



SEEK PRAY SHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

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In his Prologue to *The Rule of St. Benedict*, the author says, "See how the Lord in His love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see God who has called us to the kingdom."

As you will see from this issue of *Seek Pray Share*, our sisters — and those who support us with their time, talent and resources — live this out in extraordinary ways every day, even in this extraordinary time.

Looking forward, hopeful signs are everywhere. All of our sisters have been vaccinated. We are slowly able to welcome family members, volunteers and retreatants back into the monastery. Tours resume later this summer. And the labor of our sisters, here and out in the world, continues to bear so much good fruit.

This is all thanks to you. Your generosity manifests itself in our mission. Your support and friendship allow us to do the work of God's kingdom here on earth.

We continue to pray for our world, that her leaders will rely on their Creator for wisdom and understanding. We continue to pray for you and those close to you, lifting you up with grateful and joyful hearts.

May God bless you and yours, today and always.

A Anita Louise Lowe, OSB

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB
Prioress

Directed Retreats

From the rush of daily life to the endless stream of email, television, social media and more, there's too little space or silence left to nurture our spiritual life and deepen our relationship with God.

Directed retreats offer time alone to be still and listen to God, with one of our Spiritual Directors to guide you.

You can participate in scheduled week-long directed retreats, such as those this June and September, or arrange for your own individual directed retreat, from a single day to eight days.

Either way, you can spend your retreat here at the Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand or participate virtually via Zoom.

In-person retreats include lodgings in our newly renovated Hospitality Center, three meals each day and access to the monastery grounds throughout the day.

To learn more about upcoming directed retreats, call the Benedictine Hospitality Center: 812-367-1411, extension 7309.

To schedule an individual retreat, call 812-367-1411 and ask to speak with someone in Spiritual Direction.

RIGHT:
Madonna Lake, east
of the monastery on
the grounds of the
Sisters of St. Benedict
in Ferdinand.



The Homemaker

Sister Jane McClure
just keeps bringing
people home with
Habitat for
Humanity.



When the parish church at St. Theresa's in Evansville, Indiana was torn down, Sister Jane Michele McClure and her team at Habitat for Humanity had a vision.

What if that empty lot, home for decades to a thriving parish community, could become a site for new Habitat homes, and the foundation for an entirely new community?

Sister Jane is the Major Gifts Officer for Habitat in Evansville. With her team and a group of committed volunteers, including an Advisory Council of over 30 St. Theresa's parishioners and graduates plus community leaders, they were able to secure the property and begin plans for a new kind of neighborhood — St. Theresa Place — a city block where all of the homes will be Habitat homes.

Sister Jane is quick to credit Father Ted Temple, who had served as pastor at St. Theresa's from 1979 - 1993. Inspired by Habitat's plan to breathe new life into a place that was so special to him, he singlehandedly raised more than a million dollars for the project.

His words about his beloved parish apply just as easily to the vision behind St. Theresa Place: "It was the people — that sense of community — that we tried to build. We worked together and played together and accomplished a lot together."

Habitat homeowners are hard-working people who typically can't qualify for a mortgage loan from a bank, usually because their income level is too low.

Each prospective Habitat homeowner commits to working 300+ sweat equity hours on their home and the homes of others, as well as attending homeownership workshops, where they learn everything from home maintenance to budgeting and financial management.

Approved Habitat homeowners receive a 0% interest mortgage loan. As they make their monthly payments and build equity in their own home, those payments replenish the pool of funds available for other homeowners.



By late 2021 or early 2022, all fourteen homes will be complete, and the new residents of St. Theresa Place will be, in Father Ted's words, working together and playing together, creating a new community.

"It never gets old," said a beaming Sister Jane, "watching people who never thought they would own a home walk through that door, look around and say, 'this is mine.' That's the beauty of what we do. We transform lives, one family at a time"

Your donations to the Sisters of St. Benedict have helped support all our sisters and the work we do throughout the communities we serve.

