

## Our far-reaching ministries



Although Ferdinand is our home and we love it here, our reach continually goes much further. Sometimes even to Africa.

Several stories in this issue reveal just how wide of a path some of our ongoing ministries take us on. From Sister Sarah Yungwirth talking to the youth of Louisville, to Sister Karen Durliat serving Hispanics in Indianapolis, to Sister Mary Lou Dick helping those with addictions in Evansville, we affect hundreds of lives in those cities every week.

And occasionally, a sister will be summoned to use her skills on another continent. Such it was with Sister Jeana Visel teaching in Kenya how monastic art and icons can enhance one's spirituality.

As always, we have plenty of offerings in Ferdinand, too. Check out the articles on some of the programs we have held at our Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall. People routinely tell us that our programs and retreats are truly unique. It helps that they are held on the peaceful, prayerful grounds of the monastery. Most importantly, though, we feel the experience will immerse you into the transforming presence of God. We invite you to attend one, and to become something more.

Another unique event coming to Ferdinand is the Women of the Church Leadership Conference set for October 7-9. I mentioned earlier how far our reach goes out from Ferdinand. This conference impresses me by how far away some of the speakers are coming from to be part of this important conversation. Some of our presenters are internationally-known, and very highly thought of within the Church. It should prove to be a very meaningful three days.

So welcome to another edition of what is happening with the sisters. We love telling you about the latest chapter in our story, and we treasure your involvement in making it a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB  
Prioress





# Seek.Pray.Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

Planting vocation seeds	2	Two women now sisters	12
“Godsend” for Hispanic parish	5	Gift shop, bakery expanding	16
Hope and care for patients	8	Registration open	18
Mary, the perfect ‘home girl’	10	Latino mother, daughter time	19
Path to wisdom	11	Teaching in Africa	20

## CONTENTS



Cover: Sister Sarah Yungwirth gives a vocation talk at a school in Louisville. Story on page 2.



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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.



# Sister Sarah helps plant seeds in Louisville Archdiocese

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Sarah Yungwirth thrives on “helping the Holy Spirit plant the seeds” in thousands of youngsters’ minds through her vocation talks, and “helping them to see where God is in their life.”

As associate vocation director for the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, Sister Sarah joins with Father Michael Wimsatt, vocation director, to give about 25 presentations a year to groups of students ranging in size from 10 to over 700.

“The talks help plant the seeds,” says Sister Sarah, “to get young people to realize that God does have a special plan for them, that God loves them, and has big things in store for them. It’s just so neat to see them grow in that, to see them become engaged with that.”

And then, as she often does, Sister Sarah says, “And that’s very cool.” It’s little wonder she uses the word “cool,” because school administrators and children regularly tell her and Father Michael that their presentations are “cool.”

Having been an elementary school teacher in Louisville for years,

Sister Sarah easily connects with children. Her big smile, her animated delivery, and use of familiar lingo capture their attention. And her heartfelt messages about the workings of God keep them listening.

She typically begins her talk with a couple of questions: Have you heard about vocations? What are ways of life that God calls people to? As the youngsters answered her at a December presentation at a Catholic elementary school, Sister Sarah quickly responded: “Awesome!” “Sweet!” “Good job, buddy!”

Then she went a bit deeper.

“God calls all of us to a special vocation. God has special plans for each of us. And when we live out of that plan, we will be truly, truly happy. Some people God calls to be priests, some to be religious sisters or brothers, some to married life, or to single life. Isn’t that pretty cool? And whatever we do, God is going to fill us with joy

Above: Sister Sarah answers a girl’s question during a vocation presentation.



*“God has special plans for each of us. And when we live out of that plan, we will be truly happy.”*

that nothing can take away. That doesn't mean we won't have problems, because we will, but there's still going to be joy there in the midst of all of that.”

Sister Sarah then told her own vocation story. A native of the Baltimore area, she wanted to be a Radio City Music Hall rockette in New York. But God had other plans for her. In high school, she was invited to be on the parish council, and it changed her life. She helped start a youth group and was selected to another special committee. “I learned lots of cool stuff,” she said, “that helped me see how fun faith could be. People helped me see that God was cool, and that I could live my life for God. I knew, that whatever I wanted to do with my life, I wanted God to be a big part of it.”

At a summer retreat in college, she felt God calling her to be a sister. She eventually visited the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand and “fell in love.” “I realized those women helped me be the best me I could be. They helped me grow closer to the person God wanted me to be. And they were kind, happy, and exciting all at the same time. I thought, wow, that's pretty cool.”

Sister Sarah later asked the children how they might begin to think about what God is calling to them. She mentioned spending

God loved us enough to die for us . . . and rise from the dead . . . that's super cool . . . we can talk to God anywhere, and I encourage you to do that, to talk to God about what's going on, because God wants to hear it.”

Father Michael then spoke to the children, and he and Sister Sarah then answered their questions for 10-15 minutes. As usual, she was asked if she liked being a sister. She responded, “I LOVE being a sister. It's so awesome to talk to people like you, and to be able to share and help people to see God's love in their life. And I live with some great women who help me to be the best me I can be.”

Their vocation talks are most frequently given to grades 4-8, but also include groups from kindergarten age through high school.

Father Michael says of Sister Sarah, “You can tell she's had a lot of classroom experience. That's a pretty huge asset for this work. She understands the school world, how kids interact with each other, and she has a really good sense of attending to personalities at that delicate stage of life. She understands young people very well, and has a very good nurturing sensibility around little people.”

Donna Schlaff, administrative assistant for the archdiocese, notes that Sister Sarah “has a natural joy, a gift, to work with young people.” She says, “When our kids grow up and have to go out on their own, Sister Sarah has a great influence with them there. This job is something she was born for. And with her, it's a stress-free environment here. In a world that's so negative and where people always find something to complain about, she's always happy and positive. If you're having a bad day all you have to do is talk to her and you're fine.”

Such conversational skills serve Sister Sarah well in other parts of her ministry. Father Michael and she are also responsible for helping the archdiocese's seminarians, men who are studying to be priests, with a variety of their needs. That includes facilitating their programs of study, making arrangements

for summer assignments, making sure they have what they need, and sometimes even discussions on spirituality and their formation classes.

“They know I'm a Benedictine sister, and I have taken classes at Saint Meinrad, so I can relate to what seminary classes are like,”



Sister Sarah leans in to listen to a student at a vocation visit.

time in church as a way to stay connected with God. “God knows what's going on in your life, what makes you happy, what makes you sad, but he wants you to talk to him about it, right? That is a way we can get closer to God. The closer you get to God, the more God can be part of all the decisions you make. . . .

*“I learned...how fun faith could be. People helped me see that God was cool, and that I could live my life for God.”*

says Sister Sarah. “And as far as making a total commitment to God, they know I have that experience, so they know I can relate to them with that.”

Father Michael also credits her life as a Benedictine sister in helping her work with the seminarians. “She knows the formation process first-hand through becoming a religious sister. We’re working with young men in a process of formation to become priests. So she has that knowledge of formation, which really does help her interact with the seminarians.”

Another plus that he sees for Sister Sarah is simply her instinct. “A lot of ministry comes down to your instincts, because situations arise you can’t predict, and all you have to respond with is pastoral instinct about what’s right,” he says. “Sister has a really finely tuned pastoral instinct about people and circumstances. That’s one thing I admire and is an asset to the office, that instinct for ministry and people that is deeply connected with the Holy Spirit, shaping us and working in the church and in the world through us.”

Other ministry activities for Sister Sarah are the Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) program, the Christian Leadership Institute, and Confirmation retreats, besides the Vocation Office’s normal list of 17 different programs.

