



Leaven

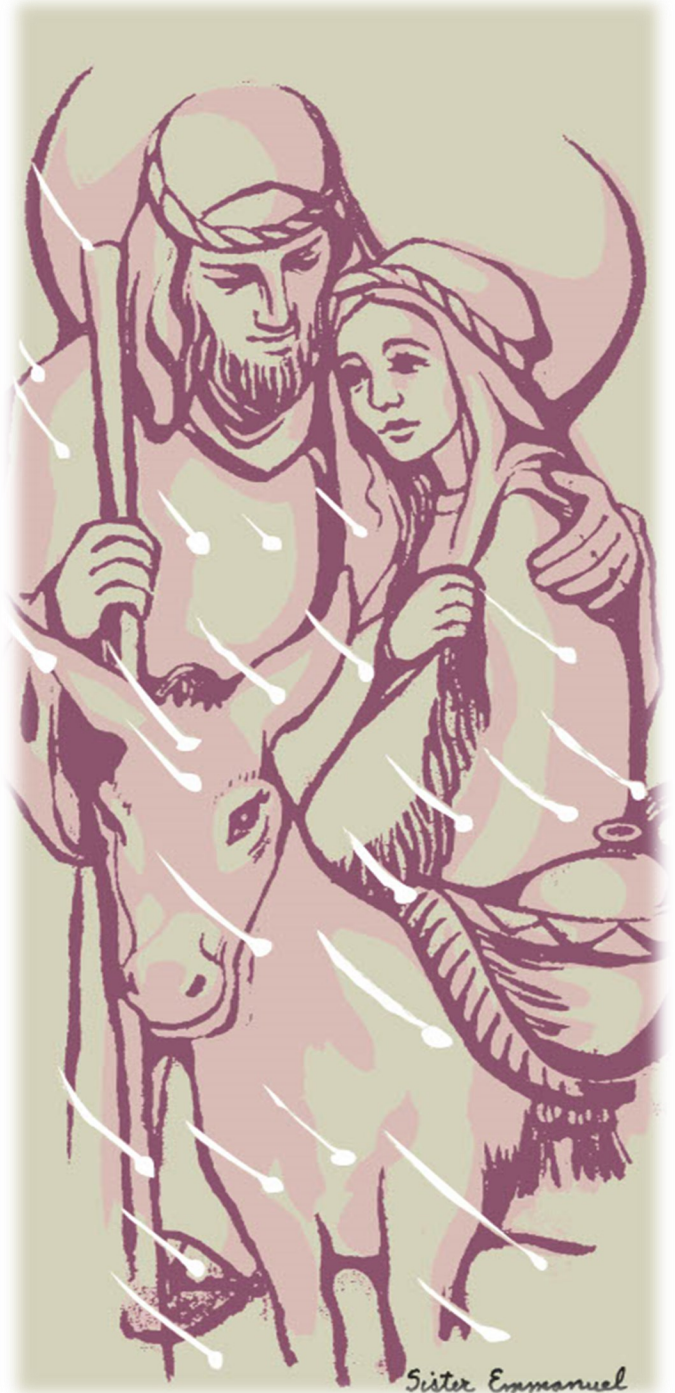
Vol. 38 Issue 3
Winter, 2020

St. Walburg Monastery • Covington, Kentucky

*Open your heart
to the Christ
in the stranger
seeking hospitality
and solace.*

Peace to you
and those you love
this Christmas season and
in the New Year
to come.

**The Benedictine Sisters
of St. Walburg Monastery**



From Our Prioress . . .

Are we getting close to the end of the pandemic? Who ever thought our quarantine would persist to Christmas and beyond? We miss our friends and families. Though we have had opportunities to virtually see many of you, it doesn't come close to in-person interaction with you. On the whole the community is doing well, but we realize that for many the pandemic continues to cause hardship and pain. Our daily prayer includes all sufferings, especially suffering caused by the virus.

The core of the Christmas message is that Jesus came to show us the way to seek God, the way to "put on" Christ. What matters most is how we love God, love and care for one another and God's creation. It is an inclusive love; everyone, everything counts.

