

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana ~ 150th Anniversary

# It's Who We Are

July, 2016



1867

**150**  
YEARS

2017



## INSIDE

.....

- Our basic values
- What we do
- Still relevant
- Meeting spiritual needs
- Using the Gospel as our guide



# Contents

## Page 2

Community: respect all; listen for the voice of God

## Page 5

Prioresses

## Page 6

Prayer: our primary vocation “the Work of God”

## Page 8

Hospitality: welcoming all as Christ

## Page 10

Work: seeking God through serving others

## Page 12

Striving to be a presence of peace

## Page 14

Community photo

## Page 16

Current community members

## Page 18

150 Years timeline

## Page 20

Together we can

## Page 22

The Rule of Benedict

## Page 23

Helping sisters serve others

## Page 24

What is a Ferdinand Benedictine?

## Page 25

How does St. Benedict speak to your heart today?

## Page 26

What others say about the sisters

## Page 29

Looking ahead



802 E. 10th Street, Ferdinand, IN 47532  
812-367-1411 • [info@thedome.org](mailto:info@thedome.org) • [thedome.org](http://thedome.org)  
Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

## Still reaching out to thousands, and moving forward

In his Letter to the Romans, Paul says, “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

We, too, have hope for our future as American Benedictine women. And, we wait for it—sometimes more patiently than others—trusting that God will, indeed, provide for us, according to his plan and purpose. With this hope, we look back with joy and gratitude on a 150-year presence in Southern Indiana.

Our world is changing rapidly. It is a challenge to keep up while attending to our tradition in the daily living of the spiritual life. There are decisions to be made and options to explore. As an active community of Benedictine women ministering in God’s church, we are called to be centered in God and to be faithful to the monastic way of life. This means we are called to give witness to the power of the Gospel in all we do and in all the decisions we make.

As many of you—our family, friends, and supporters—know, we have looked forward to the next 15 years to determine how best to steward our resources in service of our mission and how we can sustain community life in whatever form that will take. As Benedictines we are called to hold all in common. This holds true for our possessions, our self will and our buildings. We are committed to use our resources in the service of all God’s people.

Turning Benet Hall into affordable senior housing means a no-longer-needed building instead serves the needs of others. Sharing our Event Hall allows the public to experience the beauty of our monastery grounds. Our sisters in ministry with the Family Scholar House give hope to those in need by facilitating education for single parents and their families. No matter their ministry, be it in a parish, school, health facility, or social service agency, our sisters are still reaching out to thousands, sharing the Benedictine values of prayer, hospitality, and service, and enriching the lives of each person they encounter.

Prayer and community life sustain us. As we gather daily to pray together we receive the nourishment to go forth into our ministries, strengthened by the bond of community life and the reality of God’s loving presence within each person. We share the stories of our day and assist one another in continuing our common search for God.

When our four young founding sisters arrived in Ferdinand in 1867 from Covington, Kentucky, they were eager to live the Benedictine way of life and to share with and minister to the people in Ferdinand. They could not have imagined how the community would expand to meet the needs of so many people throughout Southern Indiana and beyond. Over these 150 years we have experienced times of growth and transition. We grew in membership yearly and started new missions and new daughter-houses. We have also lived through difficult times and decisions—the closing of St. Joseph Hospital in Huntingburg, Indiana, and of Marian Heights Academy on our monastery grounds, and the loss of members. Yet the list of accomplishments is long for these 150 years. Our challenge is to move forward, to open our hearts to what we are being called to be and to do in the future.

As always, we would love to have you visit, call, or write us. It is a blessing to hear from you and learn of your journey of seeking God. What a delight it is to receive a phone call from a 90-year-old woman in New Jersey, sharing the joys of her life; and what a gift it is to travel to Texas and listen to the story of a young couple just beginning their family life. Graces upon graces are showered on us and upon all who walk with us. Thank you so much for what you do to make the journey possible.

With a grateful heart,



Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB  
Prioress







# Community: respect all; listen for the voice of God

*By Sister Anita Louise Lowe  
and Sister Jane Becker*

"This, then, is the good zeal which monastics must foster with fervent love: 'They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other' (Romans 12:10), supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another." With this line in Chapter 72 of his Rule, St. Benedict describes the relationship members of his community should strive to have with one another.

Visitors to our monastery often inquire how over 140 women can live together. The statement above from the Rule is the answer. Like any family, we need to consider others' needs as much as, if not more than, our own. There is a give-and-take in our daily living with others. In this we work out our spiritual growth and journey. In living together we meet Christ in one another.

Community life is one of the main values of a Benedictine

*Above: Sisters Rachel Geracitano, Doris Schepers, Jeanne Ellen Niehaus, Jill Marie Reuber, and Paula Wolff live together in a mission deanery in Louisville.*

monastery. It is central to our spirituality. Benedict wrote his Rule for those living in community. This calls us to develop the monastic virtues of humility, flexibility, honesty, patience, and compassion for others. In living together we help one another in our committed search for God.

As in any family, respect for each other and listening to one another is essential. Benedict tells his followers to receive all persons as Christ. We look for the Christ-like qualities in each person, even those with whom we struggle. It can be hard work, but searching for Christ in another can open us to discovering new ways of looking at an issue and of understanding how different people think.

There is richness in living with others. It can call forth unseen talents within us that we may not have recognized on our own. Many sisters, preparing for perpetual profession, say what they want most from community is other sisters' support. As sisters, we help one another walk the paths of our lives. We build up one another to reach out in service, in whatever way God calls us.

*“Living in community calls me to greater generosity, greater service, and greater love.”*

For Benedictines, living together is a value that has not changed with the centuries. We live, pray, and work together at the monastery and in smaller houses (mission deaneries). We try to group our external ministries in order to live together.

We have houses of sisters in Evansville, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; and Jasper, Indiana. These sisters come together for daily prayer and a meal. They share the work of cooking and taking care of the house and yard. While their schedule may be different from the monastery, their commitment to community life is no less.

#### **What is life-giving about community life in a mission deanery?**

**Sister Rose Mary Rexing, Jasper:** “There are others with whom I can share my prayer, my hopes and fears, and be challenged to grow. Living in community calls me to greater generosity, greater service, and greater love.”

**Sister Teresa Gunter, Evansville:** “When I’m exhausted, it’s a place where I can be refreshed. When I’m happy, it’s a place to celebrate. When I’m going through something hard, it’s a place that supports and loves me.”



Left to Right, Sisters Shirley Ann Schultheis, Sylvia Gehlhausen, and Mary Karen Hill look at the iPad being held by Sister Jeannine Kavanaugh.



Sisters compete against one another on balancing boards during Familian Fest.

At the monastery, we recognize it can be difficult to relate to over 100 women. So we organize ourselves into deaneries based on where our bedrooms are. Generally, these deaneries range from 5 to 12 members. While sisters pray and eat with the total home community, the deaneries provide for smaller groups of sisters with whom to have more intimate gatherings. The sisters typically celebrate birthdays and feast days within their deaneries. They also meet together regularly for discussions and recreation.

Part of the challenge of community life is shared ownership. We share living space, cars, and care for the house and tools we use. We share duties—cooking and cleaning in a mission deanery or doing dishes, covering switchboard, and cleaning halls at the monastery.

As we range in age from 23 to 99, we benefit from the richness of our elders’ wisdom and the energy and enthusiasm of our younger members. All of us, no matter how long we have been in the monastery, recognize that each one of us is seeking God, and that we are on that journey together.





Sisters celebrate Sister Mary Judith Fleig's birthday during a deanery gathering.

### Sisters talk about community life

**Sister Marilyn Market:** "Our daily attendance at Mass and prayer gives us the divine light to enable us to see Christ in the sisters with whom we live, in daily events, in visitors and strangers. We hear 'You sisters are so good to one another.' The Spirit is there. In our old age there is a rare energy that continues to do what must be done, not because it is exciting but because it is worthwhile doing. There is a great deal of life in old age. We can die before our time or live until we die. Religious life never retires."

**Sister Carlita Koch:** "Living with others who share the same values is life-giving because I know the others are there to support me when I need help."

