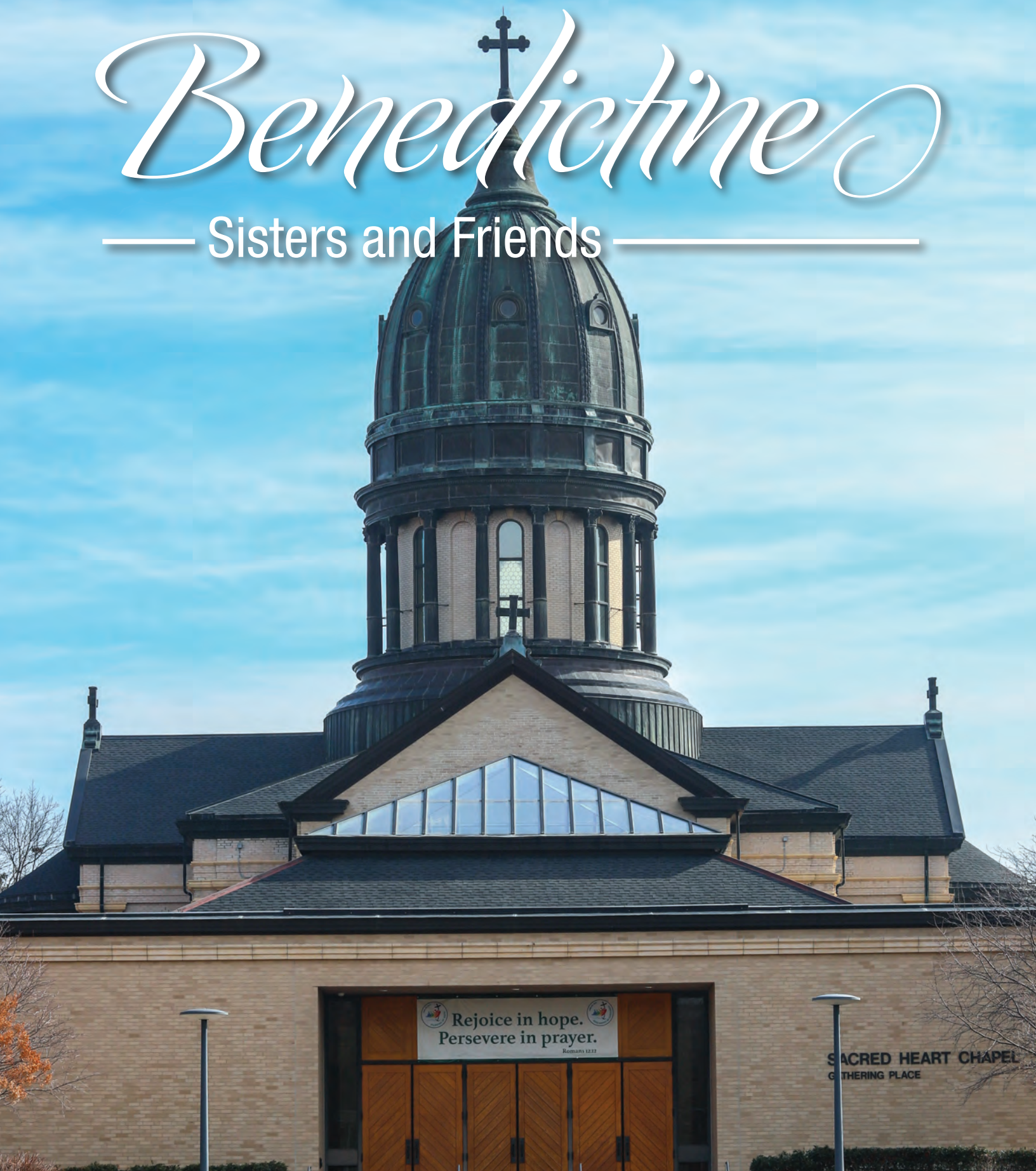


Benedictine

— Sisters and Friends —



Opening the Doors of Hope

Sisters of the  Order of Saint Benedict®

Spring 2025

From the *Prioress*

Karen Rose, OSB, Prioress

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

[illegible]

*A*s I write this letter, we are living through the nine days of mourning for Pope Francis. By the time you read it, the Conclave will be over, and we will have a new Holy Father. Right now, we are in a liminal space, a time of transition, on the threshold of something new. We can look to the past with gratitude for Pope Francis and how he consistently sought to teach us that the Gospel is a gospel of love, a love which embraces everyone.

Pope Francis was a man who exemplified, to the very end of his life, the hunger and thirst of which Matthew speaks (5:6). We can rejoice because we know that he is now blessed to be filled in the presence of God.

We are also called to look to the future. In this Year of Hope, let's do that in a spirit of hope as we welcome our new Pope, praying that he, too, will be given the grace to lead us, through word and example, to become more Christlike.

What about the “now”? By “now,” I don’t mean only the periods where we honor the life of Pope Francis or embrace a new papal era. When

you read this letter, your “now” will be different from the “now” that I’m experiencing as I write it. What binds us together through time, and as people of God, is our hunger for righteousness. At all times and in all places, it is this thirst which impels us to live fully and deeply the message of the Gospel, and which gives a true Christian meaning to past, present and future.

As we journey into the future,
may we embrace what is to be,
while giving thanks for what has
been, living out the Gospel in the
present and praying always for
open hearts which constantly listen
for the voice of the Spirit to guide
our actions.

Yours in gratitude and hope,



Therese Rose, OSB, Prioress

**Benedictine Sisters
and Friends**
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The Jubilee Year of Hope banner on the front door of the Gathering Place. Taken by Andra Johnson.

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Our Mission
We, the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., are a monastic community of women who seek God in our daily lives according to the Gospel and the *Rule of Benedict*. Through our ministry of prayer, work and community living, we listen and respond to the needs of the Church and the world.

Benedictine Sisters and Friends is published annually by the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn. The purpose of this magazine is to share the stories of our Benedictine lives and engage our relatives, friends, oblates and benefactors in the mission and ministries of the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict.