“I really love working with TEC,” she says. “People attending have said it’s changed their life, that they’ve encountered with God in a powerful way, that they’ve never experienced God in

that way. Young people have told me, ‘I never thought about things like that before.’ It’s neat helping them to see how much their faith can come alive.”

She also has fielded a few calls and emails from people “trying to figure out what God wants of me.” These are people Sister Sarah doesn’t know, but she relishes talking them through that puzzle, and offering insight on where to begin.

Through it all, she leans heavily on her life as a Ferdinand Benedictine.

“My identity is all centered on being a daughter of God. And as I work with people to help them develop a deeper sense of themselves as a child of God, it all stems from my being a Sister of St. Benedict trying to seek God. Now I’m working with other people as they seek God. I couldn’t do that if I didn’t have that experience as a Benedictine, and seeking God together with my amazing sisters. I couldn’t be supporting others, helping plant seeds so they can develop that personal relationship with God, without having God be a part of all we do in community.

“So if my words can help the spirit work within people as they search to begin their life’s call, that’s a blessing for me.”

And that’s pretty cool, too. ■



Sister Sarah explains a point during a vocation talk.



# Sister Karen “a Godsend” for Hispanic parish

by Greg Eckerle

The 80 young Hispanic students in the confirmation class sat transfixed last fall as Sister Karen Durliat painfully described that moment in 2001 when she indelibly understood how wrongfully some Americans were treating new Hispanic immigrants.

She was encouraging the confirmation class to become more involved in the Hispanic religious reenactment events at St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis, where she serves as director of religious education.

Her telling of her first experience with a posada, a Hispanic Christmas custom that dramatizes the failed search of Mary and Joseph for lodging, was a good example of the tradition's educational value.

In the posada, she portrayed an innkeeper telling Mary and Joseph, “No, we don’t want you, you’re rifraf, we don’t know who you are, we’re not going to let you in.” Sister Karen told the confirmation students, “A lot of people have thought that about the Hispanic community of immigrants. I understood it was wrong. I’m glad I understood it in a whole different way.” The experience touched her at an entirely different level. She

promotes the reenactments as “very meaningful” activities for anyone ever since, and “a wonderful way to deepen your faith.”

It’s that deep understanding and appreciation of the Hispanic culture, and her ability to converse in Spanish, that have helped make Sister Karen a hit at the parish, which is 90% Hispanic.

Her Benedictine trait of hospitality helps, too. Because not only does she accept all Hispanics with open arms, she also regularly fixes a bologna sandwich for an area homeless man who knocks on the office door nearly every day. It doesn’t matter how busy she is. St. Benedict said to treat visitors as Christ. So feed him she will.

Sister Karen served the Hispanic community in Guatemala from 1998-2001, then helped direct the Hispanic ministry efforts for the Evansville Diocese for 13 years. So she was a perfect fit for

Above: Sister Karen Durliat at an altar decorated for the Hispanic “Day of the Dead” celebration at St. Patrick’s Church in Indianapolis. Parishioners bring in flowers, pictures, and mementoes to honor their departed loved ones and help support their spiritual journey. The exhibit is displayed for two weeks.



St. Patrick's, one of the largest Hispanic parishes in Indianapolis, when she started there in the summer of 2014.

Father Larry Janezic, St. Patrick's pastor, says, "One of the most critical things for a parish such as ours is that people feel comfortable and at home with her. Sister speaks the language very well, she knows the culture, she's very flexible, and very pastoral. She's very qualified because of her background in the language and culture. She also has very good organizational ability, a certain warmth, and initiative. She's a Godsend."

As director of religious education, Sister Karen is responsible for sacramental programs at all levels. Classes for kindergarten through 6th grade children are held on Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings, about 100 in each group. There are about 80 teenagers in the confirmation program, about 60 preparing for first communion, and about 20 adults preparing for sacraments.

Deacon Emilio Ferrer-Soto credits Sister Karen's new approach to catechesis with having a positive effect on Hispanic parents. Previously, when parents dropped off their children at the parish for catechesis classes, the parents routinely left and returned later. Sister Karen initiated a program for the parents to stay and be able to go through their own formation program to receive sacraments.

Deacon Emilio endearingly calls the new venture "children evangelizing parents," because when the children are getting formed it now opens a way for their parents to be formed at the same time. "The good part is many of the parents have been able to get married," he says. And it all started because they wanted to receive communion, just like their children. "Many of them were just living together, but have now resolved their issues so they can get married. That is one thing I see where Sister Karen has been very



Sister Karen explains ways of deepening one's faith to a confirmation class of 80 Hispanic teenagers at St. Patrick's Parish in Indianapolis.

instrumental in our church, in the evangelization of parents. That's great. We were able to prepare many on how to be good parents."

The first characteristic that strikes Deacon Emilio about Sister Karen is her humility. And her caring for the poor, especially her feeding of the hungry homeless.

Sister Karen also works closely with the parish's nearly 60 catechists, including arranging and periodically teaching their training classes.

One catechist, Jessica Garcia, believes Sister Karen is the first sister to be DRE at the parish. "She's been wonderful with the kids and families," says Jessica. "She does great things with the kids, always finding activities for them. As a catechist, I love that she's been providing us with classes and workshops. We catechists need formation, too, and to learn from others. She's given us that opportunity. We are helping kids see how we can all live as Christians, we are encouraging a lifestyle. She is always so willing, so open. She has done great things for us.

"Sister Karen has the passion for the service. This is her life. This is not just a job for her, this is who she is. And she shares that in the way she is. She shares that love and passion for the service with others."

Indeed, a key part of Sister Karen's talk to the confirmation class was asking them to volunteer their time. "We're asking you to do service, because that's something we should be doing all our life," she told them. "We're trying to have you develop good habits, just like going to church once a week, and hopefully you will continue them after confirmation. You've studied what it means to be a Catholic, and about the works of mercy. We're called to do service to other people. That's a lifelong thing."

Maria Torres, parish receptionist and a pastoral associate, says parishioners "are very happy with (Sister Karen) because there are



Sister Karen discusses material for a sacramental class with a Hispanic father and daughter.

new things happening in the church with her present, (and) they are learning much.”

More than 800 Hispanic families belong to St. Patrick’s Parish. Some travel nearly 45 minutes one way to attend services. There are three Spanish masses on Sunday – at 10:30, 12:30, and 6:15, and the 800-seat church is usually filled for all three. And Sister Karen will sometimes be there for all three. Only one other Indianapolis parish has three Spanish weekend masses. St. Patrick’s also has two weekend masses in English and two weekday Spanish masses. The parish community is growing – there were about 200 baptisms in the past year.

“I really enjoy being part of the Hispanic spirituality,” says Sister Karen. “I wanted to find someplace where I could use my Spanish in a social service. I just find their spirituality really meaningful in their way of worship and in their way of celebration.”

As she told the confirmation students, “You have a very special parish here at St. Patrick’s. There is a lot of opportunity on ways of keeping your faith.”

And Sister Karen keeps working to make it so. ■

## Benedictine Hospitality Center available for women’s retreats

If you’re looking to organize a women’s retreat for your parish, the Sisters of St. Benedict will welcome you with open arms at their monastery grounds.

Two groups of women recently held weekend retreats at the Ferdinand monastery – one for the second time, and one for the 19th year in a row.

So the sisters can take care of the hospitality for you, and can likely even deliver presentations on your desired spirituality theme. It’s as easy as contacting Sister Jane Will at 812-367-1411, ext. 2841, or at [jwill@thedome.org](mailto:jwill@thedome.org), to discuss the details.

