



LEAVEN

Volume 40 Issue 2
Summer 2022



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VOLUME 40
ISSUE 2

Leaven

Published three times a year for the friends of St. Walburg Monastery.

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Photos: Srs. Cathy Bauer, Eileen O'Connell, Mary Tewes, Mrs. Amy Holtzman, and Mr. Tony Wagner

On the cover: Surviving WWII and weather, this statue of St. Benedict in Monte Cassino, Italy still reminds guests of the importance of hospitality.

The Benedictine Sisters are deeply grateful for the support provided by our benefactors. You are remembered whenever the community gathers for prayer. For purposes of donations, bequests, and annuities, our legal title is

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From the PRIORRESS

Bless our God, for summer days and lingering light.

Summer is half spent, but there continue the lingering sounds, beauty and heat of a summer day. Best of all are the fresh fruits and vegetables that make it to our tables. The community rejoices in that we are continuing to open up though not to the extent of pre-Covid times. We are hoping that the momentum lasts so that we can extend our Benedictine hospitality further.

Zoom eased the isolation during the dark days of Covid. Getting together in person for the General Chapter of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica in Atchison, KS with delegates from the seventeen communities was a long-awaited and welcome experience. That being said, the Chapter was cut short when two delegates tested positive. A small miracle occurred when the last three days of the Chapter were compressed into one. Though a bit rushed, we were in good spirits. A reminder that Covid is still not behind us.

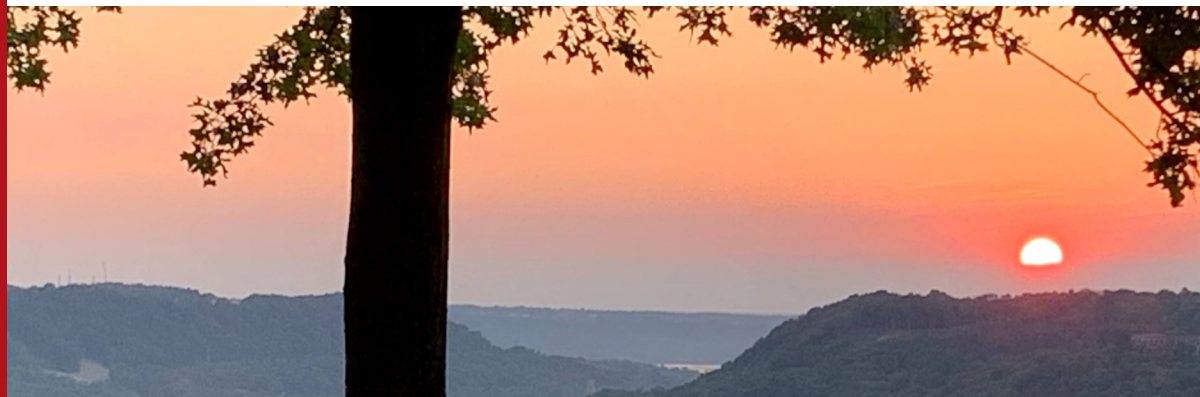
We are both saddened and joyful for Sisters David and Victoria who died since the last issue of *Leaven*. When one thinks of generous, contributing sisters, they easily come to mind. Heaven is blessed to have these women join! They are deeply missed here at St. Walburg and by their family members.


Periodically we receive updates from the Sisters in Ukraine whose communities are recipients of the funding we have sent. The following is an excerpt from Mother Clara of the Benedictine Sisters of Zhytomyr and Lviv.

“We have received funds from CIB (Communion of International Benedictines) passed on to us through M. Blandyna. Thank you for your solidarity with our suffering people and helping to bring the loving presence of God to the most destitute place on earth: people whose homes and lives have been attacked and destroyed. Strangers, wanderers, and outcasts have literally become our sisters and brothers, living across the corridor of our cells and under the gaze of the God who created us. Without your financial support, this could not have continued. We are grateful to God, to you and to the benefactors who participate in this ministry of presence and mercy. It is difficult for us to express our gratitude, but you can be sure that the prayers and blessings of the poor you have helped will accompany you on your life's journey.”

On the home front, since the last issue of *Leaven*, a family of five from Afghanistan stayed temporarily in St. Joseph's House before moving to California to live near relatives. We have informed the refugee settling personnel that we are also willing to host families from Ukraine or other troubled, war-torn regions. We continue to pray daily for those suffering from the hardships of war and mismanagement of power.

