



LEAVEN

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LEAVEN

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From the PRIORRESS

Leaven

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

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Photos: Amy Holtzman, Soshana Bosley, Srs. Eileen O'Connell and Mary Tewes, and public domain.

On the cover: Easter in the monastery chapel.

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Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

I suppose there are many who have a sense of coming out of a tomb this Easter and celebrating with the risen Jesus! With COVID more under control, it is the first Easter for us in three years that we are able to have a full celebration at the Monastery. Alleluia!

Of the many gifts and blessings of Easter is the celebration of hope made real. In the Exsultet we sing: "The sanctifying power of this night dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord. . ." Oh that we as a people could remember these words, bind them into our hearts and put them into practice! Much of the hourly/daily news reports are replete with negativity, violence and hopelessness. Sometimes we glorify the past and forget that our history is full of troubles and calamities, human made or otherwise. This is reason enough for believers to commit themselves into the growth in the body of Christ.

Easter hope leads us to celebrate the new creation. It is the ultimate feast of the Church year manifesting the abundance of God's love for all. Many times, the abundance of God's love is a difficult concept for us to believe in. We live in a world in which scarcity, the belief that there is never enough and never will be, leads to a number of selfish practices. The vision that Jesus desires for us is to live forgiveness, reconciliation and all the while trusting in the goodness of God.



Richard Rohr states, "To be Christian is to be inevitably and forever a person of hope. . . God in Christ is saying, 'This is what will last - my life and my love will always and forever have the final word.'" Remembering that we are all in this together could be a helpful start. Let us heed the advice of St. Benedict and realize as a human family that together we go to God, not separately!

Together in the words of St. Paul let us pray, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1Pet 1:3)

Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB
Prioress



Sr. Aileen Completes 3-year Term as Chair of Conference of Benedictine Prioresses

by Sr. Colleen Winston



Sr. Aileen Bankemper and Sr. Nicole Kunze of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, ND

Chapter 36 of the Rule, *Care of the Sick*; Similar to the CBP, but on the international level, is the Communion of International Benedictines (CIB). CIB supports and exchanges ideas and experiences among Benedictine women on the worldwide level and fosters the development of monasticism for women. CIB is divided into nineteen regions; Sr. Aileen was elected as a United States delegate from Region 9 along with the new chair, Sr. Nicole Kunze from Bismarck, ND. CIB delegates meet annually. Last year it was in Rome; this year the multicultural, international group will gather in Cullman, Alabama, home of the Benedictine sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.

Being on the CBP core team, while it dealt with such a complicated situation, was a difficult but rewarding task, Sr. Aileen said. "We all had to be and grow in flexibility because our best laid plans often went awry."

"Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ."

Rule of St. Benedict Chapter 36

Another really enriching experience was seeing how every community, whether under ten or over one hundred members, is searching how to live the Benedictine charism while dealing with brand new challenges. During their search, however, all these communities reach out to share information, plusses and minuses, collaborating with each other because all monasteries are on the same journey.

States delegate from Region 9 along with the new chair, Sr. Nicole Kunze from Bismarck, ND. CIB delegates meet annually. Last year it was in Rome; this year the multicultural, international group will gather in Cullman, Alabama, home of the Benedictine sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.

The Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP) is made up of prioresses or administrators from forty-five North American communities that vary widely in size. The group's members work together to provide assistance and encouragement to each other as they live Benedictine values and vision in their own corner of an ever-changing society.

Sr. Aileen and an elected coordinating committee of four other members planned annual gatherings. From early 2020 to February 2023, however, the pandemic years kept plans in constant flux. Routine tasks were greatly complicated by problems and situations caused by COVID, with a major issue of how to shape agenda content and processes to fit Zoom. In addition, every four years the CBP meets with the heads of men's communities on a topic of mutual interest, so a separate committee chaired by Sr. Aileen that included abbots prepared a joint program. The 2023 topic would be