The sisters have long opened their facilities and grounds to groups seeking a hospitable, peace-filled environment for their meetings, programs or retreats.

Last November, 19 women from St. Lawrence Parish in Louisville, Kentucky, came to the monastery for a Friday through Sunday retreat. Their first trip, a one-night stay in 2014, had been so worthwhile that they expanded the retreat to two nights. The theme of their last retreat, presented by Sister Jane Will, was “Deepening Your Personal Relationship with God and Sharing It With Others.” Themes included were God’s unconditional love for each of us, various ways of praying, and sharing our salvation history. The retreat had ample time for reflection and sharing of experiences.

Last October, women from Nativity Parish and Holy Rosary Parish in Evansville had a Friday evening to Saturday afternoon retreat. The Nativity women have made a Ferdinand retreat for 19 years. They also invited some women from Holy Rosary, which is merging with Nativity, to come along for the first time. Their retreat’s theme was “Deepening Your Personal Relationship with the Living God.”

Ellen Hedges, a retreat organizer from Nativity Parish, wrote to



Sister Jane Will delivers a retreat presentation at the Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall in Ferdinand to women from Evansville’s Nativity Parish.

Sister Jane, “. . . we were very pleased with the retreat . . . I saw some sharing that I didn’t expect. That makes me believe there was trust in the group. . . . As always, we were treated so hospitably by all the sisters. . . . I heard nothing negative from anyone (in our group). Breakfast and lunch were delicious, as always. . . . I think it was an added benefit for the ladies to attend Mass . . .”

There is also a group of 15-20 women from various parishes in the St. Louis area that has been making an annual silent directed retreat in Ferdinand. Last summer they stayed for four days, with a team of Ferdinand Benedictine sisters serving as directors for the group.

If you have a group interested in learning more about possible retreats, please contact Sister Jane Will. She will be glad to assist in designing a retreat to meet your needs.





# Sister Mary Lou a face of hope and care for those with addiction problem

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Mary Lou Dick will often see people at the absolute lowest point of their lives.

To feed their substance abuse habit, some have squandered their savings, lost their job, lost their car, and lost their home. And, if they don't kick their addiction, are in real danger of losing their spouses, significant others, and their children, who probably already no longer talk to them. Active addiction has led others to jail or prison.

If they're seeing Sister Mary Lou, they have a chance at a different way of living. It's a good chance to turn their life around, because Sister Mary Lou is part of a professional healthcare team that offers them hope, real hope, to salvage their wrecked lives.

She is a registered nurse at Stepping Stones, a part of Southwestern Behavioral Health Care in Evansville, Indiana, which provides mental health and addiction treatment to hundreds of people annually.

Sister Mary Lou is one of the first people a new admission sees. She'll perform a health assessment, checking vital signs, blood pressure, pulse, and breathing. She reviews the client's recent use of substance to help determine the phase of treatment the client needs to start in. She'll collect their medications and manage them for proper distribution, and perform a tuberculosis skin test.

Her office is also somewhat of a mini health clinic and first aid stop. She'll periodically bandage up wounds and administer to various

aches and pains, sometimes sending clients out to convenient care or the emergency room, and sometimes calling an ambulance. Her office is strategically located by the sickest clients so she and her team can closely monitor them during early withdrawal.

The facility has a capacity of 42, and it's consistently full, with a waiting list. Sister Mary Lou will see nearly all of them several times a day. She also teaches an hour-long class for the clients on medical issues in recovery, focusing on medications to avoid to stay clean and sober after they are released. Treatment programs run from 28 to 35 days and are often followed with participation in an outpatient program. There is also a mentoring program, where former clients return to help those just beginning. For most clients, their drug use started out as fun, but it became life-threatening. So Southwestern provides treatment through every phase and teaches clients a different way to interact with daily life.

"I don't do anything spectacular," says Sister Mary Lou, who has been at the facility since 2003. "I just try to reach out with a kind word or a smile. My big reward is seeing somebody complete the program. Or when somebody just tells me later that they're doing fine. Or I see somebody working a job, they have a house and car, they're back with their family. I don't know anything that can make me happier than to

Above: Sister Mary Lou Dick, a registered nurse at Southwest Mental Health Services in Evansville, Indiana, teaches a class to patients on how medications can affect their recovery from addictions.

know I had a teeny-tiny part in helping that to happen. We are one huge team here that surrounds patients with hope. We give them hope that they can get parts of their lives back and begin new lives. They are not bad people becoming good, they are people sick with a disease that are getting better.”

Sister Mary Lou’s name tag at Southwest doesn’t say she’s a sister, since some new admissions may have issues with religion. But that doesn’t mean her religious nature doesn’t enter into how she helps patients. It has formed her into a true face of caring.

“We talk about a higher power,” she says. “When I’m teaching, I tell them my higher power happens to be God; however, you address whoever your higher power is. I try to affect them by bringing them to God through the smile I give them. I think how I’m bringing God to these people is by the hope I bring them. A lot of them have never felt somebody caring for them. So I’m part cheerleader. I’ll say, ‘You can do this. If you fall down, I’ll pick you up.’ I hope that somehow my word, or my touch, or my moment of caring will bring a moment of God into their life.

“My Benedictine background helps me a lot here – the hospitality, the compassion, the sense of family – all solid Benedictine values. I am able to convey to clients a sense of a loving, caring God because of my experience of God and my life in my Benedictine community. You can’t give what you don’t have and I am blessed in many ways. People respond to caring and compassion. And then they’re able sometimes to listen to the hard things you have to say.”



Sister Mary Lou explains a medical procedure to mental health technicians Robert Graham and Charles Dannheiser.

Keeping patient information confidential is paramount for Southwest, so Sister Mary Lou can’t talk about case histories, other than to say there are successes and it’s a real joy when that happens. Often, a successful day for her is simply convincing a troubled patient to stick with the program for another day. She’s good at injecting that hope that their life can get better, that it doesn’t have to be plagued by drugs. And that Southwestern can teach them the new life skills to

enable them to cope with their disease.

Still, some patients will walk out of the program before it’s had a real chance to work. “I’ll talk their ear off all the way to the door trying to change their mind,” says Sister Mary Lou.

She realizes if she’s working harder than the patient to get them to stay, they’re likely to leave. But she tries anyway. Giving up is not in her vocabulary.

“These diseases are cunning, baffling, and powerful,” she says. “I see examples of that a hundred times a day. I’m going to tell that disease ‘you can’t have them, they’re coming my way.’ But it doesn’t always work.”

Katy Adams, Southwest’s director of addiction services, says, “Sister Mary Lou does a lot of medical case management with our folks. Some folks may not have ever seen a medical provider. She is really good at identifying medical issues that may not have been identified otherwise, and getting people the resources they need. One thing in particular is pregnant women. She’s really steeped in knowing something we need to follow up on. She’s really good at medical care. She works a lot of extra hours. She does that on her own. She’s our only nurse, and is very devoted to working. That makes a difference.”

Sister Mary Lou also trains Southwest’s staff on various medical issues, how to follow procedures, patient medications, infection control, how to detect signs and symptoms of substance withdrawal, and methods of crisis intervention.

Robert Graham, a mental health technician who has been trained by Sister Mary Lou and works closely with her, says, “She’s somebody we can talk to about difficult subjects. There are a lot of challenges here. We see some of the people more than once. But she is always there to help them. I admire that. She is very patient with them. And she shows us the right way to do things. She’s been a mentor to me and some others. I’ve had some things I’ve dealt with. My daughter has had brain cancer, and I’ve asked Sister Mary Lou for some prayers. And she’s helped me find some prayer, with comfort for my family.” ■



Sister Mary Lou organizes patient medications that are stored in her office.



