



Leaven

Vol. 38, Issue 2
Summer, 2020

St. Walburg Monastery • Covington, Kentucky

Monastery Gardens

*If you've never
experienced the joy
of accomplishing
more than you can
imagine,
plant a garden.*

Robert Brault



See pp. 4-5

From Our Prioress . . .

Ecclesiastes 1:9 states “*There is nothing new under the sun.*” Makes me wonder if the author ever lived through a pandemic!

A number of “new” experiences have occurred at St. Walburg during this time. Due to the quarantine our Sunday liturgies consisted of rich Liturgy of the Word services. Many sisters presented well prepared and thoughtful reflections on the Sunday readings. **Father Ken Overburg, S.J.** began celebrating with us on Pentecost. Now he comes every Sunday. We are so grateful for his willingness to preside with the community. We regret that we feel unable to invite our friends to worship with us.



Practicing hospitality, one of our Benedictine hallmarks, challenges us during this pandemic. “Zooming” has become an everyday experience. Recently we really moved into the twenty-first century when we made the necessary changes to live-stream the retreat conferences. (See p. 9)

Pizza on Saturday has become a community favorite. Most of the pizza meals have come through a generous donation by **Sister Mary Peter’s** niece, **Debbie Youtsey.**

Card tournaments, penny bingo; Saturday spirituality DVD’s that mostly featured **Ronald Rohlheiser**; afternoon movies have included **Just Mercy, Harriet, Fiddler on the Roof, Trouble with Angels, Of Gods and**

Men; special group dinners and exercise classes have continued to enhance our lives and keep us involved.

There are challenges. For some, just learning how to wear a mask properly and keeping it on at a doctor’s appointment is problematic. Social distancing is not easy especially for those experiencing hearing difficulties.

As a community we are very aware of and pray daily for all those impacted by the virus, which in reality is everyone. We recognize there are many hardships that so many people throughout the world continue to face.

For me, when not bemoaning the pandemic, I am finding a certain amount of freedom in staying home. Praying with the Church in the Liturgy of the Hours is enhanced. I experience the psalms as more alive today, particularly the ones calling on God in difficult times and circumstances, and asking for healing and compassion for our troubled world. Occasionally even the cursing psalms seem quite appropriate.

Dear author of Ecclesiastes, yes, “*there is something new* under the sun.” It is called COVID-19. It is deadly, dangerous yet dealing with it inspires creativity, kindness, tolerance and joining together in ways we may never have imagined possible.

Sr. Aileen Bankemper, Prioress

LEAVEN

Vol. 38, Issue 2

Summer, 2020

Srs. Deborah Harmeling
and Margaret Mary
Gough, editors.

Pictures:

Holly Springer, Srs. Cathy
Bauer, Eileen O’Connell,
Mary Tewes, and
Deborah Harmeling

Steps Toward Anti-racism



When the racial protests were taking place in many parts of the country and the world, the leadership of St. Walburg Monastery and Villa Madonna Academy met and issued the following anti-racism statement:

We, as a Benedictine community, stand united in our response to the racial injustices in our country against people of color, particularly African Americans. We pray for the nation's healing. We dedicate ourselves to shaping a community based on acceptance, equality and compassion. We pledge to listen, learn, pray and seek solutions that result in a world where the dignity and diversity of all people are cherished.

Villa Madonna Academy and the Benedictine Sisters express our unity and commitment to transformational change in our world.

We are in the process of discerning next steps so that our words reflect the manner in which we examine and live our lives. We realize that hard questions need to be asked about our own attitudes and behaviors toward those who have been marginalized, and especially towards persons of color. We need to identify our own implicit racial biases because, if not, we will continue to be blinded by our own lack of insight.

Following the admonition of Saint Benedict we begin by finding ways to *listen* carefully to understand those who experience life differently. Our goal is to open our hearts to be more loving and accepting of all God's people.

Srs. Dorothy Schuette, Cathy Bauer, Kimberly Porter, Barbara Woeste, and Eileen O'Connell will serve on a community task force. Sr. Eileen will be the liaison between the community and Villa Madonna Academy to coordinate our efforts. Our Oblates also have chosen racism as a focus area for this coming year. We will coordinate our efforts with them.