North American Prioresses and Abbots





meet the sisters

SISTER MARY CAROL HELLMANN

by Sr. Dorothy Schuette

Sr. Mary Carol Hellmann taught music most of her life, literally, most of her life. She recalled that as a small child she tried to “make her grandma’s piano sing” whenever the family went to visit and so her parents enrolled her in piano lessons at 7 years old and brought home that piano. As the oldest of ten children and eager to play school with her siblings, Mary Carol taught some of them to play also in those early years. Her piano teacher, Sr. Bertilla Bell, recognized her talent and asked her to play the organ at church occasionally if she gave her lessons. So, Sr. Mary Carol began her career as an organist at St. Henry Parish when she was in the 6th grade, playing for Tuesday evening rosary devotions and Benediction, also Mass when Sr. Bertilla was on

retreat. And she capped her education in this field in 1971 with a Master’s Degree in Music from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Reflecting on her vocation, Mary Carol notes that her name has been a foreshadowing: Carol means “song of joy” and Hellmann means “bright one.” Sister says that she sensed early on that becoming a sister is what God wanted her to do. She loved her Benedictine teachers at St. Henry Elementary and Villa Madonna Academy High School and explored with them, especially recalling Srs. Mercedes Wolking and Carmella Azzolina, what entering the monastery might mean for her. She experienced

their happiness and anticipated continued warm relationships with them. In her sophomore year her family suffered the tragedy of her brother Billy’s death at age nine. Mary Carol was deeply moved by this and by the grieving of her family, especially her father. It raised significant feelings and drew her into life’s mysteries. At the end of her junior year Mary Carol entered St. Walburg Monastery and completed her senior year as a postulant, then as a novice, receiving the name of her brother, William which she went by for seventeen years until renewal summer, 1969.



Sr. Mary Carol receiving the habit from Bishop William Mulloy



Welcome Becky Motley



St. Walburg Monastery welcomes Becky Motley as a member of its Advancement Office. The Motley name is familiar around the monastery. Ellen worked in the kitchen and Rachel and Courtney in the infirmary while students at Villa Madonna Academy. Becky says, "Now it is my turn!" Becky's professional background and experience in program creation, relationship building, publication design and organizational planning will serve to strengthen and broaden the monastery's efforts. Welcome Becky!



Sr. Mary Carol was a regular visitor to Villa Madonna Elementary School where she taught lessons on St. Benedict and his values. She was also the school archivist.



At the end of this school term Sr. Mary Carol will be retiring from teaching music. This has been an extremely satisfying ministry for her. The one-on-one lessons allow for Sr. Mary Carol to develop a personal relationship with each student, supporting the growth of each, companionship some whom she has mentored over the years, even from grades 1 through 12. She delights in their accomplishments and shares a measure of joy. Recently a student composed a piece of music for her and played it, bringing tears to her eyes and joy to her heart.



The Chronicles

by Sr. Mary Tewes

December: Sr. Emmanuel designed the community Christmas card which she has done for many years.

Dec. 1-4: Sr. Kimberly Porter traveled to Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, to facilitate the discernment process for election of prioress along with monastic congregation president Sr. Lynn McKenzie.

Dec. 2-9: Sr. Dorothy Schuette joined the team at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Milford, OH for personally directed retreatants.

Dec. 10: The Benedictine Oblates held an Advent day of activities closing with a pot-luck lunch.

Dec. 21: Employee Christmas Party joined employees and sisters for games, prizes, food and laughter.

Dec. 22: A snow/ice blizzard grounded the area and much of the country, delaying celebration plans for many.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve party for the community. Both **Srs. Nancy** and **Mariana** were able to return to the monastery from the hospital for Christmas.

Dec. 31: New Year's Eve Party with dropping of the 2023 ball, a tinsel-covered soccer ball lowered from the 2-story front entry. It's been years since we dropped the ball at midnight.

Jan. 8: Sr. Mariana Kirk died of a heart attack after a short illness. The community and many of her cousins and friends celebrated her life and death with the funeral on Jan. 14.

Jan. 12: Srs. Rita and **Kimberly** hosted a Poetry Night, a gathering in which sisters share poetry of their choice.

Jan. 17-21: Sr. Kimberly Porter traveled to Cullman, AL for a Congregational Council Meeting.