# Learning why Mary the perfect ‘home girl’

by Greg Eckerle

Mary, the mother of Jesus, “has been an important part of my life,” Sister Traci Stutz told the 16 people attending her program, “Mary: A Gift to Many,” at the Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall in Ferdinand.

It was obvious Mary was special for the attendees, too, as they drove in to hear about her from as far away as Bowling Green and Madisonville, Kentucky, as well as from Evansville and Louisville.

Sister Traci continued, “Mary is someone that I turn to and have intercede for me. She gives me comfort.” So it’s little wonder Sister Traci also considers Mary to be her “home girl,” a slang term often reserved for one’s closest friends. She terms a “home girl” as someone who speaks on your behalf, someone who loves you despite your faults, one who brings out the best in you, someone who is respected by your friends as well as your enemies, someone who is your advocate to Jesus, one who we all have faith in what she can do. Just like Mary.

“Mary is wonderfully and truly universal,” says Sister Traci. “She is the woman with a thousand faces and a thousand titles, transcending all cultures and ages, and therein lies her power.” Sister Traci spent much of the program sharing various countries’ illustrations and celebrations of Mary, ranging from Africa to the Middle East to the U.S. to Korea, calling her the “holy United Nations in one person.”

“Mary walks with us on individual journeys, engaging us differently as our life circumstances change. I’ve learned you never can know exactly when or how Mary will meet you, smiling with gentle recognition and taking up residence in your heart. That’s how I want Mary to be as my home girl, someone who takes me at my worst, who pushes me to do better, who keeps showing up, and someone who can take her concern for me to God for help.”

Sister Traci talked fondly of her visits to the Shrine of Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., which houses hundreds of “Mary” altars. One of her favorites was Mary depicted as an African slave woman. “Her hands and feet were bigger than her body, her hands being so big because of the work she had to do to raise her family and cope with the troubles she’d seen,” said Sister Traci, “and her feet so big because of her steadfastness and the work she had to do to keep herself and her family alive. We went every year for seven



Sister Traci Stutz shows the “Mary” program audience a couple of illustrations of Mary that have been given to her.

years, and she was always one of the “Marys” I’d have to go back to and say hello to.”

She invited attendees to view the Mary statues at the monastery in Ferdinand. She mentioned how impressed she was with the devotion of some visiting Latino students from Louisville, who sent kisses to the Immaculate Conception statue in the monastery’s Blessed Virgin Room, then prayed later by the Mary statues in the nearby grotto.

“Mary reminds us that what is important is within ourselves, and not our appearance,” said Sister Traci.

Judging from participants’ comments, it’s easy to see how helpful the program was:

“I’m learning to love Mary now.”

“A crisis in faith brought me here today.”

“This opened my eyes to seeing Mary in many different ways,” wrote Marilyn Sermersheim on her evaluation form.

Lisa Muller from Evansville wrote, “Coming to this place is always stimulating, motivating, and life-changing. It is restful and peaceful. Perfect!!” ■

# Sharing and reflecting on path to wisdom

by Greg Eckerle

During her program on “Wise Women in the Benedictine Tradition,” it was only natural that Sister Mary Ann Verkamp talked about the wisdom of Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Germany.

Way back in the 12th century, St. Hildegard was already saying that our mission is “to green things.” And that is what Sister Mary Ann was doing for the nine people listening – she was pumping new life into them by initiating discussion about the qualities of wisdom.

The first quality she mentioned was humility. “No one that is truly wise walks around and says, ‘I am a wise one.’ To become wise, we must be open to all of who we are, accepting my gifts as well as my limitations. With humility a person is able to accept their mistakes, and learn from them.”

Another quality of the wise is being steadfast, or single-minded. To stay focused on your purpose. In times of doubt and darkness, it can turn suffering into wisdom if one is willing to be transformed instead of bitter.

Sister Mary Ann also thinks the wise reflect a discerning heart. “They take an experience and search, ‘What is God saying to me?’ They’re not satisfied to live life on the surface, they go deeper. They go deep down in search of God’s wisdom. We do that in reading

the Scriptures. And we do it when reflecting on our experiences.”

Other qualities discussed were discretion – knowing when to be silent and when to speak – having respectful relationships, inviting participation, embracing diversity, accepting each one as they are, and having a whole stance toward life of being directed toward others, and not being ‘all about me.’

Sister Mary Ann talked about Radegund, the first woman to found a monastery in France, in the 6th century. An advocate of social justice, she used her connections to try to bring peace in an era of turmoil and violence. Yet Radegund knew she possessed only a part of the truth. And Sister Mary Ann emphasized, “That’s always important to remember – no one knows everything.”

She then asked the audience what struck them about Radegund. Jo Kostka Weikert of Evansville, Indiana, spoke up, “My favorite saying is ‘you would never ask anyone to do something you would not do.’”

Jenny Schinke of Floyds Knobs, Indiana, shared a related thought on a field of narrative therapy that says “we create meaning in our lives by reflecting on our stories.” And that Michael White, the therapy’s founder, said ‘we have to earn the right to be influential in other people’s lives.’ Which is exactly what Radegund did by listening with her heart to the people around her.

The shared reflections among the audience were a perfect example of an earlier comment by Sister Mary Ann, that “Monastics made it a point to learn something from each one in community; that’s a wonderful practice for becoming wise.” To get there, she stressed the importance of asking good questions.

Sister Mary Ann also noted, “In a Biblical sense, wisdom assumes that a person has an authentic relationship with God. Prayer guides the wise. And prayer is a deep relationship with God.”

She concluded by talking about the “greening power” of good deeds, and encouraged attendees to reflect on what is green and what is withering in their own lives. ■



Sister Mary Ann Verkamp speaks during her “Wise Women in the Benedictine Tradition” program at Kordes Center on the grounds of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand.



# NEWS from the Dome

## Sisters of St. Benedict accept two women into novitiate

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, accepted postulants Lynn Falcony and Lisa Schutz into the novitiate, the second stage of incorporation into the religious community, during a simple ceremony on Saturday, November 14. During the ceremony, the women received their titles of Sister Lynn Marie and Sister Lisa Marie.

Sister Lynn Marie, from Evansville, is the daughter of Mary Kaye and Joe Falcony and was a member of St. Anthony Parish in Evansville. Prior to entering the monastery, she was an IV admixture technician in the pharmacy department and surgery satellite at St. Mary's Medical Center in Evansville. She is licensed by the Indiana State Board of Pharmacy and the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board. During the past year, she took classes at the monastery and online from the University of Dayton in Ohio. She also worked with area youth groups and in the monastery bakery.

Sister Lisa Marie, from Crown Point, Indiana, is the daughter of Ken and Carole Schutz. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education, certificates in early childhood and elementary teaching, and a Certified Nursing Assistant certificate. Prior to entering the monastery she taught preschool and was a CNA in Schererville, Indiana. She was a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Munster, Indiana. During the past year, she took classes at the monastery



Sister Lisa Marie Schutz, Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, prioress, Sister Louise LaRoche, novice director, and Sister Lynn Falcony

and assisted in Community Health Services and other support services.

During their year in the novitiate, the two novices will focus on community life, prayer, and work as they discern their call to vowed membership in the Ferdinand Benedictine community. Their classes during this period will have an emphasis on Benedictine history, spirituality, and the Rule of St. Benedict.

Founded in 1867, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand currently number 148 and serve in the areas of education, parish work, health care, retreat and spirituality work, social services, counseling, and mission work in Indiana, Kentucky, and Peru.

## Donors: thanks for the heat!



Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen dances for joy at news of the installation of the new blow-down separator.

Thanks to the support of our generous donors we had heat at the monastery this year!

