

# JOTTINGS

The AIC / MHA Alumnae Newsletter | SUMMER 2026



Möge Friede Auf Erden Sein  
May Peace Prevail On Earth

Pax In Terrā Regnet  
Que La Paz Prevalezca En La Tierra

## A Legacy of Peace: Our Alumnae Sisterhood

Our time on “The Hill” was defined by a single, powerful Benedictine word: Pax. While our graduation years span more than a century, we are bound together by the Benedictine Sisters who mentored us. They didn't just teach us leadership; they modeled it through a steady, quiet grace. They created a home where day students, boarders, and international classmates from around the globe could find common ground.

In those hallways, we learned a truth that remains vital today:

*“Peace is not the absence of noise, but the presence of understanding.”*

That understanding was forged in Ferdinand. It was built in the classrooms where we learned new languages, in the chapel where we shared silence, and in the dorms where our global sisterhood was born. The Sisters challenged us to be women of influence—not through volume, but through the strength of our character and the depth of our compassion.

Today, as Academy Alumnae, we are the stewards of that peace. Whether you are a “Golden Girl” or a graduate of the final classes, you carry the Sisters' mission into a world that deeply needs your leadership.

Though the years pass and the world changes, we remain sisters—united by the Hill, rooted in Pax, and dedicated to leading with understanding.

— From the Alumnae Board



## Alumnae Board

**Kristi Bonilla**  
President

**Mary Ellen Espy McCoy**  
Vice President

**Falisha Pierce**  
Secretary

**Sister Pat McGuire**

**Sister Anna O'Connor**

**Veronica Marcos**

**Sonya Lackey**

**Jennifer Gazda DeHenes**

**Tina Dalton**

**Elaine Baumgart**

**Mary Stickler**

**Nicole Beck Beavin**

**Susie Schafer**

**Linda Wenning**

**Janessa Stein Force**

**Laura Riha**

**Sarah Tucker**



# 2025 Reunion Photos

Thank you to all the Alumnae, Sisters, faculty and their guests who joined us for last year's reunion. All the photos you'll see throughout this issue were taken from that weekend. We can't wait to share even more memories with you at this year's reunion in September.

**Be sure to fill out and send in the registration form that you can find at the back of this issue, or submit it quicker by completing and paying online.**

If there has been any recent changes to your contact information, please update your information online by visiting [thedome.org/update-your-info](http://thedome.org/update-your-info).



# Dear Alumnae,

Pax. This word, Latin for peace, was the title of each yearbook of Academy Immaculate Conception and Marian Heights Academy.

When I learned that peace was to be the theme of this issue of “Jottings,” I remembered this and decided to look at the first issue from 1937. The first page of this yearbook was entitled, “The Pax Benedictina.” The article noted that Benedictine “churches, corridors, refectories, and cells are adorned with emblems of peace.” The article continued to state that peace is a key concept found throughout the Rule of St. Benedict, and that, “Not only the monastic family, but all Benedictine education is founded on Peace.”



As Alumnae of the Academy, we all have been instructed to follow St. Benedict’s guidance to “make peace our quest and aim” in life. This statement from the Prologue to the Rule, urges us to actively pursue, maintain, and create peace in our hearts, in our communities, and with God. This is an active quest, not a passive activity. It calls for us to be intentional in our efforts to solve arguments and to seek peace. Throughout his Rule, St. Benedict gives us actions that assist us in this quest. He calls on his followers to avoid evil, to control our speech, and to perform a variety of good works. In chapter 4, “The Tools of Good Works,” he states, “Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love.”

We live in a world that desperately needs peace, that calls for us to be true peacemakers. It can be easy to wish someone peace or pray for peace without doing our part to bring it about. It’s much harder to truly work for true peace, a peace that reminds us that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and that we are, therefore, truly brothers and sisters to one another.

In the final paragraph of “The Pax Benedictina,” the author quotes the Reverend Thomas Burke, CSC, who had spoken about a 1937 conference of the Catholic Association for International Peace. He said, “It is something to talk peace. That will keep peace before us. It is by talking wars, we get wars. By talking peace, we will get peace—if enough people talk and mean what they say.” These words, spoken nearly 90 years ago, remain true today. May we each do our part to mean what we say when we speak of peace and when we offer peace to one another.