Bless our God for summer days and lingering light.
Sr. Aileen Bankemper, OSB





Federation of Saint Scholastica 100th Anniversary

Benedictine Life: A Vision Unfolding

by Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

From June 15 to June 22, chapter delegates from the seventeen monasteries of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica were scheduled to meet at Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, Kansas. What a delight it was to meet in person with so many Benedictine women, some old friends and some new ones.

The first two days of the chapter were given to the topics of radical hospitality and the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

Sr. Judith Sutera of the Atchison community presented on radical hospitality. Her comparison of the Rule of the Master, on which St. Benedict's Rule is based, showed the vast differences between the two. While the Master welcomed guests he was wary of them from the beginning, checking to be sure they were "not of the devil" and then, having them put under surveillance lest they "suddenly... be found to be thieves." In contrast, Benedict welcomes them with prayer and they are offered "every kindness". As he writes: "Christ is

to be adored in them as it is he who is in fact being received." This, in fact, summarizes our understanding of Benedictine hospitality, alive today.



Chapter Delegates: Srs. Nancy Kordenbrock, Rita Brink, Kimberly Porter, and Aileen Bankemper

Continuing on the theme of radical hospitality, Sr. Maricarmen Bracamontes, prioress of Pan de Vida Monastery in Torreon, Mexico brought Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* to life for the delegates. The encyclical addresses the interdependence of all the citizens of the world. In it the Pope urges us to see that we are a universal community of differences and encourages us to put aside indifference. Can we replace our indifference with tenderness and true care for each other? Sr. Maricarmen's role as a leader in the Church in Latin America provided her and us with

a more universal outlook. There is much to be done in all parts of the world to

replace fear and hatred with kindness and love, the essence of Benedictine radical hospitality.

The final agenda of the chapter included election of the president and council members, as well as some canonical matters. After two delegates were symptomatic and tested positive for Covid, this process was compressed from two and a half days into one.



Sister Lynn McKenzie from Cullman, Alabama, was re-elected as president; council member Sr. Anne Wambach, Erie, PA; Sr. Elaine Fischer of Atchison, Kansas, as first councilor and other council members: Kimberly Porter, Covington, KY, Susan Quaintance, Chicago, IL, and Maricarmen Bracamontes, Torreon, Mexico.

Throughout the week, the delegates were treated to the outstanding hospitality of the sisters of Mt. St. Scholastica. Their attention to detail in meeting and anticipating the needs of the delegates was incredible. The food, the accommodations, the service and the kindness were unparalleled. They have our sincere gratitude for a wonderful chapter.



election of prioress



Sister Aileen Bankemper was elected to a second term as prioress of St. Walburg Monastery on April 23, 2022. Second terms are *somewhat* like new territory. Personnel changes and fresh challenges bring newness, while the previous community agenda remains partly accomplished as always. New or “old”, the continuing support of community members is essential for facing the future. At the election each member indicates her support to Sr. Aileen one by one. Only then is Sr. Aileen asked if she accepts the results of the election. Serious stuff.

In June Sister Aileen and three other sisters participated in the chapter (meeting) of the newly named Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica, held every four years. Each of 17 communities in the congregation sends several members. It is an opportunity for the sisters to make connections and collaborate. Sister Aileen appreciated the time to share with other leaders the sense of hope for the future of Benedictine life amid diminishing numbers of members throughout the monastic congregation. Staying close to Benedictine roots, the chapter theme of hospitality formed an important part of the agenda. *Please see the article by Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock for more detail.*

The congregation chapter afforded Sister Aileen the occasion to meet with Benedictines across the country. She looks forward to the September meeting in Rome of the CIB (Communion of International Benedictines) which will address topics affecting communities throughout the world. The prevalence of Covid in the past couple years restricted the CIB to Zoom. Aileen hopes that her second term might actually include travel.

Heavy agendas here and across the globe are lightened by the old friends and the new friends one meets at these gatherings. To switch to a lighter note, I asked Aileen why she likes the color purple. She explained that when her great-niece Allie was three years old, she gave Aileen a purple gift because “AJ likes purple”. This might have been a surprise to Aileen at the time, but her attachment to the color grew from then on. Allie is now 18 and still gives purple gifts. And Aileen continues to enjoy the color purple.

By Sr. Christa Kreinbrink

Community, family, and friends bless Sr. Aileen at Evening Prayer on June 4, 2022 as she begins her second term as prioress.