**Sister Mary Carmen Spayd:** "Our administration has such deep concern for each sister's spiritual and physical welfare. Communal prayer, liturgy, and the common table are essential

*"If we seek Christ in those with whom we live, then we truly live in the presence of Christ."*

aspects of our life together as Benedictines."

**Sister Corda Trouy:** "We do what we need to do out of love for God and for one another."

**Sister Jane Will:** "It is a great gift to know that God has called all of us, as different and varied as we are, to join this monastery where we have the opportunity to become our best self, to laugh and cry together, to work and play together, and to allow these blessings to flow out to all those to whom we minister for the honor and glory of God."

**Sister Mary Karen Hill:** "We share in our conversations of who we are and can learn from others. It's inspiring what our sisters do with teaching, counseling and the good example they show."

**Sister Mary Ann Verkamp:** "The time for prayer, silence, and solitude nurture the inner journey and call me to be other-centered."



Sisters Rose Mary Rexing and Mary Lee Hillenbrand are enjoying time together at Familian Fest.

**Sister Jeana Visel:** "Living in community means I don't always get my way, this is healthy for spiritual growth, even if it isn't always easy! I like using the gifts I've been given for the greater good. I love coming home to the monastery knowing I've been missed. I love connecting with my wisdom figures."

**Sister Elnora Shidler:** "It's life-giving to live, pray, and work together. Daily prayer is most important to me." ■

# Prioresses



**Mother Benedicta  
Berns**  
1867-1878



**Mother Agatha Werb**  
1878-1890



**Mother Scholastica  
Stockman**  
1890-1898, 1902-1914



**Mother Veronica  
Ackerman**  
1898-1902



**Mother Seraphine  
Kordes**  
1914-1949



**Mother Clarissa Riehl**  
1949-1961



**Mother Julia Goebel**  
1961-1973



**Sister Carlita Koch**  
1973-1981



**Sister Mary Walter  
Goebel**  
1981-1989



**Sister Kathryn Huber**  
1989-1998



**Sister Joella Kidwell**  
1998 - 2003



**Sister Kristine Anne  
Harpenau**  
2003-2013



**Sister Barbara  
Lynn Schmitz**  
2013-present





# Prayer: our primary vocation “the Work of God”

By Sister Anita Louise Lowe

Ora et labora. Prayer and Work. This ancient motto of Benedictine life states clearly the major emphasis of our lives. We pray and we work. Gathering together several times a day for communal prayer provides a framework for our lives. At the monastery, we gather for communal prayer three times a day: morning, midday, and evening. In addition, we celebrate the Eucharist each day, and each of us sets aside time for daily personal prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours, our morning, midday, and evening prayer, is the primary prayer for the monastic. It is during this daily repeated prayer that the monastic community gathers as the body of Christ. By our very act of gathering to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours, the community becomes the Church at prayer. In this prayer, we exercise our baptismal priesthood by interceding on behalf of the world.

It is from this communal prayer, then, that the rest of our day takes shape. The words of the psalms or scripture reading at Morning Prayer may resonate in our hearts and minds throughout the rest of the day, or they may surface at some particular moment in the day's work, once more calling to mind Christ's presence at all times. Evening Prayer provides an opportunity

to review the day, to recall moments of noticing God's presence and to ask forgiveness for the times when we failed to notice that presence and to receive another as Christ.

We have a basic human need to pray, to pray daily, and to pray with others. We all have that need, no matter our state in life. And whenever we gather to pray we manifest the praying church.

Praying with the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours gives us words for our dialogue with God. The psalms speak of every human emotion. By praying these words we are not only attending to the thoughts and feelings of our own person or of the community. Rather, we embrace our world and give voice to the cry of all people in our world.

Both communal and personal prayer are important in our lives as Benedictines. In our time of personal prayer, we enter into our relationship with God. We listen to God's voice in the depths of our heart, and we make known our deepest desires and needs. Our personal prayer takes many forms, one of which we call *lectio divina*, divine reading. This is an ancient way of praying with Scripture that calls us to read the Scripture

Above: Sister Gail Hamilton lies prostrate during her Rite of Perpetual Profession.



*We take seriously our responsibility to pray for others.*

passage slowly and carefully, noting places where God may be stirring our hearts. We then stop and ruminate on the word, meditating on it. Then, we give voice to the prayer that arises out of this word before sitting in the stillness of God's presence.

In addition to daily personal prayer, each member of the community takes a yearly week of retreat. While such a week may seem like a luxury to many, to us it is vital to deepening our spiritual life. In this week, we set aside our normal daily tasks and routines and focus solely on our relationship to God. It is here that we find rest and refreshment, as well as challenge and renewal.

We take seriously our responsibility to pray for others. We make special note of our relatives, family members, friends, and all who have asked us to keep them in prayer, and we offer our prayers for all who are in need in our world. We also invite others to join us in prayer and are always ready to welcome our visitors to pray with us. Together, we form the Body of Christ, and in our prayer we carry one another into the presence of God. ■



Sister Helen Maurer prays in the Eucharistic Chapel.

## Ferdinand Oblates talk about Benedictine prayer life



Left to right, Oblates Charlie Luebbehusen, Judy Luebbehusen, Linda Begle, and Vic Begle pose for a picture at an Oblate meeting with Sister Karen Joseph (standing).

### Oblate Elaine Baumgart:

Jesus promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in the midst of them. That truth is a powerful reality when I pray with my sisters. It feels so right to tuck my prayer in with the prayers of the friends I intend to spend eternity with and send those prayers to the Father who loves us each. What a great gift that is for me!

### Oblate Mel Schroeder:

My prayer life surpassed the "just do enough to get by" phase to a more constant role after attending a Cursillo and meetings with a group of men for reflections on Sunday readings. Still, there was something missing. Then I became an Oblate with Monastery Immaculate Conception. Prayers then changed to more a discussion with Jesus and feeling of God's presence in my daily surroundings. My demeanor and attitude has changed to being more accepting of others, realizing it's not all about me and reaching a sense of joy. I am leaning more toward spiritual growth. I find myself realizing when God is telling me to stop, listen, learn, and take direction. Being an Oblate allows me a closer relationship with the sisters and other Oblates. That relationship is truly rewarding personally and spiritually. Not because we sit around buried in prayer but because we can relate together knowing that God is there ready to be part of the conversation. My prayer life since becoming an Oblate is more consistent, spontaneous, joyful and focused to the really important things in life, which is simply sharing of our love with others and not being afraid to demonstrate our love through actions and words. ■



# Hospitality: welcoming all as Christ

*By Sister Jenny Miller*

Hospitality: a biblical value, a Benedictine value, a necessary, everyday value in the world today.

Jesus urged us to practice hospitality toward one another. The moral in the story of the Good Samaritan is clear. In Matthew 25 we read, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me...whatever you did for one of these brothers (or sisters) of mine, you did for me."

St. Benedict got the message. In chapter 53 of his Rule, he wrote, "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ."

To receive others as Christ requires openness: an open mind, an open heart, an open door, and open hands. This objective does not discriminate, but is issued to all God's people—the stranger, the neighbor, the friend, the needy, the curious, the eccentric, and the troubled of all ages.

Often the faith-sharing experiences in our deaneries offer insights for growth in hospitality as sisters reveal how and through whom they met Christ that day.

In an age of rampant homelessness, when many who live in homes feel isolated and abandoned, when violent behavior is often the norm, and when even neighbors are strangers, human beings long to feel welcomed and at home with one another.

The hospitality of the Ferdinand Benedictines has spread far and wide. Our sisters have served in Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, and Rome. There they have been treated to a hospitality which echoes the biblical ideal. They have been invited into homes to share abundance in a family's meager food, the scarcity of their space, their simple lives, and their open hearts. In turn, our sisters have shared themselves, their love of God, their desire for community, and their talents, particularly in education and health care.



Top: Two visitors listen intently to Sister Christine Kempf (left) as she gives a tour of the monastery church.

Bottom: The Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall welcomes overnight guests and numerous program participants and groups throughout the year.



*“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.”*



Sister Lisa Marie Schutz works on a craft project with a young visitor during a Latino outreach program.