The verse of our Christmas card urges us to reach out with compassion:



*Open your heart
to the Christ
in the stranger
seeking hospitality and solace.*

Teresa of Avila states our commission so clearly "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. . . Christ has no body now on earth but yours." The message of Christmas beckons us to put on Christ - thoughts, words and above all, actions. Even though there is confinement during these times, the seminal Christmas message challenges us to find and extend openings of love.

May all of you experience the peace and love of Christ that can surpass any pandemic.

Sr. Aileen Bankemper, Prioress

LEAVEN

Vol. 38, Issue 3

Winter, 2020

Srs. Deborah Harmeling
and Margaret Mary
Gough, editors.

Pictures:

Holly Springer, Srs. Mary
Tewes, Aileen Bankem-
per, Eileen O'Connell, and
Rita Brink

Focus on Sr. Charles Wolking

“God bless you. Let the devil miss you and not find you until you are forty days dead. (and he won’t want you then!)” These words and many other unique phrases echo through the halls of the monastery and the sisters’ houses for the past 78 years thanks to **Sr. Charles Wolking**. Raised during the depression, the six Wolking daughters had strong family ties and many stories. All six girls entered the Monastery – **Srs. Mary Ann, Teresa, Amelia, Charles, Mercedes and Consolata**. Sr. Charles is the only one living and she carries on the tradition with her amazing wit.

Sr. Charles began her ministry as an elementary teacher in local schools including **St. John Orphanage**. In 1955, she started a new venture graduating from **St. Catherine College** in Minnesota as a certified occupational therapist. She returned to Covington to work at the *United Cerebral Palsy Center* working with pre-school and elementary students. This became **Redwood school** and is still in existence. Sr. Charles’ gentle and effective approach to handling difficult situations and adjusting when needed made her a most respected member of the team.

Her loving and caring, gentle but firm, warm and sympathetic personality led her to her next ministry as administrator of **Madonna Manor**, receiving training at **St. Louis University**. Her successful career lasted 33 years during which time she endeared herself to the residents with their many wishes and needs. Time caught up with her and she retired to the Monastery in 1999. She helped as needed at home and immediately began volunteering at the Manor as sacristan and continued to visit the residents. With passion she admits, “I love the Manor and always will.”

Where is Sr. Charles now? If she is not in her room in the infirmary, she is in the Chapel praying or walking the circuit of dining room and halls, an exercise she loves. Reflecting on her life, she says, “we learned so much and God gives the grace.” With joy she adds, “WOW!”

Sr. Mary Rabe



The Chronicles

By Sr. Mary Tewes, OSB

Aug. 16—The Walker family moved into **St. Joseph House**, until they can locate another place to live. **Christa Fischer Walker** is a '93 alum of Villa Madonna Academy, a PhD graduate from Johns Hopkins in international health, and works for the CDC in the HIV division. (See p. 5 for longer article.)

August 19—School started at the Villa, K through 12 with lots of precautions and planning to keep everyone safe. Some chose to do their work virtually, but most are at Villa each day. The teachers are exposing their classes to the outdoors as much as possible. Students have come to school with their mats or ground covers so that this works well. Lunch time is especially delightful with groups all over the grounds and extending the time for some exercise. We can watch some of this activity from the monastery building.

August 25—The recent past prioress from **St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, IL, Sr. Sandra Brunenn**, is spending some of her sabbatical time with us and staying at Cottage 7. Her former subprioress, **Sr. Sheila**, came to spend a week here with Sr. Sandra, experiencing Kentucky Benedictine hospitality.

August-September—Harvest Time: Our vegetable and herb gardeners, **Srs. Cathy, Mary Catherine and Eileen O’Connell** have been faithful to the cucumber, tomato and bean plants that

have enjoyed all the rain and sunshine. Picking is a daily endeavor, and canning to follow. We have many quarts of sweet-sour, bread and butter and hot spice pickles. We have enjoyed the pickles, beans, cherry tomatoes and salsas. They are the best! Mosquitoes were also in abundance in the little gardens.