As we once again move into the summer months, know that you are always welcome to visit our monastery campus. We welcome you to walk the grounds, visit the church, and inquire about some of your teachers. We also look forward to seeing many of you this fall for the annual reunion this fall.

Know that you are always in our prayers. God bless you! Pax!

*Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB*

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB  
Prioress





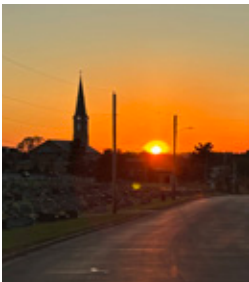
# Disruptive Peace

Kristi Bonilla, Board President

In a world increasingly fractured by culture wars and social unrest, finding a sense of true peace can feel nearly impossible. We often find ourselves caught between competing headlines and shouting matches over modern socio-political terms. Two recent homilies by Father Jeremy King, OSB and Sister Anna O'Connor, OSB offer a refreshing antidote to this exhausting noise. By looking at the concepts of “peace” and “wokeness” through the lens of the Gospel, they remind us that Christ’s peace isn’t found in modern political labels—it is found in the radical, boundary-breaking love of God.

## The Disruptive Peace of an Inclusive Kingdom

The weekend of the Board meeting, Father Jeremy shared a very timely homily. Society heavily debates the concept of “wokeness” and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Father Jeremy directly confronts this modern conversation, posing a provocative question: Was Jesus woke? If “woke” means being deeply attentive to the marginalized, Father Jeremy notes that Jesus’ entire ministry was a masterclass in upending social and religious hierarchies. He didn’t build his peace coalition from the wealthy or the religious elite. Instead, he assembled a “rag-tag team” composed of uneducated fishermen, a despised tax collector, a political insurgent, and prominent women disciples like Mary Magdalene.



**“True peace demands that we reject outdated theories of conflict, champion human dignity, and recognize that Christ died for us when we were still powerless and imperfect.”**

Father Jeremy suggests that true Christian peace is inherently inclusive, drawing diverse and often conflicting people into one covenant. He points to Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas, noting that the Pope’s viral critiques of corporate power and his bold calls for global diplomacy over armed conflict have earned him a modern “woke” label.



Yet, as Father Jeremy illustrates, this isn't left-leaning politics; it is ancient Gospel truth. True peace demands that we reject outdated theories of conflict, champion human dignity, and recognize that Christ died for us when we were still powerless and imperfect.

## Overcoming the Discord Within and Without

While Father Jeremy looks at the sweeping, societal scale of peace and inclusion, Sister Anna shared a reflection with the Board that brings us back to the ground level of our daily lives. She acknowledges the heavy toll of living in a world filled with hate, prejudice, and political hostility—pointing out modern divisions ranging from the rollback of civil rights protections to the mistreatment of immigrants.

Sister Anna connects this directly to our personal struggles. It is easy to talk about global peace, but it is incredibly hard to practice it in our immediate circles. She vulnerably shares the struggle to show compassion to every Sister within the Monastery walls and the painful reality of irreconcilable conflicts within our own families.

How do we survive and find tranquility in such a discordant world? Sister Anna argues that we must look past modern labels and anchor ourselves in divine relationship:

“Faithfulness to prayer and developing a relationship with God are the only ways we can survive in this discordant world of ours. We must pray to be compassionate lovers of God and others.”

## The Flame of Peace, Dignity, and Leadership

Ultimately, both reflections reveal that Christ's version of peace is far more radical than any modern political movement. It does not wait for a perfect world or perfect people. It calls us to look past superficial social labels and ground ourselves in a timeless mission: educating women for leadership and uplifting the inherent worth of every individual.

The underlying philosophy of this spiritual journey is perfectly captured by the foundational words of AIC and MHA:

Whether we call it “wokeness” or simply the Gospel, our commission remains the same: to recognize the dignity in others, to actively heal divisions, and to offer unconditional love without payment. If that original, deeply divided crew of first-century disciples could bridge their differences to build a community of peace, so can we—one small act of kindness at a time.