Sr. Aileen Bankemper, Prioress

The Chronicles

by Sr. Mary Tewes

March 17—A letter came from **Bishop Roger Foys**, calling for the suspension of all Masses across the diocese of Covington until further notice. Our last Mass had been Sunday, March 15 with **Fr. Roger Cooney**.

Much communication took place to accommodate these orders via phone, emails, face book and website.

March 16—**Sr. Eileen O'Connell** set up a corner of the library as her on-line teaching center to be able to communicate with her five religion classes of Villa Madonna seniors and freshmen, starting at 8:10 each morning. She had to get creative about sitting in that same chair all day. Later when the VMA building was open to faculty and staff, she moved to her classroom there.

March 17—**Sr. Kimberly Porter** set up a table in the library TV room as her office to do on-line work with her staff from **Beech Acres Parenting Center**. Her meetings started at 8:00 a.m. each morning and went till after 4:00 p.m. The advantage was that she could join the community for Noonday prayer and lunch each day, and it eliminated an hour of travel to and from work.

March 18—The liturgy committee set about preparing Liturgy of the Word services for Sundays and the special Holy Week services, calling on some sisters to prepare reflections on the readings for those days in the absence

of a priest.

March 21—Feast day of St. Benedict. **Sr. Rita Brink** organized for the community a party afternoon of all kinds of games from penny bingo to cards, Yahtzee, UNO, dominos, etc. and snacks.

March 23—Sr. Aileen with the Covid-19 Committee, consisting of **Srs. Rita Brink, Mary Catherine Wenstrup, Barbara Woeste** and **Mary Rabe**, started meeting daily to find ways to keep all in a positive mood, assist with keeping the community physically and emotionally healthy, and keeping updated with latest information. From then on postings of the *Corona Courier* appeared daily, esp. with lists of activities like exercises, games, movies, etc.

Holy Week—The City of Villa Hills sponsored a contest, inviting citizens to make posters to place in front of their homes with Easter greetings. We had a discussion and came up with ideas to give to **Sr. Emmanuel** to create our offering. We decided on two posters to be hung on the two pillars at the entrance to our property: **Easter Joy to All!** and **Praying for the Healing of the World**. The posters were hung on Holy Saturday morning. We won the contest and received coupons for \$35 for Snappy Tomato Pizza, on Wednesday. Photos were posted on Facebook.

April 12—Easter Sunday: **Sr. Aileen** has been the presider at all the Liturgy of the Word services of Holy Week and Easter Season. Sisters have been preparing the reflections for the Gospels each day of Holy Week and each Sun-

Monastery Gardens

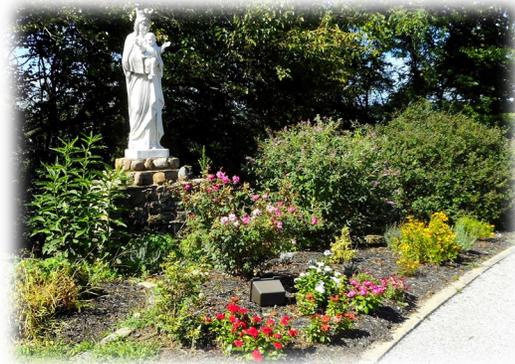
Plant a Garden

a poem by **Edgar Guest** (1881 – 1959).

If your purse no longer bulges
and you've lost your golden treasure,
If at times you think you're lonely
and have hungry grown for pleasure,
Don't sit by your hearth and grumble,
don't let mind and spirit harden.
If it's thrills of joy you wish for,
get to work and plant a garden!

Covid-19 quarantine has kept us all home. Naturally time, energy and talent have looked for and found expression close at hand – in multiple gardens in and around our monastery campus. As a community we have never lacked either appreciation for the beauty of our home nor sisters who find pleasure in developing soil, air, sun and water into oases that nurture the soul.

Over the years, as some sisters retired from the rigors of gardening, others have taken responsibility for existing areas and, in fact, discovered new patches for beautification. Currently our sisters are involved as follows: **Sr. Kimberly** makes sure that visitors are greeted with a lovely display at the front door of St. Walburg Monastery and around the statue of Mary (see above) which stands at the head of our driveway.



flowers which are being recycled after altar duty.

