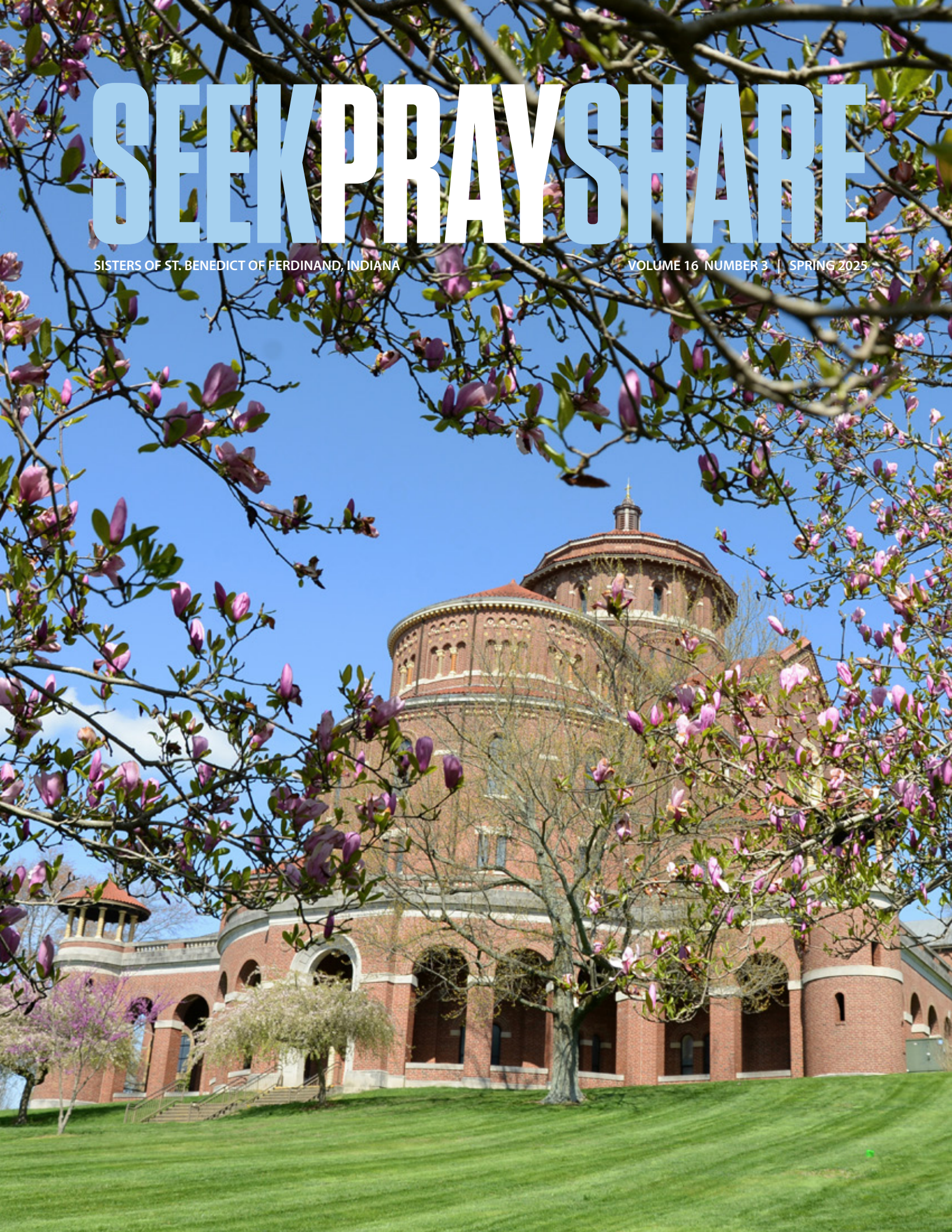


SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 3 | SPRING 2025



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Sometimes, when life seems like a whirlwind and change is the only constant, it helps to pause and reflect on those stable, solid people and things you know you can depend on.

