

SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

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As I write this, we have been coping with Covid for two years. While it has been a trying time, I believe it has made our community stronger. We have found a renewed focus on caring for ourselves and one another, on prayer for all, and on the need to trust in God.

In this issue of *Seek Pray Share*, you'll discover more about our community through the work of our more experienced sisters, through the eyes of donors, through mission work in Peru and more.

You may not realize that, as Sisters of St. Benedict, we never retire. Every Sister remains active in some ministry, a sampling of which you can see on the opposite page.

Perhaps no ministry is more vital to our community than our Prayer Ministry. While it may not be as visible as our work with the hungry, the homeless, students or immigrants, it has an immeasurable impact on the world around us, and our senior Sisters are among our most powerful prayer warriors.

Even as we pray for an end to this pandemic and for the health of our own community, we continue to pray for you and your family with warmth and gratitude. Please know that you are loved today and cherished always.

May God bless you and yours,

Anita Louise Lowe, OSB

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB
Prioress

Sisters with Impact!





A Giving Spirit

Donors Dan and Sara Fritch
share their love for the Sisters.

Jasper residents Dan and Sara Fritch each felt the impact of the Sisters of St. Benedict on their lives from a young age.

Sara grew up in the Bretzville area and attended St. Anthony Grade School, where she recalls being taught by Sister Patricia and Sister Brenda in those early years, and by Sister Rose Mary Rexing in high school.

When she shares a vivid memory of missing the bus when she was little, and being cared for and comforted by the Sisters, you can still feel how much it meant to that little girl...and still means to her today.

Dan went to Holy Family in Jasper, and remembers having many Sisters of St. Benedict as teachers through eighth grade. “It was a blessing for us to be taught by such wonderful people who were very caring and giving of their time, always smiling, who took such a personal interest in you.”

Sara’s connection with the Sisters continued well beyond childhood. When she made the decision to open a Catholic book and gift store some years ago, she was encouraged and advised by the Sisters who ran the Monastery Gift Shop.

Dan also reconnected with the Sisters through his company, Matrix Integration, an IT solutions and managed services provider with four locations in Indiana and Kentucky.

“From a business standpoint, they were a great group to work with,” he says. “I wish all our clients were as caring and loving and understanding as they are.”

Dan is quick to share his admiration for the way the Sisters of St. Benedict, a community established over 150 years ago, have worked to remain relevant and forward-thinking through the years.



“They continually look at ways to improve and do things better, and they’re willing to change with the times,” he observed.

“I think the leadership has always looked at how they can be Jesus walking among us — how they can change what they’re offering and providing to our communities through their outreach. They’ve been flexible. They’ve looked at how society has changed, and they’re making sure that they’re still bringing value and God’s word to people.”

“When I was in high school, Sister Rose Mary Rexing was the most wonderful teacher. She had the most beautiful personality, and I loved being around her and being taught by her.”
Sara Fritch

If you’d like to join Dan and Sara in their support of the Sisters, there are many ways from which to choose. In addition to a one-time gift, you can:

- Become a Partner of St. Benedict by making an annual gift at one of four levels
- Become a Monastery Angel by making a regular monthly gift
- Give a gift of securities — stocks, bonds or mutual funds
- Make a planned gift by including the Sisters in your estate plan.

