

## Our path to serving others



Stories in this issue depict a variety of ways of how Ferdinand Benedictines journey far and wide to serve others.

From Sister Jane Michele McClure raising money to help provide people homes through the Habitat for Humanity program in Evansville, Indiana, to Sister Jane Will traveling to California to teach monks about delivering spiritual direction, to Sisters Teresa Gunter and Jackie Kissel repairing flood-damaged homes in Louisiana, we strive to help where help is needed.

You can learn more about the foundation for this service, and how we live our lives, by reading the article on our Benedictine Hallmarks. It offers an in-depth look on what Benedictines offer the

world, and why and how we approach our lives and our service to others the way we do. It is indeed a revealing look at who we are.

Our sisters have many talents. It's enlightening to read about Sister Jeana Visel's book on icons being selected as the Lenten reading for local seminarians. And we certainly know how to have fun, too. Check out how Sister Benita Biever entertained the crowd at her 100th birthday party.

Plus, there's plenty of other news for you to catch up on. As always, thank you for being part of our lives. We continue to look to the future as we strategize our facilities and ministries. With your support, we eagerly look forward to performing more of God's work.

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB  
Prioress



# Seek. Pray. Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

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**Mission:** We, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are monastic women seeking God through the Benedictine tradition of community life, prayer, hospitality, and service to others. 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.

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# Sister Jane Michele “the face of Habitat to many”

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Jane Michele McClure lives her life to help those in need. With her, it’s “a God thing.”

As the major gifts officer for Habitat for Humanity of Evansville, she has performed her calling so well since 2005 that the organization’s executive director, Beth Folz, says, “Sister Jane Michele is the face of Habitat to so many of our donors, volunteers, and partner families.”

As a devoted follower of the Benedictine lifestyle for 48 years, Sister Jane Michele is a good fit to help lead in the living out of Habitat’s mission: “Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.”

The work of Habitat – to build decent, affordable houses in partnership with low-income families – obviously needs funds to survive. Sister Jane Michele works so relentlessly to raise those funds that she’s commonly called the “Energizer Bunny.”

“She is tireless in helping people who don’t have as many privileges as others,” says Folz. “She’s a strong advocate for low-income families. She’s so welcoming and friendly that she makes you feel like you’re the best thing since sliced bread.”

“She understands the plight of families struggling to put up a decent home. She tells those stories to our donors, and makes it come to life to them that this isn’t a choice these people make. It’s the cards they’ve been dealt, and they’re trying to improve their life. We can’t do the work of Habitat without the funds. She has a way of telling the story of our families that engenders people to support the Habitat ministry.”

To qualify to become a Habitat homeowner, people must demonstrate a need by being low income, be a good enough credit risk to pay off a 30-year, zero interest loan, and be willing to partner with Habitat by performing 300 hours of sweat equity, meaning 150 hours of building their own home, and 150 hours helping someone else build their home. Habitat is on track to build its 500th home in Evansville by next year.

Benedictine sisters have historically served people on the margins, so the Habitat ministry is a natural cause to support. “I have the great privilege of reaching out, meeting and supporting people every day that are in need of housing,” says Sister Jane Michele.

Above: Sister Jane Michele McClure chats with construction volunteer Bob Grant. Grant says, “Sister Jane is wonderful. Everybody knows Sister Jane, and they all have the same opinion of her – she’s great, and they love working with her.”

"In working with donors, I form relationships with people who have the interest, resources, and a philanthropic mindset. Knowing they've been blessed with assets, they feel a deep responsibility within themselves to share."

She frequently refers to donor generosity as "a God thing." But she knows God is at work in other ways, too. She thinks people at times put trust in her because she's a Sister of St. Benedict. It's meaningful to them that sisters have given their entire lives to serve others, and are not about building wealth for themselves. "People have said to me, 'Well, Jane Michele, if it's good enough for you, it's good enough for me.'"

She credits that earning of trust to the Benedictine way of life. "I know how many times I fail," she says. "But if you fall, you get up, and if you fall again, you get up again. All of us have human failings. But following this way of life for nearly 50 years, I think God has to be at work in that. I think a human life is about shedding the ego. The Benedictine life is about a gradual understanding that it's God, it's a spirit, a force that we can't imagine that's at work in our life. So it's not a Sister Jane thing, but a God thing."

She thrives on doing her part to ensure Habitat endures in developing neglected, underserved neighborhoods. To do that, she works with people on planned giving. "Habitat becomes part of their legacy," she says. "It's important to them in answering the question, what has my life meant on this earth? That's why we have so many faith partnerships. People who spend time growing spiritually understand that dimension, and are more likely to help someone who didn't have as many advantages. I encourage people to take that step. It's about alleviating human suffering, making the world a better place, and achieving the highest destiny of your institution."

Sister Jane Michele loves to create initiatives. She talks of a 2005 tornado that destroyed 40 Evansville homes, and

Habitat responded by raising enough funds to build a 55-home subdivision. She was also instrumental in establishing an Inter-Faith Advisory Council for Habitat. She pulled the membership of all faiths together, helping to bridge gaps to build more affordable homes. She did it because she simply wanted to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ, which is Habitat's first core principle. She knew that "Jesus loved, was inclusive, and hung around with all kinds of people." Habitat Director Folz says, "The Inter-Faith Council would not have happened without Sister Jane Michele's leadership. There are very few Habitat affiliates across the country that have had the success in the interfaith community that our affiliate has had, and that's due to Sister Jane Michele's work."

Cynthia Bennett, whose home was built through Habitat 22 years ago, and is a member of its Family Support Committee, says of Sister Jane Michele, "That woman is so involved and so compassionate. When you meet her, it's obvious the compassion she has within her heart. It's the way she makes you feel, the blessing you receive when you meet her, she's just awesome, definitely a great asset to Habitat. She believes in prayer, is a never-give-up person, and a go-getter."

For her work, Sister Jane Michele was awarded the Vanderburgh Community Foundation's Spirit of Giving Award in 2015, and the Albion Fellows Bacon Award in 2016 for "her lifelong dedication to Southern Indiana."

Habitat's Folz sees the Benedictine values driving everything Sister Jane Michele does – her spirit of service, spirit of care, and spirit of community. She recalled the time a low-income lady who was freezing cold one winter just wanting to sit in Habitat's lobby for a few minutes to warm up. "Sister Jane Michele treated her with such care and such respect that it engendered that into the culture of our entire organization, that each human life is due respect and is valued. I'm sure that's a result of what she's learned being a part of the community of Benedictine sisters." ■



Sister Jane Michele McClure says of the volunteers who build Habitat for Humanity houses: "This is awesome. These guys are what make it happen. These guys are saints. They're beautiful. They are all retired; many are in their 80s."





# Sister Jane teaches spiritual direction to monks

by Greg Eckerle

The Ferdinand Benedictine Sisters have conducted spiritual direction sessions for years for people yearning to deepen their relationship with God.