*Sister Katherine Kraft (front) and the monastic community
pray Liturgy of the Hours, a prayer for the world.*

Photograph taken by Andra Johnson



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A History of Hope

Christian Morris, OSB, and
Ephrem Hollermann, OSB

Every 25 years, the Pope declares a universal year of Jubilee. In May 2024, Pope Francis decreed that the year 2025 will be a Jubilee Year of Hope which “will be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade; our hope in God. It is a Jubilee year of ‘Pilgrims of Hope.’” Like the ritual blessings and the opening of the Holy Doors in Rome, on January 8, 2025, we blessed and opened *our* Holy Door and heard witnesses to hope. The celebration powerfully rekindled our call and commitment to be “Pilgrims of Hope.”

We are not strangers to hope and to doors being opened. Our community history is filled with “Pilgrims of Hope”—women whose faith moved us into futures unseen. Savor and enjoy moments like these:



Mother Benedicta Riepp

Mother Benedicta Riepp, foundress in North America, refused to lose hope in the mission for which she and her companions came to America—to teach the children of German Catholic immigrants and to spread the Benedictine order in the United States. That refusal to lose hope impelled her to leave Pennsylvania and to journey to St. Cloud, Minn., where she hoped that the autonomy of women’s convents could be preserved.



Mother Willibalda Scherbauer

Mother Willibalda Scherbauer dared to hope in a new future when, in early November 1863, seven sisters of her small community of 14 members left for Atchison, Kan., leaving her in St. Cloud with six sisters. Later that same month, she relocated her community to St. Joseph, Minn., due to a school controversy in St. Cloud which left them nowhere to teach—the mission for which the nuns from Eichstätt, Bavaria, originally came to America.



Sister Evin Rademacher

Sister Evin Rademacher, with a vision and hope for adequate and long-term health care for our retired and elder sisters, led the move in 1978 to relocate the infirmary from the St. Joseph motherhouse to Saint Scholastica Convent in St. Cloud, when the Main Building infirmary became a space too small to provide for the community.

And the Women Who Shaped It



With a hopeful conviction that health care ministry was God's call to our community in St. Cloud and the surrounding area for many years to come, 936 Chapter members of the community voted in 1928 to take on a debt of \$2 million to build a new hospital on its present location.

Photo: *Dedication of the St. Cloud Hospital on February 9, 1928*

With deep hope in a new call to carry the light of Christianity to the Far East, Sisters Francetta Vetter, Donalda Terhaar, Regia Zens, Rachel Loulan, Ronayne Gergen and Wibora Muehlenbein left for China on August 30, 1930. Thus began our community's expanded mission abroad into Asia.

Photo: *Ss. Donalda (right) and Ronayne at the sisters' residence in China in the 1930s*

These stories and so many more have shaped us and brought us to this—our moment in the story of who we are. The women here are but a few of those “giants on whose shoulders we are standing.” They give us the hope (and the mandate?) to open doors to an unknown future. Ours, like theirs, must be a hope **“that does not fade ... it is our hope in God.”**

This article was originally published in the December 2024/January 2025 issue of Community News, an internal publication for Saint Benedict's Monastery.

Opening the Doors of Hope

Catherine Duenne, OSB

All who come to Saint Benedict's Monastery this year are welcomed by a banner hanging above the exterior doors, marking the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 with the words, "Rejoice in Hope. Persevere in Prayer." (Romans 12:12)

In the Bible, a "jubilee" is a time of renewal, forgiveness and reconciliation. Having its origins in Leviticus 25, the Jubilee Year is a time for each of us to reestablish a proper relationship with God, one another and creation. The first jubilee was celebrated in 1300 by Boniface VIII, who recommended that a jubilee be celebrated every 100 years. Considering that many of the faithful would be unable to experience a jubilee in their lifetime, this number was later reduced to 50 years, and more recently to 25. Today, along with "ordinary jubilees" every 25 years, popes may declare "extraordinary jubilees" for special occasions or purposes. This occurred most recently when Pope Francis proclaimed the Jubilee Year of Mercy in 2016.

Holy Doors symbolize Christ, who called himself the "gateway for the sheep" (John 10:7). To mark the beginning of the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Holy Doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome were blessed and opened on December 24, 2024. According to Pope Francis, the Holy Doors should be flung open "to invite everyone to an intense experience of the love of God that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ."

Ever mindful of the marginalized, Pope Francis made history on December 26, 2024, by opening a Holy Door in the chapel of Rebibbia, Rome's largest prison, as a sign of hope for the inmates. Pope Francis urged us to be beacons of hope to the young, elderly, poor, sick and migrants, stating, "We are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind."

To participate in the Jubilee Year of Hope, Sisters Catherine Duenne, Delores Dufner and Janine Mettling planned a special prayer service which was celebrated on January 8, 2025. The public was invited, and approximately 150 of us joined together as Sister Karen Rose, prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery, blessed our exterior doors to the Gathering Place and the interior doors to Sacred Heart Chapel. We rang bells and sprinkled holy water as we lifted our hearts and voices in song: **"In joy, we open wide a year of hope, of jubilee!"**

Three speakers shared personal testimonies about how hope has made a difference in their lives and the lives of those with whom they work: Lana Faber of St. Cloud, Minn., a retired social worker and longtime friend of the community; Harry Fleegel of St. Cloud, executive director of Homeless Helping Homeless; and Blanca Guzman, coordinator of Latino ministries in the Cold Spring, Minn., area. The celebration concluded with everyone enjoying a simple meal in the monastery dining room.

Guests entering Sacred Heart Chapel during the Blessing of the Doors





Ritually opening our doors was only the beginning of our yearlong celebration. For our Liturgy of the Hours (common prayer for the world), we have new antiphons focused on hope, which we recite at Morning Prayer and sing at Evening Prayer. The antiphon texts were written by S. Delores Dufner using melodies written and published by Sister Christine Manderfeld. At Noon Prayer, we listen to readings focused on hope, which were selected by S. Catherine Duenne with the help of Sisters Katherine Kraft and Julie Schleper.