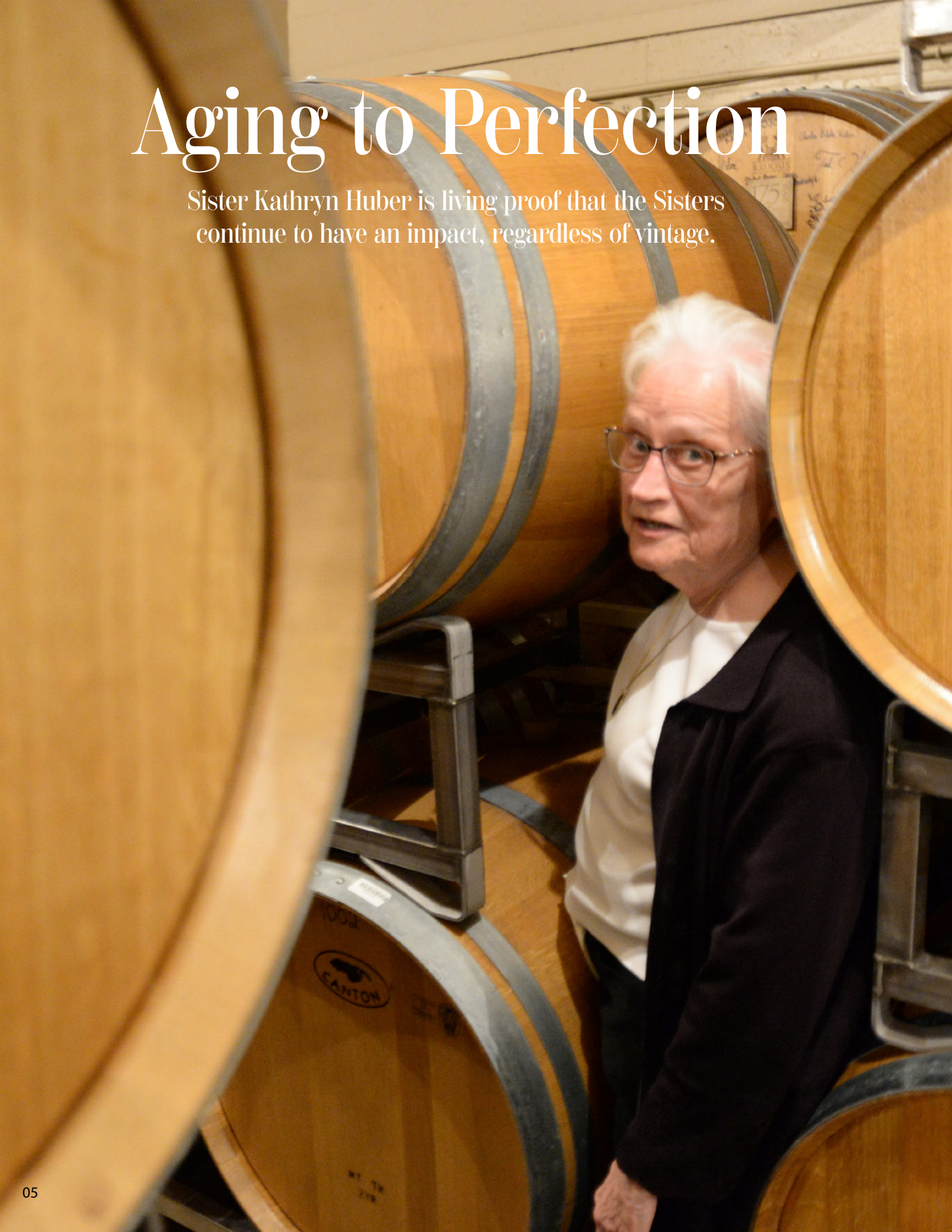
WATCH THE VIDEO

Scan the QR code below with your phone to watch Sara and Dan talk about the Sisters



Aging to Perfection

Sister Kathryn Huber is living proof that the Sisters continue to have an impact, regardless of vintage.



As the seventh of eleven children of Joe and Mary Huber growing up in Starlight, Indiana, with lots of family all around, Kathryn Huber knew from an early age what it was like to be part of a tight-knit, religious community.

According to her mother, she first wanted to become a nun in fourth grade, but “Sister Kathy” recalls that in seventh grade, she greatly admired one of the Sisters who taught the primary grades, and she began thinking about it.

She attended the Academy Immaculate Conception, and by the time she was a senior, she knew she wanted to join their community.

Her oldest sister had already become a Maryknoll Sister, but she loved the spirit of prayer and service — *“ora et labora”* — that she witnessed among the Benedictines. So at the tender age of 18, she entered the monastery, making her vows two years later, in June of 1958.