Srs. Sharon, Barbara, Aileen and Eileen take care of the plantings and pots around the Guest House, St. Joseph House and the Cottages on the way to our cemetery.

Sr. Emmanuel enhances the front entrance of the Infirmary and regularly plants the Easter Lilies and other



Monastery Gardens (cont')

Sr. Kathleen garden -scapes the perimeter of the Infirmary with help from **Srs. Barbara and Joan**. Joan also maintains a colorful environment around the back- entrance patio and, during this quarantine, misses her best helper, **Oblate Joan McAlonan**.

Sr. Mariana is responsible for the lovely rock garden in the back of the monastery (see cover) and along with **Sr. Dorothy**, tends the inner patio garden. (see cover and below).



And, perhaps the most watched over area on campus is our vegetable garden (see below right) and the new herb garden (see below left) yielding treats for the table, the do-



main of **Srs. Cathy, Mary Catherine and Eileen**.

We are grateful to all who care for our beautiful environment



and also to our maintenance and grounds crew for helping us all with the "heavy lifting."

Sister Dorothy Schuette



day throughout the Easter Season. They have been very inspirational!

Popular movies have been scheduled for each Thursday afternoon: *Dancing with Wolves* and *My Fair Lady*, etc. Religious videos were added for Saturday afternoons, followed by discussion. The videos were mostly by Fr. **Ron Rolheiser, OMI**

Each sister has been invited to dinner at the *St. Walburg Monastery Garden Restaurant* along with five others who chose the same menu. Each group was served by **Srs. Aileen and Rita Brink**. Such a clever idea. The Lower Level restaurant looks very inviting.

Spring has brought budding to our new trees in front of the monastery. The sight is so welcome! As are the flowering plants in the patio and around the monastery, all with the help of our gardeners. The vegetable garden has given us lettuce, radishes, and eventually cucumbers, which will be turned into pickles with the help of **Srs. Eileen, Mary Catherine and Cathy**. There is also a new endeavor: **Sr. Eileen's** raised herb garden. (See pp. 4-5 for pictures and article.)

With no graduations happening due to the virus, many plans have been made to help the Villa graduates celebrate virtually. The High School principal, **Pamela McQueen**, had banners made of each of the 40 graduates that were placed along the entrance road to the property. Also posters made by Sr. Emmanuel were hung on the front pillars. One read: *Congratulations Class of 2020, from VMA Faculty and Benedictine Sisters*. The other: *Take your Successes to*

the World with your Villa Values.

On May 8, the last day that classes were scheduled, the graduates drove through the property, waving and honking their horns, while the sisters and teachers waved them on.

The Covid-19 Committee announced planned outings for one driver/one passenger-stay-in-car trip starting May 15th. This was especially organized for sisters who can't drive. The driver and invited guest arranged a day and time for a visit to the cemetery and/or a ride to the river for lunch. Precautions were listed for purchasing sandwiches at a drive-thru. The kitchen was prepared for what was needed otherwise. Many got to see the progress on the Sanctuary Village and the new buildings at Madonna Manor. Everyone enjoyed these luncheon opportunities.

May 13—We received word from the bishop that we could resume inviting a priest for Sunday Mass beginning May 24th. After consultation, it was decided that **Fr. Ken Overberg, SJ** would be asked to preside at our Masses on Sundays, beginning on Pentecost, May 31. There will be no weekday Masses for now.

On Friday, **May 22**, there was an on-line celebration where the Bishop spoke to the graduates and parents from his seat in the Cathedral. The superintendent of schools spoke, then the principals, as well as those students chosen to give speeches. That evening the new graduates came back to Villa to receive their diplomas. They came in alphabetical order, each in a car with their parent(s), were handed

Those Who Help Us Live Monastic Life

Infirmiry Team

Keeping the community safe during the Covid-19 pandemic has been a major concern and goal. While we have had no cases of the virus, we know that we are truly blessed to have caring and competent nurses and nurse assistants in our infirmiry. Our goal is to provide excellent medical care in a family atmosphere. The infirmiry is home to our sisters who need assistance, whether temporary or long-term.

Nancy Haskamp (right) and **Mary Lou Aldridge** (left) have been caring for



community members for many years. Nancy began working here in 1977 and Mary Lou in 1983. Both of them know us well and are wonderful nurses.



