

SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 3 | FALL 2021



SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 3 | FALL 2021

Contents

FROM THE prioress 01

UNDER THE INFLUENCE 02

Yvonne Zink remembers the Sister who inspired her to teach.

ICONIC ART 03

Sister Jeana Visel practices what she teaches: icons.

BACK TO SCHOOL 06

Just some of our Sisters who are back in the classroom.

SPECIAL EDUCATORS 07

The pioneering sisters behind Madonna Learning Center.

WOMEN RULE 08

Exciting projects being funded by our Women of the Rule

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY 09

Our Gift Shop celebrates 25 years and bakes up some new breads.

FORCE FOR GOOD 11

Meet volunteers Stan and Connie, and learn how to join them.

THE GRAND TOUR 13

If you've never toured the church, here's what you'll see.

IN MEMORIAM 14

Celebrating four special sisters who have passed.



www.thedome.org | 812.367.1411
802 E 10th St., Ferdinand, IN 47532-9239



In 1867, the monastery in Ferdinand was established with the purpose of teaching the children of the German settlers in the area. Over the past 154 years, our field of work has expanded greatly. And yet, we still have Sisters in classrooms across the region and beyond — and some providing education outside the school setting.

In this issue of *Seek Pray Share*, we hope to share with you how our Sisters are teaching students and touching lives today. Some of their stories may surprise you; others will seem quite familiar.

As Sisters of St. Benedict, we share four core values: prayer, work, hospitality and community. Nothing weaves these four strands into a beautiful tapestry quite as elegantly as teaching does.

And each of the lives we touch, young and old alike, is a result of your involvement. Nowhere does your generosity bear fruit in a more obvious and delightful way. Those we teach are able to flourish through your support and friendship.

Pray for our Sisters and all those who teach in any capacity. And know that we continue to pray for you and yours with genuine love and thanksgiving. You are the Gospel set in motion.

May God bless you and yours, today and always.

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB
Prioress



Teaching Under the Influence

Yvonne Zink teaches third grade at Huntingburg Elementary School. She's been a teacher for 24 years. And it's all because she had the late Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen in the second grade.

"She was a great role model," recalls Yvonne today. "I remember my entire class at St. Anthony Elementary School and how she loved each and every child. The struggling student. The very successful student. That troublemaker student. I can still remember how Sister handled each of those kids."

Sister Sylvia never forgot, either. She kept a binder with the class pictures of every class she taught over a career that spanned 42 years and ten different elementary schools. She had notes beside each, and knew whenever one of her former students had passed away.

"When I was in second grade, I was in an ATV accident and crushed my leg," says Yvonne. "Sister Sylvia was probably 80 lbs. soaking wet. But that dear soul carried me up and down the steps of St. Anthony's so I could go to lunch and have recess with my friends. There wasn't anything she couldn't do."

But what inspired Yvonne most was the love Sister Sylvia showered on her students. "We knew she loved us. So when I decided to go into education, that was one of my biggest goals: to make sure that all of my kids know that I love them every day."

And the Sister who inspired her? "She's someone I will remember and care about the rest of my life."

ABOVE:
Teacher Yvonne Zink
in her classroom
at Huntingburg
Elementary School.

LEFT:
The inspiring Sister
Sylvia Gehlhausen,
who passed away in
May of this year.

SCAN the code
below with your
phone to see a
video with Yvonne.





Iconic Art

Sister Jeana Visel literally wrote the book on an art form that draws the viewer to the Creator. Now she teaches from it.

Some art is simply created to be admired. Beauty for the sake of beauty. But icons are created for a higher purpose. Just ask our own Sister Jeana Visel.

Sister Jeana serves as Dean of School of Theology Programs at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. The Benedictine archabbey was founded in the 1850s, just a few years before Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand was.

While she oversees five non-seminary theology programs, her passion for the spiritual finds its deepest expression in painting — and teaching — icons.

If you're not familiar with them, icons are paintings which represent important religious figures. While they can certainly be admired for their technique or artistry, they're created as a spiritual tool leading to a richer prayer life.