With their help, we were able to replace the boiler feed water system condensation tank, the feed water pumps, and blow down separator.

We also installed water treatment, a new flue through the boiler roof on the primary boiler, and re-tubed the boilers.

All of this work allowed us to safely operate our heating system this winter!



Sister Rachel Lynn Geracitano, Sister Michelle Mohr, Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, and Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen stand between one of the renovated boilers and the new boiler feed water pump.

## Sister Anita vocation article one of 25 years' best

An article Sister Anita Louise Lowe wrote nine years ago has so much staying power it was included in the e-book *Discover Your Path: Best of VISION Vocation Guide*.

The *VISION Vocation Guide* is an annual magazine produced for the past 25 years by the National Religious Vocation Conference of Chicago, Illinois. It's filled with articles giving guidance to those discerning religious life.

Sister Anita's article, "Four steps to hearing your call," was published in the 2007 edition. When it came time for editors of the e-book to pick the best articles out of the hundreds published in the last 25 years, Sister Anita's was selected.

That her article is still popular is no surprise. It's still posted on the organization's website, [www.vocationnetwork.org](http://www.vocationnetwork.org), where it's also listed in a "Most Viewed" section.

Upon learning of her article's inclusion, Sister Anita said, "I was thrilled. It was like, oh my gosh, it was published again, and it's in a book!"

"As I look at the article's



content, though, it has a timeless quality to it. The messages are not going to change. This is guidance that anybody could use."

In her multi-page story, Sister Anita advised four steps for anyone going through the discernment process: (1) Become aware; (2) Gather information and investigate the many available options; (3) Choose what you understand to be God's will; and (4) Look for confirmation of your choice.

Some of the customer reviews posted about the e-book on amazon.com:

- "... offers insight and helpful suggestions to anyone considering a vocation to Catholic religious life."
- "There is no better resource for those discerning religious life than *Discover Your Path*."
- "Each writer has awakened some new awareness for me regarding my own path."
- "When looking for guidance on a topic as important as "What shall I do with my life?" (you) want a resource that is wise and trustworthy. *VISION Vocation Guide* has been that for over a quarter-century."

Sister Anita, who has a bachelor's degree in English, was assistant communication director for the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand from 1990 to 1995, and vocations director from 2000 to 2007. She is currently the community's director of liturgy.

## Sisters of St. Benedict Programs and Retreats at the Benedictine Hospitality Center at Kordes Hall

March 19, 2016	<b>Loss and Grief: "Why Didn't They Tell Me it Would Hurt Like This?"</b>	Pat Evans
March 24-27, 2016	<b>Triduum Retreat</b>	Sister Betty Drewes, OSB
April 2, 2016	<b>Unwrapping God's Gift From the Sea</b>	Sister Mary Ann Verkamp, OSB
April 4-6, 2016	<b>Come Away Retreat</b>	
April 9, 2016	<b>Healing and Music</b>	Ruth Stanley
April 15-17, 2016	<b>Weekend Away Retreat</b>	
April 16, 2016	<b>Psalms: Prayers of the Heart</b>	Sister Louise Laroche, OSB
April 30, 2016	<b>Confirmation Retreat</b>	Sister Traci Stutz, OSB
July 24-31, 2016	<b>Private/Personal Retreat</b>	
September 9-16, 2016	<b>Directed Retreat</b>	

As part of their outreach, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand offer group or individual programs and retreats that educate and provide personal spiritual direction. These programs develop a deeper awareness of God, the world, oneself, and others that leads to a more meaningful and fulfilling life. The sisters also open their facilities and grounds to groups seeking a hospitable, peace-filled environment for meetings, programs, or other gatherings.

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



## Sisters celebrate jubilees

Twelve Benedictine sisters celebrated special anniversaries of their religious profession on Sunday, October 25, at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand. Celebrating 75 years were Sisters Wilma Davis, Mary George Kissel, and Theresita Schenk. They entered the monastery in 1938 and professed their vows in 1940. Sister Mary Victor Kercher celebrated 70 years, entering the monastery in 1943

and making vows in 1945. Celebrating 60 years were Sisters Mary Leon Kiesel, Mary André Gettelfinger, Barbara Catherine Schmitz, Jacqueline Kissel, Carlita Koch, Jolinda Naas, Mary Beth Maier, and Michelle Mohr. They entered the monastery in 1953 and made vows in 1955. These sisters have served a total of 775 years in ministries in Indiana, Kentucky, North Dakota, Minnesota, California, Colombia, and Guatemala.



Sister Wilma Davis



Sister Mary George Kissel



Sister Theresita Schenk



Sister Mary Victor Kercher



Sister Mary Leon Kiesel



Sister Mary Andre Gettelfinger



Sister Barbara Catherine Schmitz



Sister Jacqueline Kissel



Sister Carlita Koch



Sister Jolinda Naas



Sister Mary Beth Maier



Sister Michelle Mohr

## In memoriam

by Sister Briana Craddock

### Sister Adele Weyer

August 20, 1918 – November 13, 2015

Sister Adele Weyer was a gift to her family and to her community. She had a ready smile and a twinkle in her eye. She enjoyed life and wanted others to do likewise.

Sister Adele loved her family members deeply. She took care of her aging mother for several years. She also cared for her nieces and nephews, was present to them, and acted as a buffer for them. Her nieces and nephews loved her and found her to be easygoing, patient, and kind.

Sister Adele had a lifelong love of education. As a student, she was the Dubois County spelling champion and loved poetry, reading, storytelling, and math. After Sister Adele became a teacher, she



shared her love of learning with her students. She believed in the ability of each student to learn, and was successful in helping students learn to read when others had been unable to do so. She devoted herself to helping her students gain the skills that they needed. Because of Sister Adele's example and devotion, her students were inspired to strive for great heights.

Sister Adele was a woman of prayer. She included many people in her daily list of intentions and told her students that she "wore out her knees" praying for them.

Sister Adele will always be remembered as a joyful, faithful community member. Her sense of humor, even in her later years, was a source of joy for many. While we miss her jokes and her laughter, we are happy that she is free from pain and is enjoying eternal life with God.



Complete obituaries can be found at [thedome.org](http://thedome.org).

## Feeling good about helping the sisters

Mike and Melissa Gossman are two donors who very much believe in paying it forward.

They donate to the sisters in four different ways: (1) through the Gossman's will; (2) the sisters are beneficiaries in Mike's life insurance policy; (3) the Gossmans are involved in the sisters' current capital campaign; and (4) they have set up regular quarterly donations through the Monastery Angel program. They have actively given to the sisters since 1992.

Mike, 56, and Melissa, 55, live in Brownsburg, Indiana. Mike's first connection with the sisters was at Evansville's Mater Dei High School, where he graduated in 1978. Several sisters ministered there.

"The sisters were a huge presence in the school," says Mike.

He has long felt "very good about the things they were doing – helping the poor, working in the schools and hospitals."

A few years ago, the Gossmans decided to pare their donations down to a few places they had a connection with, and became more involved with the sisters.

"We knew more about the things the sisters were doing, and agreed with," he says. "It just makes me feel good that we're able to help them out in some small way in the wonderful things they are doing. We really enjoy doing it. We know how much the things they do are needed by the communities they work in."

Melissa says they picked the sisters to donate to because "we were really supportive of their mission and what they were doing for

the community, not only currently but even in the past."

"It's nice to see there's a strong organization there that is still supporting that type of community and women that want to be able to live that type of ministry. And also, taking care of those that have helped in the past, the elderly sisters. That's part of their mission, and I think that's important to continue to support as well because they've given so much in the past."

