

SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

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Contents

FROM THE PRIORESS 01

TRUE ORIGINALS 02

Own a work of art by one of our talented Sisters.

SEEKING SHELTER 03

Sister Mary Frances Schafer works for the homeless.

10 TAKEAWAYS 06

Common misconceptions about homelessness.

SUMMER VISITORS GUIDE 07

The Monastery has lots for you to do this summer.

IN MEMORIAM 09

We say farewell to three of our beloved Sisters.

A HIGHER CALL 11

Sister Sarah Yungwirth guides young people in their faith.

OBLATES IN ACTION 13

Our Oblates hear about the Eucharist and our Archives.



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



At the St. Hildegard Society Dinner, which took place just as this issue of *Seek Pray Share* was going to press, we heard from two Postulants, Katie Cummings and Callie Nowlin, about their intent to enter the Novitiate later this year, and from Sister Roxanne Cassandra Higgins and Sister Lisa Marie Schutz about their intent to make their final profession. Meanwhile, our Director of Vocations, Sister Jill Reuber, continues to have ongoing conversations with a number of young women who are discerning whether religious life in our community is right for them.

These are dynamic times for Monastery Immaculate Conception. In this issue, you'll read about just two of our many Sisters whose ministry takes them outside the walls of the monastery and into the world, making a real difference in the lives of people every day.

You'll also read about our growing and active group of Oblates, whose members come from this area and from all across the country, joining us in living by the Gospel and the Rule of St. Benedict. All this, and much more.

I can't truly express what a joy it is to be part of our vibrant Benedictine community now. But I can express our gratitude to all of you whose unwavering support makes our work possible. You are changing the world.

Anita Louise Lowe, OSB

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB
Prioress

True Originals.

Own art created by the Sisters.

The Sisters of St. Benedict are blessed with a multitude of talents, including many gifted artists. And some of their original works could find a place in your home! Not in the market for original art? The Sisters' art can also be found on a variety of our notecards. Visit the Monastery Gift Shop or go online at thedome.org to find a unique work of art you'll love.



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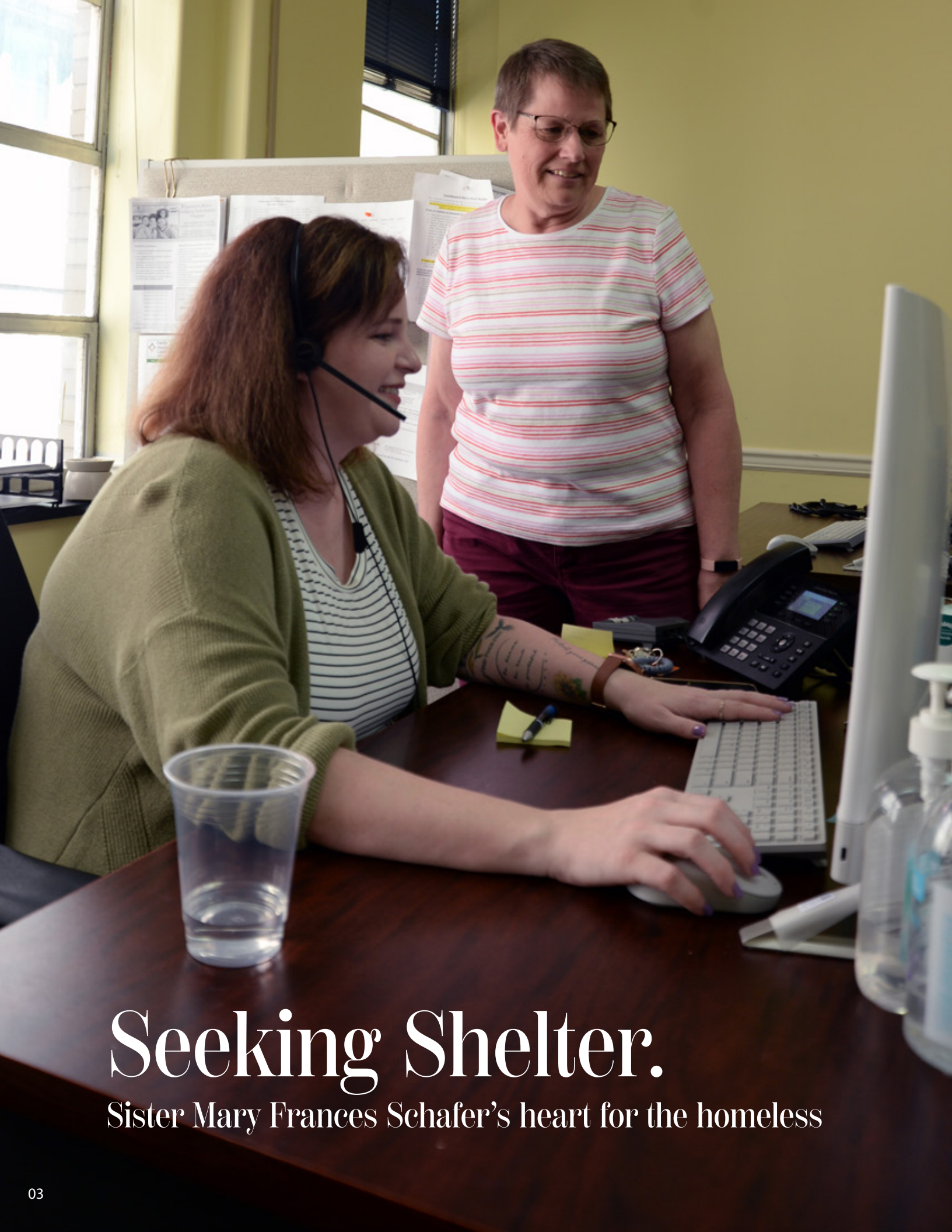