# Peace or Polarization

Mary Ellen Espy McCoy, Class of 1992

When tasked with writing an article on political polarization, discourse within and among nearly every human relationship, and how we navigate such waters, I found myself asking what we were taught during our time at AIC/MHA. Anything? Does this current environment even apply to my years as an Academy student from 1988 to 1992? I set out to ponder and reflect on these questions.

Through ACTION rather than mere words, I watched our Sisters of Catholic faith and devotion comfort fellow students of the Muslim faith during a time of war in their homelands, broadcast live on CNN.

These students watched in horror and fear as cities and streets they recognized—places where they had lived—were being bombed. It was the Gulf War, and students from Kuwait and surrounding regions watched from couches in our communal spaces: teenage girls wondering whether their parents were safe, or even alive.

I remember noticing our proctors and Sisters on the dorm floors, quietly and seemingly without notice, standing like hidden sentries beyond doorways, ensuring that prayer rugs and musalla remained undisturbed. They recognized that these students needed their time for prayer and faith now more than ever. Never once did they discourage them from practicing a faith different from their own. They loved those with different religious beliefs and perspectives. They simply loved them—purely.

“And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”

Matthew 5:47

I remember students from different political backgrounds, both conservative and liberal, debating the issues of the day in history and current events classes. Although I have no idea what my teachers' political affiliations were at the time—and it was neither my business then nor now—I would loosely wager that many were socially progressive. If that assumption is correct, one might expect students with a conservative viewpoint to have had a smaller microphone, or at least a muted one. That assumption would be entirely incorrect.

In fact, a remarkable thing would happen, noticeable to anyone paying close attention. Students whose views differed from those of the majority were softly but firmly protected. You WOULD listen to that classmate and respect their right to be different from you. You certainly did not have to agree with them, but you would respect their right to be who they were. They did not need to justify themselves or explain their beliefs. Those responsibilities belonged to you—to understand yourself—rather than to others, who were under no obligation to prove anything to you.

The Sisters may not have preached the great Stoics, but their actions and words embodied Aurelius in practice. They taught us Matthew 5:47 every day—not in theory, and not from soapboxes or clickbait.

Quiet. Still. Action.

They taught us how to be wise. They taught us how to be intelligent. Through experience, they taught us that everything in life is part of a pendulum, and that what matters most is not the direction of its swing, but how we conduct ourselves as it moves.

Love one another. Be each other's quiet space in the storm. Be still, and embrace one another. Do these things especially for those who differ from us rather than those who align with us. We are all riding the same pendulum. Hold on, love one another through the swings, and remember that love is the final lesson—the final takeaway.



# Reflecting on the Early 1960s

Linda (Little) Wenning,  
Class of 1964

The early 1960s were an eventful few years. Just as the Peace Corps was getting its start, the Russians began building a wall in Berlin (1961) while sending the first man into space. Not to be outdone, the United States sent John Glenn into orbit around the Earth in 1962. Next, our world seemed ready to explode with the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963, and sadly, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. We stood in Algebra class and prayed.

In 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, and Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Also in 1964, many African nations gained their independence, while the United States escalated its involvement in the Vietnam War. “Beatlemania” also intensified as the band appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

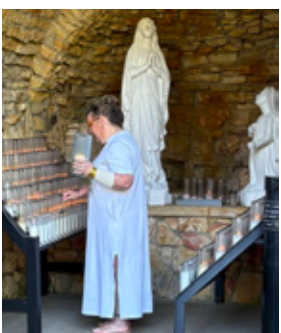
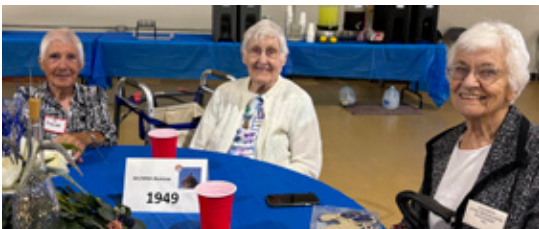
The highlight of these four years was, of course, the Academy of the Immaculate Conception’s education and graduation of the Class of 1964, the largest class to date.