The community is privileged to have a variety of wonderful bakers, who are often seen in the kitchen preparing desserts for the evening meal or an individual sister's birthday cake: **Srs. Cathy Bauer, Dorothy Schuette, Eileen O'Connell, Joan Fraenzle, Mary Catherine Wenstrup and Nancy Kordenbrock.**

We also have a great many benefactors who look out for our well-being.

One is **Debbie Youtsy, Sr. Mary Peter's** niece, who provides supper for us every other Saturday evening. The meals come from a variety of restaurants. Another is **Bob Kordenbrock, Sr. Nancy's** brother, who provides wonderful tomatoes from his garden. Another is **Don Barth**, who brings drums of ice cream from **Agliamesis Brothers**. Because of the virus restrictions he can't come and put on an Ice Cream Social with his family, as he has done in the past few years.

September 5—Derby Day: This is a must party day for the community. Even though it was moved from May, we still had

Congratulations to VMA High School/ Junior High for 3rd National Blue Ribbon Award

Villa Madonna Academy High School/Junior High in Villa Hills, KY is proud to be an Exemplary High Performing National Blue Ribbon School for 2020. Villa is one of 367 schools in the nation and one of only ten in Kentucky to be recognized this year. Villa is the only high school in the Tri-state to earn a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School Award, and this is the high school/junior high's third National Blue Ribbon Schools designation.



Villa Madonna Academy High School/Junior High Principal **Pamela McQueen** (above) said, "Villa Madonna Academy High School is honored to be recognized with our third National Blue Ribbon! What a tribute to an incredible faculty who work together as a team and sees in students limitless possibilities in an ever-changing world. This is, indeed, an honor for our Villa community of dedicated students and supportive parents. We are forever grateful to the Benedictine Sisters for their vision 116 years ago."



Mrs. McQueen announced the news to students and unveiled a banner listing the years that Villa Madonna Academy High School/Junior High has received the National Blue Ribbon award.

Sr. Eileen O'Connell

Hospitality Story in Time of COVID

In mid-August, 2020 we welcomed **Christa Fischer-Walker**, her husband, **Bill Walker** and their children, **Eden**, age 10, **Elias**, age 8 and **Joshua**, age 4 into one of the houses on our grounds.

Christa is a '93 Villa Madonna Academy graduate. She has her PhD from **Johns Hopkins** in international health. She works for the Center for Disease Control in the HIV division.

In January her family was reassigned from Namibia, where they had lived for 5 ½ years, to Ukraine. It was a tough adjustment but they were doing okay until Covid-19. They had just moved into permanent housing in March when they

were given 48 hours to return to the US. The CDC/US government could not assure their safety. They returned to northern Kentucky and stayed in a series of B&B's and then with Christa's parents in Edgewood.

Christa hoped to have a more permanent situation for them before school starts. The two older children had been doing virtual school through their international school, but this required getting up at 3:00 a.m. because the broadcasts were from Europe. They are now enrolled and doing a hybrid schedule at River Ridge Elementary.

The family has settled in and we have enjoyed seeing and hearing the children at play. Covid-19 has kept us from a lot of contact but we are so happy to have them with us. It seems that they may only be here until January. Christa's position may require her to return to Ukraine or be reassigned. Ukraine is still considered a Covid-19 hot spot so nothing is certain. Their life has been very uncertain for months; the only certainty has been having a home here.

It is interesting to know that Bill's grandmother who raised him was born in France before World War II. She and her two brothers were abandoned by their parents when she was 8 years old. They lived on the streets until she was taken in by the Benedictine Sisters and was raised in their orphanage. She came to the US as a war bride in 1945. He is so touched to be connecting with Benedictines.

We feel blessed to have had them among us during this time.

Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock



the usual small betting pots. A delicious supper was prepared by our chef, **Maureen Smain**. Then at 7:05 p.m. the horses were coming into their gates when, one of the favorites, **Thousand Words**, reared up, fell on his side and broke his leg. Of course, the horse was scratched from the race. The rest took off, and to the owner's surprise, his other entry, **Authentic**, won the race. Then the winnings were handed out and the party was over for another year.