She remembers working in the fields of the family farm as a child and imagining herself as a teacher. So she earned a Bachelor’s degree from St. Benedict College, a Master’s degree in Education from the University of Dayton, her Indiana license in Elementary Administration from Ball State University and the University of Evansville, and a second Master’s degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago, including a 9-month program in spiritual direction.

Many years in education followed, first as a teacher, then as a principal. In her first year of teaching, at St. Meinrad Grade School, she had 48 second graders in her class!

She taught second grade for four years, then eighth grade for three years in Montgomery before becoming principal at Ireland Elementary School for ten years. “It was a time when the school and the family worked together for the kids,” she recalls. “I loved my years there.”

She served as principal for four more years at Holy Redeemer, then decided it was time to try her hand at something different.

After working in the retreat ministry, Sister Kathryn was elected prioress in 1989 and served two terms. “It was a great call to serve,” she notes. “The community was wonderful — about 275 at that time. Anything I asked anyone to do, they were willing to do.”

It was during her term as prioress that the Sisters reclaimed the word “monastery” and the idea that they were a monastic community of women.

She also oversaw four dependent monasteries during those years, in Guatemala, Peru, Louisiana and Kentucky.

(Today, two have become independent, one is closed and the one in Peru remains a dependent monastery of the Sisters in Ferdinand. You can read more about the Peru monastery on pages 9 - 10 of this issue of *Seek Pray Share*.)



OPPOSITE
Sister Kathryn checks on a barrel signed by the Sisters at Huber’s Winery



LEFT
In full habit in 1966

ABOVE
Outside the Huber family’s home in Starlight. She was born in the dining room.

In her time as prioress, the community deepened its relationships with the town of Ferdinand and with Dubois County, especially through ministries, engagement in civic organizations... and prayer.



“We do a *lot* of praying,” she says. “We continue to pray for peace in our world. The world is more and more chaotic. It needs the wisdom of the monastic life. How do we live together?”

How do we welcome the stranger, and become more and more inclusive in our relationships?”

Today, Sister Kathryn is no less active. After serving as president of their federation, she now devotes much of her time to Spirituality Ministries as a spiritual director.

“A more proper word would be spiritual companioning,” she observes. “We’re ‘companioning’ people on their journey as they search for God and search for meaning in their life. I have wonderful people I work with.”

Among them are Catholic men and women, Protestant men and women — even a Muslim woman. But perhaps the person she feels most passionate about guiding is a woman who is incarcerated for life.

“Every time I walk into the Ohio Reformatory for Women, I remember St. Benedict’s words: ‘We believe the Divine presence is everywhere.’ And when I walk into that facility, I’m very aware of God’s presence and activity in the woman I companion who is in that system.”

That incarcerated woman, Alice, has become a Roman Catholic, with Shirley France, an Oblate of the Sisters of St. Benedict and a volunteer at the Reformatory, as her godmother. Alice herself is now an Oblate as well. “She is just a marvelous woman,” says Sister Kathryn, “and the difference she is making in that prison! She helps women as they prepare to go before the parole board. She is attentive to the women who first come into the prison, scared to death, and takes them under her wing.”



Sister Kathryn continues to stretch herself as well, taking part in an Islamic study group to learn for herself what the Quran says — and doesn’t say.

“There are many paths to God,” she offers. “I’m greatly enriched by this study.”

Family remains at the center of Sister Kathryn’s life, both in her community in Ferdinand and beyond. If you accompany her to the Joe Huber Family Farm and Restaurant or Huber’s Winery, Orchard & Vineyards, be prepared to meet dozens of new friends, many her family members.

And that’s Sister Kathryn in a nutshell: we’re all part of one big family. And we’re so glad she’s at the heart of it.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Scan the QR code below with your smart phone to watch a video and hear Sister Kathryn tell her story in her own words, from choosing to become a Sister of St. Benedict to her time as prioress and much more.





In Memoriam.

The promise of God has been fulfilled for
our dear Sister Joanna Trainer.