Melissa "feels good about where our money is going, and it makes me think more about those who are serving – it gives me a lot of respect for those who serve at that level. I'm just really in awe that they can give their time and energy in the way that they do."

The Gossmans believe their actions will show their three daughters the importance of philanthropy in their lives.

To find out more about how you can financially support the sisters, call 812-367-1411 and ask for the Mission Advancement office, or visit [www.thedome.org](http://www.thedome.org) and click on "Make A Gift" at the top of the home page.



## Sister Kate forms hospital council to upgrade healthcare

The capstone project Sister Kate Willegal completed as part of earning her doctorate of nursing degree has achieved two significant milestones en route to her goal of improving the quality of healthcare for hospital patients.

Her project, the development of an Interprofessional Research Council, has been officially chartered at Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper, Indiana.

The project was also deemed impressive enough that Sister Kate presented it at the Indiana Organization of Nurse Executives Fall Conference at the French Lick Resort. She explained the process leading to the council's official charter.

The council facilitates interprofessional education among various



hospital departments, with the goal of enhancing patient care. The idea is to improve how hospital personnel and areas work together. The council has representatives from the lab, radiology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and nursing. They also plan to add a physician champion. The council's academic advisor is the chairman of the nursing program at Vincennes University – Jasper Center.

Sister Kate, who is chairperson of the Interprofessional Research Council, says, "We're going to be a resource for hospital personnel who want to do an evidence-based research project. We will advise them how to go about it, guiding them through the process."

One project underway is a nurse collaborating with physical therapy to determine the effectiveness of a particular machine that could be used for elective knee surgeries. Another project is a nurse working with pharmacy and surgery to see if acupressure would help alleviate post-operative nausea and vomiting.

Sister Kate is nurse clinician of post surgical – pediatric, and involved with clinical education, at Memorial Hospital.

## Expanding cookies and gifts

by Laura Reckelhoff

A rebirth is occurring at the monastery's gift shop and bakery. For Heaven's Sake gift shop is now known as Monastery Gift Shop, and Simply Divine Bakery is now Monastery Baked Goods. The name changes are just part of the initiative to grow both entities.

The department of Monastery Goods and Services was formed to combine the bakery and gift shop, to expand revenue-generating ventures, and for multimedia sales. Plans also include bringing in Monastery Event Hall. Angi Seffernick and Cyndy Faulkenberg were promoted to co-directors of Monastery Goods and Services.



The bakery and gift shop name changes put our strongest marketing message and name in the forefront. The new names of Monastery Baked Goods and Monastery Gift Shop more closely relate to the Sisters of St. Benedict.

The bakery has hired a part-time baker and a part-time bakery assistant and expects to hire more as sales increase. Five sisters bake weekly, and many volunteers help with baking, or packaging, or cleaning. Sister Jean Marie Ballard, bakery manager, said there are more sisters who help any way they can. Some help clean or wash trays. The sisters residing in Hildegard Health Center help by folding boxes.

Sister Jean Marie says, "It is important to our sisters to help and they want to help even though some of our bakers and bakery assistants are 78 plus years old."

Sister Jean Marie also points out that the cookies are still prayerfully made. "While working in the bakery, we pray for the people that will be purchasing our cookies. Some sisters have a mantra said at particular times during the baking process. I don't have a particular mantra, but I consciously call to mind the people that will be purchasing." She says the people buying are "getting prayer whether they like it or not."

Other changes for the bakery include plans for expansion into a new space, addition of equipment, new cookie boxes, and reusable tins.

Monastery Baked Goods will be increasing their visibility, and sales, by exhibiting in a variety of shows. They will continue to attend the Indiana Artisan show, will attend the Catholic Marketing Network show and Kentucky Crafted show, and in January attended the Atlanta marketplace for the second time.

A new focus of Monastery Gift Shop is offering items made at other monasteries, such as jams by Trappist Monks, Monastery Mustards by Oregon Benedictine sisters, and Monastery Scents soaps from Missouri Benedictine Sisters. There are also Monastery Baked Goods cookies, and craft and art items from our sisters.

Sister Charlene Ann Wheelless, gift shop manager, says, "We have done well selling the monastery items and have had to reorder many items." Faulkenberg says, "Cross selling between monasteries is very important to us."

The gift shop has expanded hours, now open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern times). They have also hired a new part-time employee.

With the gift shop being the main seller of the monastery's baked goods, Seffernick and Faulkenberg feel having the bakery next door to the gift shop would be ideal in the future.

Future plans also include a coffee shop at the gift shop. They are already testing coffees to offer.

The changes under the Monastery Goods and Services umbrella are exciting to both Seffernick and Faulkenberg. Seffernick, a monastery employee for 17 years, says,

"I am most excited about the idea of new products and everyone, bakery, gift shop, and coffee shop, coming together. I like the idea of change!"

Faulkenberg adds, "I am excited about the prospect of growth so the sisters can sustain themselves into the future."

Regarding the growth of Monastery Goods and Services, Sister Jean Marie says, "The potential of reaching a broader audience is an opportunity to share our Benedictine charism with others. That is a gift customers will have long after cookies they buy are gone."

To order Monastery Baked Goods cookies and visit Monastery Gift Shop online, go to [monasterygiftshop.org](http://monasterygiftshop.org).





## Women of the Rule again fund proposals

by Greg Eckerle

Fran Bartley said it well in her opening prayer at the annual luncheon gathering of the Women of the Rule: “. . . We seek to be good stewards; Lord, bless us as we gather here to share your gifts . . . “

Women of the Rule, a philanthropy circle affiliated with the Ferdinand Benedictines, voted on its yearly financial grants to various proposals presented by the sisters.

The first award was \$10,000, to continue converting a deteriorating section of a rocked pathway in the monastery's outdoor Grotto into an aggregate walkway. Many school groups and visitors regularly walk through and pray at the Grotto. The request was submitted by Sisters Mary Carmen and Mary Carmel Spayd. Sister Mary Carmen had light-heartedly told the group of nearly 100, repeatedly drawing laughter, “Last year I said to you if you would consider funding this project, the Blessed Mother would really smile on you, really big time. So this year if you would consider funding this, she will dance all around, and I might even do a jig with her.”

The sisters like to have fun, too.

The second award, for \$14,210.77, went to Sister Mary Philip Berger's request to fund lodging and food expenses for volunteer groups to stay at the monastery, in hopes that some of them will decide to join the community.

In addition to the luncheon grants, the group also funded the following proposals after the first round of voting done by mail:

- Repair of the leather on the church organ pipes; \$4,000;
- Installing a kitchenette, including a sink, refrigerator, and stove, in the Monastery Event Hall; \$4,000;
- Providing a special concrete to prevent decay to walls in the sister's Peru monastery; \$7,500;
- Cookie extruding equipment for the sisters' Simply Divine Bakery that will produce 12-16 times more cookies; \$5,500;
- Establishing an office for the Latino Outreach project, which tends to immigration needs and shares Benedictine spirituality with Spanish-speaking people; \$10,000.

Anonymous donors also funded three other proposals:

- Installing landscaping and outdoor seating in the courtyard between St. Benedict's Brew Works and the Monastery Event Hall and Monastery Gift Shop; \$4,000;
- Providing a new identity symbol, a unique pin/pendant, for the sisters; \$5,838;
- Purchasing iPads for the sisters' deaneries; \$5,000.

In total, the Women of the Rule, as a group and individually,



Women of the Rule members Carrie Berg (left) and Audrey Brames announce a grant winner to applause at the group's annual awards luncheon.

generously granted \$70,048.77 to sisters' proposals this year.