ABOVE (left to right): Holly Edmond, Director of Development; Ken Schenk, longtime St. Theresa's parishioner; Sister Jane Michele McClure, Major Gifts Officer; Tom Baumgart, another longtime St. Theresa's parishioner; and Sister Jenny Miller.

OPPOSITE: Sister Jane Michele McClure, standing in a house under construction that will soon be one of the completed homes in St. Theresa Place.

More Sisters Making a Difference

Sister Judy Dewig loves teaching. With a Bachelor's in Elementary Education from St. Benedict College and a Master's in Special Education from Indiana State, she's devoted her life to it.

In fact, teaching led her to the Sisters of St. Benedict. "I was drawn to this life by the joy, enthusiasm and happiness that I experienced with the Sisters that taught me at St. Joseph.

With the close of the 2020 - 2021 school year at St. Benedict Cathedral School in Evansville, Sister Judy will also bring her teaching career to a close.

But don't worry. After decades of shaping young hearts and minds, we have a feeling she'll stay very busy making the world a better place in the months and years to come.



The pandemic brought food insecurity to millions more households. But at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry in Evansville, they find more than meals. They get a warm welcome and sunny smile from our own Sister Donna Marie Herr who manages the food pantry. "I think my favorite thing is observing the kindness of our volunteers to those who come — and seeing smiles on the faces of those receiving a 4-day supply of groceries."

Make Your Team at Home.

Is your company, group or organization looking for the ideal place to get away for a day of planning, brainstorming or team building?

The Sisters of St. Benedict have the perfect solution. Actually, four of them, any of which can be configured to meet your needs.



Our Media Center offers a unique classroom setting. Whether you bring your own technology or use ours, this sunlit space creates a warm, welcoming learning environment.

Our Alumnae Center is perfect for group exercises and general discussion, while St. Scholastica provides an ideal venue for workshops and presentations.



Have a bigger group? St. Gertrude Hall is an expansive space that can accommodate even the largest group. And its proximity to our kitchen and dining hall make it perfect for before-lunch and after-lunch sessions.



But you don't have to stay indoors. The monastery grounds offer plenty of places for your team to get out and stretch their legs, from a stroll through the grotto to a leisurely walk around the lake. And when work is over, you can visit St. Benedict's Brew Works for one of their refreshing craft beverages and homemade pizza.



Clockwise from upper left: Media Center, St. Gertrude Hall, Media Center, Brew Works, St. Scholastica, Alumnae Center.



To find out more or book a space for your group or team, just call the Hospitality Center at 812-367-1411, ext. 7309.

Entangled for Good

Jessica Bergman's ties to the Sisters

"How wonderful that
these people are on
the planet with me
right now"

JESSICA BERGMAN



Many people have a life-changing moment when they encounter the Sisters of St. Benedict. For Jessica Bergman, it happened in Mexico.

A chaplain from Lees–McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina invited Jessica to accompany the Benedictine Monks of Weston Priory to visit the Benedictine Sisters in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

“It was an eye-opening moment,” she recalls. “The only thing they were all worried about was helping the needy.” Little did she know that single encounter would eventually lead to a much deeper involvement with the Sisters.

A Career Path to the Sisters

Jessica attended Union College in Kentucky, where she met Matt Bergman (although they didn’t start dating until after college). She worked in the Community Service office coordinating the Bonner Scholar Program, which offered scholarships and public service experience to Appalachian college students.

She stayed with the program for two years as it was expanded through Americorp, then worked in the same program for 4 years as a graduate student at Appalachian State, where she was Interim Dean of Students for year, then Dean of Students for 3 years. It wasn’t her sweet spot. “If you’d gotten to me,” she says, “the answer was no.”

Following her trip to Mexico and marriage to Matt, a number of positions followed. She was Director of Annual Giving at Hanover College for 2 years, then worked in development for the University of Louisville, then as a VP for Union College, her alma mater.

When she left that post, she was contacted by Kerri Cokeley, Director of Mission Advancement for the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand. Recalling her deep admiration for the Benedictines, she began working for the Sisters as a consultant and coach for Kerri’s team.