Additionally, we partnered with the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB+SJU) for two events. One was with the Benedictine Friends program in an evening entitled "Hour of Hope." Cindy Gonzalez, director of CSB Campus Ministry, shared her personal testimony of how living with hope has helped her and her family overcome adversity. Everyone then shared in small groups and created greeting cards to be sent to those in need of hope.

At the second event, sisters and students joined together in a Vigil of Hope as we prayed for immigrants and refugees. After a candlelight procession from the CSB Multicultural Center to Sacred Heart Chapel, S. Karen Rose read the letter from Pope Francis to the United States bishops, urging them to "take a step forward in the construction of a society that is more fraternal, inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all."

We are planning other prayer services and events throughout 2025 that you are welcome to attend. One event is a walking pilgrimage from Saint Benedict's Monastery to Saint John's Abbey on **Saturday, September 6, 2025**. We intend to bring together the two religious communities, area colleges and universities, youth groups, schools, parishes, families and all individuals who choose to participate and spread hope to others. It will begin with a short prayer service, continue with a five-mile walk along the Lake Wobegon Trail, and conclude with the celebration of Eucharist and a shared meal.

Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to make pilgrimages to sacred places throughout the year. We hope that Saint Benedict's Monastery will be on your list of places to visit, either in person or virtually. If you come, you may pick up a Pilgrimage of Hope prayer card at the reception desk. You may choose to pray this prayer in our chapel, at home or at work, individually or with others. The words to this prayer can be found on page 8 of this magazine.

Although the Jubilee Year will officially come to an end with the closing of St. Peter's Basilica's Holy Doors on January 6, 2026, the seeds of hope we are planting now will continue to grow and flourish. Let us join and pray together during this Jubilee Year as we are all called and challenged to be bearers of hope in our troubled world.

For more information about the walking pilgrimage and other events during the Jubilee Year of Hope, visit www.sbm.osb.org or follow our social media channels.

Pilgrims of Hope

Delores Dufner, OSB

*Compassionate God,
you accompany and sustain us on our pilgrim journey.
Through the light and strength of your Holy Spirit,
help us to recognize the signs of your presence in the events of our world.
Help us to trust that,
in spite of the hardships and disappointments we encounter,
you are with us in every event and at every moment of our lives.
Give us sure and confident HOPE
that you have both the power and the will
to make all things work together for our good
and the good of the world you made and love.*

*The life on earth of Jesus, your Son,
shows us your mercy, goodness, and love
towards the human race and all of creation.
We believe that Jesus walks with us now,
and we ask your help to follow in his way
of tender care for all our brothers and sisters.
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus,
who lives with you and the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever. Amen.*



All visitors to the monastery can receive their own Pilgrims of Hope prayer card to pray in Sacred Heart Chapel, at home or work, individually or with others. Stop at the reception desk to request one.

Rainbows of Hope

Myrna Ohmann

When Sister Eunice Antony was asked to join the staff at the Spirituality Center•Studium at Saint Benedict's Monastery in 2007, she was asked to start a ministry to an underserved population. S. Eunice asked if I, along with Ann, another woman who has a gay child, would help her plan a meeting for Catholic parents of LGBTQ+ children. I didn't hesitate to say yes because that is truly an underserved community. I had been working on behalf of LGBTQ+ people and their families since my older son came out in 1999.

S. Eunice, Ann and I met to do some brainstorming. We set a date and sent out an announcement inviting Catholic parents of gay children to come and share their stories. We had no set agenda and no idea if anyone would show up. We just wanted to give people a safe place to share their stories.

Talk about hope!

Fourteen people came that first night, and we had a grace-filled evening getting to know each other and listening to our stories. That was the birth of our Rainbow Support Group. We never limited the group to Catholic families, and soon those of other faiths, as well as LGBTQ+ people and allies, also joined the group. We still meet the second Thursday of odd-numbered months, and

the friendships that formed have lasted.

Several times over the years, we wondered if we had fulfilled our original mission, but each time we thought it might be time to disband, we would be contacted by someone new. Obviously, there is still a need! Even after 18 years, there are new people joining the group, and each one brings new gifts to all of us. While Pope Francis and many priests and bishops have been welcoming to gay and lesbian people, transgender persons face much hostility in society and condemnation in some sectors of the Catholic Church. For many, our group is the only Catholic space where they feel comfortable sharing their family's beauty.

In May and September, we gather in person at the Spirituality Center•Studium. In the winter months, we meet by Zoom. That enables those who live at a distance to participate. One such person, Pat from Tennessee, works in special education, and according to Tennessee law, she can be arrested if she helps a questioning student. She says, ***"There is hope! I know you and Saint Ben's, and your values, and you don't give up. I can't be up there, but for me, there is this invisible bridge that exists from my place to you and it keeps me sane ... your rainbow makes it all the way here."***

Visit www.sbm.osb.org/ministry/spirituality-center-studium/ to learn more about Rainbow Support Evenings, as well as other programs, retreats and spiritual offerings.

Whatever You Do

Harry Fleegel

It was November, the temperature was dropping, and those experiencing homelessness began desperately searching for a place to stay warm. The staff and volunteers at the Lincoln Center were stressed to the max. The city had made no plans for wintry weather emergencies but instead instructed us to discontinue overnight stays for those we were not housing due to safety regulations. People were freezing and getting frostbitten—one even lost his toes, and another set herself on fire trying to keep warm under a blanket. **This is not what God intended for his people.**

The Homeless Helping Homeless Lincoln Center brought up the situation to the Faith and Housing group, which we are a member of, to seek out some sort of solution that would keep the people warm and prevent us from being closed by the city. The idea was presented that local churches could host some of the folks for whom we did not have room.