Guests are welcome at our table and the sisters in the Spirituality Ministry department are adept in guiding persons to greater personal insight and peace in their relationship with the Lord.

Benedict says the community is to meet the guest “with the courtesy of love. First of all they are to pray together and thus be united in peace.” (Rule of Benedict 53, 3-4) We sisters meet this opportunity daily in the classroom, sickroom, meeting room, dining room, lounge, and chapel. Some of our ministries lend themselves to the priority of prayer. Being with the sick and the dying, for example, invites a sharing of prayer. It is at this time that human beings have a keen experience of their mortality and God’s mastery, of their weakness and God’s goodness.

Hospitality becomes a lived value in the life of our Benedictine community when a teaching sister responds with encouragement and respect toward both the well-behaved student and the child who comes to school unprepared and angry. Hospitality

is witnessed in our community when a request for dishwashers is tacked to the board and fills in quickly. Hospitality is realized when the sister who is sitting with a person in need has listened to the same story numerous times without complaint. It is the response of hospitality when administrators are concerned both with the health of the group and the task with which they grapple. It is hospitality which prompts us to write to legislators to promote laws that are just.

Hospitality has reached its zenith when it becomes second nature to receive each person as Christ.

Our opportunities to practice hospitality are varied and continuous. Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen is well known for the delightful way in which she distributes prayer books to visitors at our church services. Sister Karen Durliat regularly fixes bologna sandwiches for homeless people who come knocking on an Indianapolis parish door. The list of examples grows every day.

We trust that our castle on the hill serves as a beacon of light for the traveler and the seeker. We hope that our schedule is inviting to the stranger and the neighbor. We hope that in our ministries we become the face, the heart, and the hands of Christ in the present time. ■



Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz cuts the ribbon for the official opening of Monastery Event Hall.



# Work: seeking God through serving others

By Sister Pat McGuire

Anyone familiar with Benedictines probably has heard the motto “Ora et Labora” or “Pray and Work.” Or as we sometimes jokingly say, “Ora et Labora et Labora et Labora.” Yes, we know there is always enough work to go around.

For Benedictines, monastic life is the primary work. It is a commitment to common prayer and community living. But the action does not stop there because in our prayer we strive to be open to the Spirit and to follow where the Spirit is leading us. We listen for how God is asking us to be present in the world today. And we challenge and support one another to do just that. We know that our work is God’s work, unfinished by God, who means it to be finished by us.

The community grew quickly upon its arrival to Ferdinand in 1867 and so did the request for sisters to teach in the parishes. From 1867 to 1963 the sisters administered and staffed 59 grade schools, Academy Immaculate Conception, Mater Dei High

School in Evansville, and St. Ferdinand High School. They began work with special needs children and adults and held summer catechetical classes of religious education for rural parishes.

The sisters have had a long history of missionary work, especially in Guatemala and Peru. Monasterio Reina de la Paz in Coban, Guatemala, was founded by the Ferdinand community in 1964. The North American sisters and native vocations worked together there until 1999, at which time the mission was turned over to the Misioneras Guadalupanas de Cristo Rey, OSB, Mexico. Monasterio Paz de la Cruz, founded in Peru in 1983, is still a dependent monastery of the Ferdinand Benedictines. Six Peruvian sisters minister there.

Teaching continued to be the primary ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand for over 100 years. As society changed, so did the needs of society. Some sisters felt they could minister more effectively in different areas of work. After all, it is not teaching that defines a Benedictine sister, but rather it’s seeking God through prayer and community living that finds expression in service to others. So a sister spends time in reflection and conversation with the prioress as she considers how her particular gifts might best be used in building up the Reign of God.

*“Ora et Labora” or  
“Pray and Work”*



Left: Sister Jill Marie Rueber and Sister Teresa Gunter (seated middle front, left to right) pose for a group picture with the participants of Camp Marian.

Every sister knows that her work, her ministry, is not hers alone. What she does, she does in the name of community; she knows that the work is greater than her, greater than the community. It is God's work. She knows, too, it is not what one does, it is how one does it—with love. She knows that it is God's work and she and the community are privileged to share in that work.

Today the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand operate the Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall, the Monastery Gift Shop, and Monastery Baked Goods. They work in health care, education, parishes, diocesan offices, food pantries, hospice care, and Habitat for Humanity. There are sisters who are musicians, spiritual directors, retreat directors, counselors, and those who work with the Oblate program—a program for lay people who want to live the Benedictine values in their own walk of life. And there are sisters who work with single parents, the homeless, and immigrants. At the monastery there are sisters who keep the operation oiled and running with the myriad of tasks they perform daily and the powerhouse of prayer that they are.

When a sister is asked if she is retired it usually brings a smile to her face. She knows that while she might be retired from outside employment there is always work to be done at the monastery. And deep down she knows that this is a blessing, for she is



Sister Christine Marie Fendel laughs with nursing home residents. As part of her ministry, she visits the homebound members of St. Ferdinand Church.

continuing to be a co-creator with God. She knows that as her physical energy wanes, she can still pray for the sisters who continue to minister and the people they serve. She also knows she has planted seeds that will grow because the Master Gardener will bring them to fruition. ■



Sister Kate Willegal, as an assistant professor of Nursing at Vincennes University Jasper Campus, observes a nursing student learning suction techniques.

## Make a difference by joining Women of the Rule

A partnership with the  
Sisters of St. Benedict

You help decide which  
new ministries to fund!



To join,  
contact Sister  
Barbara  
C.Schmitz:  
bcschmitz@  
thedome.org or  
812-367-1411



## Striving to be a presence of peace

By Greg Eckerle

The sisters are not shy about proclaiming their emphasis on peace.

In their mission statement they strongly vow, “By our life and work, we commit ourselves to be a presence of peace as we join our sisters and brothers in the common search for God.”

Visitors are greeted by two signs referencing peace before even setting foot inside the monastery’s front entrance. The first, a welcome sign on the drive up the hill to the monastery, states “Pursue Peace” and “Seek Peace.” The second is a peace pole near the first set of outside steps. It declares “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in four different languages.

The sisters have certainly been leaders for 150 years in striving to make that dream come true. Feedback from monastery guests regularly attests to a rare feeling of peace and calm when on the grounds and when interacting with sisters.

The sisters feel the call to be Christ’s peace in the world. What does that mean? How do they try to live out being a presence of peace?

Five sisters shared thoughts on those questions - -

**Sister Paulette Seng:** Being formed and guided by St. Benedict’s Rule, we try to reflect God’s peace through our lives and in our work and ministries. We strive to be at peace with God, with ourselves, and with others. To be a presence of peace we need to be a person of peace. And we know that outward

peace comes from our inner peace. Part of what we learn from the Rule is the need for quiet time, solitude, and prayer to help discover our peace within.

When guests say the monastery is a peaceful place, I say it’s part of the environment. For almost 150 years, dynamic and prayerful Benedictine women have left positive energy, enthusiasm, and peaceful spirits here. That permeates all of us, so it’s no wonder visitors feel a sense of peace.

In our individual ministries, we seek to empower others to become people of peace and to establish right relationships with God and others. We help them find their true selves, to see themselves as persons of worth and dignity.

We are a presence of peace by serving the poor, working for peace and justice, and respecting and upholding the dignity and equality of all people.

**Sister Kathryn Huber:** That means we have to respect each other, and we have to forgive each other. It’s not easy; we’re not perfect!

The origin of the word “peace,” in Hebrew and Aramaic, means completeness and wholeness. It carries the connotation that may you have the freedom to become the person God created you to be. That’s what Benedict is trying to help us do. When we do that, we can live in harmony and peace. But greed and power often get in the way.

Above: This welcome sign sits to the southwest of the monastery, welcoming all visitors.



One commentator on the Rule of Benedict says we all come broken to the monastery, that we all come to be healed. As we are healed, we can then be a healing presence for others. That's a lot of what our Spirituality Ministry programs and spiritual direction sessions are about – helping people become healed, helping them realize they are God's beloved. If we know we are loved, we can be loving people, and be respectful to others, and be a person of peace.