Women of the Rule

Kerri invited Jessica to be a guest at an event for the Women of the Rule Philanthropy Circle. Members each contribute \$1,000 every year to the Sisters. Then they meet once a year to review proposals from the Sisters and choose projects to fund. Jessica quickly became an enthusiastic member.

In 2020, just before COVID-19 closed things down, Jessica came full circle from that first trip south of the border, going with the Women of the Rule to visit the Sisters’ mission in Peru.

For information about joining the Women of the Rule, contact Sr. Barbara Catherine Schmitz at barbarac@thdome.org or at 812-367-1411, ext. 2649.



A Sister's Story

SISTER DIANE
FISCHER'S
JOURNEY TO
BECOME A
SISTER, IN HER
OWN WORDS

“My Mom was sitting at the kitchen table when I was ready to leave. I bent down and kissed her and said goodbye, but she wouldn't answer me.”



“In high school in our Academy, I was pretty boy crazy and had seven guys on the string. (In fact, I dated up until the night before I entered.)

When I was suddenly hit with a call to religious life during our Dec. 7th retreat day, I made a quick response to enter. I finally shared it with other girls, but they didn't quite believe me.

Then, when I met the prioress (in 1954) to state my desire to enter, she asked me if I liked children. I told her, “Yes, very much.” She said, “Maybe you should get married and have children.”

When I left the interview, I felt she really didn't want me to enter. Years later, when I met with her as a young sister, she confessed to me that she didn't think I would really enter, and when I did, that I would stay. At that time, she wanted me to know what a wonderful young sister I had become.

I hesitated to tell my family about my decision. I finally wrote and told my parents before going home for our Easter break from the Academy.

When I went home and got up the nerve to bring it up, Mom wouldn't talk about it.

I was determined to enter and got prepared to do so during that summer. Mom was totally against it. My parents offered to send me to college (my sisters had not gone to college).

On Labor Day weekend, we were going back to French Lick to our house there for a visit. I called the Greyhound bus station for the schedule for when it would go through French Lick.

I then made plans for my friend from Haubstadt, IN, who was also entering, to pick me up at the bus station in Evansville and take me to her home. Her parents would take us to the monastery.

I was only 17, but I was able to make all the arrangements. I still marvel at how I did all that. Things went as planned.

When it came time for the bus to come through French Lick, I picked up my two suitcases and was going to walk down the hill to catch the bus.

However, my dad said he would take me. He told me on the way that he wasn't against my entering, but he and Mom thought I was too young. My Mom was sitting at the kitchen table when I was ready to leave. I bent down and kissed her and said goodbye, but she wouldn't answer me.

Although my family came to my Investing and Professions, Mom was never happy about my being here. After I was teaching for several years in Evansville, when my parents came to visit me, my mom seemed to finally accept it and realized I was happy.

After that, she became very proud of me, and I heard her bragging one time to someone that she had a daughter who was a nun. I still have a note she wrote me on my Silver Jubilee, telling me how proud she was of me.”

If you have questions about religious life or the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, if you'd like to visit — or if you just want to talk — reach out to us at vocation@thedome.org or by calling 812.367.1411, ext. 2830.



Going with the Flow...

God doesn't stop calling women to religious life during a pandemic. So we don't stop meeting with them. We just think of safe, smart ways to stay in touch. Our Vocation Director, Sister Jill Reuber, has taken advantage of Zoom and WhatsApp to continue building relationships and helping women on their path to discernment.





Our Famous Fruitcake's Founding (Grand)father

If you've ever savored the divine experience of Sister Anita's Bourbon-Soaked Fruitcake, you know that it lives up to its name. Every delicious loaf is lovingly infused with the equivalent of two full shots of bourbon.

What you might not know is that the recipe is a family heirloom, handed down from prioress Sister Anita Louise Lowe's grandfather, Frank Geywitz, pictured here.

