benedict

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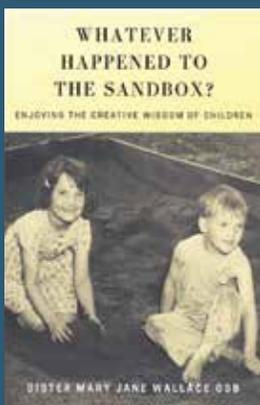
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Whatever Happened to the Sandbox?

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.

Would you prefer to receive our
digital copy of **Connecting Point?**

Please email us at:
jgull@smmsisters.org