Take this issue, for example. While the next page highlights just some of the renovations making a joyful noise at the monastery, the following pages spotlight Lisa and Bill Muller — generous donors, faithful Oblates, diligent Spiritual Directees, devout Retreatants and more. Like so many who support our ministries — like you — they are part of the bedrock which makes all our work possible.

You'll also see a lot of numbers in this issue. As you look those over, I encourage you to keep in mind that every one of those figures represents people who are touched by the Sisters because of you.

If you don't already, I encourage you to follow us on social media — we're on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn as @ferdinandosb — and to encourage others in your circle to do so as well, so that our message reaches the broadest possible audience. As always, you are in our prayers. I hope you'll keep us in yours.

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB
Prioress

Renovation Updates...

While many appreciate the stillness of the monastery, the last couple of years have been noisier than usual, with major projects taking place everywhere.

After one hundred years, we are replacing our old heating and air system with a modern, efficient one that will significantly reduce the monthly energy costs for heating and cooling our buildings, while providing a solution that should last for at least the next fifty years.

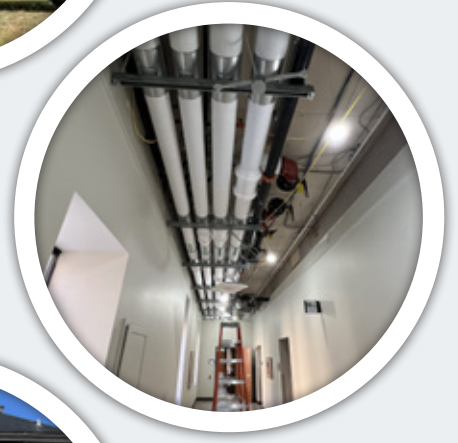
Window replacement continues throughout the monastery, as older and draftier windows give way to more weathertight, energy-efficient ones, while still preserving the appearance of this historic structure.

Many of our departments have been moving around as we renovate office areas to make the best possible use of the space we have. Upon completion, our business, administration, immigration services and mission advancement offices, among others, will all be renovated.

Our renovation of the former Hildegard Health Center space on the third floor was also completed recently, providing additional space for rooms for the Sisters and some much-needed updates.



Take a video tour of the remodeled third floor by scanning the code at left with your phone.





Power Couple

Oblates. Retreats. Spiritual Direction. Donors.
Lisa and Bill Muller go all in for the Sisters.

If it's possible to be born with a Benedictine spirit, then Lisa and Bill Muller probably were. The retired Evansville couple (she taught high school for 38 years, and he worked for a company that managed and leased farm real estate for 41 years) are deeply involved with the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand, and you get the sense that if there was room for them at the Monastery, they'd move in tomorrow.

Their first encounter with the Ferdinand Sisters was with Sister Mary Terence Knapp in the late 1980s or early 1990s at Mass at St. Nicholas Parish in Santa Claus, Indiana. "I didn't know who she was," Lisa recalls, "but I said, 'Look at that woman, that look of joy on her face!' That was Sister Mary Terence, and she did a wonderful job of running that parish with her sister, Sister Elaine Knapp." (The two, who were both religious and biological sisters, passed away within a week of each other in September of 2005.)

When the couple were members at Saint Mary's Church in downtown Evansville, the church hired two Sisters of St. Benedict, Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz and Sister Jennifer Miller, "both of whom," Lisa gushes, "were absolutely lovely people to work with."

Someone told Sister Jennifer that Lisa's summer break from teaching had just begun, and that she might have some extra time. Lisa remembers Sister Jennifer running across the parking lot and saying, "Hey, I think we've got some things you could do!" So the couple got very involved very quickly, doing RCIA, working at the church two or three nights a week, and loved every minute of it.

The Mullers enjoy regular visits with the Sisters. "I'd go every day if I lived there," declares Lisa. One of their favorite parts is visiting with our senior Sisters at Scenic Hills, just a short stroll down the hill from the Monastery.