**Sister Dolores Folz:** Striving to be a peaceful person is not always a peaceful process. It's an effort to maintain that peace within. It's a personal and constant struggle within ourselves to be the best we can be. That's where our own personal prayer is so important. And communal prayer has an impact, as we gather daily to pray with one another. The wisdom is in the Rule on how to live together in peace and justice.

Living together in community can get routine, and we do get on each other's nerves at times, but if anybody has a difficult situation, everybody gives support.

**Sister Mary Ann Verkamp:** Benedict talks about speaking the truth. We can't say one thing and mean something else. When there's a conflict, Benedict calls everyone to pray for the individuals. Another element of the Rule connected with peace is our stability, of staying connected and committed to one another. And our stability of heart with God. Silence is also related to coming to that inner peace. So is gratefulness, rather than grumbling. If we cultivate a grateful heart, we're more likely to be at peace.

There's also the importance of listening. Underneath that is the emphasis Benedict places on humility. If we're not willing to let go of power, or control, or to have the last word, we're not going to be able to listen.

**Sister Jeana Visel:** I like the notion of being a sister as a joyful presence, a lively presence, and yet a peaceful presence. Peace is not simply about live and let live. Sometimes peace is hard work. Engagement when things look difficult means working together to reach conflict resolution. This is the work of Benedictine community life. We are very different people, often born in different generations, in different places, and yet we engage with each other. We work to get to know each other and love each other. We have to work out differences with love. This is the work of peace. Sometimes it means giving in a little. ■



The peace pole says, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in four languages; English, Latin, Spanish, and German.

## The World is Zigging. *I ZAGGED.*

*I found a place where women seek and share God by living together in a community based on prayer and service. The world is zigging. I zagged. Now, I'm experiencing a journey of spiritual and self discovery. And I'm using my gifts and talents in ways I never dreamed.*

Join us in a 1500-year tradition of using individual strengths and leadership to spread God's love. Arrange a visit by calling 800-738-9999 or visit online at [izagged.org](http://izagged.org).





# Sisters of St. Benedict





1867 - 150th Anniversary - 2017

# Current community members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Entrance</u>		
Sister Rebecca Abel	September 10, 1962	Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen	October 8, 1940
Sister Mary Leah Baehl	September 7, 1948	Sister Rachel Geracitano	August 19, 2012
Sister Jean Marie Ballard	August 19, 1976	Sister Mary André Gettelfinger	September 7, 1953
Sister Jane Becker	August 8, 1963	Sister Mary Benet Goodrum	September 7, 1950
Sister Maura Beckman	September 6, 1950	Sister Dorothy Graf	September 10, 1961
Sister Mary Philip Berger	September 10, 1961	Sister Teresa Gunter	September 6, 1992
Sister Benita Biever	September 7, 1937	Sister Gail Hamilton	August 27, 2006
Sister Kathy Bilskie	August 25, 1966	Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau	August 24, 1967
Sister Linda Bittner	September 6, 1965	Sister Mary Rose Hasenour	September 12, 1959
Sister Mary Austin Blank	September 9, 1957	Sister Madonna Helmer	September 8, 1954
Sister Celeste Boda	August 30, 1998	Sister Donna Marie Herr	September 8, 1963
Sister Jane Ann Breen	August 12, 1968	Sister Assunta Highbaugh	September 6, 1931
Sister Anna Marie Brosmer	September 10, 1961	Sister Mary Karen Hill	September 8, 1951
Sister Kathleen Marie Cash	August 15, 2004	Sister Mary Lee Hillenbrand	September 13, 1958
Sister Magna LuciaCastillo Castillo	November 16, 1990	Sister Ann Francis Hillenbrand	August 25, 1966
Sister Marilú Córdova Campoverde	November 16, 1990	Sister Corita Hoffman	September 8, 1944
Sister Briana Elisabeth Craddock	August 20, 1995	Sister Sharon Hollander	August 25, 1966
Sister Mary Claude Croteau	October 1, 1950	Sister Susan Mary Hooks	January 7, 1984
Sister Agnes Marie Dauby	August 24, 1968	Sister Ann Marie Howard	August 24, 1968
Sister Rosemary Dauby	September 13, 1970	Sister Kathryn Huber	September 11, 1956
Sister Wilma Davis	June 19, 1938	Sister Mary Emma Jochum	September 9, 1957
Sister Lorraine DeVault	October 2, 1949	Sister Karen Joseph	September 8, 1967
Sister Judy Dewig	September 6, 1965	Sister Jeannine Kavanaugh	September 10, 1962
Sister Mary Lou Dick	August 25, 1966	Sister Christine Kempf	September 11, 1955
Sister Betty Drewes	September 6, 1965	Sister Mary Victor Kercher	November 28, 1943
Sister Catherine Marie Duenne	August 19, 2001	Sister Joella Kidwell	September 11, 1954
Sister Karen Sue Durliat	August 19, 1974	Sister Mary Leon Kiesel	September 7, 1953
Sister Brenda Engleman	August 28, 1966	Sister Mary Jane Kiesel	September 12, 1959
Sister Lynn Marie Falcony	January 11, 2015	Sister Mary Carol Kinghorn	September 10, 1956
Sister Christine Marie Fendel	September 10, 1960	Sister Mary George Kissel	September 4, 1938
Sister Diane Fischer	September 11, 1954	Sister Jackie Kissel	September 7, 1953
Sister Mary Judith Fleig	September 9, 1961	Sister Vera Kloeck	September 6, 1950
Sister Dolores Folz	September 12, 1959	Sister Doris Marie Knebel	September 12, 1959
Sister Mary Dominic Frederick	November 27, 1949	Sister Carlita Koch	September 7, 1953
Sister Norma Fultz	September 10, 1960	Sister Rosa Lee Koch	September 9, 1957



Sister Helen Jean Kormelink	September 11, 1954	Sister Joan Scheller	August 24, 1967
Sister Romaine Kuntz	September 10, 1956	Sister Theresita Schenk	December 8, 1938
Sister Louise Laroche	August 27, 1983	Sister Doris Schepers	August 27, 2006
Sister Patty Lasher	August 25, 1966	Sister Mary Ann Schepers	September 11, 1955
Sister Jayn Elizabeth Lein	August 20, 1995	Sister Leona Schlachter	September 11, 1954
Sister Dolorita Libs	September 5, 1937	Sister Laura Marie Schmitt	August 25, 1966
Sister Mary Longtine	September 10, 1956	Sister Barbara Catherine Schmitz	September 7, 1953
Sister Arcelia López Chumacero	March 12, 2012	Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz	January 17, 1981
Sister Anita Louise Lowe	August 15, 1987	Sister Mary Alice Schnur	September 5, 1940
Sister Mary Beth Maier	September 7, 1953	Sister Marilyn Schroering	September 7, 1964
Sister Doris Market	September 11, 1954	Sister Shirley Ann Schultheis	September 13, 1958
Sister Marilyn Market	September 8, 1941	Sister Lisa Marie Schutz	March 8, 2015
Sister Rebecca Ann Mathauer	August 22, 1999	Sister Paulette Seng	September 12, 1959
Sister Helen Maurer	September 5, 1937	Sister Karlene Sensmeier	September 10, 1962
Sister Jane Michele McClure	August 24, 1967	Sister Mary Agnes Sermersheim	September 11, 1955
Sister Patricia Ann McGuire	September 10, 1960	Sister Elnora Shidler	September 10, 1961
Sister Beata Mehling	October 1, 1944	Sister Jacqueline Shively	September 11, 1954
Sister Jennifer Miller	September 7, 1964	Sister Michelle Catherine Sinkhorn	August 24, 1997
Sister Michelle Mohr	September 7, 1953	Sister Mary Carmen Spayd	September 8, 1944
Sister María Montalbán Chávez	April 26, 1987	Sister Mary Carmel Spayd	September 8, 1944
Sister Jolinda Naas	September 7, 1953	Sister Geneva Stumler	September 7, 1951
Sister Susan Ann Necas	September 4, 1982	Sister Teresa Elizabeth Stutz	August 30, 1998
Sister Joyce Marie Newton	September 7, 1964	Sister Joanna Trainer	September 7, 1949
Sister Jeanne Ellen Niehaus	August 28, 1966	Sister Corda Trouy	October 15, 1955
Sister Anna Corrine O'Connor	September 1, 1969	Sister Mary Cheryl Uebelhor	September 9, 1957
Sister Barbara Ann Offerman	September 12, 1959	Sister Mary Louise Uebelhor	September 10, 1960
Sister Irma Peña Coello	November 16, 1990	Sister Mary Ann Verkamp	September 9, 1961
Sister Victoria Pohl	September 7, 1947	Sister Jeana Visel	August 10, 2003
Sister Nolberta Ramírez Jiménez	November 16, 1990	Sister Agnes Weinzapfel	September 8, 1963
Sister Eileen Reckelhoff	September 8, 1963	Sister Charlene Ann Wheelless	September 12, 1959
Sister Mary Oliver Reising	September 9, 1957	Sister Rose Wildeman	August 24, 1967
Sister Felícita Rentería Navarro	April 26, 1987	Sister Jane Will	September 6, 1965
Sister Jill Marie Reuber	August 10, 2003	Sister Kate Willegal	September 11, 1993
Sister Rose Mary Rexing	August 24, 1968	Sister Mary Francis Williams	September 13, 1958
Sister Cathy Ann Robinson	August 24, 1997	Sister Paula Wolff	August 20, 1995
Sister Marge Sasse	September 7, 1952	Sister Jan Youart	September 11, 1955
Sister Mary Frances Schafer	June 30, 1980	Sister Sarah Cathleen Yungwirth	August 30, 1998