## In Remembrance

Margaret "Pearl" (Best) Huber, 1948  
 Sister Rosemary Huber MM, 1949  
 Dorothy (Dethy) Allen, 1950  
 Sister Diane Fischer OSB, 1954  
 Estella (Vaeth) Kreilein, 1954  
 Sister Jacqueline Shively OSB, 1955  
 Janet Theresa (Will) Gest, 1957  
 Kay (Dethy) Hoehn, 1958  
 Marilyn (Jordan) Stocker, 1959  
 Sharon (Baehl) Mills, 1961  
 Sister Karlene Sensmeier, 1962  
 Carolyn (Koressel) Wenzel, 1962  
 Janet (Wolf) Spahn, 1964  
 Mary Beth (Lueken) Flick, 1965  
 Brenda (Weber) Donofrio, 1966  
 Angela (Harris) Luther, 1992



# 2026 Alumnae Reunion Weekend

**SATURDAY  
SEPTEMBER 26**

## **Alumnae Picnic**

Event Center

12:00 p.m. EST

*Please bring a dish to pass*

## **Tours of Monastery**

1:00 p.m. & 2:00 p.m. EST

## **Silent Auction**

Event Center

3:00 p.m. EST

**SUNDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 27**

## **Pastries & Coffee**

BHC St. Scholastica

8:30 a.m. EST

## **Mass at the Monastery**

10:30 a.m. EST

## **Dinner**

Event Center

12:30 p.m. EST

## **Meeting & Silent Auction Winners**

**Announced**

Event Center

1:15 p.m. EST

# Register Today for the 2026 Alumnae Reunion

Online registration: [thedome.org/reunion2026](http://thedome.org/reunion2026)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Class of \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Alumnae registration and dinners ..... \$50

Guest at dinner on Sunday ..... \$15

**Please complete the registration form even if paying in-person. This will provide us with more accurate numbers when confirming with the caterers.**

### Please check all that apply:

- I will attend the Saturday picnic.  
(Please bring a dish to pass.)
  - I will bring \_\_\_\_\_ guest(s).
- I will attend the Sunday dinner.
  - I will bring \_\_\_\_\_ guest(s).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ # of meat meals
  - \_\_\_\_\_ # of vegetarian meals

**Total amount enclosed:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Mail in registration

Send this form & your check to:  
Sisters of St. Benedict  
802 E. 10th Street • Ferdinand, IN 47532

- Pay in-person upon arrival**  
Cash or check only



## 2026 Alumnae Reunion September 26 - 27

- **Don't forget cash or your checkbook** for Raffle Tickets.
- **Please bring a dish to the Saturday Picnic which will held at NOON in the Event Center.** The Alumnae Board will be providing pulled pork.
- Guided tours will given on Saturday, September 26 at 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- Reserve a room before they're gone.



### Hotels with Room Blocks & Special Rates:

Hampton Inn 355 3rd Ave Jasper, IN 47546 (812) 481-1888	Comfort Inn 123 Scenic Hills Court Ferdinand, IN 47532 (812) 817-0484
--	--

Call the hotels directly for discount rate.



# JOTTINGS

AIC/MHA Alumnae Association

802 E. 10th Street • Ferdinand, Indiana 47532-9239

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Ferdinand, Indiana  
Permit No. 15

## The Academy Alumnae

### Sister Anna Corinne O'Connor

We, as a board, have been calling our group, The Academy Alumnae for a few years. To refresh your memory if you studied Latin, Alumnae is the plural for Alumna, a woman graduate. (Alumni is the plural for Alumnus, a male graduate.) Many seem to choose the male form, but we wanted to support all the women who graduated from the Academy. In this discordant world, we also believe it's important to unite the Academy of the Immaculate Conception and Marian Heights Academy as one and call it "The Academy Alumnae." We, as sisters united through a common education and influenced by the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand, want to be one in our gratitude and remembrance of the love and the gifts we have received.

The artistic members of the Board are creating a common symbol that will incorporate this idea and hope to have it ready for our September 26-27, 2026, gathering. Please take time to pray about this and allow your heart to unite as one with us. We are not forgetting our separate entities, we're just trying to show that we are one in Christ. It might take a while to feel as one, but it seems to us to be an important step in showing the Love of Christ to our world. We always have fun as one during our reunions.

**STAY CONNECTED**