Back Row: Srs. Nancy Kordenbrock, Eileen O'Connell, Dorothy Schuette, Mary Catherine Wenstrup, Barbara Woeste, Aileen Bankemper, Kimberly Porter, Martha Walther, Rita Brink, and Mariana Kirk

Middle Row: Srs. Mary Carol Hellmann, Christa Kreinbrink, Stella Gough, Cathy Bauer, Kathleen Ryan, Colleen Winston, Joan Fraenzle, Andrea Vasquez, Emmanuel Pieper, Sharon Portwood, and Mary Tewes

Seated: Srs. Ann John Kotch, Denise Gough, Deborah Harmeling, Mary Rabe, Rosemary McCormack, Victoria Eisenman, and Mary Peter Youtsey.

Missing from photo: Srs. Andrea Collopy and Ann Middendorf



wish list

by Sr. Rita Brink

Spectrum Cable is upgrading its system requiring HDMI connectors. Most of the TV's in the infirmary bedrooms are not equipped for this upgrade. The monastery is looking to replace the older and smaller TV's with new flat screen TV's with higher definition offering sharper images for viewing pleasure and HDMI hook-up capability. (\$250-\$300)



Chronicles

The

by Sr. Mary Tewes



Principal Meg Piatt, Sr. Emmanuel, and Mrs. & Mr. Tom Rasp

March 7-30: The St. Walburg Garden Restaurant was open on select evenings for enjoying the recipes of five of our cooks. This experience is always a highlight for all of us.

March 30-31: **Sr. Cathy Bauer** led a Seek Retreat for the eighth-graders of St. Agnes School.

April 1-4: **Sr. Aileen B.** facilitated the "Under 55 Sisters" weekend at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN. **Srs Eileen O'Connell** and **Kimberly Porter** participated along with 50 other young sisters from monasteries in the US.



Srs. Aileen, Eileen, and Kimberly attend the 55 and Under

April 8-17: **Sr. Dorothy Schuette** hosted one woman for a directed retreat at the Guest House, and welcomed two Sisters of Divine Providence from San Antonio, TX for a retreat during the Triduum.

April 21-22: Discernment process for election of prioress: **Sr. Elaine Fischer, OSB** from Atchison, KS facilitated the process, and **Sr. Lynn McKenzie**, federation president from Cullman, AL, officiated at the election. **Sr. Aileen Bankemper** was elected for a second term.

April 25-26: The Regional LCWR meeting was held at the Diocesan Retreat Center in Melbourne, Ky. **Sister Aileen & Sister Anita Louise**, Prioress from Ferdinand, IN, participated.

May 7: Annual Corporation Meeting followed by Derby Day party and betting on our favorite horses. The winning horse this year was a complete surprise, so that whole pot will be donated to the missions.

May: As the VMA school year comes to a close, we are grateful to all the fourth-graders and juniors, who communicated with many sisters as pen pals.

May 12: We welcomed another Afghan family for most of this month; On May 27 they moved to California to live closer to relatives-

May 23: **Sr. Aileen** participated in a virtual meeting of CIB. In August she will join with this international group in person in Rome.

May 24: Mary Queen of Heaven Parish in Erlanger welcomed the Sisters who served there to a Mass and blessing of a painting of *Mary Queen of Heaven* by **Sr. Emmanuel Pieper**, commissioned by the family of the former first grade teacher.

May 27-30: **Sr. Kimberly Porter** facilitated the discernment and election process for the Ursuline Sisters in Maple Mount, KY.

June 4: Vigil of Pentecost, the community celebrated the installation of **Sr. Aileen Bankemper** as prioress for her second term. Sr. Aileen's family and local community leaders joined in the celebration and dinner.

June 9-12: **Sr. Aileen** facilitated the discernment process for the election of Prioress at St. Placid Priory.

June 15-21: General Chapter of Federation of St. Scholastica, renamed: Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica, and 100th anniversary of the federation in Atchison, KS. **Sisters**

Aileen, Nancy, Rita and **Kimberly** were the chapter delegates. Sister Kimberly was reelected to the Federation Council. The chapter was followed by a colloquium to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica, June 21-24.



June 15: **Sr. Cathy Bauer** traveled to Mayfield, KY to help with rebuilding after last year's devastating tornados.

June 22: Old friends and acquaintances enjoyed themselves at the annual Serra Club's picnic for women religious.

June 25: Oblate inquirers were welcomed to an information/formation session with **Sr. Mary Tewes**, Oblate Director and the coordinating team. The oblates' annual ice cream social for the sisters opened with the dulcimer group, bingo, prizes and ice cream.

June 25-July 9: **Sr. Eileen O'Connell** and **Maureen Smain** (St. Walburg food service director) traveled to Italy for a long-awaited trip after two years of Covid delays.



Sr. Mary Rabe with Sr. Mary Carol Henggeler, CDP in foreground with Sr. Dorothy Schuette and Kay Kremer, CDP in the background.