So when Father Tom Davis was looking for someone to indoctrinate eight young Cistercian monks of the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux in Vina, California, into the nuances of spiritual direction, he picked Sister Jane Will, a long-time spiritual director for the Ferdinand Benedictines.

The abbey has its own seminary formation program. Learning to conduct spiritual direction is one of the requirements for pastoral formation.

Father Davis, OCSO, who was the abbey's abbot from 1970 to 2008, says, "Some of our monks are being advanced to the priesthood. It is important that their ministry will be spiritually fruitful for the persons to whom they minister. Also, it is basic to have good spiritual guidance within our community itself. Sister Jane was very

competent and good." Father Davis had two blood sisters who were Ferdinand Benedictines: Sister Wilma Davis and Sister Mary Jean Davis.

Sister Jane talked to the eight young monks two hours a day for five days, and presented two one-hour sessions to the entire community. Among the topics she covered were what spiritual direction is and is not, matters for spiritual direction, similarities and differences between spiritual direction and counseling/therapy, qualities of a spiritual director, contemplative attitudes and listening, ways of praying, what's talked about in spiritual direction, spiritual direction interview questions, and ethics in spiritual direction.

She touched on some of the issues that typically come up in spiritual direction sessions: anger, forgiveness, grief, loss, transition, self-esteem, guilt, shame, addictions, and dreams.

Brother Luis Cortez, part of the daily classes, said, "Sister Jane's presentation on spiritual direction was our first exposure to professional training in this field of ministry. We tried to soak in every word, and we benefitted immensely. Her training, I dare say, will set the tone for the ministry of spiritual direction here at New Clairvaux for decades to come.

Above: Sister Jane Will with her spiritual direction class of eight monks at the Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, California.

"I most enjoyed the practicing that had monks play the roles of spiritual director and directee, with a third person observing and critiquing. The most important point I gathered is that spiritual direction is not about fixing another person's problems, but journeying with the directee into the depths of divinity. Sister Jane helped me see that a spiritual director can be an effective tool in the 'hands' of the Holy Spirit when we listen attentively, probe gently, and encourage heartily. I want to be as skilled and effective as Sister Jane. She had fascinating material. Also, Sister is just plain cute – so gentle and spiced with Indiana charm."

Brother Christopher Chenery also pointed to the practice sessions and Sister Jane's instructions in helping give him "confidence in my ability to be a spiritual director." He noted that "God is the spiritual director, and we are the human instruments of his grace."

Brother Guerric Llanes was appreciative that Sister Jane was the fourth Ferdinand Benedictine to share her knowledge and expertise at the abbey.



Sister Jane Will talks about forgiveness and resistance to spirituality to the monk community at the Abbey of New Clairvaux in California.

Sisters Kathryn Huber and Karen Joseph have directed their annual retreat, and Sister Anita Louise Lowe has presented courses on liturgy.

"A lesson I learned was to 'notice the duck,'" said Brother Guerric, referring to an article Sister Jane shared where a duck represents things in the background not always apparent to the directee, but once the spiritual director brings attention to the 'ducks,' they provide significant insights into the directee's spiritual life. "So it's important

to acknowledge those ducks!

"During a role-playing practice session, I brought up a real issue and in less than four minutes I got (from Sister Jane) an insight which helped me tremendously. So thank you, Sister Jane!" ■

(Note: For more information or to schedule an appointment with

one of our spiritual directors, please call Anita Aders at 812-367-1411, ext. 2915, or Sister Jane Will, OSB, at ext. 2849. Or call 800-880-2777 or visit [www.thedome.org/how-we-serve/spiritual-direction/](http://www.thedome.org/how-we-serve/spiritual-direction/))

## Postulant Roxanne Becomes Novice

Postulant Roxanne Higgins was accepted into the novitiate, the second stage of incorporation into the religious community, during a simple ceremony on Wednesday, July 26. During the ceremony, she received her title of Sister Roxanne Cassandra.

During her year in the novitiate, Sister Roxanne Cassandra will focus on community life, prayer, and work as she discerns her call to vowed membership in the Ferdinand Benedictine community. Her classes during this time period will have an emphasis on Benedictine history, spirituality, and the Rule of St. Benedict.



Sister Roxanne Cassandra and Sister Louise Laroche, Formation Director



# Sister Jeana teaches seminarians about icons

by Greg Eckerle

Every year on Ash Wednesday, the president/rector of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology distributes a book to the entire seminarian student body for each to read during Lent.

It's a time-honored Benedictine tradition, as St. Benedict decreed that sacred reading is especially important for all monastics during Lent. Since the Lenten season is a time of reflection and a prime opportunity to strengthen one's relationship with God, picking a book for 124 would-be priests to read is a decision not to be taken lightly.

This past year, Father Denis Robinson, president/rector, chose "Icons in the Western Church: Toward a More Sacramental Encounter," the recently-published book by Sister Jeana Visel, OSB, for the Saint Meinrad seminarians to read.

Above: Father Tobias Colgan and Sister Jeana Visel share a moment after her presentation about icons to Saint Meinrad seminarians. After Sister Jeana's talk, Father Tobias addressed her, telling the audience, "I am a very visual person, and I think having someone unravel some of the imagery for me is very, very helpful. I feel very enriched by your presentation."

Sister Jeana is dean of School of Theology Programs and director of the Graduate Theology Program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

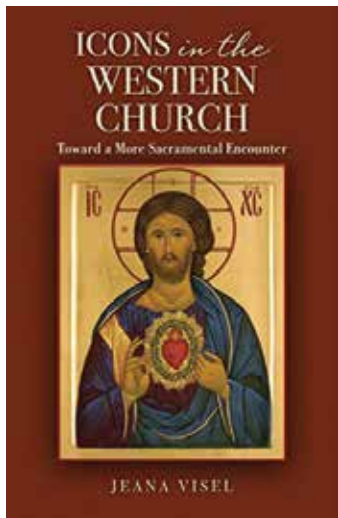
"One of the book's reviewers said it 'should be mandatory reading for every Catholic seminarian, priest, and church architect,'" says Sister Jeana. "Our president/rector apparently took that to heart. He also asked me to give a presentation about the spirituality of icons to the seminarians."

As explained in her book, an icon is a portable image of Jesus, angels, or the saints, usually painted on a wood panel, and used for prayer. And not only does Sister Jeana write about icons, she also continues to learn how to paint them. She speaks about icons and how to pray with them to various audiences every year.

Included in the book are the following thoughts from Sister Jeana about icons:

- Icons are a special kind of religious art connecting us to





Sister Jeana Visel's book is available at Monastery Gift Shop, [www.monasterygiftshop.org](http://www.monasterygiftshop.org) and on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

the world of heaven. They are painted in a particular way to articulate truths taught by the Church.