September 6—Labor Day: A day full of un-labor was prepared for us. After late Morning Prayer, we had Bingo with many prizes. After lunch we were treated to the movie **The Butler** followed by corn-hole games in the Refectory. Our eldest, **Srs. Andrea** and **David** have become the folks to beat in this game. **Srs. Christa** and **Kimberly** prepared a wonderful picnic supper to complete the day.

Racism is the topic for study and awareness in the community and the Oblate meetings.

The joint statement on Racism issued by our community and Villa Madonna Academy has grounded our work on this issue. We now have a committee which will keep us moving on this issue. The Oblates are studying **White Fragility** and sharing on monthly Zoom meetings. **Sr. Dorothy Schuette** and the Racism committee are meeting and preparing activities for community meetings and in-between. Many of the Thursday and Sunday movies are educating us on this topic as well.

September 22—The next round of *Dinners Out* began this evening in the St. Walburg Garden Restaurant in the Lower Level with **Sr. Cathy's** famous baked potato bar and apple dumplings. Five more evenings are scheduled with cooks preparing their favorite recipes for diners to enjoy.

September 24—Today **Sr. Kimberly Porter** flew to **Emmanuel Monastery in Lutherville, MD** to assist the community in the process of electing a prioress and leadership team. **Sr. Lynn McKenzie**, the Federation President worked with her.

This was also the day when the announcement was made to the **Villa Madonna Academy** students, faculty and staff that the high school had been awarded the third Blue Ribbon Award. What an accomplishment! Many of the sisters joined in the outdoor celebration with drums and cheers, when the new multi-foot banner was unfurled from the roof of the building. **Sr. Aileen's** letter to **Mrs. Pamela McQueen** and the Villa community acknowledged that "the Benedictine Sisters are especially proud of the obvious daily living of the Benedictine values of scholarship, respect, hospitality, service and prayer that are the foundation of all that you do."

September 24—**Sr. Joan Fraenzle** organized the Feast Day/ Birthday Party in the infirmary dining room for all who come each month. The bingo consists of names and items pertaining to the month. (**Srs. Jeanette**

Congratulations to Our 2020 Jubilarians

This year marks the 60th anniversary of profession for three of our sisters: **Srs. Andrea Vasquez, Mary Rabe and Rita Brink**. We congratulate them and thank them for their years of faithfulness to monastic life.

In reflecting on their 60 years of monastic profession, they expressed their thanks to the community for the opportunity to grow spiritually and personally. They have been asked to do things they may not have thought possible, but with the encouragement and support of the community have had great experiences. Praying, working and living together has brought many gifts and blessings

Each of them was taught by Benedictine Sisters in their early years. Sr. Andrea at **Our**



Lady of Guadalupe in Colorado; Sr. Mary at **Blessed Sacrament and Villa Madonna Academy;** Sr. Rita at **St. Henry in northern Kentucky**. Getting to know the sisters led to their decisions to enter St. Walburg after high school graduation.

They all began their ministry as educators. Sr. Rita (above) served as teacher and principal for over 20 years before being named Superintendent of Catholic schools in the Diocese

of Lexington. She then was elected prioress of the community. After that service she was named director of urban education in the diocese of Covington. She recently returned from St. Marys, PA where she facilitated the closing of the monastery there, selling the buildings and property and assisting sisters in transferring to other communities. Sr. Rita now serves as Director of Development for the community, as well as serving on several committees.



Congratulations to Our 2020 Jubilarians (cont')



Sr. Mary Rabe (previous page, bottom) taught science for over 50 years at St. Henry High School and Villa Madonna Academy. In retirement, Sr. Mary is house coordinator at the monastery, helping all the sisters in whatever way she can. Sr. Mary co-ordinates the daily schedule, telephone duty, dish-washing volunteers, oversees Covid protocols and many other

details of monastery life.