Sister Joanna Trainer of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 10:40 a.m. on Saturday, January 22, 2022, at the monastery.

Sister Joanna was born Iona Marie Trainer on October 22, 1932 in Evansville, Indiana, the eldest of four children of Howard and Mary Charlotte (Wheatley) Trainer. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1949 from St. Anthony Parish and made her monastic vows in 1951.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her brother, Robert Trainer; her brother William Trainer and sister-in-law Dorothy Faye (Kolb) Trainer; and her brother Jerome Trainer. She is survived by her sister-in-law, Dorothy Trainer; her sister-in-law Delores (Bittner) Trainer; her niece Christel (Trainer) Reising and husband Gary; her niece Dawn (Trainer) Hoesli and husband Jay; her niece Doretha (Trainer) Johnson; her niece Teresa (Trainer) Page and husband Gary; her niece, Mrs. Donald Gore and her husband; several cousins and her religious family.

Sister Joanna earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from St. Benedict College. She spent four summers at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee while working at St. Coletta of Wisconsin, providing residential, day and vocational programs for those with developmental and other challenges.

She taught elementary and special education students for 34 years at Christ the King School in Indianapolis; St. Philip School in St. Philip; and St. Joseph School, Marian Day School, St. John School, St. Vincent Day Care Center, and St. Anthony School, all in Evansville.

In 1982, she co-founded a soup kitchen. From 1982 through 2004, she served homeless women and children at House of Bread and Peace in Evansville, which she was instrumental in establishing. She also worked at the switchboard and as a mail clerk at the monastery in Ferdinand.

In 2021, she celebrated 70 years as a Sister of St. Benedict.

Peruvian Reunion

Retired Bishop Dan Turley returns from Peru and visits with some of our own missionary Sisters.



In 1965, Pope John XXIII asked religious communities in the U.S. to send 10% of their members to Central and South America within the next decade. Four years later, the Sisters of St. Benedict sent several members of their community to Morropón, a city of about 10,000 in northern Peru.

The friars of the Midwest Augustinian Province had established a mission in the diocese of Chulucanas in 1963. Last fall, retired Bishop Daniel Turley, who began serving as coadjutor in Peru to founding Bishop McNabb in 1996 and became diocesan bishop in 2000, stopped by to visit with the Sisters in Ferdinand and talked about his experience with them in Peru.

Father Edward Chapman, one of the first missionaries to Peru from the Chicago Province, saw a need to help the young women of Morropón and the outlying areas, who had no opportunity for schooling beyond grammar school. With the support of Bishop McNabb, he oversaw the construction of St. Rita High School as a high school for girls from poor families in the parish.

The Sisters of St. Benedict arrived from Ferdinand to teach at and run St. Rita High School. Because there were so many young women who lived in the more remote outlying areas around Morropón, St. Rita soon became a “pensionado” or boarding school that could accommodate fifty girls. One of the school’s very first principals was the late Sister Mary Baehl.

By the 1980s, the Sisters of St. Benedict had begun accepting vocations from Peruvian sisters and established a dependent monastery in Morropón, one of six they founded in the western hemisphere. Their work continues today in both Morropón and Santo Domingo.

“It’s a great blessing to have the presence of the Sisters,” said Bishop Turley, “a prayerful presence. They carried the charism of St. Benedict, St. Scholastica and St. Gertrude, that tremendous love for the church, the liturgy and prayer. Their spirit has been a gift to Peru.”

St. Rita also became known for its women athletes, who excelled in volleyball, soccer and basketball. Today, more than fifty years after it was established, the school is co-ed and serves elementary and high school students.

The Benedictine monastery founded by the Ferdinand Sisters has also continued to flourish and attract young women to religious life.

“Some communities came and went,” recalls Bishop Turley, “but the Benedictines brought a sense of permanence — that they were there to stay, to be with the people of God and walk with them.”