"Iconography is a vocation...a call," notes Sister Jeana. "You ask yourself, how does it tie to spiritual life? How does it connect you to other people?"

These and other questions inform her work in a studio space at St. Meinrad, where she spends much of her time outside the classroom creating icons like the one in our Liturgy office in Ferdinand.

"You need to relax and be contemplative," she observes about the creative process for iconographers. "There's prayer in the process of painting that has to happen."

The learning process is less an "art school" approach and more in keeping with an apprentice / master model. As she works, she's aware of the centuries of history of which she is a part. "You're part of a bigger tradition, and you're responsible for the period of time you've been given."

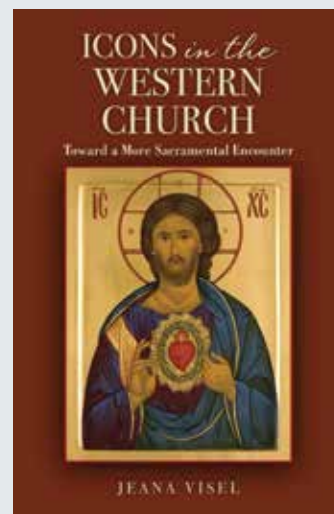
When she entered the Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand in 2003, she was given a handbook of icon painting as a gift. After learning from it and other books on the subject. Sister Jeana attended her first workshop in 2008, with Russian master iconographer Ksenia Pokrovsky, who had trained as a biophysicist but immersed herself in this tradition.

Iconography was illegal in Russia, and Ksenia was followed by the KGB until she moved to Boston with her daughter, Anna Gouriev, in the 1990s. There, she started weekend workshops where students painted for eight hours a day. Ksenia died in 2013.

Sister Jeana's current mentor is noted iconographer Marek Czarnecki, who trained with Ksenia and created a workbook around her methods.

In 2016, Sister Jeana's own book on the subject, *Icons in the Western Church: Toward a More Sacramental Encounter*, was published to rave reviews. "This lovely book by Sr. Jeana Visel offers a remarkably fresh approach to the sacred iconic art of the ancient Church and shows how it can be a spiritual resource to renew worship across the traditions: Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant." (Archpriest John A. McGuckin, Nielsen Professor of Byzantine Christian History, Columbia University, New York). She uses the book as the text for the course she teaches on understanding and using icons.

Prints of some of Sister Jeana Visel's icons can be purchased through the Monastery Gift Shop, in person or online.



ABOVE
Icons in the Western Church, the guide to iconography written by Sister Jeana Visel

OPPOSITE
Sister Jeana stands in the school chapel at St. Meinrad Archabbey in front of an icon she created of St. Paul

NEXT PAGE
Five things you didn't know about icons

5 Facts About Icons



THEY USE INVERSE PERSPECTIVE.

This very stylized approach can be disorienting, but it's based on the idea that the spiritual world is larger on the inside than the outside.

THEY'RE MEANT FOR PRAYER.

Unlike other art forms, icons are created for prayer. They function as liturgical art, devotional art and catechistical art.

THEY REPRESENT HEAVEN.

We're asked to be transformed by Christ. Icons suggest that transformation and invite us into the heavenly realm.

THEY'RE A TIME CAPSULE.

Every icon represents the church of its time...the world, the artist and the culture present during its creation.

THEY HAVE LAYERS OF LIGHT.

The techniques used to create icons — the natural materials and pigments, the varnishes — convey a sense of the spiritual light that comes from within. It's why there are no true shadows in them. We are all “growing in light, towards the light.”



Back in the Classroom.

Say hello to some of our Sisters who are back in front of students this fall.



UPPER RIGHT: Sister Rebecca Ann Mathauer at Holy Trinity in Jasper.

ABOVE: Sister Jill Reuber at Sacred Heart Model School in Louisville.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Sister Kathleen Cash at Trinity High School in Louisville.

LEFT: Music lessons at the Monastery with Sister Michelle Mohr.





From the Monastery to Memphis.

While our Sisters have taught in schools across the region, their legacy in education runs much deeper. A case in point: Madonna Learning Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

In 1958, at the urgent request of several groups of parents, our own Sister Mary Mark Graf started Marian Day School in Evansville, devoted entirely to meeting the needs of special education students.