The Sisters go to great lengths to make certain that those who live at Scenic Hills remain a vital part of monastery life. Bill and Lisa have especially enjoyed visiting there at 4:00 when it's time for afternoon prayer, which is led by the dynamic duo of Sister Jennifer Miller and Sister Judy Dewig.

Reflecting on their visits, Lisa says, "I can't describe it...how wonderful it is to be there with the Sisters at Scenic Hills.

They're in different states of health, but they light up when they have visitors come."

The couple always leaves the senior Sisters inspired as well. On a recent visit, they were talking about preparing children for First Communion.

Some people feel that children are too young to understand. But Sister Mary Leah Baehl told the couple, "If you saw the faces of those kids when they go up the first time to receive Communion, they may not all know all the nuts and bolts and all the prayers, but they know that this is a gift from God." Lisa adds, "You should have seen her eyes when she was telling us that!"

Over the next few pages, we'll share some of the ways in which the Mullers are involved with the Sisters — and some of the ways you can join them!



FAR LEFT

Lisa and Bill Muller at their home in Evansville.

LEFT

Sister Mary Terence Knapp, the first Benedictine Sister the couple met. In November 2003, she was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, a papal honor given in recognition of service to the Church, and never before given in the Diocese of Evansville. She was also a recipient of the Evansville Diocesan Bruté Award for her pioneer ministry in the diocese and 20 years of service as a pastoral leader.

On Becoming Oblates

Bill and Lisa began thinking about becoming Oblates in 2015, when a card in a rack made Lisa think about a deeper connection with the Sisters. Sister Brenda Engelman, the leader at that time, assigned the pair to Sister Jane Will, who let them go through the process together, a wonderful experience for them.

“We’re just grateful to have the opportunity to be associated with the Sisters,” says Bill. “It’s been a true honor to attempt to join in living the Rule of St. Benedict in our phase of life as a married couple.”

For those who may think they’re not “holy” enough to become an oblate, Lisa reminds them, “Benedict said ‘every day we begin again’. You don’t have to be perfect. You don’t have to be holy. You don’t have to be a saint.”

A prospective Oblate is an inquirer for a year, and if you show sincere interest, you become a candidate for a year with a companion Sister and a companion Oblate.

At the end of the year as a candidate, if you follow through with all your learning, you make your Oblation, when the prioress asks if you want to make the commitment to be an Oblate of St. Benedict. “It’s a wonderful ceremony,” Bill recalls, “and a wonderful opportunity.”

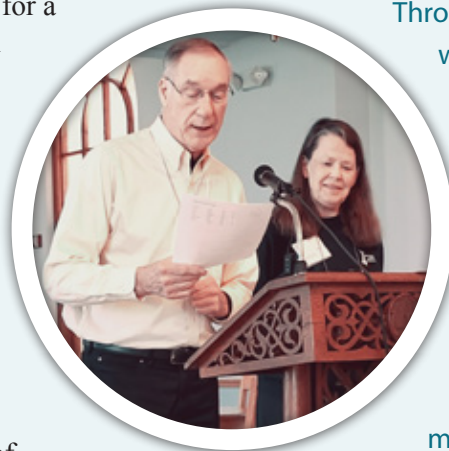
Lisa adds that Oblates come from every walk of life, with different ways of living, of being, and even of looking at their church lives and spirituality. It works because the Benedictine Rule is not a “rule book” but a way of approaching life.

The Rule is a way of responding to life and all the things it can present to you. During the pandemic, Lisa was a lay companion to someone coming through the process. Going through it again, she found all new things to look at and to think about.

Candidates go through the Joan Chittister book, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, while the Sister shares how they live the rule, how things work in the monastery, and how you take that out into everyday life. Regular meetings and programs ensure continued growth — and new relationships, too.

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian men and women from all walks of life who associate themselves with a specific Benedictine monastery to enrich their way of life.