Saint Benedict's Monastery also participates in this group. Right away, Elizabeth Reum, the monastery's director of Social Justice Ministries, arranged to pick up some sleeping mats from Camp Friendship that were being donated to us. Using the community bus and arranging volunteers, enough mats were secured so that people could sleep on the floor in these church basements and community centers. Since then, every two weeks, volunteers with the Benedictine sisters transfer these mats from one church to another so that our

guests can stay warm. The Benedictine community then arranged for donations to pay for staffing and supervision at these churches and for food to be delivered twice a week to feed 65 hungry people at the Lincoln Center.

There were folks in our overflow population who were reluctant to go to churches because that meant they would have to leave everything they owned behind and worried that it might get stolen. So, it was suggested that we should acquire some lockers so people could store their belongings in a safe place. Again, the Benedictines jumped at the opportunity to seek out someplace where we could get lockers for free. These were found in Alexandria, Minn., and Elizabeth arranged for volunteers and transportation to pick them up. Our residents eagerly assisted and set them up in our center. What a blessing!

The weather has now begun to warm, and the number of folks visiting the center should have decreased. However, one warm day, I stopped by to visit only to find that the center was crowded—what was going on? Apparently during the winter, the people experiencing homelessness realized that on every Thursday, there was a full, well-balanced, hearty meal available at the Lincoln Center provided by the Benedictine sisters. Homeless folks rarely get a healthy meal—they mostly survive on cereal, doughnuts and junk food. When they do get meals, there is often not enough to feed everyone. The Thursday noon meal became the highlight of



Food is a gift from God, and we are blessed to share our abundance with those in need.

Left: Sister Lisa Rose

Right: Each year on the Feast of the Assumption, we bless garden produce during Evening Prayer.



their week, and they keep coming whether it's cold or warm to receive the gift of the Benedictines' love.

To top everything off, the Benedictine sisters shared their ministry with their neighboring brothers and sisters at Celebration Lutheran Church in Sartell, Minn., who also offered to bring a meal every week. Then they surprised us with a Monday meal, and now the Johnnies are bringing meals, and members of Saint Mary's Church in St. Cloud—even the local VFW now brings us chili every two weeks. Father Tony brings soup every week, as does a member of the local Assembly of God church. Like the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the Benedictines have inspired the whole community to provide manna to God's children.

But the most important gift the Benedictine community has given us has been their prayer support. How frustrating it must be to have a heart full of compassion and, because of age or disability, be unable to physically address the needs of those in our community who are so severely traumatized and hurting. But we want every Benedictine sister to know that her contributions of prayer have resulted in enumerable miracles at the center. We are always on a tight budget, trusting in the Lord's generosity to care for us as he cares for the flowers and the birds. Through their intercessory prayers, we were able to pay our staff with a last-minute donation.

The Lord likes to test our trust in his benevolence. Earlier this year, we were faced with a shut-off notice for our heat and light only to have the Holy Spirit inspire someone who knew nothing of our crisis to contribute funds. We believe this was only possible because of the many prayers joined with ours. When we get discouraged, we can always move forward with confidence because these prayers give us hope.

We meet and pray with traumatized folks every day, and we see many of them find solace in their faith. Folks who have not gone to church for years are now returning. Homeless Catholics are praying with us, going to Mass with us, engaging in prayer groups and Bible studies, and seeking reconciliation. People who had no faith are asking to be baptized. These are the folks that Jesus came and died for. **To the Benedictine community: Your love, your prayers and your delicious meals are making all of this possible.**

The next few years will be exceedingly difficult for those who are hungry, destitute, immigrants, elderly, mentally ill, chemically challenged and those that serve them. Even though the number of practicing Catholics and religious vocations are down, we know that the Lord will empower this remnant, this repository of faith and wisdom, to burst forth full of love and determination to minister and build community among the impoverished and hurting surrounding us.

About the Homeless Helping Homeless Lincoln Center

Harry Fleegel is the executive director of the Homeless Helping Homeless Lincoln Center in St. Cloud, Minn. It is a nonprofit organization that operates as a resource for those experiencing homelessness or extreme poverty. Learn more at www.homelesshelpinghomeless.org/.

Photo: artin1/Shutterstock.com

Hope at the Reception Desk

Alice Imdieke, OSB

At Saint Benedict's Monastery, when we answer the phone or open our doors to visitors, it's not only about charity. It's about creating a community where dignity is upheld. That encourages **hope**.

As we welcome guests and listen to their stories, the Holy Spirit often weaves the conversations into hopeful messages. Voices carry warmth, sincerity and sometimes humorous laughter, and it seems to settle into the walls of the reception desk room. One receptionist likes to touch the walls before she sits down and asks for the previous day's blessings to be with her.

Working at the reception desk requires concentration, and the receptionists need to remain focused. Yet our time there is filled with moments of grace. When sorrow and confusion are shared, hope quietly emerges, often in unexpected ways. This occurs especially when the receptionist promises to pray for the caller concerning situations he or she is sharing.

The reasons for people's calls range from friendly to challenging, and the condition of the caller or visitor varies greatly. Each conversation requires patience and the necessity to remain focused on the message. That attentiveness allows us to hear their stories of joy or grief spoken in their truest form. Every interaction reminds us that the receptionist ministry should be a Benedictine ministry.



Listening and responding does not erase grief, but the act of sharing, as is true with joy, creates the opportunity for catharsis, and for love and life to persist. At the core, it's about the power of community. We are *all* deeply connected, and the responses to visitors and phone conversations begin with small words of love and caring. Hope and optimism are shared, especially when we promise to pray for them.

It is felt that the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope's theme, "Pilgrims of Hope," is calling us to the path of hope and unwavering love. Miracles are possible through faithful kindness and the smallest offering of our *ora et labora* (prayer and work) at the desk. It's the collective spirit of our community willing to share, especially our prayers. Every sister is part of the miracle that happens at the desk. Every member of our community, contributing prayer, plays a vital piece of the work we do. We cannot keep the doors open and continue the beautiful experience of loving hope without each one of us.