The Sisters continued to be a pastoral presence for good, evangelizing throughout northern Peru

That extended into other areas, including care for the sick. Sister Romaine Kuntz worked to open a dispensary in Santo Domingo, an area where healthcare resources are scarce. Observed Bishop Turley, “The people had such great confidence and trust in the Sisters, in meeting both spiritual and corporeal needs.”



OPPOSITE

Retired Bishop Daniel Turley visits with some of the Sisters who served in Peru, including, from left to right, Sister Patricia Ann McGuire, Sister Mary Leah Baehl, Sister Rosa Lee Koch and Sister Romaine Kuntz.

LEFT

Prioress Sr. Anita Louise Lowe (center) and Sr. Joan Scheller (right) visit with the Sisters in Morropón, Peru

WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smart phone to see Bishop Dan’s entire video.





Making History

Archivist Sister
Rebecca Abel
archives 155 years of
monastery history.

When your community was founded in 1867, you accumulate a lot of history. That's certainly the case for the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand. And today, much of that history can be found in the monastery archives, overseen with great enthusiasm and energy by Sister Rebecca Abel.

Although Monastery Immaculate Conception has been around for 155 years, the archives were only begun in the 1980s, when our first Archivist, Sister Mary Kenneth Scheessele, tackled the enormous task of gathering decades of historical artifacts and records into one place, deep in the lower level of the monastery.

In the 1990s, our second Archivist, Sister Mary Dominic Frederick, dove in, sorting all of those records and objects into boxes according to year, and logging everything for the first time by computer.

Today, the archives are overseen by our third Archivist, Sister Rebecca Abel, who, with the assistance of others like Sister Ann Marie Howard, continues the process of further organizing everything and creating a digital database that can be searched.

But it's not just the history of the monastery. The lives of the Sisters themselves are documented — literally — in the archives. Row after row of shelves in the archives contain the records of the Sisters, going all the way back to the founding of the monastery just after the Civil War. Of course, as Sister Rebecca laments, there are fewer surviving records from those earliest years.

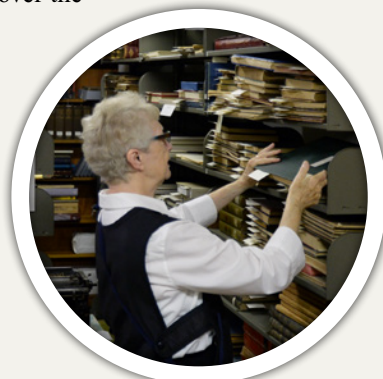


You'd be hard-pressed to find someone more qualified to oversee the archives than Sister Rebecca — although she would tell you that her path to the position was anything but a straight line.

When she entered the monastery, she had been teaching second grade in Miami. So in her first years as a Sister of St. Benedict, she continued to teach while attending college for Library Science in the summers.

As she notes, "God comes when you least expect it, and asks you to do things you never thought you could do." Sister Rebecca developed a habit of saying "yes," and it took her all over the world.

She spent 15 years as a school librarian in Southeast Dubois County Schools, first in the children's library and then the high school library and media center. In the summer, she served in poverty programs all over the United States.



She then began spending summers in Europe, "weeding" libraries for schools and sisters in Wales, Ireland and Spain. She was asked to set up the archives for the North American College in Rome, where she became Director of Libraries for most of the next 20 years. Today, in addition to her duties in Ferdinand, she is a Library / Archives Consultant for Benedictine Communities and just retired as the Online Librarian for the Catholic Distance University after five years of service. "I just see in terms of organization," she says cheerily. Our archives are the proof!



OPPOSITE AND BELOW RIGHT
Archivist Sister Rebecca Abel in her element.

LEFT
Sister Anne Marie Howard hard at work in the archives.

BELOW LEFT
Another section in the archives, which extend across a number of rooms in the lower level of the monastery.

WATCH
Scan the QR code with your smart phone to see Sister Rebecca herself talk about the archives.



Coming Attractions

Connect with your spiritual side and with the Sisters at these upcoming events. You must register at least a week in advance. Early registration is recommended, as most events have a limited number of spots available. Call 812-367-1411 Ext. 7309 or visit www.thedome.org.