June – Month of Guests: **Sr Lynn Stenken, CDP** spent her retreat week at the Guest House. **Sr. Nancy's cousin, Sr. Mariea Christi**, an Olivetan Benedictine from Arkansas, stayed with us on her way to and from visiting with her family. Five members of the Bristow, VA community made an overnight stop on their way to and from St. John's Collegeville for a conference. **Sr. Cathy** and her sisters used the Guest House during their four-day vacation to various local destinations.

July 9: At the virtual ABA Convention, oblate **Miriam Perkins** was presented with the first award for her essay.

July 11: Feast of St. Benedict: Covid-19 cases in the house prevented sisters and oblates from joining for Mass and Dinner. LOH was live streamed.

July 14-18: **Sr. Kimberly Porter** flew to Norfolk, NE to assist the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in their discernment process in preparation for the election of prioress.

July has brought much fresh produce from generous donors: peaches, apricots, blackberries, rhubarb, and shipments of strawberries: the latter called for stemming parties to prepare them for the table and freezer. We are very grateful.



Srs. Dorothy Schuette, Mary Tewes, Kathleen Ryan, Rosemary McCormack, and Martha Walther at the stemming party.

July 24-29: Community Retreat: **Sr. Michaela Hedican, OSB** from St. Benedict Monastery in St. Joseph MN directed the retreat with the theme *Heartened by Hope*. Two Good Shepherd Sisters joined us for the retreat week.

July 29: We welcomed another family to St. Joe's House. This family of eight, including nine-month old twins, is from the Congo. We look forward to meeting our new neighbors.

August 2-9: The NAABOD Conference took place at St. Meinrad's Archabbey Guest House, IN, for oblate directors and oblates. **Sr. Dorothy Schuette** and oblate **Louise Jewett** represented us.



Sr. Cathy Bauer rebuilding a barn in Mayfield, KY



Sr. Michaela Hedigan, OSB





meet the sisters

SISTER DOROTHY SCHUETTE

by Colleen Winston

“I love my life,” says our jubilant Sr. Dorothy Schuette, a quote that sheds much insight into this woman of faith, hope, and optimism. God has been a guiding light in life since her young days at Holy Cross School in Latonia. Her parents and teachers taught her respect for everyone because God loves all persons equally.

When she was young Sr. Dorothy wanted to be a high school biology teacher. Little did she know as her life unfolded, her vocation would carry her into many different ministries and professions, all tied to some kind of service to others. Her first major step after high school was to follow that light from her childhood, God. She entered St. Walburg Monastery, home of the many Benedictines who taught her at Holy Cross and Villa Madonna Academy. This was 1960. Less than two years later she began



studies at Villa Madonna College, then Our Lady of Cincinnati (later Edgecliff College) in the first of what would become many professional fields, dietetics. After graduation she worked in the community’s health care facilities and then studied health care administration at Xavier University. After graduating with her Masters she served at hospitals both in Colorado and Cincinnati.

In 1982 she had the opportunity to attend Fordham University in the Bronx, NY to study theology and religious education. While

there she helped with ministry in a local parish. She directed RCIA (religious formation in preparation for being received into the Catholic Church), worked as a school and parish resource person, and as a guitarist with the Hispanic music group there.

For Sr. Dorothy, her time in New York enriched her in multiple ways. She found her theology classes exciting and the coursework deeply enriching for her sense of God. Her living situation with sisters from six different communities was significant in broadening her vision of the community of church and helping her develop her own sense of self as a Catholic, Benedictine woman.

When Sr. Dorothy returned home in 1985 she was invited to live with some community members who had started a small group ministry in downtown Covington. Called Gentle Breeze, it established an inner city presence for St. Walburg community members who felt called to serve the needs of people who lived in that area. This location gave Sr. Dorothy even more opportunities to fulfill her passion for social justice ministry.

With her return home Sr. Dorothy began a period of years serving parishes in Greater Cincinnati. The first four years were in Cincinnati at Our Lady of Visitation parish, then more than twenty-five years at Mother of God parish in Covington. During this time she enthusiastically spread her ministerial wings into many areas of need. Besides varied roles in the Covington parish such as RCIA, communication media, staffing the parish council, and the health and wellness ministry, she served as chair of the diocesan social concerns committee. Included in this was the jail and prison ministry, which she coordinated for three years. She

Religious Communities Against the death row. Sr. Dorothy in the middle, Sr. Emmanuel on the right





Sr. Dorothy receiving the Lucille Hurt Robuck Award for her work for the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Department of Corrections.