1 - Hand painted ornament by Sister Mary Lee Hillenbrand, top right. 2 and 3 - Watercolors by Sister Jane Becker, center left. 4 & 5 - Watercolors by Sister Doris Market, bottom right.

Mark Your Calendar!

You'll be able to find the Sisters' gourmet baked goods and more at the Big Four Arts Festival in Louisville on Sept. 9 & 10; the Ferdinand Folk Festival on Sept. 16; and Madison Chautauqua on Sept. 30 & Oct. 1.





Seeking Shelter.

Sister Mary Frances Schafer's heart for the homeless

The Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand may be the only religious community to gain a member thanks to UFOs.

In high school at Academy Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Mary Frances Schafer was considering religious life. While the community in Ferdinand was at the top of her list, she decided to visit others as well.

One of those was the Ursuline Sisters in Louisville. Academy principal Sister Mary Dominic Frederick, who had family in the Louisville area volunteered to drive her.

“On the way back, it’s dark,” recalls Sister Mary Frances today. “And Sister Mary Dominic says, ‘Now, whenever I come through this area, when it’s dark, I always look for UFOs.’ And I say, ‘UFOs?’ She says, ‘Yeah, they’re real. I know they’re real!’ So we have to look for UFOs. Well, I thought she was nuts.

But I also thought, if she can be in this community, and still be respected as principal of the high school, and all of those things, maybe there’s a place for me. You don’t have to be all together and all of that, and if you believe in UFOs, fine with us! So that really kind of pushed me over the edge.”

Years later, Sister Mary Frances reminded Sister Mary Dominic of that night. She told her former principal the important role she had played in her decision to become a Benedictine, “not because you were principal of the high school, but because you believed in UFOs.” Sister Mary Dominic’s response? “I still believe in UFOs! *Don’t you?*”

When Sister Mary Frances first entered the community, she wanted to be a lawyer, to help people with wills and other family matters. She began by working on her Bachelor’s degree at Brescia College in Owensboro, Kentucky while serving the elderly in Dubois County in social services.

For her Master’s degree, she decided on Washington University in St. Louis. Her last practicum was in Louisville, and upon graduation, she worked with that city’s New Directions Housing Corporation, providing transitional housing for homeless single parent families, for about seven years.