Eleven years later, a letter arrived from a parent in Memphis asking for Sister Mary Mark's help in starting a similar school in Tennessee. In August, 1969, she and Sisters Ruth Ann Schmitt and Beata Mehling opened Madonna Day School in St. Peter's Home for Children, an orphanage in Memphis.

"It was beautiful. We had children from all religions: Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, Baptist, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses," recalls Sister Beata. In 1971, the school moved into St. James Catholic School, which had closed. In 1996, it moved again to the former Church of Christ building in Germantown, where it remains today as Madonna Learning Center.

Sister Beata returned to Evansville to serve as Principal at Marian Day School, then went on to establish residential homes and summer camps for these same students as they grew up. She served special needs students for 54 years.

L to R: Srs. Judy Dewig, Ruth Ann Schmitt and Mary Mark Graf with students at Madonna Day School in Memphis. INSET: Srs. Beata Mehling and Judy Dewig.

The Power of Compassionate Women



On August 21, 2021, The Women of the Rule Philanthropy Circle held their annual luncheon virtually.

Each year at this event, members hear proposals from the Sisters for a variety of projects and decide as a group which projects to fund.

This year, 12 projects were proposed. Each proposal included a description, the cost, expected outcomes and how the project aligns with the Sisters' core values of prayer, hospitality, community and service.

After a first round of voting by mail, six projects were fully funded by individual members of the Women of the Rule. The other six projects were chosen for consideration at the annual luncheon.

For the latter six, a short video described each project for consideration. Some of these had also received partial funding by individual members prior to the luncheon.

As always, we're filled with gratitude at the generosity of this amazing group of women. Their ongoing support empowers the Sisters to continue their work in so many ways, and we are deeply grateful for their commitment and compassion.

2021 Projects Funded

First Round projects fully funded by individual members:

INR Anti-Coagulation	
Blood Testing Device	\$1,500
Hydroponic Tomato & Pepper Area	\$2,300
Partner with Us to Help People in Need	\$3,600
Wheelchair Accessible Hair Dryers	\$500
Refurbish Hand Bells	\$2,787
Ministry to Incarcerated Women	\$2,000

At the **Annual Luncheon**, full funding was approved by the Women of the Rule as a group for the following projects:

Digital Prayer Board & Hildegard Health Center Usage	\$4,156
Bakery Equipment	\$9,050
4th Floor Community Health	
Bedrooms Renovation	\$23,125
KEB Consultants	\$30,500

Partial funding was approved by group for the following project:

Compassion as a Way of Life	\$8,684
<i>(Remaining need of \$11,316)</i>	

No funding was earmarked by the group this year for the following project:

Outside Areas of Visitation	
Prayer/Meditation	\$8,600

Women of the Rule are dedicated to making a difference in the world by providing financial support for important strategic initiatives of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana. To find out more, contact Sister Barbara Catherine Schmitz at bcschmitz@thedome.org or at 812-367-1411, ext. 2649.



More Blessings in Store.

Celebrating the First 25 Years of Our Monastery Gift Shop.

This fall marks 25 years since the Sisters of St. Benedict first opened the doors to their Ferdinand Gift Shop, originally called “For Heaven’s Sake.”

From a small craft shop tucked away down a monastery hall, the Sisters began planning a larger retail space with a broad selection of products from a variety of sources, to remind people of their monastery visit while enriching their lives.

With the help of owners and managers of area shops and others, the Sisters were able to get the entire store furnished, set up and open, faster and better than they imagined. “We were hoping for a Norman Rockwell,” recalls Sister Rosa Lee Koch, the Gift Shop’s first manager, “and we got a Rembrandt.”

In the years since those doors opened, much has changed. The Gift Shop sells a much wider variety of merchandise today, and online customers make up a significant portion of sales.

One thing that hasn’t changed is how the Gift Shop remains a far-reaching ministry. It offers the Sisters a way to connect with and minister to a wider range of people, from in-store visitors to online customers.