Sr. Andrea (above) taught in elementary schools before she was asked to be part of the community's mission in Pomata, Peru. She polished up her Spanish and also learned to work with translators in order to work with the Peruvian people who spoke Aymaran. After returning from Peru she began work in La Junta as part of a parish team. **Bishop Tafoya** of the diocese of Pueblo, CO, then asked her to be Director of Hispanic Ministry, director of Catholic Schools, volunteers and the diocesan paper. What a vote of confidence from Bishop Tafoya! Sr. Andrea has also had the privilege of leading pilgrimages to Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Peru and the Holy Land. She is now working in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish.

The community is grateful to them and wishes them many blessings in this, their jubilee year.

Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock



and **Anne Frisch** worked on these years ago.) There are snacks to complete the event. Because of the pandemic Sr. Joan has been missing the assistance of **Oblate Dottie Due** at these events.

October 3-7—Sr. Cathy Bauer and the Formation Team have been in contact with three women regarding their interest in joining our community. Because of COVID-19, it has been difficult to arrange for them to visit with us safely. After much consultation with each of them and the Prioress, it was decided that we would work out a time for this to happen safely. So, on Oct. 3, one of the three came to stay at the Guest House and join in our meals, prayers, and activities. **Nicole Soder** from northern Ohio made herself at home, and joined in cards, sharing with the sisters, and especially enjoyed the bonfire in the courtyard with s'mores for a treat one evening. We look forward to meeting the other two women soon.

Oct 5-9—Our absentee ballots arrived in September and were prepared to be delivered to the county clerk's office during this week in plenty time before the election.

Tuck-pointing has begun on the exterior of the Monastery buildings. Recently we had new air conditioners put in the Chapel area. And new doors in the Lower Level, making it easier to get in and out, especially when the weather is hot.

October 8—The flu vaccine was administered by the druggist from the **Ft. Mitchell Drug Shoppe**.

This is a wonderful annual service that they provide to the community.

October 16-19— Because the Academy has a long weekend, and others do not have to go off to work, we are having an October Fest time, with later Morning Prayer, a card tournament on Friday evening, and an October Fest Dinner on Saturday. We are not short on ideas for celebrating and keeping spirits up during this time of pandemic.

October 21—Time for another Poetry Night. Sisters bring their favorite poem to share and provide information about the poet. **Srs. Kimberly Porter** and **Rita Brink** organize this evening and provide snacks to end the sharing.

October 24—The Fall Center of Spirituality Day took on a different form this year. We had a Zoom session—a Morning of Reflection entitled, *Walking with Thomas Merton: Letting Go to Live* presented by musician **Bill Tonnis**, Pastoral Associate for Outreach for Our Lady of the Visitation Parish, Cincinnati, OH, from 9:30-11:45 am. Sisters gathered in Lower Level to watch the presentation with the rest of the Zoom participants.

October 31—The annual Halloween Party was held in the refectory with some folks donning a costume for the theme of Covid 19. Imagine creating a costume with that theme. Was difficult, but some did it and marched in the procession, for the choice of a winner. *Chaos* by **Sr. Kimberly Porter**

Oblates Share with Sisters a Study of Racism

Recently our Benedictine Oblates reflected on the statement that the sisters had published about their commitment to racial justice. After several members suggested that the Oblates take on this same endeavor they chose the book *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo to study and discuss in groups. **Jamie Leslie** (right) volunteered to lead them and reports, “We write this article to share the activities of the Oblates with the intention that our activities give hope to the Sisters as we walk parallel paths on the topic of racism.”



As of October, fifteen Oblates have read and discussed via Zoom meetings about half of *White Fragility*. For the October discussion, people seemed to relax into the topic a bit, enjoying what we learned about each other. In reflection, we must have been nervous at the September meeting as we dipped our toes in this new topic. Led by Diangelo, we are becoming more aware of racism around us and better able to acknowledge the most challenging issue of systemic racism. Our familiarity with each other as Oblates has allowed us to share our personal thoughts and stories of racism in our lives. Again with Diangelo’s prompting, we have moved away from the dichotomy of “racist thoughts = bad” to admit that we are raised in a racist culture deeply in need of healing.