Let us "hold fast to hope" and the promise of our prayer commitment *to* this and *in* this, our way of life. May our prayer light always find a way to shine in the darkness.

Top Right: Sister Margaret Maus (Photograph taken by Andra Johnson)

Left: Sister Elizabeth Theis





*“Rejoice in hope.
Persevere in prayer.”
— Romans 12:12 —*

Remembering Pope Francis

Pope Francis entered eternal life on April 21, 2025. He lived as an example of God's love, and the sisters of Saint Benedict's Monastery continue to be inspired by his legacy.

Renée Domeier, OSB



"He, our beloved Pope Francis, was one of us—human! Who of us does not wish to be loving, approachable, pleasant, arms open to people who are poor, disabled, deformed, marginalized, sinners? He rode buses, paid his own bills, chose simplicity in where he lived, how he dressed, how he preached truth to leaders of nations and to parents, and how he denied himself the luxury of judging others.

Our beloved Pope Francis lived the Gospel, preached the Gospel; he walked the talk! His legacy will continue among us. He was a great leader by simply being himself. Our Church and our world are better because of him—so humble, honest and so incredibly inspiring!"

Mary Catherine Holicky, OSB



"Pope Francis has had a profound impact on so many people across generations, cultures, gender, socioeconomic standing, people of faith and unbelievers alike. He recognized divisions that have isolated us from one another and brought a listening ear and a gracious love shrinking the gap caused by fear, mistrust and indifference.

Pope Francis was a man who held up to us the gift of encounter. His playfulness with children, his encouragement to the youth, his respect of the elders and infirm, his bending to the imprisoned, his gratitude for health care workers, his carrying the weight of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and bringing us together while he stood alone in St. Peter's Square praying for and with us.

In *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis says, 'Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God.' He challenges me to ask this of myself: Am I eager or even willing to learn something new about God? If yes, where will that love take me? Amid the complexities of our world and our Church, Pope Francis reminds us of the joy of the Gospel, the mercy readily available to us, and a hope that will not disappoint."

Mara Faulkner, OSB



“Like many people, I loved and admired Pope Francis for his humility, humor and warm-hearted love for our Earth, our common home. His love for the Gospel, the Church and for the entire world led him to embrace the vision of Pope John XXIII and the second Vatican Council, flinging the windows, doors and gates of our churches, countries and hearts wide open. He asked us to mean it when we sing, ‘All are welcome in this place.’ As we see how Francis spent the last few days of his life, we see how deeply he believed those words and lived them every day.

On Holy Thursday, he went in his wheelchair to the prison where he had spent every Holy Thursday. He could no longer wash the feet of the prisoners, but he was there with them, loving them. On Holy Saturday, he called the Catholic community in Gaza, asking them if they were safe and had something to eat; he had done this every evening since that terrible war began. On Easter Sunday, his message was a clear-eyed look at the many places in our world devastated by war, hunger and natural disasters. The message is filled with hope, challenge to all of us, and the deep joy that can come only from living the Gospel of justice and mercy. In that joyful spirit, Francis took a little jaunt around Vatican Square in his open-air Popemobile.

I hope that whoever the Holy Spirit chooses to step into Francis’s plain black shoes will follow his vision and his actions. But I hope even more that each of us will do the same. He asked all of us to listen to Christ’s call and be brave enough to follow. Some of his last words made their way around the world by way of social media. He reminded us that Christ is risen, and that all of creation is meant not for death but for abundant life.”

Elaine Schroeder, OSB



“Pope Francis impressed me as a ‘man of the land!’ His encyclical *Laudato Si’* was a powerful statement that I can relate to. I too am a person of the earth, rooted in the land and family farms. And now, as we garden and produce food for our community, it is a marvel seeing the growth of both food and flowers: tomatoes and zucchini, cucumbers and squash! We studied *Laudato Si’* as a community, and I often return to its wisdom.”



With Lamps Still Burning

Judy Kramer, OSB



With Lamps Burning, the monumental historical record of Saint Benedict's Monastery written by Sister Grace McDonald, was published in 1957. S. Grace stated: "The purpose of the book is to trace the growth of the convent of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn., from its establishment to the present."

Now, 68 years later, as the sisters of that monastery prepare to build a new, smaller home in St. Joseph, this exhibit documents the continuation of the Benedictine monastic life of prayer and work in new ways, giving tribute to the fact that the lamps are *still* burning!

After touring the museum, guests are invited to stop into Whitby Gift Shop and browse a wide variety of items for sale, many handmade by sisters and other artisans.

Read About Our History

With Lamps Burning by Grace McDonald, OSB (1957)

With Hearts Expanded: Transformations in the Lives of Benedictine Women, St. Joseph, Minnesota, 1957 to 2000 by Sisters Evin Rademacher, Emmanuel Renner, Olivia Forster and Carol Berg (2000)

Regular Hours

Tuesday–Friday: 12–4 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Closed Sunday and Monday

Visits outside regular hours are arranged as requested. For more information, contact Sister Judy Kramer, director of the Haehn Museum, at (320) 363-1605.

2025 Haehn Museum Exhibit

*All photographs taken
by Andra Johnson*



Joy in Service

Amanda Hackett



The projects and initiatives led by our Social Justice Ministries team run on caring hearts and engaged action. Imagine our gratitude when St. Wendelin's Catholic School in Luxemburg, Minn., contacted us and asked if they could do a service project for Catholic Schools Week! Catholic Schools Week is an annual weeklong celebration that honors and raises awareness of the value of Catholic education and how it contributes to our churches, communities and world.

Elizabeth Reum, the monastery's director of Social Justice Ministries, knew exactly what project we would offer. The monastery receives so many donations ranging from clothing to shoes to household items that sorting through them all could be a full-time job in itself! Thankfully, the students at St. Wendelin's were up to the challenge.