University in Omaha, Nebraska. She received her certificate in 2004 and has incorporated this direction as a major element among her many ministries up to the present.

After 2016 the focus of Sr. Dorothy's ministries shifted when she retired from Mother of God and moved to the monastery. Once there she continued some of her social justice ministries along with other ministries within the community. Her presence there would provide more retreat opportunities for women and men who spend time at the Guest House. She began helping with liturgies in planning, cantoring, sacristy work, and hospitality. Eventually she became assistant oblate coordinator for the community.

Sr. Dorothy summarizes her in-house service as "the usual and unusual jobs to be done around the monastery." This description hints at her enthusiastic, dedicated, and whole-hearted approach to her day-to-day life as a woman of faith, one who holds a firm belief in a life of service to any needs that present themselves. Hers is truly incarnational spirituality that grew from seeds planted in her as a child and were nourished by her varied human interactions and experiences during her 60-year life as a member of St. Walburg Monastery. The local and broader church joins Sr. Dorothy and the monastery in wholeheartedly celebrating this jubilarian's life.

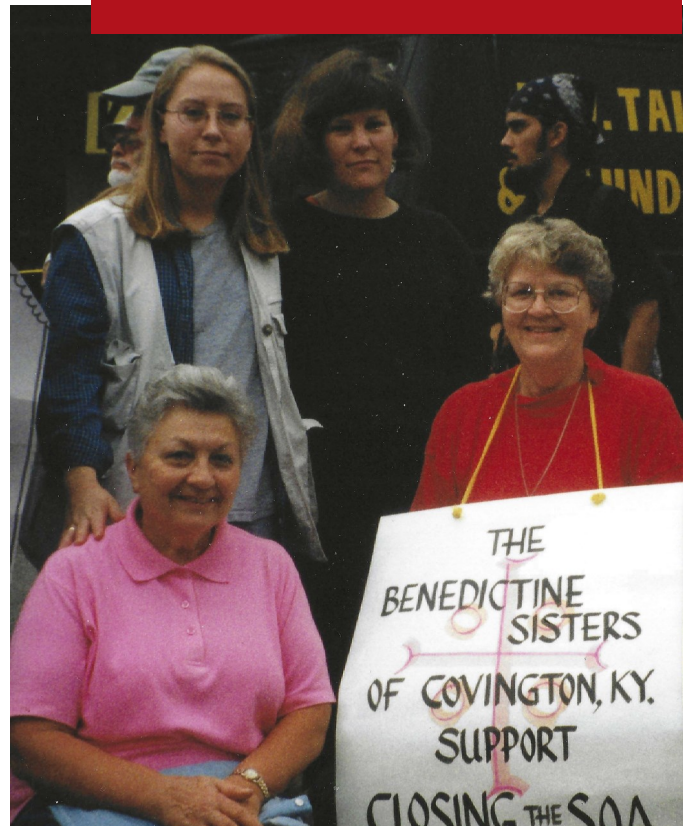
was also a member of the emergency shelter board of NKy and the statewide pro-life and social concerns committees of the Catholic Conference of KY.

Over years of serving many people in many ways, Sr. Dorothy frequently became a spiritual confidant to a number of individuals, so she began studies in spiritual direction at Creighton

broader church joins Sr. Dorothy and the monastery in wholeheartedly celebrating this jubilarian's life.

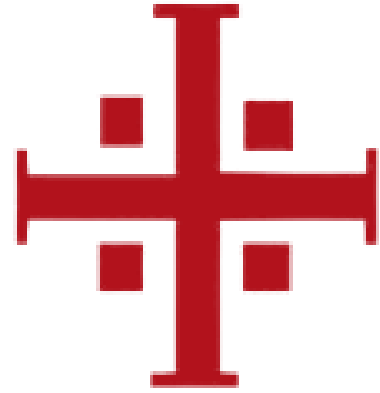
Emily and Lori Boerger (standing) with Angela Cassanova and Sr. Dorothy

Death Penalty visit
front with
two rows back.



in memoriam

sr. david ruschmann



Sister David Ruschmann was born on July 3, 1926 to Joseph J. and Clara Motz Ruschmann and named Anna Louise. She was the ninth of eleven children, having eight sisters and two brothers.



Anna entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1944, became a novice in 1945 and received the name David. First profession followed in 1946, perpetual profession in 1949, silver jubilee in 1971, golden in 1996, 60th in 2006, diamond in 2021.

Sister David received a B.S. degree from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN in 1950 and her R.N. from St. Mary's School of Nursing in Duluth that same year. In 1951 she completed training as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) at St. John's School of Anesthesia in Springfield, IL.