Brooks (below) have joined the nursing



staff and provide excellent care as well.

Judy Kreinest (right) began working for us in 2004; while she works for a doctors' group she still serves us a couple days a month. We are so



grateful for each of these generous, caring women.

In addition, we have two



nurse assistants who have been with us for many years:

Wilma Wright (right), since



2000, and **Rita Kohl** (left) since 2012. They, too, provide invaluable support to the nurses and care lovingly for

Continued on next page

Those Who Help Us Live Monastic Life (cont')

the sisters. Several high school and college students also provide nurse assistance services after school and on weekends. Their youthful presence and energy are such a joy for us.

Bookkeeper

Our newest employee is **Glenna Ramsey**, our bookkeeper in the business office. Glenna joined us in May, 2020, in the midst of the pandemic. She faithfully wears her mask while performing the many tasks that keep our financial records in order. She has a gentleness and kindness that show in everything she does. We are so blessed to have found her!

Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

Kitchen Team

The Rule of Benedict speaks of food in many ways: the amount, the variety, seasonal food, servers, times for meals but, alas, does not speak of those who prepare the food. Perhaps it was too obvious that we all need them.



Our kitchen staff has been ably headed for the past 14 years by Chef **Maureen Smain** (above) who provides for excellent meals with an eye to using food wisely, creatively and economically. She even follows the Rule that recommends two entrees at each meal. Maureen is aided by 20-plus-year veteran **Kim Messer** (left) who comes in early to prepare a hot breakfast and is also the “queen of soups” which we enjoy every day. The cold food area, affectionately known as “the icebox”, is the work of **Becky Selm** (above) who for these past ten years has prepared a salad bar twice a day and manages the condiments. We also have the assistance of college and high school students for the evening meal and on weekends. We are grateful for all of these services and consider ourselves truly blessed and our healthy bodies attest to it.

Sr. Mary Rabe

Continued on next page

their diplomas by the principal, Pamela McQueen. The girls were given a bouquet of roses, and the boys a top hat and cane. As they drove around the drive, many sisters lined up in front of the monastery to congratulate each one and wish them all well.

May 31—Today, Pentecost Sunday, we had our first Mass since March 15th. What a joy to celebrate the Eucharist together in our chapel with **Fr. Ken Overberg, SJ**, presiding! This was the first Mass he has been able to celebrate for the last 3 months. He, too, was happy to be invited to be our presider for our Sunday Masses for the next weeks.

June 4— We started a four-part video course on *The Parables of Jesus: Paradigm for Monastic Life* by **Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB**, of St. Meinrad's Monastery, IN.

June 7—VMA sponsored a prayer gathering entitled *Praying Together: United in Peace*. The seniors and faculty gathered in prayer at the Academy, while the sisters prayed a similar prayer in chapel for our night prayer. (“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.” **Pope Francis**) At the conclusion the seniors were invited to paint a message of hope and peace on the spirit rock that sits in front of the gym.

June 9— **Sr. Nancy** announced to the community that we have a new book keeper. We welcome **Glenna Ramsey**, who has been in training with our previous book keeper, **Rita Sweeney**, for the past three weeks, and seems to have melded into the new job very well. We say good-bye to Rita, whose quiet presence among



us will be missed.

June 11-15—**Sr. Aileen Bankemper** traveled to Rock Island, IL, to facilitate the election of a new prioress for Saint Mary Monastery.

June 13—The Benedictine Oblates had the opportunity to gather for a WebEx virtual meeting. Oblate **Jamie Leslie** made the arrangements and many took the time to join in. We read articles by **Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI** on the meaning of the Ascension and Pentecost ahead of time. But the most important aspect was having the chance to talk and share how each one is doing. After this first hour of welcoming and hearing from each one, we got on with reflecting on the topic. It was a good meeting! A date was set to meet again on Sat. July 11, the feast of St. Benedict.

June 21-28—**Sr. Dorothy Schuette** was invited to **Our Lady of Grace Monastery** in Beech Grove, IN to be present for the community retreat to give directed retreats while **Sr. Cecilia Dwryer, OSB** gave the preached retreat.