Necrology of the sisters can be found at [thedome.org/geneology](http://thedome.org/geneology).

# 150 Years

**1867** On August 20, Sister Benedicta Berns, Sister Xaveria Schroeder, Sister Rose Chapelle, and Sister Clara Vollmer from St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, Kentucky, arrived in Ferdinand, Indiana. Mother Alexia Lechner, the prioress of St. Walburg Monastery, accompanied them. The sisters came to teach the children of the German immigrants.

**1870** The sisters opened Academy Immaculate Conception, a boarding school for girls.

**1876** Sisters began teaching school in St. Meinrad. This was the community's first mission.

**1878** Four Ferdinand Benedictines went to Shoal Creek, Arkansas, to do missionary work. St. Scholastica Monastery in Shoal Creek became the first daughter-house of the community in 1879. St. Scholastica's is now located in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



The first convent was a three-room home formerly used by the Providence sisters. Two rooms and a chapel were added immediately.



St. Joseph House, a retirement home for the elderly poor, was built at the foot of the hill in 1890.

**1883** Work began on the Quadrangle, the first building on "the hill." It was completed in 1886.

**1886** Thirty-three sisters professed perpetual vows. Since 1870, this privilege had been withheld from the sisters by the Vincennes bishop until he felt the community could prove viability.

**1902** A telephone and electric lights were installed. East wing addition was begun.

**1907** The sisters accepted their first school in Evansville, St. Joseph School.

**1910** Following the decree of Pope Pius X, the sisters were permitted to receive daily Holy Communion.

**1914** St. Benedict Normal College was accredited as a two year State Teachers' Training School. In 1943, the four year college was allowed to grant a B.S. in Elementary Education and Music Education. Lay women were admitted for the first time in 1958. The college became coeducational in 1967 and eventually closed in 1970.

**1915** Ground was broken for the new monastery chapel. The chapel was dedicated in 1924. The sanctuary's carved wood was installed in 1928, the stained glass windows in 1930, the marble altar and communion rail in 1956.

**1922** The sisters bought their first car and installed a new bake oven to replace the outdoor oven.

**1926** Bishop Chartrand ordered that the sisters use English instead of German for spiritual reading, table reading, and the usual prayers they were adding to the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

**1933** Sisters were sent to North Dakota to staff St. Ann's Indian Mission in Belcourt. Queen of Peace Monastery opened in Belcourt in 1956. The monastery closed in 2007 and the sisters returned to Ferdinand



The monastery chapel during construction.



1927-1928 Academy Immaculate Conception basketball team.

**1934** The construction of six-story St. Benedict Hall began.

**1939** The Ferdinand community became affiliated with the Congregation of St. Gertrude the Great and petitioned pontifical jurisdiction.

**1945** Ground was broken for Lourdes Grotto, an Academy Immaculate Conception project.

**1949** Construction began for a new laundry building, which was completed in 1950 and named St. Joseph Annex.

**1951** The Ferdinand Benedictines began working at Stork Memorial Hospital in Huntingburg, Indiana.

**1956** Because the Ferdinand community had become so large, Our Lady of Grace Monastery was built in Beech Grove, Indiana. Over 100 sisters transferred to that daughterhouse.





Marian Day School, an educational institution serving children with special needs, was opened in Evansville in 1958.

- 1958** Sisters received permission from Rome to pray the Divine Office in English.
- 1962** The construction of Kordes Hall was completed, and the building was dedicated.
- 1964** Missionary endeavors began in Cobán, Guatemala. The sisters transferred this monastery to Misioneras Guadalupanas de Cristo Rey, O.S.B., Mexico in 1999. Benet Hall, a new building for sisters in Initial Formation, was dedicated.
- 1967** Missionary endeavors began in Peru. Monasterio Paz de la Cruz was built in Morropón. Madonna Day, a school for children with special needs, was opened in Memphis, Tennessee.
- 1968** The sisters changed from traditional garb and veil to modern garb and veil. In 1969, permission was given for the sisters to return to their baptismal names, if desired.
- 1970** Madonna Hall, a new residence hall for the academy, was opened.
- 1971** Sisters founded a contemplative community in Labadieville, Louisiana, which later merged with St. Scholastica Priory in Petersham, Massachusetts.
- 1972** Holy Spirit Monastery in Grand Terrace, California, founded by Ferdinand Benedictines, became an independent monastery. The monastery closed in 2013 and the sisters returned to Ferdinand.
- 1973** Academy Immaculate Conception was renamed Marian Heights Academy.
- 1978** Kordes Enrichment Center opened as a retreat center and guest house.
- 1983** The monastery campus was enrolled in the National Registry of Historic Places.



Monastery Immaculate Conception Church was renovated and rededicated in 2005.

- 1988** The Sisters of St. Benedict turned over management of St. Joseph Hospital to Huntingburg Corporate Group.
- 1990** Sister Mary Walter Goebel, former prioress, was killed in a car accident. Saint Hildegard Society was established as a legacy-giving society for the monastery.
- 1991** The sisters, in reclaiming their identity as a monastic community, changed the title of their institution from Convent Immaculate Conception to Monastery Immaculate Conception.
- 1996** For Heaven Sake, now known as Monastery Gift Shop, opened.
- 2000** Marian Heights Academy closed.
- 2005** Monastery Immaculate Conception Church was renovated and rededicated. The monastery infirmary became licensed as Hildegard Health Center, a long-term care facility for the sisters.
- 2008** The sisters and Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center began partnership for an administrative program. The monastery bakery was established.
- 2012** Affiliation with Family Scholar House began as a new ministry.
- 2014** The Hermitage was built.
- 2015** Marian Heights Academy gymnasium was converted to Monastery Event Hall. St. Benedict's Brew Works began renting the art studio.
- 2016** Benet Hall was renovated into affordable senior housing.



Monastery Baked Goods, previously known as Simply Divine Bakery, was established in 2008.

# 1867–2017



# Together we can

How sisters join others in the common search for God

*Oblates, volunteers, benefactors, co-workers, alumnae*

By Greg Eckerle

The sisters thrive by living together in community. They know the power of the group in helping a person to become what God created them to be. Through struggles and the joys, the group is there to facilitate all in continuously moving forward.

The same is true of the special connection the sisters have with close groups they interact with often – Oblates (those who associate with a specific Benedictine monastery and promise to deepen their faith by living according to the Rule of Benedict), volunteers, benefactors, co-workers, and alumnae of Academy Immaculate Conception/Marian Heights Academy.

Many people belong to more than one of these groups. For instance, Executive Advisory Council members are both benefactors and volunteers who regularly give significant advice to the prioress and her council. The Women of the Rule join in the spirituality of the sisters and support their mission.