Sister David served as Director of Nursing and Anesthesia for sixteen years in two hospitals in Colorado. She spent one year at Madonna Manor as Director of Nursing before moving to Estill County/Marcum & Wallace Hospital in Irvine, KY and serving as Director of Nursing and Anesthesia from 1968-83. While continuing to live in Irvine she then served as nurse anesthetist in Winchester, KY at Clark Regional Medical Center for twelve years. In her words she spent a total of 44 years "taking them under", always said with a chuckle.

For ten years (1991-2001) Sr. David and Sr. Andrew Hellmann provided medical service by joining the ecumenical group, Medical Mission International. They traveled to Ec-

uador (4x), Mexico, Swaziland, Jamaica and Peru. Both sisters maintained friendships with their co-workers from those trips.

After retiring from the work of "taking them under", Sister David provided outreach service to the poor at St. Elizabeth Church in Ravenna, KY. She helped to support the church flea market long after she returned to the monastery in 2005. Many people continue to bring clothing and other items to the monastery "for the mountains".

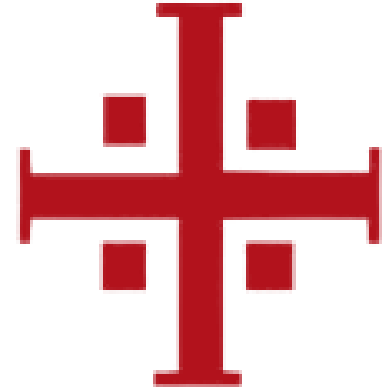
Sister David provided internal service at the monastery as long as she was able. Failing eyesight did not stop her from joining in daily prayer at the Liturgy of the Hours, nor from her rich personal prayer life.

Sister David died in the monastery infirmary on April 19, 2022. She is preceded in death by her parents Joseph and Clara Motz Ruschmann, her sisters, Sister Clara, CDP, Sr. Joseph, OSB, Freda Schmitz, Sr. Agnes, OSB, Bernadette Cunningham, Theresa Humpert, Agnes Rumker and brothers, Joseph and William. Sr. David is survived by her sister, Rita Keener, many nieces, nephews, friends and her Benedictine community.



in memoriam

sr. victoria eisenman



Sister Victoria Eisenman was born on April 25, 1928 to Francis A. and Margaret Fussinger Eisenman and named Audrey Jean. She was the older of two children; her brother Jerry (now deceased) followed.



Audrey entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1946, became a novice in 1947 and received the name Victoria. First profession followed in 1948, perpetual in 1951, silver jubilee in 1973, golden in 1998, and diamond in 2008.

Sister Victoria began teaching in 1948, achieving her B.A. in Elementary Ed. at Villa Madonna College (now TMU) in 1953 and her M.A. in Elementary Ed. from Catholic University in 1958. Although she taught and served as principal during several of those years, she was able to study at St. Louis University to complete her Ph.D. in Elementary Education in 1962. For five years she taught in the Education Dept. at Villa Madonna / Thomas More College before becoming a supervisor for the Diocese of Covington Education Office.

Sister Victoria served as principal at St. Paul Parish (1976-85) and at Villa Madonna Elementary (1986-95), becoming Executive Director of VMA in 1995. She retired from that position in 2001.

At that time Sr. Victoria said her goal during her years at VMA had been to establish “those values of the Benedictine community which have given so much life and peace to me.” She promoted the school’s Benedictine identity consistently and left behind materials to assist the school’s leadership in carrying on that work.

After “retiring”, Sr. Victoria served as a liaison between the day care and monastery, oversaw dorm rental, kept current the personal records of community members, and enjoyed having adequate time for personal prayer, spiritual reading, and visiting in the infirmary. She commented that she gets “great pleasure helping people who have trouble moving freely or who need any kind of assistance.” For fun she played the dulcimer, worked jigsaw and word puzzles. In her younger years she loved to dance and laughed easily throughout her life.

Sr. Victoria moved to the infirmary in 2017. She was amazed with the way the infirm sisters patiently awaited the Lord’s coming and asked, “May God grant me the grace to do likewise.”

Sr. Victoria died on June 28, 2022, preceded in death by her parents Francis and Margaret Eisenman and her brother Jerry. She is survived by her nieces, nephews, friends and her Benedictine community.

Vigil service was held the evening of July 5 and the Mass of Christian Burial on July 6, 2022 followed by interment at St. Walburg Cemetery.