- Sacred images help Christians to imagine and connect with the spiritual world we cannot see.
- When people pray to the saints through their icons, the saints are present.
- Authentic, beautiful icons have the power to invite people deeper into the life of the Church.
- The icon invites us to see others with reverence and respect. To a world of war and senseless violence and noise, the icon offers space for healing, for silence, for holiness, and for peace.

In the introduction, Sister Jeana expresses her goal for the book:

"It is my hope that this study will engender further dialogue about the importance of quality images used for prayer and liturgy. . . . when we are bombarded with images that propagate knowledge of violence, lust, and greed, we stand in need of holy images. . . . in a mysterious way, icons have the power to help heal our brokenness. In the peaceful gaze of Christ and the saints, icons teach us to see with new eyes the dignity of the human person and the presence of God among us."

Father Tobias Colgan, OSB, vice rector of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, notes that Sister Jeana teaches a week-long course on the spirituality of icons to seminarians beginning their third year of theology. "Since this is an area of expertise for her, both as scholar and practitioner, and since her book had just been published, it seemed a most appropriate choice for our common read during Lent," he says. "The book's introduction lays out what she hopes to achieve, and I find that she succeeds with great clarity.

"Her presentation to the seminarians ("Moving Toward the Light: The Icons of the Lenten and Paschal Seasons") provided images for us to absorb in a more informed way."

Sister Jeana feels that icons shape our religious imagination and teach us the Catholic faith. "As they are images for prayer, they help us enter more deeply into sacramental life," she says, "and should help seminarians prepare to be priests."

For her, the value of many of the images are that they make visible parts of the liturgy that one doesn't see – including the mysteries we celebrate in the nativity, crucifixion, and resurrection.

"So when your mind starts to wander at mass," she says, with a laugh, "these images give you some place to go. Reflecting on icons leads us to contemplate the bigger reality, helping remind us that we're tapping into something that's much bigger."

Another theme in her book is the proper preparation of icons, and how to use them to improve ecumenical relationships between different religious denominations.

Both Sister Jeana's book and presentation were well-received by the seminarians.

In an email last April, Deacon Colby Elbert wrote, "Sister Jeana's book has been extremely important and useful. I am going to be ordained in a month, and having a grounding in the Eastern spiritual practice and devotion of icons has become very important to me. It is extremely convenient that we have such an expert so close, and Sister Jeana was helpful about using an icon for my priesthood ordination card. Her book also helped me write a section of my



A seminarian discusses icons with Sister Jeana after her presentation. He was one of several who came up to thank her and ask questions. Concerning a question about whether it's healthy for Catholics to have Eastern icons in their houses, and to try joining Western and Eastern icons in church, Sister Jeana replied, "I think it's great! It's really important for Catholics to understand what icons are and what they're meant to be in their original tradition, so we use them wisely and respectfully. They are meant for prayer. So yes, have them in houses and churches, and pray with them. That's what they are there for."



thesis paper relating some of the theology of preaching to the theology of icons.

"I loved the presentation. I have an appreciation now for icons that I don't believe I would have held had I not had the pleasure of Sister Jeana's presentations and workshops. I have a few personal icons now I use for prayer and meditation and I believe this ancient practice of the Church will be with me throughout my life.

"I'm reminded from the work of Sister Jeana that we are to live our lives in such a way that we also let that light of God's goodness and eternal love shine through us. And that the greatest icon any human ever writes is the life they lead in following Christ, and themselves becoming living saints and living figures of Christ in the world."

Deacon Ryan McCandless wrote in an email, "Sister Jeana's book is a great resource for bringing people to a better understanding of what



This icon of St. Bede created by Sister Jeana appears on page 11 of her book, and is also on display in St. Bede Hall on the campus of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

an icon is and what an icon does. She helps bring about the awareness for the necessity of good art in our churches and in our devotional life. She introduces the icon as an appropriate form of communicating the heavenly life of the Communion of Saints and our life in Christ.

"How we look at and interact with art is often indicative of how we interact with God and others. I think this is what Sister Jeana is going for. She wants us to engage art as it stands for higher truths.

"I learned from the book the idea of the sacramentality of the icon. She speaks for a sacramental view that an icon gives grace because of the interactions one has with an icon and its presence. From the icon creator, to those who venerate it, there is a communal offering that happens, connecting earth and heaven. We gain something from that communication, and that is a tremendous lesson to learn." ■

## Sister Karlene named director of outreach and engagement

by Greg Eckerle



Sister Karlene Sensmeier

Sister Karlene Sensmeier has been named director of outreach and engagement for the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand.

She will oversee Benedictine hospitality, outreach, programs, Oblates, music lessons, tourism, tutoring, Monastery Goods and Services, and information technology.

Sister Karlene recently retired as principal of St. Benedict Cathedral School in Evansville, Indiana, after serving for 34 years.

She has moved back to the monastery in Ferdinand.

In 2012, the mayor of Evansville proclaimed a "Sister Karlene Sensmeier Day." His proclamation stated, in part, "Sister Karlene... has distinguished herself not only as an outstanding principal but also as a tireless educational and spiritual leader in our community..."

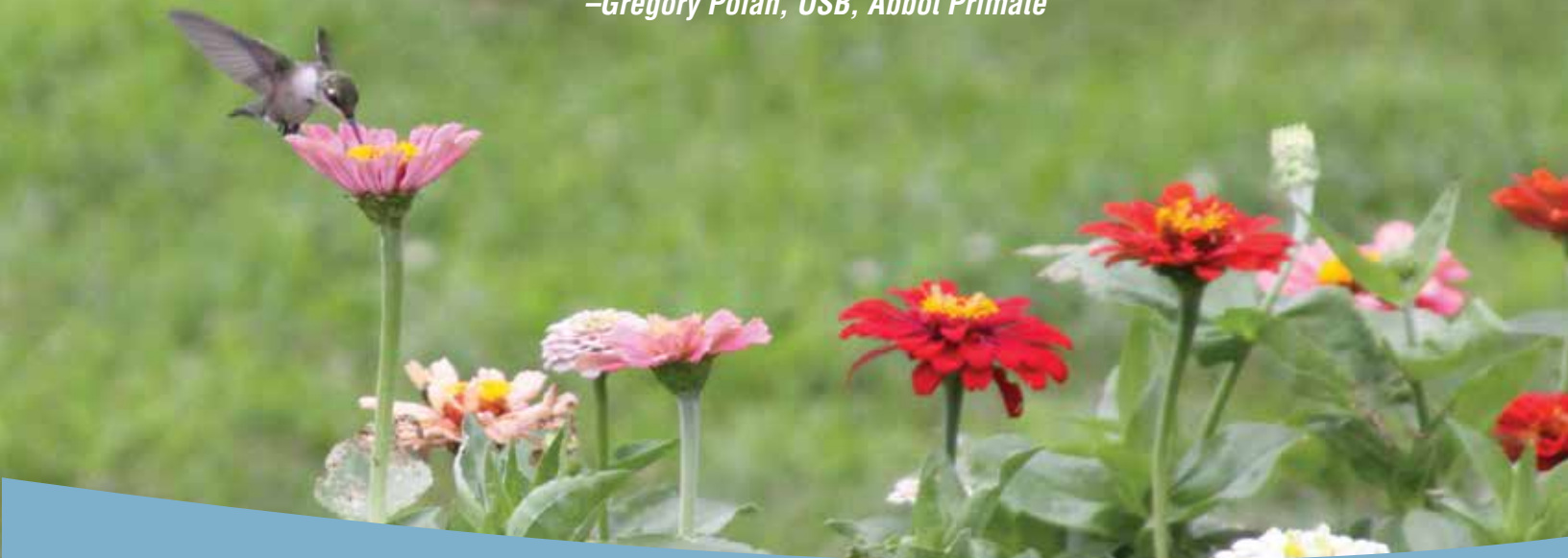
Her ministry to serve others and empower them to do their best is evident in the service projects she champions..."