We recognize that most of us are white with one Latina. We appreciate the perspective of everyone, agreeing with Diangelo that the structures of racism in our country have been built and maintained by white people. As such, it is primarily white people who need to repair the damage. Because the first step in solving a problem is to recognize it, that is the stage we have worked on. We are also slowly looking towards action to repair structural racism. Some actions we have shared so far include joining protests against police brutality, others supporting *Black Lives Matter*, living in an economically and racially diverse neighborhood, sending kids to a public school classroom with 50% black children, tipping a black man well who runs a carwash, gathering Oblates to visit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, supporting the vote for various groups including black men formerly incarcerated.

Oblates Study Racism (cont')

ated in Kentucky.

As we concluded our meeting in October, one Oblate offered her insight: 'Reading this book calls us to our duty of

conversion as an Oblate.' As we remain open to the discussion, we find our hearts changed, strengthened to be better people, to find ways to support our brothers and sisters who are people of color."

As Benedictine Oblate Director, I am very encouraged by the joint effort of our Oblates and Sisters to address this much needed issue in our society today. It is indeed a work of conversion for our time.

Sr. Mary Tewes

Resources

Black Art Speaks: <https://www.blackartspeaks.com/>

Black-owned businesses: <https://thevoiceofblackcincinnati.com/>

Coates, T.N. The case for reparations: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Data re: Racial inequality in US: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/03/politics/black-white-us-financial-inequality/index.html>

Implicit Association Tests – to detect implicit bias: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html> - Be sure to read the information around your score and how it compares to others.



won the contest. **Sr. Nancy** had games for us at the tables, and **Sr. Joan Fraenzle** prepared popcorn and candy. We enjoyed each other as always. Off we went to prepare for the big feast day of All Saints, on Sunday, Nov. 1.



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day—We will be live-streaming the following:

Christmas Eve:

5:00 pm Evening Prayer

Christmas Day:

9:00 am Morning Prayer

9:30 am Eucharist

5:00 pm Evening Prayer

All Saturday Evening Prayers at 5:00 pm during the Christmas season.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/715268015980495/?ref=share>

Or search Facebook for St. Walburg Monastery Special Events to find the link.



Front row (left to right): **Srs. Rita Bilz** and **Henrietta Seiler**.

Back row (left to right): **Srs. Deborah Harmeling, Rita Brink, Nancy Kordenbrock, Margaret Mary Gough** and **Andrea Collopy**.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas!

We look forward to a time when we can meet face-to-face.

Until then know that our prayer is with you always.

May your Christmas celebration bring joy and peace to you and your family.

May Christ fill your hearts with joy and hope!

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery

Front row (left to right): **Srs. Denise Gough, Charles Wolking, Rose Rauen** and **Mary Peter Youtsey**.

Back row (left to right): **Srs. Mary Carol Hellmann, Emmanuel Pieper, Stella Gough** and **Mary Rabe**.



Front row (left to right): **Srs. Rosemary McCormack** and **Ann John Kotch**.

Back row (left to right): **Srs. Christa Kreinbrink, Eileen O’Connell, Mary Catherine Wenstrup, Martha Walther** and **Barbara Woeste**.



**Sisters Unavailable
for Group Pictures**

Top row (left to right): **Srs. Sharon Portwood, Ann Middendorf** and **Kathleen Ryan**.

Bottom row: **Srs. Andrea Vasquez, Laura Vallimont, and Cathy Bauer**.

Front row (left to right): **Srs. David Ruschmann** and **Colleen Winston**.

Back row (left to right): **Srs. Kimberly Porter, Mariana Kirk, Aileen Bankemper, Dorothy Schuette, Mary Tewes, Joan Fraenzle** and **Victoria Eisenman**.





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SAVE THE DATE

Join us for a Lenten Morning of Reflection on Zoom
Indifference as a Virtue in the Spiritual Life

Presented by **Rev. P. Del Staigers**, pastor of St. Veronica Parish
and St. John Fisher Parish, Cincinnati Archdiocese

Saturday, March 6, 2021

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.



St. Ignatius of Loyola