“We pray for all of our customers,” said Sister Rachel Geracitano, the Gift Shop’s current manager. “We hope we can bring some joy and peace into their lives, through both our ministry to them and through the good things they’re able to purchase.”

What's baking? Our specialty breads.

Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone." On the other hand, He broke bread with people a lot. So He would have loved the specialty breads the Sisters whip up in the Bakery from time to time.

Because they're good stewards, the Sisters take the spent grain left over after St. Benedict Brew Works is finished working their magic with it, and turn it into delicious Spent Grain Bread.

With basil grown right here in our hydroponic garden, our new Pesto Bread brings the flavor of Old Italy home to your table.

And for those who are fasting, our special Fasting Bread is loaded with all of the important ingredients you need to sustain your body until your fast is finished.

Our specialty breads are only available on a limited basis when the Sisters bake up a batch. Want to make sure you don't miss out? Go to www.monasterygiftshop.org, scroll down to the button that says "Newsletter Signup," enter your email address and hit "Subscribe." You'll never miss another special!



Sister Charlene Ann Wheelless, who was the Gift Shop's manager for 15 of its 25 years, concurred. "I was always surprised when our customers would remark how much they felt at peace when they came up that front hill."

That may never have been more important than when Covid-19 first hit. While the monastery remained closed to visitors for the health and safety of the Sisters and our employees, the Gift Shop was able to find sensible ways to remain open and continue to minister to our customers.

In-person and online shoppers can leave prayer intentions, all of which get delivered to the monastery regularly. This lets the Sisters continue to pray for any specific intentions that our visitors have and remain connected with them.

Celebrate With Us!

Starting Oct. 5, enjoy 25 days of saving and giveaways, in person and online, plus our big anniversary party on Sat., Oct. 30 with door prizes, a grand prize drawing and more!

And as a woman-owned business, the Gift Shop proudly supports a number of other locally-owned and woman-owned businesses, foreign missions and even other monasteries. It's a great place to do your Christmas shopping, too. Come visit today!

OPPOSITE PAGE, L TO R: Sister Charlene Ann Wheelless, who managed the Gift Shop for 15 years; Sister Rosa Lee Koch, its first manager; and Sister Rachel Geracitano, the newest manager, who is excited to build on the success of her predecessors.



SCAN the code
at right with your
phone to see a
video with Stan.



On Deck. On a Roll.

Stan Schenher never imagined a fishing trip could change his life. But God's funny that way.

After Stan and his friends spent an afternoon fishing at the Monastery, he made a small donation. He was amazed when one of the Sisters called to thank him.

They talked and became friends. Stan became a volunteer, always ready to tackle the next thing that needed doing. He made more friends among the Sisters. Then he became a regular donor.

And by the time you read this, Stan will be an Oblate...someone who chooses to follow the Benedictine way of life with the Sisters, but within the life they already have. As St. Peter might have told Stan, you never know where fishing can lead you!

Then there's Connie Lanaghan. A native of Millstadt, Illinois, she was serving as a youth minister in her parish within the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois.



She first encountered the Sisters when she brought a group of youth ministers from different parishes to the Monastery to see if they might be interested in bringing their youth groups here for a service opportunity.

She and Tena Karcher from McLeansboro teamed up to bring their youth groups here, and have been bringing young people back ever since, until Covid hit. She stopped in to reconnect with us...and ended up with a paint roller in her hand, a smile on her face and the best painting shirt ever!

Could You Be a Volunteer?

If you have a heart for serving with the Sisters, there are so many ways to get involved. You can volunteer for a couple of hours, a half-day, a full day...or even multiple days and stay at our Hospitality Center.

BAKERY

Be part of the inner circle of our Monastery Baked Goods by making, dusting, sorting, or packaging our products for sale to the public. We're busiest October through December.

Besides the fun of hanging with co-workers, you get to create a delicious product and help support our Benedictine community.

GARDEN & GROUNDS

We can always use a hand during busy times of tilling, planting, weeding, mulching, harvesting and tree trimming, as well as cleaning up our grounds and garden.

MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING

There are opportunities for painting, pressure washing, moving furniture, washing cars, cleaning and more.