When announcing Sister Karlene's retirement as principal, Benedictine Father Godfrey Mullen, pastor of St. Benedict Cathedral Parish, said, "... on behalf of several generations and thousands of people, Sister Karlene, thank you for your great work, your faithful prayer, and the peace that your leadership has brought..." He also noted "her extraordinary ability for administration and her strong and capable leadership."

At a mass on Sunday, July 9, Father Godfrey presented Sister Karlene with the Decoration of Honor *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, given to her by the Holy Father (Pope Francis) for her years of service, especially at St. Benedict Cathedral. Along with a pin and medallion depicting Saints Peter and Paul, she received a "diploma" that read: "The Supreme Pontiff Francis has deigned to decree and bestow the symbol of honor of the Exalted Cross – *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for service to the Church and to the Pope) to Rev. Sister Karlene Sensmeier, O.S.B., instituted for persons distinguished for outstanding service and zeal and, along with this, the faculty to wear this ornament in public. From the Vatican, May 29, 2017."

**“It is my conviction that monasteries are  
among the most important places  
in the world today.”**

*—Gregory Polan, OSB, Abbot Primate*



# Being Benedictine: Hallmarks of Benedictine Life

by Sister Briana Elisabeth Craddock, OSB

Abbot Primate Gregory Polan stated, “It is my conviction that monasteries are among the most important places in the world today.”

His statement begs the questions, “What do Benedictine monasteries offer to today’s world?” and “What makes them essential to the society in which we live?” The answer lies in the Benedictine values, which each Benedictine community articulates in some form or another.

As a community, we have been reflecting on the 10 Benedictine hallmarks that emerged from a study by the Benedictine men and women from the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities. According to the study, the 10 hallmarks are: love of Christ and neighbor; prayer, stability, conversatio, obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, and community.

## 1. Love of Christ and neighbor

*“First of all, love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Rule of St. Benedict 4:1)*

As Christians and as Benedictines, we are called to love Christ and neighbor. We believe that the boundless love that God has lavished upon us enlarges our hearts so that we may be generous in our sharing of love. Love is the natural response to love, and it manifests itself in many ways. Because of this lavish gift, St. Benedict reminds us in The Rule: “Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love.” (4:25-26) and “If you have a dispute with someone, make peace before the sun goes down.” (4:73)

St. Benedict knew that we would fall short of being the loving people that we are called to be, so he gave us ways to make amends if we would happen to respond to others selfishly rather than selflessly.

## 2. Prayer – a life marked by liturgy, lectio, mindfulness

*“Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.” (Rule of St. Benedict 43:3)*

As a community, we gather together several times per day to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. Within this practice, we are both speaking and listening to God’s word. The word of God takes root within



us and forms our lives. We cannot help but be changed by these interactions with Scripture.

Lectio Divina, a method of reading and reflecting on God's word, helps deepen our experience of God's presence in Scripture, in prayer, and in our daily lives. Our prayer during Lectio helps shape our experience of common prayer and common life. It also helps us keep in mind all people of the world as we bring their needs before God.



As a community, we gather for prayer three times per day.

In addition to prayer, Benedictine life has a spirit of mindfulness. In this context, mindfulness is more than focus. Instead, it is being attentive and aware of what is going on around and within us, and how God is speaking to us in each moment. Mindfulness in the Benedictine way of life is characterized by a stance of listening. Both the type of listening and the level of attention are mentioned first of all in the Rule of St. Benedict: "Listen, my child, to your master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart."

### 3. Stability

*"Never swerving from God's instructions, then, but faithfully observing God's teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in Christ's kingdom." (Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 50)*

Stability is, at its very core, commitment to the daily life of one place, its heritage and tradition. For us, it is our Ferdinand community. The concept of stability stands as a response to a society that sees relationships as disposable and place as unimportant. As Ferdinand Benedictines, we stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us and become rooted and grounded so that we may support those who come after us. For us, commitment to this place and these people is long-term, and is lived out in the dailiness of life. From this, our long-term commitment to those with whom we work is evident. We are in it for the long haul.

### 4. Conversatio – formation and transformation

*"But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love." (Rule of St. Benedict Prologue 49)*

It is easy to think that we alone are responsible for our own formation and transformation. The Benedictine hallmark of conversatio instructs us differently. While the ultimate goal of conversatio is making God's presence more real and palpable in everyday life, God accomplishes the formation and transformation. Our job as Benedictines in particular, and as lovers of God in general, is to be open to allow conversatio to occur through our relationships, prayer life, and other situations and circumstances.

### 5. Obedience – listening and acting

*"Obedience is a blessing to be shown by all...since we know that it is by this way of obedience that we go to God." (Rule of St. Benedict 71:1-2)*

For us, obedience has more to do with listening than it does with following orders. In fact, the root word of obedience is the Latin word "audire," which means "to listen." In Benedictine communities, obedience involves engaging in dialogue, listening to and attending to what the other person or group is saying, because we know that no one person has all the answers. It is through this type of obedience that we come to know what God wants of us. If we are not obedient, if we refuse to listen, we cannot grow.

### 6. Discipline – focusing energy and attention on what matters most

*"Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to life." (Rule of St. Benedict 72:1-2)*

As Benedictines, we concentrate our energy and attention on what is central to our lives, namely prayer, work, and relationships. We participate in the Liturgy of the Hours as a community three times per day and we take time for personal prayer and lectio on a daily basis. Our prayer in common and in solitude unites us with others and sustains us throughout the day.

St. Benedict valued work and even warned monastics that idleness is the enemy of the soul. Each sister in community is missioned to a specific place and a specific ministry every year of her monastic life. Our service flows from our life together.

We build relationships through eating together at common table and sharing our joys, struggles, and talents with one another. The strength that develops in our relationships within community nourishes us as we reach out to both strangers and friends.

The discipline that is within the Benedictine life frees the monastic to take delight in God's presence in self, community, and world, and

helps develop the skills to live the life wholeheartedly.