June 23—Primary Voting Day in Kentucky was moved from early May because of the Covid-19 pandemic. **Sr. Christa** arranged for all to vote by mail.

June 22-26—As chair of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, **Sr. Aileen** has been busy coordination communication with prioresses, working with committee members in setting the agenda (hopefully) for the January 2021 Conference of Prioresses meeting and involvement in Zoom meetings with the prioresses in the Federation of St. Scholastica. Throughout May, June, July and

Those Who Help Us Live Monastic Life (Cont')

Maintenance

St. Walburg's maintenance department is ably staffed by **James/Tony Jarman, Rick Glendening** and **Greg Brinck**. Together they care for the needs of the buildings, vehicles and grounds of St. Walburg Monastery, whatever the sisters cannot do for themselves.

Tony Jarman (below, center) has worked here for 38 years, all his adult life. Working as an auto mechanic to start, he quickly enhanced and multiplied his skills in several trades. Familiar with all elements of building systems, Tony is able to repair and/or give an extended life to the component parts of the monastery plant. For Tony, recycling is synonymous with repurposing. Keep it for the parts, or for the scrap metal value. Generous with his time, Tony is a "first responder" to serious needs that occur outside of working hours.



Rick Glendening (above, right) has served as a member of the maintenance staff for over 16 years. Working outdoors from spring through late fall, he is familiar with what grows from the ground and what falls from sky or trees. During the winter Rick plans and executes large-scale cleaning tasks throughout the living quarters, making windows and floors shine.

Greg Brinck (above, left) is in his second year at St. Walburg's, working part-time after a long career elsewhere. Signing on because he loves outdoor work, he agreed to work year-round to help complete the duties of winter. He has noticed more than once something that would allow us to do a job better. After suggesting a new carpet scrubber, Rick dubbed Greg The Rug Doctor.

Between the lines is a large et cetera. Our gratitude for their service is wide and deep.

Sr. Christa Kreinbrink

House Cleaning

Cindy Lewis, who owns her own cleaning business, has worked with us for 28 years. She and her assistants keep the large public spaces, such as the chapel, dining room, stairs and parlors clean. She also cleans the Infirmary and Infirmary rooms. If cleanliness is next to godliness is true, she keeps our home godly.



Our 2020 Retreat

Rev. William Cleves was the retreat director for our 2020 retreat from July 26-31. For a year we had looked forward to having him as our retreat director and were grateful that he could still come, in spite of Covid-19. The title for the retreat was *A New Look at Some Old Stories from Scripture*.

Covid-19 prevented us from being able to invite our Oblates to join us for retreat as we have done in the past. But we were able to use **Sr. Eileen**

O’Connell’s (see below) technical proficiency to live-stream LOH, Eucharist and the retreat conferences for our Oblates and members of local religious communities. The technology was new to us and to many of the people who were able to participate.

Fr. Cleves received rave reviews from community members and people using the live-stream. One person said, “I appreciate this opportunity. I’m not in retreat myself this week but I’m showing the presentations to some of our sisters who are happy to experience the retreat conferences since the retreats they had scheduled were cancelled! Thank you for making this opportunity available for so many of us!”

One community member responded in the evaluation, “After March 13, what I thought was a 30-day retreat became a 4-5 month retreat—a

desert experience. The poem Fr. Cleves used gave me the ability to see more clearly what this retreat could be—an accidental ‘desert’ experience to get closer to God and to appreciate the gifts of sisters shared.”

Many people especially appreciated the poem, *Pandemic* by Lynn Unger which Fr. Cleves used to set the tone of the retreat. See <http://www.lynnungar.com/poems/pandemic/>. We are so grateful to Fr. Cleves for the opportunity to enjoy his scholarly, “new insights” into old Scripture stories.



August, every other Friday night has become a card tournament night. The majority of the community has been involved around tables in the refectory. There are prizes of course: for first, second and third place winners, and a booby prize. Hand and Foot has been the primary game even though recently Uno and Manipulation have surfaced.

June and **July** have seen a comeback for dining “out.” This time individual sisters were the chefs and provided menus. Everyone could sign-up for a dinner in St. Walburg Monastery Garden Restaurant. The menus are getting very enticing, making it hard to choose.