On a Sunday afternoon, students and their parents picked up dozens of bins and boxes of clothing donations and brought them back to their school gym. The older students, parents and teachers spent many hours sorting the clothing by gender and size while the younger children, not to be left out, sorted through a box of buttons and sharpened a box of pencils. When the tasks were complete, the students and teachers personally delivered and loaded the boxes into the storage room at Saint Benedict's Monastery where they will live until someone in need receives their blessings.

Elizabeth shared, "This wonderful gift allowed us to catch up on sorting donations and is much more manageable for the wonderful sisters who spend evenings sorting."

In a world that can feel divisive and unjust, it is encouraging and hopeful to see young people take initiative and find joy in the service of others. The service of these students is a huge help to our ministries. Thank you to St. Wendelin's Catholic School!



"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

— Proverbs 22:6 —

Benedictine Sisters and Friends

“Risen Christ”

Mary Jane Berger, OSB

When Sister Jean Juenemann was chief executive officer of Queen of Peace Hospital in New Prague, Minn., she had no idea the sculpture she commissioned Joe O’Connell to complete would ever be her responsibility again. Yet, when she was notified in 2024 that “Risen Christ” was being retired from its home after some 40 years and she could come to claim it, she realized a new story was about to begin.

“Risen Christ” is a wooden sculpture completed by artist Joe O’Connell in 1981, who in turn commissioned Jean Matzke (1939–2009), a well-known textile artist, to create a woven backdrop for the sculpture. The sculpture now hangs in the entryway at Saint Scholastica Convent, our community’s retirement facility, in St. Cloud, Minn.

When you go to see “Risen Christ,” you will want to meditate upon it because it is a very special work that Joe “was able to create that went beyond the simple materials of stone, wood, iron, ink and paper that comprised the major media he was fond of using,” according to Sister Dennis Frandrup, master potter and accomplished artist. S. Dennis, whose workspace was close by, often heard Joe working because he used a chisel and hammer to make the curves, gentle rhythms and designs in his medium.

For this piece, Joe used mainly wood. For the figure of Christ, poplar; walnut wood for connectors; and mahogany for cubes and end pieces. The cubes contain inserts that hold the symbols of the four evangelists: Matthew, a man; Luke, a winged ox; Mark, a lion; and John, an eagle. The evangelists are made of iron.

Joe’s many commissioned sculptures reside in other locations as close as Saint Benedict’s Monastery and the Church of Saint Joseph in

St. Joseph, Minn. They also exist in more distant lands such as Chicago, Ill. (where he was born), and Las Vegas, Nev. (a triptych for Christ the King Catholic Community). These sculptures are made of wood, stone, limestone and iron, his favorite medium.

Joe began his commissioned work in the 1950s while he was, according to *Divine Favor: The Art of Joseph O’Connell*, “a diverse craftsman and head teacher” at Hancock Vocational School. A variety of occupations, experiences and education gave Joe the opportunity for his first one-man exhibition in Chicago. This show and its reviews launched him into the artistic world through the favorable words of Copeland C. Burg in the *Chicago Herald American*: “One of the most satisfying shows of the younger artists we have seen in a long time. It reflects a genuine talent and earnest approach to many phases and facets of the environments to which this artist has been exposed.”

Following this review and others like it, Joe received commissions from many more places in Chicago, Glencoe, Ill., and beyond the Midwest. We are grateful to have this stunning piece welcoming guests at Saint Scholastica Convent.



“Divine Favor: The Art of Joseph O’Connell,”
edited by Colman O’Connell, OSB, published in
1999 by Liturgical Press in Collegeville, Minn.

The Gift of Gratitude

Maribeth Theis, OSB

Remember the thank-you notes you wrote as a child to your grandparents, aunts and uncles? Remember the joy of receiving a thank-you card from someone? This reflection explores the meaning and benefits of **gratitude**.

Gratitude, thankfulness or appreciation is a virtue often practiced after something good is received. Usually, one responds to the giver in writing, verbally or through body language. Sometimes, simple gestures are significant signs of gratitude: a warm handshake, a heart hug, a wink of the eye, a peck on the cheek, a pat on the back, or a contagious smile.

One acknowledges a time of happiness, a moment of grace, and blessings. When one gives to someone close to oneself, it is a way to share friendship. When one gives to a cause, the gift serves and helps unknown others. God is at the heart of a giving person's generosity, the good deed. To be grateful for things, no matter how small they may be, is to open oneself to ongoing receptiveness—you end up having more.

Gratitude can be the aftermath of forgiveness, such as in the Eucharist when we pray: "Lord, have mercy!" While we are asking for forgiveness, we

are already thanking God for Divine Mercy. As the Eucharistic Prayer begins, the first words are "...for all things and at all times give thanks to our gracious God." The psalms are also examples of thankfulness: "I recall your awesome deeds ... I reflect on all You have done" (Psalm 77).



Sisters Karen Rose (left) and Katherine Kraft

God is at the source of a grateful person's attitude. Grateful people are inclined to enable God to guide their lives. Researchers have proven that gratitude is not only good in itself, but it is also a foundation for cultivating hope. When that hope is fulfilled, happiness follows, and that feeling promotes gratitude.

How do we learn to develop a grateful heart and mind? Appreciating and living fully in each moment as it is gifted to us sets the stage for developing a grateful heart and mind. Another important aspect of becoming a thankful person is to practice resilience. When bad stuff happens to a person, there are methods available to focus on the positive rather than the negative. The most effective is a daily, concrete practice of expressing gratitude.

This practice can be as simple as having a Gratitude Jar. Each evening, write one to three good things that happened that day and put the papers in



a jar. Other people write a short thank-you note to someone who showed them kindness. You can mail it or just keep it. A third way is to keep a gratitude journal. Each night, write three things that brought you joy that day. Then, after each joy-bringer, write why it caused you joy. A thankfulness activity can change one's life!

What about the non-desirable or even tragic events in one's day? It's hard to be thankful for them! The secret is to accept everything as part of God's plan. If the situation seems hopeless or the outcome is not what one hoped for, choosing acceptance is a form of gratitude: "God's ways are not my ways." As well, judging and blaming others for things which one cannot control detracts from gratitude. Counter this feeling by recalling all the good things done for and to self from others. This positive remembering will prevent one from going down the slippery slide of the "pity-me syndrome."