## 7. Humility – Knowledge of self in relation to others, God, and the world

*“The first step of humility then, is that person keeps the fear of God always before his/her eyes and never forgets it.” (Rule of St. Benedict 7:10)*

There are many misconceptions about the word, “humility.” Many shudder at the thought of it because they equate it with humiliation, exiting stage left with a red face.

For St. Benedict, humility is the word for wisdom that develops over the lifetime of a monastic. Humility has more to do with a person becoming who he or she really is than being shamed or embarrassed in front of others. It is common to put on virtual masks so that other people see what we want them to see. As one develops in humility, however, one realizes that the masks that he or she had put on – successful businesswoman, life of the party, wet blanket, etc. – do not help in developing relationships or even in being happy. Humility involves accepting one’s limitations and one’s gifts and realizing that we really are dependent on God and on community.

## 8. Stewardship

*“Regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected.” (Rule of St. Benedict 31:10-11)*

There is a place for stewardship in the world today, especially as we face the very real threat of climate change. As Benedictines, the concept of stewardship includes reverence towards creation, the earth and all creatures who dwell upon it and in it. We recognize that we are part of something larger than ourselves, larger than our community, and we know that our love must embrace all creatures. We understand that all of the world is gift and should be treated as such.

We work to recycle or reuse whatever we can because we know that we are responsible for the earth. We do this not only because we want to reduce our impact on the natural world, but because we recognize the beauty of the world. We believe that beauty can communicate the presence and power of God.

## 9. Hospitality

*“All humility should be shown in addressing a guest on arrival or departure. By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, Christ is to be adored because he is indeed welcomed in them.” (Rule of St. Benedict 53:6-7)*

As Benedictines, we often hear the mandate to receive all people as Christ. We understand that hospitality includes being open to others and seeking Christ in all people, especially the guest, the

stranger, and the unexpected person. Ultimately, it means that we want to extend a sense of home to all who visit here.

We realize that we receive many blessings from the people who visit us at the monastery and from the people we meet when we are ministering in other areas. We know that we are transformed by our engagement with the other. We value blessings that are present in both giving and receiving.



We welcome guests and volunteers into our home.

## 10. Community – call to serve the common good

*“No one is to pursue what she judges better for herself, but instead what she judges better for someone else.” (Rule of St. Benedict 72:7)*

Community life is one of our four core values as Ferdinand Benedictines to the extent that our primary work is to seek God together in community.

Living in community requires a mindset that encompasses all people, from the youngest to the oldest. It also roots us in a history that is beyond ourselves and our present time. We become rooted in the history of community, and recognize sisters who have gone before as our sisters just as much as the present members are. In fact, we feel very connected to the members who have gone before us – from Sister Walburga Gerber to Sister Wilma Davis. Because we are in relationship with all of these women, present and past, we can more easily let go of our individual needs and look at the bigger picture of what is needed in our religious community, in our civic community, and in our world.

At its core, Benedictine monastic life is about love – the love of God, the love of others, the love of creation. This love urges us on and helps embrace and embody these values. As we continue our study, we invite you to ponder these ten values and discern how they fit into your life. ■





# Sisters transforming campus to better serve people

by Greg Eckerle



Visitors have long marveled at the peaceful presence of the monastery grounds and facilities, but a significant transformation is underway that will make the experience even better for guests.

The sisters are in the middle of a \$6-million fundraising campaign to improve buildings that will make the Ferdinand Benedictines more viable for the future and their many ministries more impactful for the thousands they serve.

The sisters are widely known for their hospitality, and since a key piece of the facility upgrade is the creation of a new, relocated Benedictine Hospitality Center, one can be sure it will be something special.

The center will be in a renovated portion of the historic Quadrangle, the original monastery building. The updated area will be used for meeting spaces, by those attending sisters' programming, or for

Left: The Benedictine sisters who are also twin sisters – Mary Carmel Spayd and Mary Carmen Spayd – drive by the site of Madonna Hall's deconstruction on the south side of the monastery. They were working on the monastery grounds, still going strong at age 92.



those wanting an ideal place for self-reflection. Overnight guests will have new rooms available with modern amenities, including private bathrooms. Visitors will enjoy the added benefit of being in the same building as the monastery church and dining facilities.

By their vows and lifestyle, the sisters transform themselves to deepen their relationship with God and to help others find peace and meaning in their lives. The new area is another tool to meet that goal.

"The new center embodies the sisters' presence of peace and provides a welcoming place where all can find that peace and carry out their search for God," says Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, prioress. "We are reaching out to people from all walks of life and spiritual traditions to enjoy this new space.

"We have been preparing for this restructuring project for about six years. We are working and planning to stay relevant for future generations in an ever-changing world. Along the way, we are right-sizing our facilities to be fiscally responsible and to ensure we remain viable and can more easily adapt to evolving needs of our ministries."

## How donors can join the campaign

The sisters have raised or received in pledges about \$4.5 million of their campaign's \$6 million goal. This includes a generous donor who is matching donations of cash or in-kind contributions up to a total of \$2 million. For more information about the campaign match, potential

donors can contact Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, or Kerri Cokeley at 812-367-1411, ext. 2630. Donors can also join in the capital campaign by sending a check in the enclosed envelope and writing "150th Campaign" in the memo line, or by giving online at the sisters' new website, [www.thedome.org](http://www.thedome.org). Gifts to the campaign can also be given in a variety of other ways, including appreciated stocks, IRA charitable rollovers, and donor advised funds.

It is anticipated that a ribbon-cutting and open house for the new Benedictine Hospitality Center will be held in July, 2018.

The sisters designed the new center to be a true destination point for the regional area, where people can relax, reflect, and renew themselves in a most unique facility. Besides the planned upgrades, the monastery has that magical look, perched on sacred grounds where sisters have been praying for 150 years. And St. Benedict's Brew Works, an on-campus brewery that offers craft beer and pizza, continues to grow strong after opening two years ago.

So if you're looking to re-energize either individually or with a group, seeking a retreat, or searching for a place of inspiration, the new-look monastery could be just the place for you. ■

Above: The recent deconstruction of Madonna Hall has opened up an impressive new view of the monastery's south side, which will include the new Benedictine Hospitality Center. A new roadway and new steps to the church will be installed.



# Donor: “This is God’s plan, the right thing to do”

by Greg Eckerle



Rita Verkamp (standing), Sister Mary Ann Verkamp (seated), and Gib Verkamp in the exam room of the new Community Health Services clinic in the Ferdinand monastery. Gib and Rita donated the funds to renovate the area into the new health clinic to serve the sisters.

Early this year, donors Gib and Rita Verkamp were touring the area that was a prime possibility for a new health clinic at the monastery for the Benedictine sisters.

The Verkamps had already agreed to donate the funds to renovate and build out an area for the clinic. As they entered a potential space, Rita just happened to notice a plaque on the wall behind her that read “Donated by John and Wilhelmina Verkamp.” It was a startling coincidence and discovery, since the late John and Wilhelmina were Gib’s parents. Rita sensed a message being sent in the irony of it all.