Oblates promise to deepen their faith and to lead enriched Christian lives according to the Rule of St. Benedict; they do not take on new religious practices. The spirituality of St. Benedict is so flexible that it can be adapted to the life of anyone seriously seeking God and desiring to live the Gospel message.



Through association with the Sisters of St. Benedict, Oblates receive guidance and support in living the Christian life. This support and guidance is provided through regular Oblate meetings, by the quarterly Oblate newsletter, and other enrichment opportunities offered by the sisters.

You can learn much more about Oblates, including how to start the process, by scanning the QR code below with your phone or visiting www.thedome.org.



ABOVE
Bill and Lisa Muller present at an Oblates’ program.

On Attending Retreats

The Mullers remember their first retreat at Monastery Immaculate Conception quite clearly. “We love to be with the sisters,” said Lisa, “so we signed up for a one day retreat on forgiveness. I’d say that was the life changing encounter.”

The couple happened to be at the monastery that day, and were not feeling good about life. Sisters Jane Will and Jane Becker led a wonderful one day retreat, and the pair was hooked.

A St. Mary’s women’s group had a two-day retreat with the late Sister Maria Tasto on “True Self, False Self.” The Mullers’ kids were leaving for college, and Lisa was feeling it. Sister Maria’s advice was, “Hold those you love lightly.” It was just what she needed to hear.

(Sister Maria Tasto served for many years in the spirituality ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict, directing retreats and spiritual and personal growth programs, serving as a spiritual director, and as a facilitator and consultant for religious communities. She is the author of *A Transformed Life* DVD and Guidebook, and *Transforming Power of Lectio Divina*. She passed away in 2014.)

The pair has taken time for the five-day Quiet Retreat in May for the last two years, which they describe as a gift you can give yourself. “You can leave things behind and set them down for five days. It’s just a gift that’s there for the taking.”

The two have also enjoyed the Tridium retreat several times. It’s held each year over Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter morning, and they have rearranged the family Easter dinner so they could have this very special experience over the Easter weekend with the Sisters.

Part of what they love is that the retreats take place here at the monastery, a place they love. They would often hurry just to be in time to go to evening prayer on Friday. “I’d look there,” Lisa reflects, “and see Sister Sylvia in the pews, and all the Sisters, and I’d hear the singing, and I feel as if I’m being ‘held in the great hands of light,’ like the poem by Mary Oliver, *Why I Wake Early*.”

The couple also loves that the Sisters work hard to accommodate everyone, never wanting money to keep someone from experiencing a retreat. For them, it’s become a vital part of their life.

If the idea of a retreat appeals to you, here are upcoming 2025 retreats with the Sisters. You can also schedule an individual retreat by calling 812-367-1411 ext. 2842

Pause and Pray Days

May 7 Mary, Mother and Perpetual Help

Aug. 7 Harvest Our Blessings

Nov. 7 An Attitude of Gratitude

Come to the Quiet Retreats

May 12 – 16

August 8 – 15

Silent Directed Retreats

September 12 – 19

October 10 – 17

Keep Watch with Me: Tridium Retreat

April 16 – 20

Prepare the Way: Advent Retreat

December 8 – 12

Ora et Labora (Pray and Work)

August 29 – 31

Find out more about all of our retreats, including full descriptions, and even reserve your place at any upcoming retreat, simply by scanning the QR code below with your phone or visiting www.thedome.org.



On Women of the Rule

Lisa Muller is a proud member of the Women of the Rule, a philanthropy circle comprised of women who wish to support the Sisters and their work in a unique way — and spend time with them as well.

Each woman contributes \$1,000 a year — “and there’s over 100 of us now,” says Lisa, “so that’s a nice bit of cash.” (Current membership stands at 135.)

What makes the Women of the Rule special to Lisa is that its members choose how their pooled funds are used every year. The sisters and the staff submit grant requests, and the members vote on which projects or initiatives to fund.