July 11 —The community celebrated the Feast of St. Benedict with sung Morning and Evening Prayer. The Benedictine Oblates had their second virtual meeting before noon, in which 17 participated on Zoom.

That evening the Oblates provided the community with a fried chicken dinner, all the usual sides and various types of pies. They didn’t get to provide the Annual Ice Cream Social on the last Saturday of June, so this was their gift instead. We did enjoy it, but surely miss having the Oblates with us on a regular basis.

July 26-31— Our annual retreat began Sunday evening, July 26 with **Rev. William Cleves** as our retreat director. The theme of the retreat was *A New Look at Some Old Stories (from Scripture.)* Because of Sr. Eileen O’Connell’s technical prowess, we were able to live-stream the retreat so that our Oblates and Sisters throughout the diocese could have the benefit of Fr. Cleves’ scholarship and creative reflections on the Scriptures. Both

groups were grateful for the opportunity. (See p. 9 for stories and pictures.)

August 3—We received a letter from *Bishop Roger Foys* saying that **Sr. Mary Catherine Wenstrup** will receive the *Cross Pro-Ecclesia et Pontifice*, a papal award bestowed on clergy, religious, and lay faithful in recognition of distinguished service given to the Church. (See this page for more information.)

August 11-16—**Sr. Aileen Bankemper** attended the yearly meeting of LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) virtually.

August 29—Because there seems to be no end in sight for Covid-19, we had the funeral Mass and burial of **Sr. Joan Gripshover's** remains at 9:30 am. **Rev. Bill Cleves** was the celebrant, and we live-streamed the Mass so that Joan's family and friends could be part of the ceremony. Next June (surely the pandemic will be over by then!) we will have a memorial Mass and invite her family and friends.

Sister Mary Catherine

To Receive Papal Award

On September 27 **Sr. Mary Catherine Wenstrup** will receive the *Cross Pro-Ecclesia et Pontifice*, a papal award bestowed on clergy, religious and lay faithful in recognition of distinguished service to the Church.

The award was established in 1888 by **Pope Leo XIII**. Other religious women in the Diocese of Covington to receive the award are: **Srs. Janet Bucher, CDP, Celeste Marie Downes, SJW, Marla Monahan, SND, Fran Moore, CDP, Mary Ethel Parrott, SND, Margaret Stallmeyer, CDP and Mothers Margaret Mary Fields, CP and Mary Christina Murray, SJW.**



Two diocesan priests and sixteen laity are also receiving the cross.

The award ceremony will take place September 27 at 2:30 pm at the Cathedral.

Our **Sr. Andrea Vasquez** received the *Cross* in 2012 in the Diocese of Pueblo, Colorado and **Sr. Adelaide Feldbauer** received the *Benemerenti Medal*, another Papal award, in 1983.

Playing Cornhole Toss on Memorial Day



Right to left: **Sr. Martha Walther** tosses with **Sr. Cathy Bauer** cheering her on, **Sr. Christa Kreinbrink** focuses on the goal and **Sr. Sharon Portwood** tries her best.

Living Together in Time of COVID-19



Left: Fixing s'mores in the courtyard together.

Below: The St. Walburg Monastery Garden Restaurant awaiting chefs and diners.



Above: Srs. Ann John Kotch and Martha Walther play a daily card game, Kings in the Corner, after lunch.



Right: Srs. Rita Brink, Mariana Kirk and Mary Tewes prepare to play Hand and Foot on a Friday evening. Sr. Rita is the MC for Friday card games.



Left: The Amazing, Balanced, Fell-on-the-Floor-Just-Like-This Pickle Slice!



St. Walburg Monastery
2500 Amsterdam Rd.
Villa Hills, KY 41017-5316

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
CINCINNATI, OH
PERMIT #1611

SAVE THE DATE

Join us on Zoom for a Morning of Reflection entitled
Walking With Thomas Merton: Letting Go to Live

Presented by musician **Bill Tonnis**, Pastoral Associate for Outreach,
Our Lady of Visitation Parish, Cincinnati, OH

Saturday, October 24, 2020

9:30 am—11:45 am

Call Sr. Deborah Harmeling at 859-331-6771 or email at
sdhosb@yahoo.com

to register and get Zoom link.

Free-will donations welcomed.