“I just thought, yes, this is God’s plan, and we need to make it happen,” said Rita when recalling the moment. “That plaque already being there was a Godsend. We were supposed to be in that room. This is the right thing to do.” And so the room became the new internal clinic for the Benedictine sisters in the area.

“I am so pleased with how the clinic turned out,” she says.

The space had originally been part of the monastery’s prior infirmary. It had been renovated in the 1990s, when John and Wilhelmina Verkamp had donated toward that remodeling. The plaque honoring their generosity had been on the wall ever since, unbeknown to their son Gib.

It’s highly fitting that the subsequent Verkamp generation is assisting the same room, because both Gib and Rita’s families have long connections to the sisters. All seven of John and Wilhelmina Verkamp’s children were taught by Ferdinand Benedictines for eight years at St. Mary’s Elementary School in Huntingburg. Two of the daughters became Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand: the late Sister Mary Aquin Verkamp, and Sister Mary Ann Verkamp. John was the maintenance man at St. Mary’s for 21 years, so he became good friends with many of the sisters. Rita (Uebelhor) and Gib were neighbors as children. Rita’s biological sister, Sister Mary Louise Uebelhor, is a Ferdinand Benedictine. Those two, and Sister Mary Ann, were close friends growing up. Rita later spent 50 years as a nurse, and worked with seven Ferdinand Benedictines during that time.

When Gib and Rita learned of the sisters’ plan to open a health clinic inside the monastery for the sisters’ use, and were in need of funding, they thought it would be an ideal cause to donate toward.

The in-house clinic, called Community Health Services, has an exam room and two offices. It opened last winter, and provides the 86 enrolled sisters with improved access to healthcare. Doctors Frank Hopkins, Marc Campbell, and John Gallagher from Jasper take turns meeting with sister-patients at the clinic one day a week.

“The sisters now don’t have to be transported for doctor’s appointments,” says Gib. “The convenience and privacy for the sisters really encouraged us to help with this project. We think it’s so much better for the sisters. My sister, Sister Mary Aquin, was infirmed here for a long time before she died. The long-term care she required made me more aware of the need for this type of clinic. That was part of the motivation, too.”

Both Gib and Rita point to how the sisters have served the area for years.

“The sisters give their entire life in helping others,” says Gib. “That’s the Benedictine way. So having that example always present for us to witness, seeing all the good they do in so many ways, caused us to want to be supportive of those efforts and their needs. They are living examples of how to lead a good Christian life. I think that’s had an enormous impact on the entire area. Look at the vocations that came out of the schools where they taught. Many priests and sisters were taught by the Ferdinand Benedictines. It’s an ongoing example of what good people that are committed can do. So we’re pleased to be part of whatever help we can provide. It goes back to our childhoods, and the examples our parents set.”

The sisters also received a grant from SOAR! (Support Our Aging Religious) to purchase medical equipment for the clinic. SOAR! grants assist religious communities in caring for their senior members. Grants cover expenses for basic needs and enable religious to age in place and remain at home with their religious communities. ■

# Donor: 'Sister kind of saved me from myself'

by Greg Eckerle

Rich Risemas believes two things saved him – basketball and the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand.

Benedictine sisters taught him throughout his grade school years from 1951-1959 at St. Benedict Cathedral School in Evansville, Indiana, and he later returned to teach for 12 years at the school under the leadership of Sister Karlene Sensmeier, OSB, principal.

Otherwise, he jokes, sort of, "I could be a bum today, I really could."

Sister Karlene hired him in 1972 to teach math and science at St. Benedict's. He had already been coaching the school's 8th grade boys' basketball team for several years.

"Those years I spent with Sister Karlene, that was Camelot," says Rich, referring to the legend of King Arthur and Camelot, a magical place of peacefulness, enlightenment, happiness, truth, and goodness.

"We all got along so well, the faculty and Sister Karlene. It was all for one and one for all. We all pitched in. When somebody got in trouble, we were all there. It was a Christian way of life you don't see much. Sister Karlene created that atmosphere as the principal. That's the Benedictine way of life.

"She was so willing to help, even outside normal school hours. Back then I was emotionally up and down. But after 12 years with her, I figured things out. That's because she was like a rock to me, just very steady and so kind. It calmed me down. She created the environment where I could grow up."

Rich also talks fondly of another of his Ferdinand Benedictine grade school teachers, Sister Mary Claude Croteau.

So it's little wonder he has been a benefactor of the Ferdinand Benedictines and their causes for nearly 40 years.

At age 33 he joined the Benedictine Society, a partnership with the sisters in which members donate annually. And nearly 20 years ago, Rich became a member of the St. Hildegard Society when he decided to name the sisters as a beneficiary in his estate plans.

"It has been a pleasure to donate to the sisters, it really has," says Rich. "To me, leaving money to the nuns is probably one of the best ways to help people later, after I'm gone.

"Many people I know are doing well, so they don't need the money. I know the sisters do need the money. And I know it goes to worthy causes, since they do a lot of good work and are so diversified. That's a main reason I give money to the nuns. The beauty of it is by giving to a good cause, a lot can be accomplished.



Rich Risemas and Sister Karlene Sensmeier

"I really do hope other people consider leaving some portion of their estate to the Ferdinand Benedictines, because I want them to continue their good works."

Rich views his donations as a way of honoring the past, and how much the sisters have done for him, and a means to support them in the future, because he knows they need the help. And another benefit of his contributions is more personal. "You feel good when you donate to a good cause," he says. "And mentally, if you feel good, it's worth more than money. It's worth more than anything to feel good about yourself."

He also chuckles about how often he calls asking for the sisters' prayers.

"I have worn them out on praying for people who are sick. When you reach my age, there are a lot of people who really need help. I'm a believer in the power of prayer, and the sisters do a great job there. I've probably called them 10 times already this year. They're a great group to talk to when you're in trouble. They have the right words to console you. And their example is just terrific."

After Rich worked for Sister Karlene, she helped him land a job at Evansville Memorial High School, including his much-coveted position of head boys' basketball coach from 1982 to 1990. It was a great fit, as he led the team to the final game of the semi-state three times in Indiana's one-class basketball tournament.

"What Sister Karlene did for me, she and basketball, both of those things kind of saved me from myself. It was a great contribution from her. And all the sisters combine to make a great organization. That's why they're in my will. It's a good way to continue giving back." ■





# Love brings volunteers back, and back

by Greg Eckerle

Mark York helped coordinate another huge group of volunteers from Gallatin County, Illinois, for five days of work, prayer, and fun last July at the monastery.

It was the sixth summer that a group from that area has come to help the sisters with various jobs on the monastery grounds.

They do a lot of cleaning, painting, plastering, moving furniture, gardening, weed and leaf removal, tree trimming, helping in the archives, washing windows, working in the bakery, taking inventory, repairing tombstones, labeling books, washing vehicles, performing crafts, and entering data into computers.