The sisters consider each of those groups a distinct part of their Benedictine family. In their own way, each joins together with the sisters on the journey to search for God. Together, they know they can do it. They talk of how they help each other find God in many ways. The sisters continually provide prayer, both sides provide service to others, and often they are alongside each other in prayer. Over time, this builds a solid connection that benefits both. As prayer is the sisters' main mission, it has naturally become a significant element in how they join others

in the search for God. The collaboration helps all search their inner selves to find the Spirit within. In many ways, each of the groups is looking for the same discoveries that the sisters are seeking; the reality is all are on the same type of journey.

Another key element in the joint search for God is each group's commitment to provide service to others. Oblates strive to share Benedictine values, volunteers at the monastery help keep the huge complex looking pristine, the generosity of donors (including Women of the Rule and St. Hildegard Society) enables the sisters' wide-ranging ministries, co-workers at the monastery provide skills to assist the operation to run smoothly, and alumnae have continued their focus on service from their academy years. The desire in each group to serve is strong, and noticeable. Each enables the other to accomplish things not possible to do on their own. But together, they can.

Following are comments from members of the groups --

**Oblate Carol Dunn:** In visits with the sisters, my experience of God has grown by leaps and bounds. The sisters actually live out the Rule of Benedict, and provide a living model of God's

Above: Left to right, Kate Miller, Elaine Miller, Sister Mary Philip Berger, and Megan Mitchell have fun during the volunteer dinner.



love in community. With the sisters' "teaching," I understand that the most important step in growing close to God is to "lose" ourselves – through becoming humble.

**Oblate Carolyn Kohler:** The most resonate Benedictine rule for me was learning to listen and to embrace silence. In that silence I discovered the essence of God.

**Volunteer Connie Lanaghan:** By volunteering for the sisters, our teens see that their faith shouldn't be unreachable. It should be juicy, full of song and laughter, and soul-touching prayer. They learn they are not alone, that community is powerful when questions block their faith journey. They learn it is hard serving others, but the rush of God's love filling their souls far outweighs the sweat-filled hours. These are gifts shared by volunteers and sisters in the common search for God.

**Volunteer Julie Chapman:** The first time we took prayer (with the sisters), we stopped because we were ahead of everybody. So, just calm down and get in that peaceful setting. It's a whole different way of life. It's just a grounding. You go home and think, slow down, relax, life is good.

**Co-worker Al Haug:** When my mom died, I came to the monastery to talk to the sisters, because when I was in need, the sisters were comforting and reassuring. They helped me very much.

**Co-worker Robin Emmert:** The sisters help bring God into our lives in many ways. Their kind words, caring thoughts, and concern for me and my family help me see God in all people. I feel blessed to work around so many good sisters!

**Pat Koch, Executive Advisory Council President, and co-founder, with her late husband, Bill, of Holiday World & Splashin' Safari in Santa Claus, Indiana:** The sisters never really change as far as their Benedictine spirit and values go. I feel so very good about supporting them because they are aware they have to be the model of good stewardship. I tell people, if you give them money, it's used well. These sisters are



Sister Teresa Gunter watches a putt with golfers at the Dome Golf Classic

willing to sacrifice to make things happen. And I just love their spirit, and their spirit of joy. These women really get involved with a person, by listening, talking, and praying. They are not afraid to show care and compassion. I know they care, I know they love me, and that's really what it's about for me. I know they will do whatever they can to ease pain, or to help. There is a great need for women in religion, for women bring a completely different focus on spirituality to our everyday lives.

**Sue Ellspermann, president, Ivy Tech Community College, former Indiana lieutenant governor:** I count on the sisters as friends, as prayer partners, as spiritual leaders, as great mentors. It's a great gift they have, the way they love the people. It's a high priority for me to support the sisters. But in the giving, you always get back so much more. I don't hesitate to reach out to ask for not only prayer, but for spiritual guidance.

**Nancy Habig, Executive Advisory Council, Women of the Rule member, and president, Greater Jasper Consolidated School Board:** The sisters really help us to lead a better life. They are a lot of fun, are very well educated, and do wonderful programming, but most of all they are so accepting of everyone. And they do a wonderful job of pinching every penny they have.

**Alumna Bea Forlano:** The time I spent (there) was life-altering. The sisters supported us in many ways, from making it possible for many to attend the academy, to encouragement, direction, development, and advice.

**Alumna Falisha Pierce:** The sisters, staff, and friends were the biggest influence in my life. ■



Volunteer Doris Stolz trays Springerles in the bakery.

# The Rule of Benedict

By Sister Jane Michele McClure

Written in the sixth century for a collection of serfs, scholars, shepherds, and wealthy scions of nobility—a motley group of would-be monastics, the Rule of St. Benedict survives today as a masterpiece of spiritual wisdom. In the Rule's prologue, Benedict said he intended to prescribe "nothing harsh, nothing burdensome" for his followers. For Benedict, a spiritual pathway was not one to be littered with weird and unusual practices; rather, all that is needed is to be faithful to finding God in the ordinary circumstances of daily life.

Benedict envisioned a balanced life of prayer and work as the ideal. Monastics would spend time in prayer so as to discover why they're working, and would spend time in work so that good order and harmony would prevail in the monastery. Benedict stressed the importance of work as the great equalizer. Everyone was to engage in manual labor. Prayer was marked by regularity and fidelity, not mood or convenience.

The importance of community life is another great theme of Benedict's Rule. Benedict's genius was to understand that each person's rough edges—all the defenses and pretensions and blind spots that keep the monastic from growing spiritually—are best confronted by living side by side with other flawed human beings whose faults and failings are only too obvious. St. Benedict taught that growth comes from accepting people as they are, not as we would like them to be. Benedict understood the



Painting of St. Benedict by Sister Gregory Ems (1934) which hangs in the monastery.



Sister Linda Bittner walks the rosary steps on Grotto Hill on the grounds of the monastery.

key to spiritual progress lies in constantly making the effort to see Christ in each person—no matter how irritating or tiresome.

By their monastic profession, Benedictines make three promises: stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience. Stability means that the monastic pledges lifelong commitment to a particular community. For Benedictines, stability proclaims that this place and this monastic family will endure. By fidelity to the monastic way, Benedictines promise to allow themselves to be shaped by the community—to be open to change, to listen to others, and not to run away when things seem frustrating. Obedience also holds a special place in Benedict's community. Monastics owe "unfeigned and humble love" to their prioress, not because they are infallible or omniscient, but because they take the place of Christ.

Hospitality for Benedict meant everyone who comes should be received with genuine acceptance. Benedict prescribed care and reverence of material things.

The wisdom of Benedict's Rule lies in its flexibility, its tolerance for individual differences, and its openness to change. Benedictine values are as necessary today as they were in the sixth century. Benedict's Rule remains a powerful alternative, another way of viewing life and people and things that finds meaning in the ordinary and makes each day a revelation of the divine. ■



# Gene and Mary Tempel on helping the sisters serve others

By Gene Tempel

My wife, Mary, and I were both taught by the Sisters of Saint Benedict. I had the sisters as teachers during my first eight years of school at Saint Meinrad and St. Anthony. Mary had the sisters as teachers during her eight years at Ferdinand elementary schools. We both attended St. Ferdinand High School, which was staffed by the sisters.

The sisters helped us see our potential. Without their guidance, we may not have set our sights on the futures we realized. We think that helping others reach their potential, especially in service to others, may be the most visible form of spirituality.

Mary's chemistry teacher, Sister Francesca, encouraged her to go to medical school. She became a nurse, working at the sisters' hospital in Huntingburg, Indiana. She later earned a Master's in Nursing and became the first dermatologic nurse practitioner in Indiana.

My future was shaped by the encouragement of Sister Dominic, my high school English teacher. No one has had more influence on my writing and outlook. I remember re-reading an article I wrote for the Ferdinand News long ago. I admired how well written it was. Then I humbly realized it had been well edited by Sister Dominic.