In welcoming the luncheon audience, Indiana Lieutenant Governor Sue Ellspermann, a Ferdinand native and Women of the Rule member, said, “It is so wonderful to be here, back home, with so many of the Sisters of St. Benedict. Thank you first for all you are, who you are, how you inspire us, how you pray with us, how you help us all through our faith journeys . . . I know this is one of my favorite events of the year . . . we so appreciate that you're here. This is going to be a special part of your faith journey, too . . . You're going to really love this group, how this faith community will strengthen your own life, and all that you do.”

Kelly Clauss, master of ceremonies, said, “. . . once a friend, always a friend . . . it is true, once you establish a relationship with these beautiful women in this Benedictine community, it's lifelong, not to mention the lifelong relationships and friendships with one another. So, I don't know where we get gifts like that other than here, but it is very, very special.”

In closing remarks, Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, prioress, said, “There are lots of things we (sisters) are working at and looking toward, but most of what happens on the hill is our prayer for you. We take it very seriously that you are in our prayers and our thoughts. It's an honor and a privilege to walk with each of you. It's amazing how you can see the face of Christ in so many. In this room I think Christ is totally present with all of us.”

The 80-member Women of the Rule is dedicated to making a difference in the world by financially supporting the mission and ministries of the sisters. For a \$1,000 membership, women can vote on the award proposals, and enjoy various programs and activities throughout the year.

For more information about Women of the Rule, or if you are interested in joining, contact Sister Barbara C. Schmitz at [bcschmitz@thedome.org](mailto:bcschmitz@thedome.org) or at 812-367-1411.

# Registration open for Women of Church conference

by Greg Eckerle

Registration is now open for "Women of the Church: Strength of the Past. Hope for Tomorrow. A Catholic Leadership Conference," to be held in Ferdinand, Indiana, on October 7-9.

Co-hosted by the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, the conference was created in response to Pope Francis's call for "a more incisive female presence" in the Church. Both women and men are invited.

To register, or for more information, visit the website [womenofthechurch.org](http://womenofthechurch.org).

The conference offers a wide range of topics and speakers, including some who are nationally and internationally-known.

Keynote speakers, and their topics, will be:

- Carolyn Woo, president/CEO, Catholic Relief Services: *"Working for a Better World: God, Neighbor, Self"*
- Kathleen Sprows Cummings, associate professor of history, Notre Dame, and director of the Cushwa Center of the Study of American Catholicism: *"Models of Catholic Women's Leadership"*
- Sister Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, professor of theology, Notre Dame: *"Go and Tell: The Testimony of Women and the Faith of the Church"*

Woo, who leads an international aid organization that reaches nearly 100 million of the world's poor each year, has been called "the very face of Catholic female leadership in the U.S." Cummings was a commentator for NBC-TV's coverage of Pope Francis's visit to the U.S. Hilkert has inspired and taught many women who serve in various ministry and teaching roles.

Breakout session speakers, and their topics, will include:

- Tammy Becht, director, "One Bread, One Cup" youth liturgical leadership program, Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology: *"Maintaining balance and respite,"* for youth ministers.
- Kathryn Lilla Cox, associate professor of theology, College

of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University: *"Transcending Women's States of Life: Insights into Our Giftedness from Scripture, the Rule of Benedict, and Infertility."*

- Ann Garrido, associate professor of homiletics, Aquinas Institute, St. Louis: *"Challenging Conversations: Strategies for Working Through the Conflicts We Face as Women in Ministry."*
- Sister Teresa Gunter, OSB, vocation director, Sisters of St. Benedict: *"Ideas for Discerning a Religious Vocation."*
- Edward Hahnenberg, professor of systematic theology, John Carroll University, Cleveland: *"Leading the Way: Discerning a Call to Lay Ecclesial Ministry."* Hahnenberg was a theological consultant for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document on professional lay ecclesial ministry.
- Sister Karen Joseph, OSB, Ferdinand Benedictine, board member, AIM: *"Harvest of Wisdom: Exploring the Heart of Benedictine Spirituality and its Timeless Values."*
- Marina Pastrana Rios, manager of mission programs, Catholic Extension, and Sister Guadalupe Ramirez, MCDP, associate professor of pastoral theology, Mexican-American Catholic College: *"The New Horizon in Hispanic Female Leadership."*
- Nancy Pineda-Madrid, associate professor of theology and Latino/Latina ministry, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry: *"Tragedy and the Cultivation of Hope."*
- C. Vanessa White, assistant professor of spirituality and ministry, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago: *"Intercultural Leadership (multi-ethnic and intergenerational)."*
- Sister Kate Willegal, OSB, Ferdinand Benedictine, nurse clinician of post-surgical and pediatric services at Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center, and Sister Rose Mary Rexing, OSB, Ferdinand Benedictine, executive director of mission integration, Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center: *"Women Transforming Health Care Through Radical Loving Care,"* spiritual formation, workplace engagement, reward and recognition, positive culture.

Archbishop Joseph Tobin of Indianapolis and Bishop Charles Thompson of Evansville will reflect on their experience of working with women, and what their hopes are for the future for women in service and leadership in the Church.

A Saturday evening concert will feature Angelus, a sacred music ensemble of young women featured on National Public Radio.

For further conference information, or to register, visit [womenofthechurch.org](http://womenofthechurch.org). ■



Carolyn Woo



Kathleen Sprows Cummings



Sister Mary Catherine Hilkert



# Latino retreat a bonding time for mothers, daughters

by Greg Eckerle

In today's hectic world, working Latino mothers and their teenage daughters often struggle to find time to just be together.

So a Latino Mother & Daughter retreat hosted by the Ferdinand Benedictines at the monastery provided a rare opportunity for some of them to spend quality, personal time with each other.

Ramona Garcia, who attended with her daughter, 15, said, "It was a very wonderful retreat. Everything built up a better relationship with my daughter. I got to know her better, and she got to know me better. The sisters have been having a lot of good programs, things that our community needs. Not everybody has that great opportunity." She lives in Washington, about a 50-minute drive from Ferdinand, and also brought along a friend and her daughter.

Sister Joan Scheller, who coordinated the retreat, enjoyed watching the mothers and daughters interact, especially when they went for a walk in the monastery's grotto. "It was also delightful to see the joy and pride on their faces when they created their reflection booklet, which was personalized with their picture."

Creating the booklet was just one of many relationship-building activities set up for the participants by the program's presenter, Ms. Kimber Nicoletti, a bi-lingual educator affiliated with Purdue University who provides workshops for underserved

communities throughout Indiana.

Ramona said her heart was "really touched" at the end of the retreat when Sister Joan commented that not everybody has the blessing to have their mother in their lives. "I still have my mother, but she is very far away, in Mexico, so I don't get to see her very often," said Ramona. The comment spurred Ramona to call her mother more often, and Ramona knows her daughter, Kelly, was also touched by the comment.

Such a reaction helped meet Sister Joan's goal for the retreat. "We wanted mothers and daughters to share and to get to know and appreciate each other better. That was invaluable as mothers are very busy with work and family, and young women too are busy with high school and other activities. Seldom do they get time for just the two of them to be together."

Among the comments from the daughters when asked what they liked about the day:

"Bonding with my mom."

"Just getting to spend some time with my mom and meeting new people."

"I like how we took time to learn more about our mother." ■

Above: A special moment for a mother and daughter (Patricia Tirado and Valeria Lomaglio) while walking the Way of the Cross in the monastery grotto.

Left: Sister Michelle Sinkhorn (middle) and Ramona Garcia (right) share a laugh with Ramona's daughter, Kelly, at the Latino Mother & Daughter retreat at the monastery. Ramona says the sisters "are very kind, we just love them. Sister Joan and Sister Michelle are very good friends of ours, we feel like they are part of our family."