During the Great Depression, he was a baker for A&P in Louisville, where he honed his craft.



He also perfected the recipe which was handed down to his granddaughter — and our prioress — Sister Anita Louise Lowe. That recipe, followed meticulously in our own bakery, is the reason these sweet loaves of goodness sell out as soon as they become available.



A Way With Words

You may already know that the Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand is home to more scholars per capita than a lot of colleges.

In March, two of our own were published in the prestigious *The American Benedictine Review*, a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal containing the latest scholarship on Benedictine monasticism and monastic history, wisdom from the monastic tradition, critical reflection on monastic life, the Church, and the culture, and articles to assist in initial and ongoing monastic formation.



Sister Jeana Visel is the author of of

“Engaging the Tradition: Monastic Customaries as Memories of Ecclesial Identity,” in which she seeks “to examine how several examples of twentieth-century customaries from my own monastery express ecclesial memory, experience, and identity in flux.”



In the same issue, our prioress, Sister Anita Louise Lowe, reviewed *The Monastic Call of Every Christian*, edited by Greg Peters, which explores the idea “that every Christian person is called to embody and embrace, in some way, the monastic way of life.”

Both are examples of the sisters embracing our role as thought leaders in modern Benedictine life.



Sister Kathy Cash’s long stay in Peru included two weeks at the convent in the mountains in Santo Domingo. “Life there is very different. There is much poverty, and things for the people are very hard. Our sisters have a lovely house and good accommodations, but some things (like cold bucket baths) were still a challenge for me.” By the time you read this, Sister Kathy will be back with us in Ferdinand.



missions



Counter Culture.

She's a nurse and a pharmacist. A former sister, an Oblate and a volunteer. A mentor, friend, supporter and more. She's the energetic Elaine Baumgart, and we love her.

When she isn't working as a Pharmacist at Ascension St. Vincent in Evansville (46 years so far), she's in constant motion.

She volunteers for No One Dies Alone, sitting with dying patients who have no family. She's been an Oblate since high school, and is an active member of our Oblate Advisory Board and other boards. She received the Brute Award from her diocese last year for her work in nearly every ministry at Holy Rosary Church in Evansville. She was even a Benedictine sister in our community for a few years, and still volunteers in our Community Health Center. She's a wonderful friend who says she values the truth and joyfulness of our community. "Hospitality is a big part of the Benedictine charism. It just becomes part of your being...it never goes away." We hope Elaine never goes away, either.



Zoomed In.

Our Oblates will be glad to begin meeting in person as soon as pandemic guidelines permit. But COVID hasn't kept them from getting together. Sisters Brenda and Karen Joseph led a discussion recently and got to hear how everyone is coping...and continuing their spiritual walk.

In Memoriam.

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



Sister Lorraine DeVault

8/22/1928 – 10/2/2020

With a Master's degree in education, Sister Lorraine had a passion for her field, teaching in Evansville, Washington and Mt. Vernon, and serving as principal at schools in Evansville, Jasper and Haubstadt.



Sister Mary Rose Hasenour

7/27/1941 – 11/26/2020

The oldest of ten children, Sister Mary Rose had a true servant's heart, working in housekeeping and supportive services here in Ferdinand, at St. Joseph Hospital in Huntingburg, St. Meinrad Archabbey, Lark Community House in Siberia, Indiana, and Dove House in Jasper. She loved a good joke.



Sister Jolinda Naas

5/14/1937 – 1/27/2021

Sister Jolinda studied at Notre Dame, California State, and Florida Institute of Technology before earning Master's degrees in Elementary Administration and Elementary Administration from Ball State University. She then put them to work, teaching at seven schools and serving as principal at four.



Sister Theresita Schenk

7/27/1920 – 4/7/2021

Sister Theresita loved music and taught generations of musicians. Following Vatican II, when Mass changed from Latin to English, Sister Theresita took on the task of translating liturgical music from Latin into English, also adjusting the music to fit the timing of the English translation. An enormous undertaking, her translated versions were widely adopted all across the United States.