But there's much more than that going on.

Back in 2009, Mark and his wife, Nadine, who serve in youth ministry at their parish, and Tom Kadela, another nearby youth director, were looking to take their annual youth mission trip to a religious community so their young people could experience that aspect of Catholicism. They contacted the Ferdinand Benedictines about the possibility, and a mutually beneficial merger was quickly born.

Sister Mary Philip Berger, volunteer director, said, "Tom Kadela's theory at the time was that he only goes to a place once. But he

has come back here several times. That's because he likes it here."

Mark says the sisters' history of educating youth led his group here initially, "but it is love that brings us back repeatedly."

The youngsters invariably want to return. So do the adults. The trip has evolved into a family affair for many. Parents come with their children. Grandparents come with their grandchildren. This year, 18 adults from ages 22 to 82, and 13 youth made the volunteer trip.

"Experiencing the prayerful serenity and unity of purpose that is life in the monastery is addictive," says Mark. "We benefit from every love relationship in our lives and this is a love relationship. We love these sisters. We love this place. We come here to live the Benedictine motto of 'Ora et Labora.' Through prayer and work, through knowing these dedicated women, through the peace of this place, we grow and are renewed. We definitely feel that we receive more than we give in this experience.

Above: Sister Doris Schepers (far left) and Mark York discuss the work to be done by the volunteer group from Illinois. At far right is Sister Mary Philip Berger, volunteer director.



An Illinois volunteer pressure washes the colonnade.

"It's always good to renew relationships (with the sisters), but our time here is also a catalyst for developing a closer relationship with the youth and adults we bring here. Working together, praying together, just spending time together in this beautiful place melds us into a more cohesive parish. We have found great value in this multi-generational faith sharing. Youth get to interact with and share the wisdom of adults. Adults get to see that our youth really are carrying on the faith."

Mark and Nadine's daughters, Emily and Ella, are prime examples of how the mission trip has turned into a family tradition. Each has volunteered several times at the monastery.

"It is such a blessing to be surrounded by sisters," says Emily. "Ferdinand is a beautiful location and the sisters are always warm and welcoming. Their ability to lovingly accept all into their home (is a strength). We gain as much from them as they do from us. It is a nice break from the working world, where you don't always receive so much thanks and appreciation."

Emily also feels the volunteer experience at Ferdinand helps her spiritually. She enjoys the many places available for quiet reflection,

and notes that the morning and evening prayer with the sisters "is a special time."

Ella says she enjoys volunteering with the sisters because each experience is full of prayerful restoration, life lessons, and laughter. "When I first volunteered with the sisters I looked upon them with a reverential respect. As I've worked alongside the sisters, my respect has grown. Now, many of them are mentors and, more importantly, friends. You learn that they are real people. Each has their own personality. Many of them defy the stereotypes society ascribes to sisters."

"I continue to volunteer with the sisters because each experience is spiritually enriching and provides perspective. I always leave with a renewed commitment to doing the will of God and seeing others as children of God."

Mark sees the strength of the Ferdinand Benedictines as exemplifying the feminine genius in the Church. "They model the Benedictine ideal of hospitality and show us how individuals can achieve great things by working in community. We are amazed at the variety of skills and professions they exhibit. And retirement seems to be a concept that isn't considered. Here, our youth get to see prayer taken seriously." ■



Volunteers mingle with the sisters.

## Sister Professes Perpetual Vows



Sister Jane Ann Breen, pictured at left, made her perpetual monastic profession as a member of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, on Saturday, July 8, in Monastery Immaculate Conception Church in Ferdinand. The Bishop of the Diocese of Evansville, Charles C. Thompson, now Archbishop of Indianapolis, presided at the Mass.



# “A blessing that Sister Corita in my life”

by Greg Eckerle

It was far from the typical relationship from the very beginning – this one that started in 2010 between a 16-year-old boy and an 85-year-old religious sister. That it endures to this day can be attributed partly to the power of prayer, which is the reason it began in the first place.

Andrew Rapp was among a group of teenage volunteers that came to the Ferdinand monastery from the McLeansboro, Illinois, area seven years ago to perform various jobs for the sisters. Each volunteer was offered the chance to connect with a Benedictine sister as a prayer partner.

In a random pairing, Andrew was linked up with Sister Corita Hoffman. And what a partnership it turned out to be.

Sister Mary Philip Berger, director of volunteers, has called Rapp the most faithful of prayer partners from the teenage volunteer groups that she has known down through the years.

And the helpfulness of Sister Corita had a lot to do with the partnership's staying power.

“She’s been almost like a grandmother to me,” says Andrew, who had a grandmother pass away. “It’s a blessing that Sister Corita was in my life.

“She’s like most of the sisters; they have a fire to them that I feel most of the world doesn’t have much of. They’ve got more of the spirit in them. The sisters can bring a lot more of that light into your life. They are really wise and just all-out good help in life.”

After they met, Andrew and Sister Corita exchanged letters every few months for about three years, then switched to corresponding by email. In addition, whenever Andrew returned in summers to volunteer again at the monastery, he would take an hour or two to visit with Sister Corita.

Andrew has now graduated from college and started his working career, and even though their correspondence has slowed, he still makes it a point to visit Sister Corita about once a year. His most recent visit was at a volunteer appreciation dinner last May.

Their conversations have always been wide-ranging, mostly general life topics, including “what you would tell a good friend,” says Andrew. He has long appreciated Sister Corita’s viewpoints.

“She always said she would pray for me,” says Andrew. “That’s the

biggest thing she could do for me. And she was always good at giving you good life advice. She was good at always coming up with an answer that would make sense.”

Andrew also treasures the crosses that Sister Corita made and sent to him over the years. He received yet another one on his most recent visit. They remind him of how she has helped him for so long.

“I thought that was always neat, how she can just sit in that rocking chair and make those crosses. She’s passionate about it. I like to hang onto them. She would also send little stickers in the mail with sayings on them; they would put a positive spin on the rest of my week.”

Andrew gave some of the crosses to his mother when she was going through a hard time at work, and he appreciated how Sister Corita kept her in prayer, too. ■



Volunteer Andrew Rapp and his prayer partner, Sister Corita, in 2010.

# Sister Benita entertains at her 100th birthday party

by Greg Eckerle



Sister Benita Bieber, seated, center, keeps a group of high school sophomores (behind her) in good spirits at her 100th birthday party.

Sister Benita Bieber was certainly the star of her own birthday party – not only because it was her milestone 100th, but she also kept the crowd entertained by playing the harmonica, reciting poems, singing, and responding with quick quips to questions lobbed her way.

Her likeability even spurred a group of eight high school sophomore girls from her hometown of Tell City, Indiana, to travel to Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand to help her celebrate her big day.

Sister Mary Emma Jochum, then the director of religious education at St. Paul's Parish in Tell City, annually took the girls from her Confirmation class on a visit to the monastery. This year's retreat, in early March, included mass, lunch with the Sisters of St. Benedict, a spiritual lesson, a tour, and a meeting with Sister Benita.