“My real interest is advocacy and policy,” she says, “but I knew that I needed some real world experience with the people before I did advocacy work. Because if you don’t, you end up doing an academic exercise, and you really don’t know how this is affecting folks. So I did the transitional housing program.”

That’s when a position became available at the Coalition for the Homeless in Louisville, as the lead for the continuum of care for Louisville and Jefferson County. “This was coordinating the shelter system in the city. Writing a huge grant to fund the shelter system. Working with all of the partners and getting everybody to walk in the same direction.” She served in that role for nearly 20 years.



OPPOSITE PAGE

Sister Mary Frances Schafer at The Coalition for the Homeless in Louisville, KY

LEFT

Sister Mary Frances on the day she made her perpetual vows.

BELOW

The late Sister Mary Dominic Frederick, who passed away in 2020 at the age of 90.



RIGHT

Sister Mary Frances Schafer at The Coalition for the Homeless in Louisville, KY

BELOW

A younger Sister Mary Frances playing guitar at Mass, flanked by Sisters Ann Francis Hillenbrand and Brenda Engleman. Just out of frame is Sister Karlene Sensmeier.

Those two decades brought perspective to Sister Mary Frances' passion. So about two years ago, she approached her boss with a proposition.

"I asked her, 'Is there any way I can back away from the job that I'm doing now and take on some responsibility for looking at trends of homeless folks? Some of the programs or services that need to be done, but need somebody specifically to coordinate them?' And she said yes!"

"So now I'm able to do some things that I think are making a difference in the services that are being provided and how homeless people access the shelters, information and that kind of thing."

"And I'm not doing a lot of the things like writing a grant or coordinating the system so much. It's more the things where it's like, it'd be great to do that, but nobody has time to do it."

If you really want to get Sister Mary Frances talking, ask her what people get wrong when they think about the homeless. Then settle in, because as you might imagine, she has a lot to say on the subject.

"One of the big misconceptions is that people become homeless because they're lazy. But many people — *many* people — who are homeless are working. They're working hard. Probably working harder than I am. They're working at low wage jobs. Most of them are physical jobs. They *are* working."

"It's commonly accepted that no person should spend more than 30% of their income on housing — the cost of a place to live, including utilities," she continues. "But when you look at what it costs in

Louisville, Kentucky for a two bedroom, low income apartment, then look at the minimum wage, or even a little more than minimum wage, you're not making enough."

Sister Mary Frances points out another misconception: that Section 8 takes care of that gap between what a person earns and what it costs to have a home or apartment.

"Section 8 was created to fill the gap between the person's income and what the landlord can afford to charge. But in the 1980s, Section 8 was cut drastically. So a lot of that gap-filling went away."

"And if you know the history of homelessness, it was in the 1980s that we really began to see large numbers of homeless people. That's a big piece."

She notes that many people who are homeless are also disabled — mentally, physically, chemically.



Those disabilities, when they're severe, can make it impossible for a person to get or keep a job, even when they truly want to work. And disability payments rarely cover the cost of a place to live.

"Once you lose your housing," she observes, "it's not a downhill slide, it's a cliff. It's expensive to move. You have to have first and last month's rent. Utility deposits. All these kinds of things. And a lot of times, they require a look at your finances."

"So even if you get a job where you're close to being able to pay that amount, you still can't get housing, because you don't have that extra piece."

"The longer you're homeless, the worse it is. You start losing a lot of the things that you have. You need to get a job close to transportation."

"Does your area have enough affordable housing — affordable to the lowest of the low, not to the middle class, not even to the upper lower class. If not, you can't even use a voucher, because there's nobody to take it."

Sister Mary Frances says that lack of support is also critical. "As many of us go through life and have our first apartment, we have a lot of supports around us. Maybe your parents can help you with those utility deposits and that kind of stuff. And maybe you need to pay it back, but you still have it upfront."