The proposals cover everything from the needs of the Sisters and the Monastery to ministries and outreach programs. “It’s everything from nicer outdoor furniture that you won’t get splinters from, to Sister Roxanne’s catechetical program for children in Jamaica, to railings for the sidewalks and stairs in the Grotto, to materials for Sister Jill to take to prospective Sisters,” says Lisa.

Here’s an excerpt from a letter regarding the project Lisa mentioned by our own Sister Roxanne Cassandra Higgins for catechists and children in the Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica. “Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to distribute Bibles to the children in the archdiocese and are in the process of obtaining Bibles for the Dioceses of Mandeville and Montego Bay. We have completed Student Worksheets and Catechist Manuals for Year 1 of the Living Our Faith Catechetical Program Ages 6-11 and have implemented it across the Archdiocese of Kingston in around 20 parishes. We expect to complete Year 2 in August 2025 and will work with the other dioceses of Jamaica to implement the program in September 2025. These initiatives play a crucial role in guiding both the children and catechists toward a deeper understanding of their faith and a stronger relationship with God.”

Lisa also loves the gatherings the Sisters host for the Women of the Rule. In addition to the luncheon where members vote on projects to fund (in person or virtually), there are Spirituality Days during Lent and Advent, along with a yearly picnic. “We all have a love of the sisters,” says Lisa, “and we learn something in those sessions, too. It’s just a good group of women!”

Members of the women of the Rule:

SUPPORT the strategic initiatives of the Sisters of St. Benedict through your annual financial commitment.

DEEPEN your own faith life by exploring Benedictine spirituality and values through programs offered exclusively for Women of the Rule by the Sisters.

PARTICIPATE in the mission of the Sisters of St. Benedict by contributing your time and talents through volunteer opportunities.

EXPERIENCE the power of giving together as you make philanthropic decisions with other women who are committed to the same values.

EXPAND the reach of the ministries of the Sisters of St. Benedict, as you partner with the Sisters in touching the lives of others.

Learn more about the Women of the Rule and even become a Member by scanning the QR code below with your phone or visiting www.thedome.org.



On Spiritual Direction

Who knew that becoming Oblates would lead Bill and Lisa to Spiritual Direction? But that's exactly what happened. "I really didn't know what it was," admits Lisa, "but we loved our Oblate sessions with Sister Jane for a whole year, we just didn't want to give up that time with her."

Spiritual direction simply means accompanying someone in her or his spiritual life. You're paired with one of our Sisters who is a Spiritual Director and who listens to your story. Together, you listen for God's call and presence in the ordinary events of your life.

Through monthly conversations, the goal is to deepen your relationship with God by helping you learn to recognize divine grace in all aspects of your life.

Think of it as the art of listening for the movement of the Divine, but in the context of a trusting relationship.

"It's a gift that we've given to ourselves," acknowledges Lisa. "If I were running out of money, that's one of the last things I would give up. It's just a chance to stop, to pause, to think about how the month has gone. How are we living life differently because we do that?"

The couple have found that Spiritual Direction also focuses their prayers. They love the information and ideas that Sister Jane brings up to assist in developing a more vibrant prayer life, which is such a vital part of spiritual growth.

"Your Spiritual Director brings ideas," offers Lisa. "She doesn't say, 'this is what you need to do.' It's not formulaic. Different people need different approaches. So she just offers ideas. She asks some questions. Nothing intrusive. It's not a checklist. It's just a way of being...an approach to spiritual life."

"It is not therapy," she points out. "It is not where you go to have serious problems solved. It is a place to ask, how are you living your life in the Benedictine way you want to live your life this month?" In other words, a sensible, practical path to spiritual growth at your own pace, with a gentle guide.



In Spiritual Direction, you meet with one of our Sisters who is a Certified Spiritual Director to explore your spiritual life.

The goal, over time, is to awaken to the mystery of God in all of your life, and respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.

Your director follows the "Guidelines for Ethical Conduct" established by Spiritual Directors International.