BENEDICTINE OBLATES

oblate inquiry sessions begin



Miriam Perkins and Michael Woods

essayist laurate

In May, Oblate Miriam Perkins received word from the American Benedictine Academy (ABA) that she had won their essay contest with her entry, "Loving the Young in Every Orientation". The essay was to explore topics related to the Benedictine tradition and charism. The award pays for membership in ABA for two years and provides a scholarship to attend their conference in Nebraska this July.

(NB: the 2022 conference is virtual only) Miriam is on Sabbatical this year and holds a Professorship at Emmanuel Christian Seminary, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Two women who are interested in becoming oblates met with Sisters Mary T. and Dorothy and several seasoned oblates on June 25 to discuss and reflect on the vocation of the Benedictine Oblate and how they may be called to join our group. Although inquiry sessions are beginning in July, we continue to welcome and to be open to anyone who is interested in exploring this way of life.

Contact Sr. Mary Tewes: marytewes@gmail.com or Sr. Dorothy Schuette: dorothyosb@gmail.com for more information on the oblate program.



Sr. Barbara Woeste with inquirer, Carol Leonhart



We are rejoicing that oblates and sisters can finally get together face to face. On Saturday, June 25 the oblates, coordinated by oblate Mary Easterling, hosted a party for the sisters. A dulcimer concert by "The Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer Club" led by oblate Gail Michalack, has become our traditional prelude to the afternoon. Ice cream cups, sundaes, and sodas followed as we mixed and mingled and then got down to the serious business of playing bingo with Sr. Joan Fraenzle calling and giving abundant prizes to delight all players.

ice cream social

Above: Jessie Lamantia (2nd from the left) and Gail Michalack (far right) as part of the Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer Club





here, we belong



by Pamela McQueen, VMA High School
Principal/Executive Director

Sr. Eileen O'Connell with VMA seniors at Master Provisions

Brother Edward England OSB was a Benedictine we shall always remember. Armed with his small copy of *The Rule*, he greeted us with a smile that warmed our hearts. He listened intently to our every word, for he saw in us the opportunity to establish a common ground for our schools. We were, after all, Benedictine educators from across the world gathered for one purpose: to establish the hallmarks of a Benedictine school. It was the opportunity of a lifetime.

Discussions were heartfelt and earnest. *Love of God and Neighbor, Prayer and Worship, Community and Stability*, and then... *Hospitality*. The mere mention of the word caused a stir in the room. Hospitality was one of the most important values to Saint Benedict, for he saw it as one of the strongest ways that his monks could encounter Christ and serve the poor.

The spirit with which we wrote about hospitality left us in awe. We knew that in Benedictine schools, the practice of hospitality must reflect this key concept of encountering Christ in the stranger and the guest, in the poor and those who are *pilgrims*. There was no doubt that as Benedictines we must ensure that all visitors to our schools experience the attention and concern, the warmth of welcome and sensitivity to any need that we would want shown to ourselves. And let's remember...this hospitality must be a radical hospitality that is accepting without exception, that is a recognition of Christ even in those we may find difficult to love.

Ask anyone in our school community about hospitality, and they will talk to you about the warmth of our students and teachers. They will smile as they share stories of students holding doors, greeting others on campus, and serving in the community. They will delight in telling you about students working at social service agencies, providing shoes and socks for inner-city children, and in the spirit of St. Benedict providing for God's creatures at the local animal shelters. They will regale you with stories of teachers and staff working alongside their students, all the while making everyone feel at home. You, too, will feel the inspiring spirit of hospitality.

Perhaps in an age when we sometimes want to shake our fist at the sky, radical hospitality calls for us to open our hearts to the "restless" and "stubborn." Perhaps radical hospitality is the way to overcome fear and hatred, to see Jesus in everyone we meet, and to acknowledge the connectedness of all of us.

We are all intricately woven into a beautiful tapestry of God's love. We belong with each other. Hospitality allows us to move past the challenges. Let's do it; after all, it is the opportunity of a lifetime.