Perhaps the most powerful value of the sisters is hospitality. It represents an open, supporting, welcoming approach, helping those they meet realize the potential of serving others. Those who provide philanthropy to the sisters join them on that mission, to help make whole those who need a welcoming hand and to help all reach their full potential in service to others. The Greek origin for philanthropy is "love of humankind." It fits perfectly how the sisters live their lives and adds meaning to us who have an opportunity to serve through them.

We have enjoyed all of our service and support of the sisters. We hope we have contributed to the future direction of the monastery through the Executive Advisory Council. The sisters face challenges, but are on a trajectory for sustaining themselves, partially aided by the generosity of benefactors. One move to consider is membership in the St. Hildegard Society. The planned gifts and estate gifts we provide will be part of our legacy through the sisters and help sustain them.

Membership in the Women of the Rule philanthropy group has enabled Mary and her mother to join other women to support specific projects important to the sisters. We enjoy seeing our contributions put to work for these worthwhile causes.

I began doing pro bono consulting for the sisters' mission advancement department this year. This has provided an opportunity to apply skills and experience developed over a lifetime for work to support the sisters. Every trip to "the castle on the hill" in Ferdinand also means a trip to the gift shop, especially for note cards, cookies, and the flower arrangements made by Sisters Mary Carmel and Mary Carmen Spayd, the 90-something twins! And now we can stop by St. Benedict's Brew Works, too.



Gene Tempel, pictured with his wife, Mary, is Professor of Philanthropic Studies and Founding Dean Emeritus, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy; President Emeritus, Indiana University Foundation.

The sisters are excellent stewards of their resources. They don't wear fancy clothes or drive expensive cars. They focus their resources on the basic needs of their community and the needs of those they serve. They hold themselves accountable to each other and to their constituents and supporters.

There was a time when the sisters helped us find our ways. They did so at great financial sacrifice. It is now our turn to pay back and help them with their needs as they grow older. But just as important, the sisters found places to serve beyond the schools, going to parishes, to the ill, to children, to families in stress, to the homeless, to those challenged by a strange culture. These missions cannot be fulfilled without the philanthropy of their benefactors. ■

# What is a Ferdinand Benedictine?

**Sister Mary Carmel Spayd:** A Ferdinand Benedictine is a down-to-earth individual, faithful to prayer, loves her sisters and community life, and is willing to get her hands dirty for the sake of community.



Sister Mary Carmel Spayd and Sister Mary Carmen Spayd talk with a golfer during the Dome Golf Classic.

**Sister Teresa Gunter:** A Ferdinand Benedictine is a strong woman, who is willing to change to become someone that only God imagined her to become.

**Sister Diane Fischer:** A Ferdinand Benedictine is a woman of God, living, loving, praying, and working in community.

**Sister Mary Ann Verkamp:** Like the roof tiles on our church, various shapes interlock harmoniously – this is a symbol for the diversity and unity in our community. Benedict calls the monastery the “house of God.” This reminds me that where I am and who I am are intimately connected.

**Sister Rosa Lee Koch:** Being a Ferdinand Benedictine means being held up and supported through good times and bad by a prayerful, loving group of compassionate women accompanying you on the journey.

**Sister Jeana Visel:** A Ferdinand Benedictine is a woman committed to the monastic rhythms of life, including community, shared prayer and meals, and work for the greater good.

**Sister Mary Alice Schnur:** A Ferdinand Benedictine is a person of integrity and authenticity, filled with the Spirit, hope, and joy, who is in love with God, people, and the universe.

**Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz:** We are a community that is centered on Gospel values, guided by the Rule of Benedict, and focused on seeking God. From this stance we serve the people of God and minister to those God brings into our lives. Benedictine life calls me to live every day in a way that the God within me meets the God within you. ■

## How you can be part of what we do to help others

- Visit Monastery Immaculate Conception – for Mass, a tour, community prayer, or a peaceful stroll on our grounds
- Explore and renew your faith at a program hosted by our Spirituality Ministry ([thedome.org/programs](http://thedome.org/programs))
- Volunteer your time and talents (contact Sister Mary Philip Berger, 812-367-1411, ext. 3021, [mpberger@thedome.org](mailto:mpberger@thedome.org))
- Consider becoming an Oblate (contact Sister Brenda Engleman, 812-367-1411, ext. 2827, [oblates@thedome.org](mailto:oblates@thedome.org), [thedome.org/oblates](http://thedome.org/oblates))
- Shop at our Monastery Gift Shop (also online at [monasterygiftshop.org](http://monasterygiftshop.org) and at [monasterybakedgoods.org](http://monasterybakedgoods.org))
- Support our ministries with a gift. Visit the sisters' website, [thedome.org](http://thedome.org). Click on “Make A Gift” at the top of the home page. Among the options listed are “Planned Giving” and “Women of the Rule.”
- For more information on leaving a legacy through the St. Hildegard Society, call 812-367-1411, ext. 2631
- For more information about joining the Women of the Rule, a philanthropy circle, contact Sister Barbara C. Schmitz at [bcschmitz@thedome.org](mailto:bcschmitz@thedome.org) or at 812-367-1411.

However you wish to take part, we welcome you with joy. Because hospitality is another thing that we do.



# How does St. Benedict speak to your heart today?

**Sister Rose Mary Rexing:** Benedict's wisdom to do all things in moderation is very needed in today's world. Benedict's chapter on Good Zeal is my favorite, which ends with the admonition "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life."

**Sister Carlita Koch:** The Rule of Benedict offers guidelines for a spirit of peace in contrast to the tensions and alienation around us. In a fast-paced and noisy world, the practices of contemplation and silence help me to live more peacefully and calmly.



Sister Teresa Gunter paints a house to prepare it for volunteer women.

**Sister Joella Kidwell:** Benedict assures us of God's love for us, exactly as we are, and God calls us to love, respect and accept all people as Christ.



Sister Carlita Koch shells pecans.

community what it is: a life-giving, joyful home in which we can serve and praise God."

**Sister Diane Fischer:** St. Benedict's Rule stresses hospitality, prayer, balance, and living my life in the best way I can.

**Sister Teresa Gunter:** Benedict speaks to my heart by the way he talks about hospitality. There are so many people on the fringes that need a friend, a smile, someone to listen, and when I'm that person, that speaks to my heart. ■



SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT  
**MONASTERY**  
**GIFT SHOP**

In addition to our gourmet cookies and spicy pretzels from Monastery Baked Goods, we feature items made by other monasteries, such as lotions, jams, and dog treats, plus religious items, such as jewelry, bibles, and sacramental gifts.

Find what is waiting for you by stopping by Monastery Gift Shop, or shop online at [monasterygiftshop.org](http://monasterygiftshop.org).

Located in Monastery Event Hall | 840 E 10th Street, Ferdinand | 812-367-2500 | [monasterygiftshop.org](http://monasterygiftshop.org)



## What others say about the sisters . . .

**Archbishop of Louisville Joseph Kurtz, also selected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2013:**

The Benedictine sisters of Ferdinand have been very good. I knew a number of them who served (in the archdiocese), and I had a favorable opinion and admiration for the great work that they're doing. People hold women religious in high regard. I think there's a great avenue of people who have an immediate positive aspect in speaking to a sister.

**Bishop Charles Thompson of the Diocese of Evansville:**

You can see this monastery from a long, long, way off. And as beautiful as it is, the beauty is within. It's here, among the lives and the hearts and the souls, the blood, the sweat and the tears of this community, for the sake of God's people.

**Edmund Higgs, former principal at Evansville (Indiana) Reitz High School, on Sister Jennifer Miller, who tended to his wife at a hospice:** Each time she came in was special, with an aura, a glow, a positiveness, happy and uplifting. She emitted warmth. She reached out to touch the lives of those who needed it, like us. You knew she was serving her God.

**Ron Sweat, director of mission advancement for St. John Center for homeless men in Louisville, on Sister Jeanne Ellen Niehaus, the center's social services coordinator:** I don't know that I ever met anybody who better typifies the zeal, compassion, and Christ-focused energy that she puts into

what she does. Her personal faith and witness is at her very heart and soul. I see an inner core that is inspired by faith and Gospel values. It's as Gospel-related as any kind of behavior I've ever seen.