Although it is appropriate at times to discuss psychological and relational difficulties in the context of spiritual direction, a Spiritual Director is not a psychotherapist and does not provide such services.

Your Director will hold your spiritual direction conversations in strict confidence. Your time together is sacred.

Learn more about Spiritual Direction and our Spiritual Director, by scanning the QR code below with your phone or visiting www.thedome.org.



ABOVE
Sister Jane Will, one of 10 Sisters who are Certified Spiritual Directors

On Being Donors

Bill and Lisa choose to support the Sisters' work financially because they see them as a community of wise women who are keeping the Benedictine Rule and their charism alive and vibrant, and they want to be part of that.

"It is so important to keep this charism in the world," asserts Lisa, "and anything we can do to help is a joy."

While the couple has contributed to specific projects or campaigns, their support has most often been in the form of unrestricted funds, which give the Sisters discretion over how the money is to be used.

"For the most part, the contributions that we've given them have been unrestricted because we believe that they know where they can best use that money," acknowledges Bill.

"There have been specific projects that we've enjoyed and supported, but for the most part, we feel like an unrestricted gift allows them to maximize the benefit to the community and to their Sisters, both at the home at the monastery, and to the ones out on mission, who are out in service."

Bill and Lisa are members of the St. Hildegard Society because they purchased a charitable gift annuity. Anyone who is at least 60 years of age can purchase a charitable gift annuity. Here's how it works.

A person makes an irrevocable gift (of \$5,000 or more) to the Sisters of St. Benedict. In return, that person receives payments for life — a portion of which are tax-free — and a charitable deduction for a portion of their gift.

At their passing, the remaining funds go to the Sisters. A married couple can set up their charitable gift annuity so that when one spouse passes, payments continue to the other spouse until they also pass.

When someone creates a charitable gift annuity with the Sisters or remembers the Sisters in their estate planning through, for example, a bequest, a retirement plan or life insurance beneficiary designation, or gift annuities, they become a member of the Sisters' St. Hildegard Society.

A person becomes a member of the St. Hildegard Society of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand by making a "planned gift" — one that offers future support to the Sisters of St. Benedict and often provides tax advantages to the donor.



These planned gifts are often funded with the assets someone owns — for example, shares of stock or a piece of real estate — rather than from income they receive.

One of the benefits of being a member of the St. Hildegard Society is being remembered in the Sisters' daily prayers and in their work. Members are invited to join the Sisters annually on the last Sunday in April for Mass and dinner to celebrate their membership and hear an annual report from the Prioress.

The St. Hildegard Society is named in honor of St. Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th century Benedictine abbess of Rupertsberg on the Rhine, near Bingen, Germany.

Learn more about planned giving by scanning the QR code or visiting www.thedome.org.





Keeping Up with the Kids.

You already know that many of our Sisters spent a large part of their careers teaching across southern Indiana and elsewhere. What you may not know is that many of them remain in touch with some of their students, even after all these decades.

Sister Patricia Ann McGuire is a case in point. She is still in touch with some of her first and second grade students from as far back as the 1960s!

In the top class photo, the bottom row, fourth from left, is Debbie (Wagner) Brockman, who was her first grade student at St. Anthony Elementary in '68-'69 — and who she still sees regularly because Debbie is a member of St. Benedict Cathedral where Sister Patricia Ann works.

Father Christopher Droste was just “Chris” when Sister Patricia Ann taught him in first and second grade at St. James School. In the middle class photo, he is the first student in the second row, and in the bottom photo, he is in the center of the bottom row. Because he’s a priest of the Evansville Diocese, she sees him often at diocesan events.

Other students she sees today include Jean (Lubbers) Weyer, who works in Mission Advancement at the Monastery, and Larry Kluemper, who lives in Jasper where he works with OCIA.



In Memoriam.

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

Sister Mary Oliver Reising of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 8:11 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand.