The trials of aging can also detract from gratitude, instead fostering discouragement and frustration. It might be tempting to lament what has been lost. Instead, switch your thinking to all still doable skills and activities and choose to fill your time with happiness and gratitude for the past and the present.

The graces of Baptism remain with us for a lifetime. We cannot earn or purchase them. These graces are there when all is going as humanly planned as well as when obstacles seem insurmountable. As Norman Vincent Peale says: ***"The more you practice the art of thankfulness, the more you have to be thankful for."***



Left: Sister Ruth Anne Schneider (center) does crafts with two College of Saint Benedict students



Right: Sisters Tamra Thomas (left) and Catherine Duenne enjoy a walk on a winter day

Benedictine Formation at CSB+SJU

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, the Benedictine Institute celebrates our partnership with the sisters of Saint Benedict's Monastery and looks with excitement to more collaboration in the years ahead. The Benedictine Institute was founded at Saint John's University in 2008. Our mission is to strengthen and articulate, in fresh ways, the Catholic and Benedictine character of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB+SJU), promoting a rich, authentic understanding and appreciation of Benedictine life and culture on campus.

Below are highlights of a few Benedictine Institute programs that benefit from the presence and wisdom of the Benedictine sisters:

Benedictine 101



Employees spend time in conversation with each other and a sister, considering questions like: What is Benedictine monasticism all about? How might we view our work through a Benedictine lens? What could it look like to integrate Benedictine practices into our daily lives?

Lunch & Learns



Employees and monastics enjoy free lunch while learning about some aspect of the Benedictine tradition. In recent years, Sister Karen Rose, prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery, and Sister Laura Suhr reflected on their vocational journeys. Brendon Duffy, archivist for CentraCare, also presented on how the Benedictine sisters shaped health care in Central Minnesota.

Lectio Divina Group



Sister Hélène Mercier leads a small group of employees through *lectio divina* (prayerful reading) every Thursday.

Benedictine Living & Learning Communities



Benedictine Living and Learning Communities (BLLC) are intentional residence halls at CSB+SJU where students incorporate Benedictine values into their daily lives.

Photo: Sister Lisa Rose (right) with BLLC students

A Shared Ministry

Jessie Bazan, OblSB, Acting Director of the Benedictine Institute



BLLCs (Continued)

"We are in our third year of working with the BLLC in its current format. We are a monastic presence that helps to foster community outside of the classroom experience. One activity we helped to facilitate was creating valentines for our sisters at Saint Scholastica Convent. The heartfelt messages included prayers and connected with the practices they have learned in class, including having a picture taken of them working together in service, which fulfilled a class component and brings what they're learning in class into action.

While our time with the students is limited, we have found they continue to remember and appreciate our presence, whether at BLLC events, times when the monastery connects with students, and our presence at their games and other performances. We continue to connect with students who participated in former years and witness how they demonstrate the fruits of that experience in how they relate to each other and structure their day with elements from the Benedictine practices. We never know who or how we will impact each student, but our hope is that they will continue to know of our prayers and encouragement as they grow in their understanding of Benedictine life and bring these experiences into their future places of work and life."

– Laura Suhr, OSB (front), and Lisa Rose, OSB



"Building" Community

Employees and monastics gather in different buildings across the CSB+SJU campuses each Friday morning for pastries, coffee and conversation. Benedictine Institute graduate assistant Garrett S. Miller reflects on his experience:

"As I anticipated my journey from Maryland to attend Saint John's School of Theology, a whirlwind of questions arose: 'What is it like out there?' and 'How will I fit in?' Soon after my arrival, I started working at the Benedictine Institute. An early assignment was to serve at the BI's 'Building' Community events.

One of the first events was held in the monastery's Gathering Place. Welcoming us all, the sisters served us delicious chocolate zucchini bread, biscotti, muffins and more. It was delightful! However, the hospitality did not stop there. I was surprised by the multitude of sisters who introduced themselves, sat with me, and surrounded me with a love that made me feel at home again. I felt that I had a place in the community, appreciated for simply being present.

Now, having experienced this hospitality time and time again, I can see that it is the sisters' many smiles and personalities that make Saint Ben's a shining beacon of Christ's light for all who visit. Thank you, sisters, for letting me feel at home, and for allowing all guests 'to be welcomed as Christ' (*Rule of Benedict 53:1*)!"

Photo: Sisters Ann Marie Biermaier (left) and Michaela Hedican (center) with Jessie Bazan

Benedictine Bridges

Alyssa Tasto

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

— Proverbs 22:6 —

Proverbs 22:6 tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The sisters of Saint Benedict’s Monastery have long honored and witnessed to the core message of this verse. Instilling strong values and teaching children to honor their faith and vocations is an integral theme of the story of Benedictine women in the United States.

Sister Marilyn Mark is the current vocations director at the monastery, and she recently had the opportunity to attend SEEK, a five-day conference presented by the Fellowship of Catholic

University Students (FOCUS). S. Marilyn attended the conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, January 1–5, 2025. A wide range of laity and religious, families with small children, and adults of all ages came together to create a diverse convention of roughly 17,000 participants.

“It was uplifting because in Utah, we don’t have a huge gathering of young people like that anymore,” said S. Marilyn, who was born in Salt Lake City and began her monastic life in Utah.

One of the conference’s schedule staples was daily Mass. S. Marilyn remarked how incredible it was to see so many young families there. There were many children at each Mass, and the youth, from infants in strollers to young adults, were outstandingly engaged in the liturgies. College-aged attendees would emit a buzzing energy before events equal to that which is usually seen at concerts and other mainstream secular events.

Of her initial thoughts on attending the conference, S. Marilyn said, “I was kind of hesitant to go, but I thought ... I need to go see what this is like. And I was just so surprised ... I was excited to see all those young people in the faith so committed.”