Laudato Si Circles

Laudato Si' Circles are small groups committed to the process of ecological conversion and deepening your relationship with the Creator and with all of creation. They gather regularly for prayer, reflection, and action in compassionate love and concern for our common home. This is an initial meeting led by Sister Jean Marie Ballard to establish small groups that will meet monthly.

March 24, 2022 | 7:30 – 8:30 EST
Benedictine Hospitality Center or Zoom
Cost: Free will offering

COR Zoom Retreat

Women in recovery from alcoholism, food, gambling, shopping, or any other “ism” often struggle with rebuilding a relationship with a loving God of their understanding. The Sisters of St. Benedict are offering a safe place for you to explore your personal relationship with your Higher Power. Our first offering will be a zoom session where “All are Welcome” to break open our old images relationship with God to discover ourselves from God’s perspective. Often, we refer to recovery as being a 3-legged stool: Spirituality, Physical and Emotional. Come join us for the first foundational “leg” of the stool. This retreat will be led by Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB.

May 14, 2022 | 9 a.m. – noon, 1 – 2 p.m.
EST via Zoom
Cost: Free will offering

Come Follow Me (The Parables and Wisdom Sayings of Jesus in Luke's Gospel)

Sr. Wendy Cotter, CSJ, Professor of New Testament, Emerita presents a workshop in which we will revisit Jesus’ parables and wisdom sayings, as the gospel of Luke brings them to us — gifts of Jesus himself.

May 20, 7 pm – May 21, 3:45 p.m. EST
Benedictine Hospitality Center
Cost: \$130 includes meals and overnight;
Commuter Fee: \$50 which includes lunch

Seek God in Silence (2 dates)

This quiet retreat led by Sister Betty Drewes will help you renew and revitalize your body, mind and spirit with rest, silence and prayer.

May 23, 7 p.m. – May 27, 9 a.m. EST
OR
August 15, 7 p.m. – August 19, 9 a.m. EST
Benedictine Hospitality Center
Cost: \$350 includes meals and overnight
Capacity: 12

Centering Prayer Zoom Retreat

This short retreat directed by Sister Kathy Bilskie will be an opportunity to practice Centering Prayer in community and learn how to extend the prayer practice into daily life. A Zoom link will be sent to your email closer to the retreat time, so register with your email address.

Friday, April 29, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. and
Saturday, April 30 from 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
EST
Zoom link sent after registration.
Cost: \$20

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Our Benedictine Principles

Four principles guide all of the Benedictine Sisters in Ferdinand. These four principles — community, prayer, hospitality and work — connect us to the Divine, to one another, and to the world, and keep our calling fresh every day.



Community

We seek God together in community with a common mission and vision. Every day, we work at turning this mixed bag of personalities, ages, backgrounds and careers into a community. As we do, our life together focuses and amplifies our energies in spreading the Gospel. Our community adapts and evolves as the world changes, so that we can continue to seek God in this time and place and to minister to his people where they are today. We laugh together, learn together, love together, grieve together and grow together, united by God's presence in our hearts and lives.

Hospitality

We endeavor to receive all people as Christ and to share who we are and what we have. Our hospitality begins in our own community, then reaches out into the rest of the world. We welcome guests at the monastery, and work outside these walls to help all others feel welcome in the world. Our hospitality extends to God's Creation, as we seek to live in harmony with nature and be good stewards of the earth.



Prayer

Our prayer, whether together or alone, keeps us connected to the other principles by which we live. Our prayer, in common and on our own, draws us back into the heart of our community and to God who called us to this life. Our prayer for others helps us to "see each person as Christ," and to extend our hospitality freely. Our prayer sustains us as we work and reminds us of the need for service and the sacred nature of shared labor.

Work

Our work puts hands and feet to the Gospel. Whether within the monastery or out in the wider world, work is the most visible way we live out our Benedictine values. We recognize the value and sacredness of labor. We work to be good stewards of the resources that have been entrusted to us. We advocate for fair treatment and just wages for all.