# Sister Jeana draws East and West together

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Jeana Visel felt honored to spend six days in Africa teaching 30 nuns about monastic art and icons.

Those nuns, of course, are already immersed in a life of prayer, and surrounded by religious images. But often those images are not fully understood, particularly in how they can help further one's spirituality. That's where Sister Jeana's teaching comes in. While earning her master's degree in theology, she completed her thesis on icons in the Western Church – how we pray with them, and how that relates to Eastern theology and icons and their resulting prayer practices. Plus, she's an accomplished artist herself in creating icons for use in prayer.

So she has a good perspective on how to decipher the meaning of icons, and plenty of experience showing people how they might use icons to deepen their own prayer life. But the trip was quite beneficial for her, too. As she posted on her Facebook page, "I teach the cloistered nuns of Kenya about monastic art and

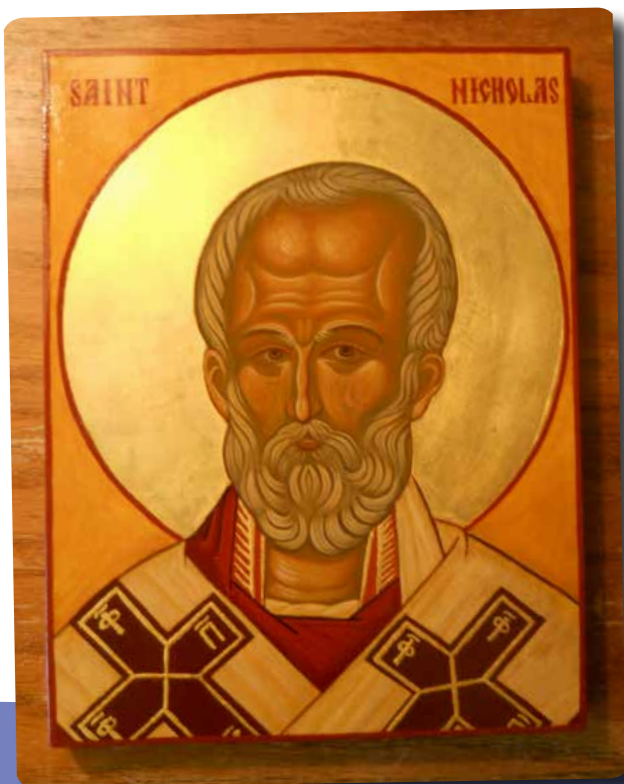
icons, and learn so much more. I am so grateful for the time I had with these women. What a gift!"

"To help people deepen their connection to what they've given their life to – God – is really quite a grace and an honor," says Sister Jeana. "And part of the reason I do this with different groups is for the ecumenical value. I think the more that Roman Catholics understand Eastern theology and icons, I think the more it helps Christians worldwide understand each other. Christ prays that all would be one, so I feel strongly that our connection between East and West is so important. Monastics in particular are given that task of ecumenical dialogue, to make it happen. For me to be part of it in a small way, inching forward toward unity, is a great gift for me."

And the African nuns felt Sister Jeana was a gift for them.

"Her teaching on monastic art was deep and so enriching," wrote Sister Lucy Moraa Tabichi in an e-mail. "It inspired me. I was so excited to learn how to use icons for personal prayer. It has been of great help in my contemplation. (Sister Jeana) teaches with passion. I could see it in her gestures, illustrations and examples. She made sure everybody understood. Because (of) her teaching, many (nuns) came to recover their lost fervor for icons, (and) how to pray with icons instead of using them as decorations."

Sister Jeana taught for about two hours a day for six days in Nairobi, Kenya, focusing on three different kinds of religious art. One was liturgical art, which makes visible the realities happening



Left: This icon of St. Nicholas, based on a Greek prototype, was painted by Sister Jeana and is often used to teach her classes about the process of painting icons. She likes how it shows different levels of light, and how it's an example of inverse perspective – where elements on the top and sides are tipped forward so multiple angles are visible. Sister Jeana says "this symbolizes how from God's perspective, everything is present, and yet everything is whole; it isn't fragmented."



Sister Jeana Visel (at right) dances with nuns in Nairobi, Kenya, during a music practice. She says, "This was so much a part of who they are, expressing in song and dance what they're feeling and how this all connects. Their sense of joy and community was really refreshing and beautiful. It reminded me of what I'm called to be as a Benedictine."

when people gather for liturgy. Another was devotional art, which helps us pray and draw closer to Jesus and the saints in preparation for liturgy. And the third was educational art, which teaches us the history and beliefs of our practices.

"A lot of it was educating about basic ways of relating with images," says Sister Jeana. "Icons are about depicting religious beliefs in a visual way, and making theological truths visible."

She would send each class off with a religious image to try to pray in a certain way, and then give her feedback. Several really connected with the images, saying they sensed God was very present as they prayed with their image.

Sister Mari Lucy Njeri wrote, "With the experience of Sister Jeana, I can confirm that images and icons can be a means to bring people back to God. Sister Jeana is a mentor for me and others. Her sharing with each one shows she is beyond a teacher, but a mentor. (She) was one of us in meals, dancing, walking, studying."

Sister Judith, an Augustinian nun, wrote that "Sister Jeana was really inspiring. Icons (are) really an awesome thing that made me have a new way of understanding. It opened a new horizon in me. Her teachings made me feel that icons are really spiritual and (gave) me a new way of viewing them."

One example of that was Sister Jeana leading the nuns through an exercise of praying with an icon of the Transfiguration. After they read the scripture passage on the Transfiguration, the class reflected on the reading and the icon, and Sister Jeana asked if the image revealed anything new to them. Some mentioned how Peter was still trying to look at Jesus despite the brilliant light surrounding Jesus, and they were struck by him trying to make that connection even when confronted with the mystery of God. Sister Jeana notes, "It was a beautiful observation of what can come out of prayer with both an image and the text. Some nuns said, 'I do understand what they're trying to say now.' It was lovely for me to hear that."

Ironically, Sister Jeana also learned something from her own classes. She's currently working to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree. As part of that, she wanted to test how teaching people to pray with images would work in a different culture. She reworked her presentation to include more African saints. "The nuns' sense of connection with those that looked more like them was instantaneous," says Sister Jeana. "I learned it's so important to have images of people – models of holiness -- with whom we can connect. I was really glad I learned that."

At a going-away party they held for Sister Jeana, one nun performed a song she wrote for her. "She said it was 'a thank you for coming and showing us the face of Christ,'" says Sister Jeana. ■



Sister Jeana with her Dominican friend, Sister Lucy Moraa Tabichi.



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### Calendar of Events

#### 2016

March 27, 2016	Easter
April 16, 2016	Oblate Meeting
May 14, 2016	Spring Recital
May 15, 2016	Oblate Meeting
June 13-15, 2016	Camp Marian (5-8th Grade Girls)
June 18, 2016	Golden Jubilee Celebration
June 25-26, 2016	Academy Alumnae Reunion
June 25-July 1, 2016	Come & See Week
August 15, 2015	Dome Golf Classic (Pete Dye Course)
August 20, 2016	Opening of 150th Celebration
August 27, 2016	Women of the Rule Banquet
August 28, 2016	Oblate Picnic
September 17, 2016	Oblate Meeting – Rite of Reception
September 17-18, 2016	Ferdinand Folk Fest Fondo
September 24, 2016	Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally
October 7-9, 2016	Women of the Church Conference
October 14-16, 2016	Benedictine Pilgrimage
October 15, 2016	Monastery Gift Shop 20th Anniversary Celebration

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