CHRISTKINDLMARKT & OTHER FESTIVALS

The entire town of Ferdinand gets caught up in this annual festival in mid-November! Thousands visit to sample delicious regional food, enjoy live entertainment and tours, and buy Christmas gifts and wares at lavishly decorated booths.

Sell our famous Monastery Baked Goods — springerle and other cookies, fruitcakes, kuchen, sweet rolls, pretzels, or fudge — along with hot chocolate, coffee, and hot tea.

You can also volunteer as a greeter or helper in the Monastery Gift Shop or Event Hall throughout Christkindlmarkt weekend.

Monastery Baked Goods and Services also has a booth at other festivals throughout the year. Volunteers are welcome to join us in selling our products at those festivals.

To learn more or volunteer, contact Sister Doris Schepers at dschepers@thedome.org or 812-367-1411, ext. 2821.

Giving for Good.

When you support the work and ministries of the Sisters of St. Benedict, you: serve God through your generosity; show love for others; change the lives of those we serve; and sustain a rare and vibrant community. Here are just a few of the ways you can accomplish all that:

Give a **One-Time Contribution** through the mail, over the phone, or online. Be a **Partner**, our annual giving program with various levels of support available. Become a **Monastery Angel** and support the sisters through recurring gifts, typically monthly. Join the **Women of the Rule Philanthropy Circle**, a group of women from across the US who pool their annual \$1,000 gifts to make a big impact for the sisters. Sponsor the **Dome Golf Classic**, our annual fundraiser that takes place in September.

Give an **Investment Gift**, whether assets such as stocks and mutual funds or funds from IRA qualified charitable distributions. Make a **Grant** from a corporate or private foundation or donor advised fund. Start a **Workplace Matching Program**. We can accept employer match gifts towards our ministries that don't require church membership for participation. Make a gift that pays, with our **Charitable Gift Annuity Program** that can provide you with annual proceeds for life. Plan a **Future Gift** when you make the sisters a bequest, beneficiary of a financial account or trust, or through other estate plans.

To find out more, call 812-367-1411, ext. 2643, or give by using your phone to scan this code.



A Grand Tour.

We invite you to visit us and experience the distinctive architecture of our church.

The monastery's striking presence is an unforgettable landmark on the Ferdinand skyline. Its soaring beauty and ornate detail are amazing. Yet amid this grandeur is a peaceful aura that surrounds you when you arrive.

Walk through the "awe doors," so named for visitors' reactions at first peek, and marvel at the Italian marble floors, German hand-carved woodworking, and inspiring architecture of the monastery church.

Self guided tours begin in the reception area, then lead you through Cloister Hall and into the monastery church. A self-guided tour brochure allows you to scan QR codes to learn facts and history of many features of the church.

Please note that tours and access to the church may change due to Covid-19. Please check the current status before you visit.



In Memoriam.

The promise of God has been fulfilled for
four of our sisters.



Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen

1/10/1924 – 5/18/2021

The eighth of ten children, the diminutive dynamo that was Sister Sylvia spent 42 years teaching and loving elementary school students across southern Indiana from Evansville to Floyds Knobs. See our story on page 2 to read about just one of the many lives she changed.



Sister Mary Karen Hill

3/28/1933 – 6/13/2021

You might say that music was Sister Mary Karen's life...or at least a big part of it. With Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music Education, she taught music at schools across the southern half of Indiana for 64 years, while also giving music lessons and serving as organist at various parishes and here at the monastery.



Sister Mary Benet Goodrum

11/19/1933 – 7/23/2021

An Evansville native, Sister Mary Benet earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from Spalding University and a Master's degree in Library Science from Ball State University...then put them to good use as a teacher and a librarian at more than half a dozen schools in Indiana. When she retired from teaching, she spent four months on a well-earned sabbatical at the North American College in Rome, Italy.



Sister Eileen Reckelhoff

2/11/1945 – 8/11/2021

Sister Eileen had a smile for everybody every day. She earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in French, teaching at Resurrection School and Memorial High School in Evansville. She served in many roles at the monastery, including Director of Vocations, Council Member, Sub-Prioress, Monastery Coordinator and more.