"If you're poor, a lot of the people around you are poor, and they don't have the resources to help you either. So like I said, homelessness is not a downhill slide, it's a cliff. And climbing back up that cliff is very, very, very difficult. Homelessness has layers and layers and layers."



10 Takeaways about the Homeless

It's not just a big city problem. It's a nationwide issue that affects rural, suburban and urban areas alike.

The homeless population is diverse.

Homelessness affects people of all ages, races, genders and backgrounds.

Homelessness is not always a choice.

Factors like job loss, mental illness, domestic violence and family breakdown can contribute to homelessness.

Homelessness isn't a short-term problem.

While some people experience brief homelessness, others are homeless for months or even years at a time.

Homelessness is on the rise. Despite efforts to combat it, the number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States has been increasing in recent years.

Homelessness disproportionately affects certain groups.

At-risk populations include veterans, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities and people of color.

Affordable housing is a major solution to homelessness. The lack of affordable housing is one of the primary drivers of homelessness in the United States.

Homelessness has significant economic costs. It can result in increased healthcare costs, lost productivity and other economic impacts.

Homelessness is often invisible. Individuals may be sleeping in their cars or couch-surfing with friends and family, making them less visible.

Homelessness is a complex issue. Addressing homelessness requires a multifaceted approach that includes affordable housing, access to healthcare, education, job training and other social services.

Photo this page by Jonathon Gregg, Spectrum News 1

Summer Visitors Guide

Come visit the monastery this summer.

Tour

Come and take a guided or self-guided tour of this historic Benedictine monastery, established in 1867.

GUIDED TOURS

Tuesday – Friday

10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m.

Saturday / Sunday

1 p.m. and 2 p.m.



Wander

Spend a peaceful morning or afternoon on Grotto Hill, including the Lourdes Shrine, our Outdoor Stations of the Cross, the Rosary Steps and the statues of Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Enjoy a meditative walk at Hildegard's Labyrinth or a contemplative stroll around the lake...or simply take in the breathtaking view from the church colonnade.



Shop

From the gourmet cookies and pretzels made right here by the Sisters, to apparel, home decor, books and more, our Gift Shop has something for everyone.

HOURS

Mon. - Thursday: 10:00 - 4:30

Friday - Saturday: 10:00 - 6:00

Sunday: Closed



Stay

Whether you're here for a retreat directed by the Sisters, or on a spiritual retreat of your own, our Benedictine Hospitality Center provides cozy, comfortable accommodations right here at the monastery.



Sip & Dine

On the grounds of the monastery, St. Benedict's Brew Works serves up craft beers, their famous pizza and more, with indoor and outdoor seating.

Gift Shop, Prayer, Mass and Tour times are Eastern Standard Time. All times subject to change. We welcome you to call the monastery to verify the times are as listed.

Pray

We invite you to join the Sisters of St. Benedict for daily prayer and Mass in our historic church.

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Monday – Friday: 7:30 a.m., Noon, 5 p.m.

Saturday: 8 a.m., Noon, 5 p.m.

Sunday: 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

MASS

Tuesday & Thursday: 7:55 a.m.

Saturday: 8:25 a.m. (Sabbatical Sat. Mass at 10:25 a.m.)

Sunday: 10:30 a.m.



In Memoriam.

God's promise has been fulfilled for our dear Sisters.



Sister Mary Emma Jochum of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, died at 9:15 p.m. on Monday, February 13, 2023, at Memorial Hospital in Jasper. She was born Henrietta Jochum on July 13, 1940 in Huntingburg, IN, the oldest of thirteen children of Otto Sr. and Emma (Brinkman) Jochum. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1957 from St. Mary Parish and made her monastic vows in 1959.

Sister Mary Emma held a Bachelor's degree from St. Benedict College and a Master's degree from Mundelein College, and studied at Mt. St. Joseph on the Ohio, St. Francis University and Ball State University. She taught elementary students at three schools in the region. She served as Director of Religious Education at St. Clement Parish in Boonville, St. Joseph Parish in Evansville and St. Paul Parish in Tell City for a total of 39 years, and as Associate Director of Religious Education at the Diocesan Catholic Center in Evansville. At the monastery, she served in Mission Advancement, gave tours, and most recently in Prayer Ministry with the Hildegard Health Center.