**Nancy Lasher, a graduate of Oakland City University – Rockport in Indiana, on teacher Sister Barbara C. Schmitz:**

Unfortunately, my kids come from a split family and I talked to Sister Barbara about that. It was very easy to open up to her. She really listens. You can tell she truly cares about people. With some you can tell instantly it's an act. With her, it's genuine.

**Judy Guest, an instructional assistant at St. Patrick School in Louisville, on teacher Sister Jill Reuber:**

You know she's a holy person, but yet she's down-to-earth. You can talk to her about a problem. You feel comfortable with her. I don't feel like I'm walking on eggs, that I have to watch everything I say because I'm in the room with a nun. We can kid around.

**Former Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, of Saint Meinrad (Indiana) Archabbey:** The sisters have primarily been a help to the Church in Southern Indiana by their witness to the life of prayer and work in the Benedictine tradition. The work of the sisters has developed beyond education, responding to the needs of the local Church and touching the lives of many in the United States and in Peru. They have become a place of prayer and hospitality.

*Above: Archbishop of Louisville Joseph Kurtz, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and his executive secretary, Sister Paula Wolff.*



**Alexandra Sondeen, staff writer for The Herald in Jasper, Indiana, in her Feb. 4, 2013, column:** I'm not sure what I envy more – the sisters' relationship with God or the fact that they can be so dedicated to one thing. Their conviction seemingly never wavers, and the sisters who have been in the community 70-plus years are just as committed, if not more so, than they were when they entered the religious life. It's absolutely astonishing to me.

**Tina Dalton, a 1982 graduate of Marian Heights Academy, a college preparatory boarding school operated by the sisters until 2000:** I was always shy, but going there completely changed me. The sisters taught us to have confidence in ourselves. And they always took care of us when we could be at our worst, and from all indications they actually loved doing it. I will always be grateful. They actually value listening to what you're saying. They taught us to respect everybody. When today's kids listen to a sister, there's just something in those sisters, it magically makes those kids behave better. There's a certain respect. It's just automatic. I don't think that happens much anymore.

**Dr. Melanie-Prejean Sullivan, director of campus ministry at Bellarmine University in Louisville, on student reaction after a 2011 spring break trip with Sister Michelle Sinkhorn:** It's amazing how many journal entries there are about misunderstandings about sisters being clarified. Students think

sisters are very serious, and praying, all the time. They think they don't smile, or joke, or know about Facebook, that they don't swim, or ski, or walk on a slackline, or had a life before becoming a sister. One student wrote in an essay that a lot of stereotypes about sisters were destroyed on this trip.



Bishop Charles C. Thompson of the Diocese of Evansville presides at Sister Doris Schepers' Rite of Perpetual Profession.

**Vickie Beckman, mother of two graduates of Holy Family School in Jasper, Indiana, on Sister Louise Laroche:** I can actually see the light of Christ in Sister Louise's eyes. Her eyes twinkle when she talks about God. It's so evident to me, and it's so rare. You know her faith is number one in her life. There are so few people that truly live their faith. It's not a question with her.



Sister Barbara Lynn talks with Father Justin DuVall, former Archabbot of Saint Meinrad (Indiana) Archabbey.

**Comment on a course evaluation of the spirituality class taught by Sisters Kathryn Huber and Maria Tasto in 2012 for the lay ministry degree program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology:** You both have such gentle spirits and it is obvious you are women of prayer. You not only pushed us spiritually, you pushed us intellectually. I appreciated that.

**Margie Bell, a nurse at Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper, Indiana, on how Sister Maura Beckman helped during patient and family conferences:** We see really sick people, and Sister Maura brought something the rest of us can't, spirituality.

**Ray Snowden, retired president and CEO of Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center:** The sisters are a tremendous treasure at our back door. We have this incredible resource right here.

**Donna Halverson, retired as assistant superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Evansville, Indiana, on Sister Karlene Sensmeier, principal at St. Benedict Cathedral School:** Sister Karlene's office serves as a shelter in any of life's storms. Her compassion and care know no bounds. Her door and heart are open to the needs of those she serves.

*"I can actually see the light of Christ in Sister Louise's eyes."*

Linda Farley, home hospice development manager for St. Vincent's Hospice – Home Care in Indianapolis, on Sister Cathy Ann Robinson, a hospice case manager:

She is very unique because she is a vessel, she knows someone has to do it, and that God has given her the grace. She's able to minister to people in a deeper sense than those of us that have not had the space yet to develop that God-dwelling within. She's open to that free-flowing, spirit-healing presence, God's action.



Tish Cronin and Sister Kathryn Huber

Father John Boeglin, at a 2014 ceremony honoring 21 Ferdinand Benedictines for their 40-plus years of service at Holy Family School in Jasper, Indiana: Boys and girls, these (sisters) are witnesses to serve Jesus, and they're happy people. As teachers, when you help somebody learn and grow, not only academically, but you grow with Jesus, too, and that's what the sisters did.

**Tish Cronin, an attendee of a Sister Kathryn Huber program at**

**Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis:** I felt God's presence in her (Sister Kathryn). I feel that God was speaking through her to me. I love when a presenter can be so relational with people and help people to connect their faith and their life. ■

Save the date!

# Summer Social

*Celebrating 150 years!*

**June 2-3, 2017**



- Grand Raffle
- Games of chance
- Quilt wheel
- Color Run (5K)
- Bingo
- Youth games
- Country store
- FOOD!

Plus more being planned, including a Friday night concert!





## Looking ahead

By Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz

We are very much living in a time of transition. There is no doubt that religious life will look different in the future. That's been true throughout the ages. We can anticipate that our numbers will be smaller but also that we will face greater needs. We realize that the church is also in a time of transition, and there is much uncertainty in our country's economic status. In all of this, though, we promise stability in this monastery, in this place and with this group of people. After 150 years we know that God is leading us. Exactly when, and where, and how we are to be is not yet known. But, the blueprint for our future is found in opening our hearts and hands, and surrendering to God's path for us.

The yes of our response to God's call and God's faithfulness to each of us and to our community sustains us and calls us into the unknown future. Fifteen years from now—when we celebrate 165 years of presence—we anticipate that our community will number around 100, and we also expect that we will be more balanced in age distribution than we are today.



Sister Doris Schepers receives a blessing from Bishop Charles Thompson during her Rite of Perpetual Profession.



Sister Karen Sue Durliat (left) and Sister Cathy Ann Robinson talk with a friend of the sisters during a reception in Indianapolis.

This is an exciting time, and we invite you to continue to walk with us on our journey, trusting that God is leading us. It is a blessing for us to have you – our Oblates, supporters, volunteers, family members, and friends – join us as we move forward into our future. We invite you to pray with us and to visit us. Benedict tells us that we are to greet each person who comes to our door as if that person were Christ himself. You are Christ for us, and we welcome you into our lives.

Truly we need the call of St. Benedict. Truly the world needs that call and our presence as Benedictine women. As we reflect on the gifts of the past 150 years and look forward to our future with hope, we do so with gratitude to God. May we live our lives in fidelity and in joyful expectation, and may we always exemplify Benedict's call, that in all things God may be glorified. ■

Above: Sister Lynn Marie Falcony receives a blessing from Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz as she begins her year of novitiate.



## We'd like to make you a member.

The St. Hildegard Society recognizes people who create a lasting legacy by including the Sisters of St. Benedict in their estate plans.

Have you ever contemplated remembering the Sisters of St. Benedict in your will? Have you already done so? Either way, we would love to hear from you.

Some of the ways you qualify for enrollment in the St. Hildegard Society are by:

- honoring a family member by making a tribute gift in your will
- avoiding capital gains tax by making a planned gift of stock or bonds
- naming the Sisters of St. Benedict as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy, bank account or retirement account
- funding a charitable gift annuity, on which you would receive a tax deduction and make a gift that pays you income for life

Any of these generous gifts will help our community prepare for the next 150 years with confidence. If you haven't yet— and would like some help preparing your will—call us or reply with the enclosed envelope. For more information, please contact Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz at 888-649-1121, ext. 2631.

*The rewards of membership? Well, they're eternal.*