Sister Mary Oliver was born Jo Mary Reising on December 18, 1928, in Evansville, Indiana, the youngest of four children of Oliver George and Mary Leoma Barbara (Zeigler) Reising. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1957 from Resurrection Parish and made her monastic vows in 1959.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her sister Florence Reising; her brother Arthur Edwin and sister-in-law Catherine (Withers) Reising; and her brother O. Gene Reising. She is survived by her sister-in-law Mary (Miles Heitzman) Reising; her nieces and nephews and her religious family.

Sister Mary Oliver Reising earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from St. Benedict College and a Master's degree in Religious Education from St. Mary's University.

Sister Mary Oliver Reising taught elementary students at Mariah Hill Elementary School in Mariah Hill, IN; at St. Philip School in Evansville, IN; and at St. Henry School in St. Henry, IN, where she taught religious education as well. She also taught religious education at St. John Parish in Evansville, IN. She served as the registrar at St. Benedict College in Ferdinand, IN, and was the Director of Religious Education at both St. Ferdinand Parish in Ferdinand, IN, and St. James Parish in Haubstadt, IN.

She served in the music and pastoral ministries at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Owensboro, KY, and as the organist for St. Joseph Parish in Dale, IN. At Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, she served in the kitchen, the bakery, in reflexology, in art work, as a eucharistic bread maker, an organist, and most recently in prayer ministry.



The Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand view the passing of a Sister differently than many of us view the loss of a loved one. Scan the code with your phone to see Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz talk about the Benedictine perspective on the passing of a beloved Sister.

Sister Mary Ann Schepers of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 7:45 a.m. on Thursday, November 28, 2024, at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand.

Sister Mary Ann was born on November 13, 1938, in Celestine, Indiana, the oldest of ten children of Roman and Leona (Fromme) Schepers. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1955 from St. Peter Celestine Parish and made her monastic vows on June 13, 1957.



She was preceded in death by her parents; her sister Darlene (Schepers) Brinkman; her brother-in-law Bud Lents; her brother-in-law Leonard R. Brinkman; her brother-in-law Louis Pete Baglan; her brother Robert J. Schepers; and her brother Alan Ray Schepers. She is survived by her brother Jerome A. Schepers and sister-in-law Diane (Sutter) Schepers; her brother-in-law Wilfred A. Brinkman; her sister Dorothy Lents; her sister Roselyn Brinkman; her sister Bertha Lee (Schepers) Merkley and brother-in-law Jerry Lee Merkley; her sister Henrietta (Schepers) Baglan; her sister-in-law Annette M. (Braunecker) Schepers; her sister Virlee (Schepers) Harris and brother-in-law Paul C. Harris; her sister-in-law Phyllis (Hopf) Schepers; her nieces and nephews and her Monastic Community.

Sister Mary Ann Schepers earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from St. Benedict College and a Master's degree in Educational Administration from the University of San Francisco, as well as a number of professional certifications.

Sister Mary Ann Schepers taught elementary students at St. Joseph School and St. Benedict School, both in Evansville, IN; at St. James School in Haubstadt, IN; and SS. Simon & Jude School and St. Francis of Assisi School (where she also served as assistant principal), both in Huntington Beach, CA.

In 1972 Sister Mary Ann transferred to and was a founding member of Holy Spirit Convent in Riverside, California. She was elected prioress in 1972 and re-elected in 1980. She was elected prioress once again in 2000 and re-elected in 2004, serving until the closure of the monastery in 2011. During her time there, Sister Mary Ann also served as formation director. In addition, she served as Associate Director of Vocations for the Diocese of San Bernadino, CA; and Director of Religious Education at St. John Church in Rubidoux, CA.

Upon completion of the Holy Spirit Monastery in 2012, she returned to Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, where Sister Mary Ann served in supportive services and prayer ministry at the monastery, at Good Samaritan Society Northwood Retirement Community in Jasper, IN, and at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand.



Stock up for spring!



*All your favorite cookies,
baked by the Sisters, are
waiting in the Gift Shop
on your next visit. Or scan
this code and shop online!*



A Year in the Life of the Sisters