Sister Mary Carmen Spayd of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 9:45 p.m. on Sunday, February 26, 2023, at the monastery.

Sister Mary Carmen was born Cyrilla Luella Spayd on August 16, 1925, in Mariah Hill, Indiana, the fourth of five children of William and Theresa (Brenner) Spayd. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1944 from Mary Help of Christian Parish with her twin sister, Sister Mary Carmel, and they made their monastic vows in 1946.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from St. Benedict College and an MBA in Commerce from Notre Dame University, where she also earned a Master's degree in Secondary Administration. Sister Mary Carmen taught at St. Benedict School and Mater Dei High School, both in Evansville; at Vincennes University in Jasper; and at St. Ferdinand High School in Ferdinand, where she was also the principal for four years. She also served as the Development Director and Director of Special Projects at Marian Heights Academy in Ferdinand. With the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand, she worked as the Assistant Development Director, as Secretary to the Vocation Director, in the gardens, making flower arrangements, and most recently served in Prayer Ministry in the Hildegard Health Center.

Sister Mary Austin Blank of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 3:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2023, at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand. Sister Mary Austin was born Donna Catherine Blank on July 16, 1939, in Cincinnati, OH, the oldest of two children of August and Lavina (Jaent) Blank. She entered the Sisters of St.

Benedict of Ferdinand in 1957 from St. Cecilia Parish and made her monastic vows in 1959.



Sister Mary Austin earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from St. Benedict College and a Master's degree in Mathematics from St. Louis University. She also studied at Indiana State University, the University of Nebraska, Oakland City University, Creighton University, the Catholic University of America, and the University of Evansville.

Sister Mary Austin taught elementary students at St. Theresa School in Evansville, IN, and taught mathematics at Mater Dei High School in Evansville, and at Marian Heights Academy in Ferdinand, where she also served as President. She worked in the admissions office of Sacred Heart College in Belmont, NC, was the Regional Director of Admissions for Elms & Associates in Asheville, NC, served as the Director of Admissions at both Felician College in Lodi, NJ and Brescia University in Owensboro, KY and worked for the University of Phoenix in Indianapolis, IN. With the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand, she worked as a Development Associate, as an online teacher, as a tutor, at the switchboard, and by making mission advancement phone calls. She most recently served in prayer ministry.

Memorial contributions in memory of these or any of our Sisters may be made to the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand.

ARCHDIOCESE
of
LOUISVILLE



VOCATIONS

A Higher Call

Sister Sarah
Cathleen
Yungwirth is
guiding young
people.



Sister Sarah Cathleen Yungwirth doesn't like her job. She loves it.

A native of Hagerstown, Maryland, Sister Sarah entered Monastery Immaculate conception in 1998, making her first profession on July 22, 2000, and her perpetual profession on September 23, 2006.

One week after her first profession, she was missioned to Louisville, where she's been ever since. For 11 years, she was a teacher at St. Raphael School. She taught second grade for seven years, fourth grade for a year, and special needs for three years, and was Coordinator of Religious Education for the school. In 2011, she made a move to St. Patrick's School, teaching second grade for one year and special needs for three years.

So how did an elementary school teacher transition to working in vocations? At St. Patrick, Sister Sarah got involved with a retreat program called Teens Encounter Christ.

At the end of a retreat weekend, the program's chaplain, Father Michael Wimsatt, asked to speak with her.

"He said, 'I see some gifts in you. And I'm wondering if you might consider and pray about working with me in the vocation office.' And as he was talking to me about it, there was this excitement and this joy coming up within me."

She thought and prayed about it, and talked with community leadership. The result? Sister Sarah spent the next eight years working as Associate Director for Vocations for the Archdiocese of Louisville.