"Sister Benita absolutely entertained the girls with her poems and recitations of other sayings," said Sister Mary Emma. "She asked them how many people were in their families, then said she was going to be 100 years old on April 10. Then she'd recite a poem again. The girls were so impressed with her, and moved by how entertaining she was. They really liked her. Afterwards, one of the girls asked me if they could come back and celebrate Sister Benita's birthday with her. They wanted to enjoy being with her again."

The Tell City group brought a cake and some helium balloons to Sister Benita's party. Before the girls served the cake to Sister Benita's family members and fellow sisters in attendance, Sister Mary Emma asked her several questions. The opening one was, "How old are you, 16 years old?" Sister Benita deftly replied, "Plus," to applause and laughter. Sister Benita later recited a poem, sang a song, and played a harmonica. After the crowd sang Happy Birthday to her, Sister Benita sang in response, "I

thank you, I do, I thank you, I do, I thank you, dear people, I thank you, I do."

One of the Tell City girls, Grace Kreilein, said, "When we visited Sister Benita before, we just loved her so much, we thought it would be a good idea to come back and wish her a happy 100th. It's amazing how much she remembers from her past. We've heard about all her brothers and sisters. And all the songs – it's crazy how she can still play the harmonica."

Elizabeth Kehl, also of the Tell City group, said, "Sister Mary Emma is very proud to be from the monastery. She really wanted to share her home with us, and visit Sister Benita. Sister Benita just talked non-stop about her 100th birthday, so we figured we had to make another trip to come see her." The Tell City girls added the visit to their list of Confirmation service projects.

Sister Benita was an elementary school teacher for 36 years at various Indiana schools in Washington, Columbus, Evansville, St. Anthony, Fulda, Rockport, and Jasper. She was also a religious education teacher at St. Meinrad Parish and worked in administration and supportive services at the monastery. ■



A group of Tell City high school sophomores, and their chaperones, display a cake they made to celebrate the 100th birthday of Sister Benita Bieber, seated, center.

# "I have a home again"

by Greg Eckerle

Thanks to Sisters Teresa Gunter and Jackie Kissel, and volunteers Ella, Emily, and Andi York, two homeowners near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, have their flood-ravaged homes back in living condition.



Sister Teresa Gunter with Ivory Irwin, a Louisiana homeowner whose house was repaired by Sister Teresa's volunteer group.

The group spent five days last spring doing whatever it took to repair the two houses. They put in drywall, ceiling tiles, and crown mouldings. They sanded, painted, and

cleaned. One homeowner had received a lot of donated materials - Sister Jackie sorted through the pile to keep what he needed and to earmark the rest for the Society of St. Vincent dePaul, to give to the needy.

Sister Teresa has long volunteered to go on two or three mission trips a year, researching and picking out places where the need is great. She often coordinates the entire journey and is adept at rounding up additional volunteer help.

She learned of the flooding near Baton Rouge and knew many people were in trouble. She contacted a local parish to find out who needed the most help. "I decided to go to Louisiana because they are very poor people," said Sister Teresa. "In some places where disasters happen, they have insurance and can get help. Then there are other people who don't have insurance. I decided to help them."

She had also lined up funding through Give Back Tuesday and the Women of the Rule, a philanthropic group affiliated with the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, to help defray expenses for the trip.

One of the houses the group worked on belonged to Ivory Irwin, who said the flood poured three feet of water into his home.

"We show up with five women at his door," said Sister Teresa, "and he doesn't think we can do anything. We started working, figuring things out with the help of YouTube, what supplies we need. When we were finished, he just couldn't believe it. He said, 'Finally, I have a home again.'"

The Yorks, who Sister Teresa knew because they have volunteered at the Ferdinand monastery for years, were eager to go along after

being asked.

"What is always so heartening is how each of the sisters lives out the Benedictine tradition of hospitality," said Ella York. "Wherever they go or whatever they do, the sisters make others feel welcomed and valued. Each time I volunteer at the monastery with a group, the sisters welcome the volunteers into their home and make them feel appreciated. But the hospitality doesn't end at their doorstep. I went with a couple of the sisters to assist flood victims in Louisiana and that ability to make others feel valued travels wherever they go. The seniors we were helping felt valued, the clerks at the hardware store felt valued, and the servers we encountered at restaurants felt valued. This priority, to make people feel valued, like the children of God that they are, is the lesson we can learn from the sisters. It isn't easy, not even for them. But, through constant prayer and the community support of their fellow sisters, they achieve the hospitality tradition." ■



Sister Jackie Kissel cleans a window in Louisiana.



The Yorks at work in Ivory Irwin's house. From left to right are Emily, Ella, and Andi York.



# NEWS from the Dome

## Sisters Celebrate 50th Jubilee



Sister Linda Bittner, Sister Betty Drewes, Sister Judy Dewig, and Sister Jane Will celebrated the 50th anniversary of their monastic profession on Saturday, August 5, 2017. The jubilarians entered the monastery in 1965 and professed their monastic vows in 1967.

Left: Sister Jane Will, Sister Betty Drewes, Sister Linda Bittner, and Sister Judy Dewig

## Summer Photo Album



Sister Joan Scheller shows Camp Marian participants how to make God's eyes out of yarn and popsicle sticks.



Counselors and campers discuss strategy during a team-building exercise at Camp Marian.



Left: Sister Susan Ann Necas greets a former student from Holy Trinity as she works the ticket booth in the kids' games area during the Summer Social.

Right: Sister Christine Kempf visits with Roz and Bernie Stutz during the Summer Social.



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## Calendar of Events

### 2017

September 16	Reception of Oblate Candidates
September 20	Annulment in the Catholic Church: Dispel the Myths, Journey Toward Healing
September 25	Dome Golf Classic at The Donald Ross Course
October 6-7	Brewing with the Spirit: A Monastic Craft Beer Experience
October 15	Rite of Oblation
November 3-4	Brewing with the Spirit: A Monastic Craft Beer Experience
November 17	Opening of Christkindlmarkt
November 18-19	Christkindlmarkt Weekend

November 28 & 29 The Hidden Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

December 1-3 Praying with Icons

December 24 Christmas Eve Mass

### 2018

January 20 Oblate Meeting

February 16-17 Brewing with the Spirit: A Monastic Craft Beer Experience

February 18 Oblate Meeting

March 2-4 Honoring the Woman Within

March 17 Understanding How the Church Uses Scripture for Holy Week

March 23-24 Brewing with the Spirit: A Monastic Craft Beer Experience

For more information or to register for a workshop: 812-367-1411, ext. 2915 • 800-880-2777 • [www.thedome.org/events](http://www.thedome.org/events)



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# Seek. Pray. Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1 FALL 2017



Sister Jane Michele McClure talks with Greg Head, a volunteer helping build a home for Habitat for Humanity.