Throughout the conference, S. Marilyn was able to speak to many young people of varying backgrounds. Two of the young women she met are attending college in Moorhead, Minn. They attended the Life Awareness Retreat held at Saint Benedict’s Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn., on February 8, 2025. Both young women are considering religious life, and one happens to be related

S. Alice (back right) and Sister Laura Suhr (back left) with students at Vacation Bible School



Benedictine Sisters and Friends

Reaching Out Across Generations



S. Alice (right) and Sister Laura Suhr during the National Eucharistic Congress Pilgrimage in St. Cloud, Minn.

to Sister Geraldine Zierden.

Events like SEEK are geared specifically toward young adults, but they are not the only place our sisters engage with young people devoted to their faith. Last spring, when Sister Alice Imdieke was teaching Vacation Bible School in Hallock, Minn., she said that her students, aged 7 to 10 years, “instilled a strong love for the Eucharist” within her. The parish children were ecstatic to share about their experiences in the Star of the North Pilgrimage. In June 2024, Sister Karen Rose, prioress of Saint Benedict’s Monastery, asked S. Alice to attend the National Eucharistic Congress—the first in 83 years—which took place in Indianapolis, Ind., July 17–21, 2024. Remembering the children of Hallock’s profound excitement regarding their own pilgrimage, she gratefully took the opportunity.

Each day of the Congress began with Mass, followed by impact sessions, which included

focuses for youth, families and priests, and time to explore the vast number of exhibits available. Some sessions would end in the late evening hours, with attendees still eagerly participating. Attendees also had the option to participate in Eucharistic Adoration at nearby St. John’s Church. It was on the way to this Adoration that S. Alice was delighted to come across a group of young adults chanting and singing to Jesus in the streets.

S. Alice recounted that upon entering the church for Adoration, she gave thanks to Jesus that she had been able to hear from the Congress’ many speakers. “But Jesus, it’s all about you,” she had continued. After a few moments of silence, she said, she was amused to hear Jesus reply in her heart, “I’m the number one speaker.”

When Mother Benedicta Riepp answered the call in 1852 to teach the children of German immigrants in Pennsylvania, she kickstarted a tradition of Benedictine women religious responding to the needs of the Church and the world. The sisters are still responding, reaching out their loving hands to guide young Catholics over 160 years later.

S. Marilyn (second from right) and Sister Joyce Willenbring (right) chat with students at the College of Saint Benedict during a Catholic Sisters Week event



The Year in Brief



Life Awareness Retreat

On February 8, 2025, Saint Benedict's Monastery hosted a Life Awareness Retreat in collaboration with Saint John's Abbey, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Crosier Fathers and Brothers, and Maryknoll Missioners. During this day-long retreat, five participants explored opportunities to serve the Church and world as future priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, and lay ministers and missionaries.

In an article published by *The Central Minnesota Catholic*, the official magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud, participant reflections shared that, "The presentations and information given at the retreat were invaluable" and "I recommend this retreat to anyone who is discerning, particularly those who are just beginning their discernment process and are curious to learn more."

Photo: Participants reflect during the Life Awareness Retreat

Jubilee Passport Project

In response to Pope Francis' request to the faithful to find ways to celebrate the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, the Diocese of St. Cloud presented the "Jubilee Passport: Pilgrims of Hope" project.

People are encouraged to pilgrimage to various sites across the diocese. Sacred Heart Chapel at Saint Benedict's Monastery is one of these sites, and so far this year, there have been many people pilgrimaging to our sacred space, including confirmation students and their sponsors and a group of women who are visiting passport locations together.

Individuals may download a free passport at www.stcdio.org/jubilee-2025-pilgrims-of-hope/.

Ciao, Italy!

Sisters Tamra Thomas (right) and Laura Suhr spent 10 enriching days in Italy. Their journey started at the annual Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB) conference in Assisi, where they ran the technology for the event. The CIB is a confederation of all Benedictine women's communities worldwide and is divided into 19 regions. Each region elects a delegate and an alternate delegate to attend the conference. After the conference, Ss. Tamra and Laura visited Rome and Subiaco, where St. Benedict lived for three years as a hermit and started the first Benedictine monasteries.





CATHOLIC SISTERS WEEK



Catholic Sisters Week

Catholic Sisters Week is celebrated annually March 8–14 and “shines a light on the spirituality, mission and community building of women religious.” This year, Saint Benedict’s Monastery joined other congregations of women religious for the #LikeaCatholicSister campaign. This campaign brought together congregations from across the country “in a unified effort to challenge outdated stereotypes and shift perceptions of religious life by showcasing the diverse, dynamic and impactful ways sisters serve today.” These reflections are found on our website at www.sbm.osb.org.

Updated Social Media Presence

Since first becoming active on social media years ago, our goal has always been the same: to be a positive presence and share God’s love far and wide. After reflection, we decided to continue utilizing only those platforms which we feel align with our values and support our mission. That being said, we discontinued engaging on X (formerly Twitter) in 2024. Please continue to stay connected with us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn. You can find links to each site on our website at www.sbm.osb.org.



Singing of God’s Goodness

GIA Publications, the publisher of Sister Christine Manderfeld’s music collection *Sing of God’s Goodness – Volume 2*, created a recording of this work to demonstrate how music can be done with different options. The recording and a visual presentation of the music is available online on GIA Unbound at www.giamusic.com/Unbound.

Photo: Sister Delores Dufner (left) and Christine Manderfeld (right) review a recording

Give to the Max 2024

To better steward our physical blessings and focus our energies on our ministries, our community is building a new, smaller monastery on our grounds—which will need a new, smaller organ.

The purchase of this organ was the center of our most recent campaign for Give to the Max, Minnesota’s annual online giving opportunity, that took place November 21, 2024. Generous donors gave more than **\$115,000**, helping us surpass our original goal of \$75,000. Thank you to all who gave to provide this gift of liturgy, prayer and organ music for years to come!





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Sister Christine Manderfeld

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