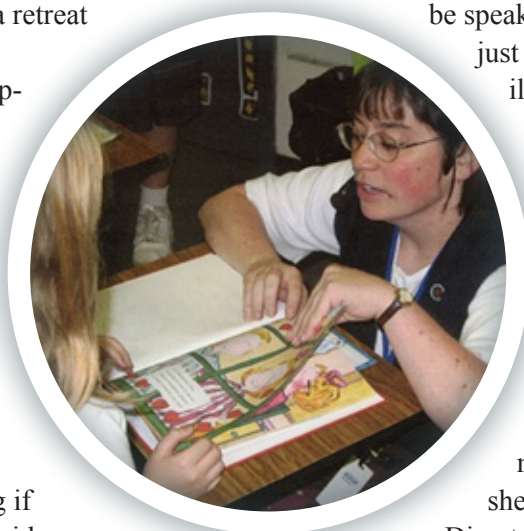
In that role, she talked with students all over the Archdiocese about how much God loves them, cares for them and has a plan for them. She worked with Seminarians as they journey through formation. She planned events where young people could come together to talk about and celebrate different vocations.

"I got to be a part of people's faith journeys as they're discovering where God might be leading them...what God might be speaking to their hearts. And I just feel so blessed and so privileged to be able to talk with and encourage people who are asking those important life questions and seeking God with their hearts."

Now she's stepping into a new role with the Archdiocese. "God is calling me to a new adventure," she says. "So I'm starting as Director of Children's Ministry, working with families preparing for Baptism through Confirmation and everything in between...being a part of the faith journey of kids and helping young people as they're preparing for the sacraments, making sure that they are growing on their faith journey."



ABOVE
Another day, another event as Associate Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Louisville



LEFT
Sister Sarah taught for 15 years at St. Raphael and St. Patrick in Louisville

Oblates: Putting Faith in Action.

Scenes from recent Oblate meetings at Monastery Immaculate Conception and via Zoom



Sisters Becky Mathauer, Jill Reuber and Kathy Cash handle the Zoom chores; meeting host Jim Weyer talks with Pat Stemle

Sister Jeana Visel presented to the Oblates; Cathy Meister chatted with Sister Ann Marie Howard



Linda Begle, Sister Mary Judith Fleig and Judy Luebehusen handled refreshments; meeting host Jim Weyer at the podium

Emily Earhart, Sister Laura Marie Schmitt and Lynn Falcony; Patti Schroeder, Arleta Weyer and Sister Brenda Engleman



Photos by Lynn Belli

For our February 19th meeting, Sister Jeana Visel presented “The Eucharist in Benedictine Life.” As U.S. Catholics, we are presently amid a three-year Eucharistic Revival. Sister Jeana spoke about what the Eucharist is for those who follow the Benedictine charism, and how it is central to our lives. Sister Jeana serves as Dean of School of Theology Programs and Director of Graduate Theology Programs at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

Our Oblates are Christian men and women from all walks of life who associate themselves with the Sisters of St. Benedict at Monastery Immaculate Conception. They promise to deepen their faith and to lead enriched Christian lives according to the Rule of St. Benedict. To find out more, visit thedome.org or email oblates@thedome.org.



Elaine Baumgart, Mel Schroeder, Pat Stemle, Jim Weyer, Arleta Weyer and Robin Dugan look over artifacts from the Archive collection.

Pat Stemle and Sister Rebecca Abel giving their presentation



Arleta Weyer, Robin Dugan, Deb Fleck and Sister Betty Drewes look at items from the Archive collection

Elaine Baumgart, Mel Schroeder and Sister Betty Drewes; Sister Rebecca Abel chats with Kathleen Weston



Photos by Lynn Belli

Our April presentation was given by Sister Rebecca Abel, Archivist, and assistant Oblate Pat Stemle (Oblate Ann Ennis also assists). They shared some history of the Archive followed by a tour of the collection on the basement floor of the Monastery. Sister Rebecca has served as Director of Libraries, NAC and Casa for the Pontifical North American College, Rome, Italy, and is a Library / Archives Consultant for Benedictine Communities and Online Librarian (part-time) for Catholic Distance University,