VMA juniors Kathryn McLagan and Anna Popham rehabbing a house during the school-wide service day.



planning

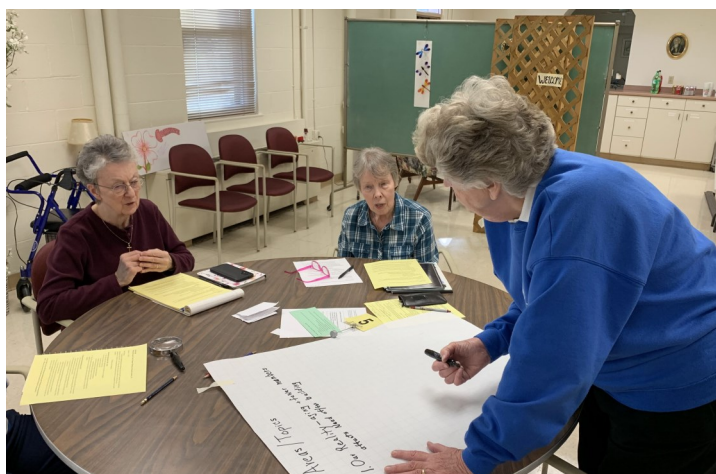
by Sr. Rita Brink

Planning is a vital and never-ending process in any organization. It is no different for St. Walburg Monastery. Our planning committee is steeped in organizing a process for engaging the community in planning and decision-making as we examine our present reality. What, you might ask, is St. Walburg Monastery's present reality?

We are a monastic monastery of 29 professed members, with a median age of 81. All the sisters are actively engaged, at some level, in prayer ministry for the Church. The number of sisters in ministry generating a salary is minimal. We live in a monastery that accommodates fifty-two individuals plus an infirmary wing that can house 20 sisters. We are located on approximately 100 acres in Villa Hills, KY. We sponsor Villa Madonna Academy, a school for Montessori education for 3 to 6-year-old and grades K--12.

As monastic women we are part of a tradition that has enriched the Church for over 1500 years and will be a vital presence in the Church into the future. Monasticism has weathered various transformations over the years by responding to the needs of the times. Our planning will assist in propelling us into the future as we examine our chosen monastic life style, our stewardship of buildings and resources, and our response to mission while listening to our day-to-day reality and the needs before us.

Teilhard De Chardin, a 20th century philosopher and paleontologist said, "the only task worthy of our effort is to construct the future." Guided by the loving hand of God and supported by your prayer and care our efforts can only assist in building a productive future.



Left: Sr. Mary Hughes, OP leading the community at a recent meeting. Top: Srs. Emmanuel, Mary Peter, Kathleen, Nancy, and Colleen. Middle: Srs. Mary Catherine, Sharon, and Dorothy. Bottom: Srs. Deborah and Kimberly.

from the archives

by Sr. Deborah Harmeling

Hospitality is one of the hallmarks of Benedictine monastic life. Throughout the history of St. Walburg Monastery, we have extended hospitality in many situations, including recently offering St. Joseph House on the property for the use of Afghan families who need a place to stay when they first come to the United States.

Looking through our internal newsletter I found an article from January, 1954 by **Sr. Catherine Bramlage** telling the story of the community's hospitality during the 1937 flood. It was Sunday, January 24, 1937, known in the area as "Black Sunday." The Ohio and Licking Rivers overflowed their banks that day, forcing people in the East end of Covington to leave their homes and seek refuge". St. Walburg Convent, St. Joseph School and Villa Madonna College at Scott and 12th Streets were far enough from the rising waters to open their doors to flood victims.

St. Joseph School on Scott Street was filled to capacity with families by noon. It was used as a Red Cross Station and the basement served as a soup kitchen. At the College **Mrs.**

small children were also comfortably situated on the second floor and the attic supplied the beds. A hot meal was served to those in the college building.

The telephone rang and it was the SCN superior of LaSalette Academy seeking refuge for three of her elderly sisters. They were housed in the periodical room and the librarian's office on the third floor of the college. Three Benedictine Sisters from St. Benedict School also needed shelter and occupied the physical science lab of the college. (See picture of the three sisters in a boat on St. Benedict's flooded school yard.)

For about two weeks the guests stayed until the waters receded. In all there were 25 guests. Sr. Catherine writes that for a time the Charity Sisters and the other guests became part of the Benedictine family and "we enjoyed their company very much." **Srs. Josephine** and **Celine** prepared a daily pot of soup and "the contribution of half a cow by the Rice Packing Company helped to provide the protein needs of all." The cistern in the back yard of the convent and college served everyone, including those housed in St. Joseph School and



Meyer and **Elizabeth**, **Sr. Celestine's** mother and sister sheltered in a small room of the infirmary. Two other families of St. Joseph Parish occupied two rooms on the first floor of the College and on the second floor of the building. The doorbell rang and **Sr. Irene** opened the door to a man who was seeking shelter for his family. He was not Catholic and expected to be turned away. He, his wife and his three

many neighbors as well.

Sr. Catherine closes her article with gratitude to God that the buildings at Scott and 12th Streets were not only high and dry but that the Benedictine Sisters were able to practice the virtue of hospitality.





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