Nurse Mary Lou Aldridge and Wilma Wright

Jan. 22 & 29: The Community Football Parties took place in the St. Walburg Stadium, (Infirmary Lounge) to cheer on the Bengals in the playoffs. We also partied for the Superbowl on Feb. 12; alas, the Bengals were not contenders!

Jan. 26-29 & Feb. 21-27: Sr. Kimberly flew to St. Joseph, MN with **Sr. Lynn McKenzie** to facilitate the two-part process of discernment for the election of prioress for St. Benedict Monastery. To accommodate the winter storm in Feb. the team had to arrive early to avoid transportation problems

Jan. 30-Feb. 8: Sr. Aileen Bankemper traveled to Cullman, AL for the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP)

meeting. For two of the days a joint meeting with the abbots was held in which a workshop on Care of the Sick was presented. The following day **Sr. Rita Brink** along with



Srs. Kimberly Porter, Andrea Westkamp, Lynn McKenzie, Christine Ereiser, Maricarmen Bracamontes, Susan Quaintance, Elaine Fischer, Anne Wambach, and Judith Zonsius



Srs. Tonette Sperando and Jeanne Weber discussed the possibilities of a Benedictine Archives project.

Feb. 10: Feast of St. Scholastica. The Serra Club again provided flowers for our tables and two others donated large bouquets of flowers for the altar. The Passionist Sisters joined us for the Eucharist, dinner and Evening Prayer.

Feb. 18: **Sr. Kay Kramer, CDP** came to our Community Meeting to share her community's response to Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si."



Sr. Kay Kramer, CDP

Feb. 22: The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday Eucharist. Sisters give reflections on the Sunday Gospel at Evening Prayer on several Saturdays during the Lent and Easter seasons. (live-streamed)

Feb. 24-26: The Marianist Formation Community from Bergamo in OH gathered at the Guest House, and joined us for meals during the weekend.

Feb. 25: The Feast of St. Walburg shared the spotlight with VillaRama, annual fundraiser for Villa Madonna Academy.



Srs. Martha Walther, Elizabeth, Dorothy Schuette, Mary Catherine, and Mary Tewes before Evening Prayer

Feb. 28: Tuesday evening lectio sessions begin in chapel for the rest of the Lenten season.

March 5: **Sr. Eileen O'Connell** renewed her monastic profession at Sunday Evening Prayer.

March 8: **Sr. Mary Tewes** joined in the zoom meeting of Tri-State Association of Oblate/Associate Directors, sharing happenings, resources and activities for members to share across the region.

March 11: **Sr. Aileen** presented a workshop on "Discernment" to the Sisters of Divine Providence.

March 11-15: **Pat Swanke** traveled from MN, to spend some time with us and give her service to some needed projects.

March 16: Longtime employee Wilma retires from our infirmary staff after years.

March 17: St. Patrick's Day: **Fr. Ron Margherio, OSB** and a group of eight students from St. Bede Academy in Illinois joined us for Morning Prayer and breakfast on their way to the next part of their "Mystery Trip."

March 17: Monastery chapel: Access to a leaking steam pipe challenges workers but does not defeat them. If crawling through a heating tunnel is too tight for a repair, cut the floor.

March 18: **Sr. Mary Hughes, OP** returned to work with the community on future planning with fewer members. Several communities shared their experiences on the topic either in person or by Zoom.

March 21: Community celebrates the Solemnity of Our Holy Father St. Benedict, Abbot.

April 2-9: We are hoping to share with our guests the liturgies of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the Easter Triduum. Alleluia!

April 22: Spring Spirituality Day features Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp of Temple Sholom in Cincinnati speaking on "Women in Scripture: A Jewish Perspective."



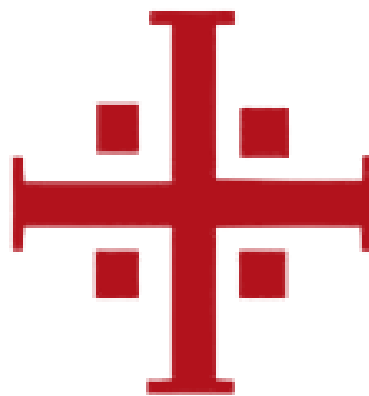
Oblate Kathleen Rosing and Sr. Mary Hughes with community members



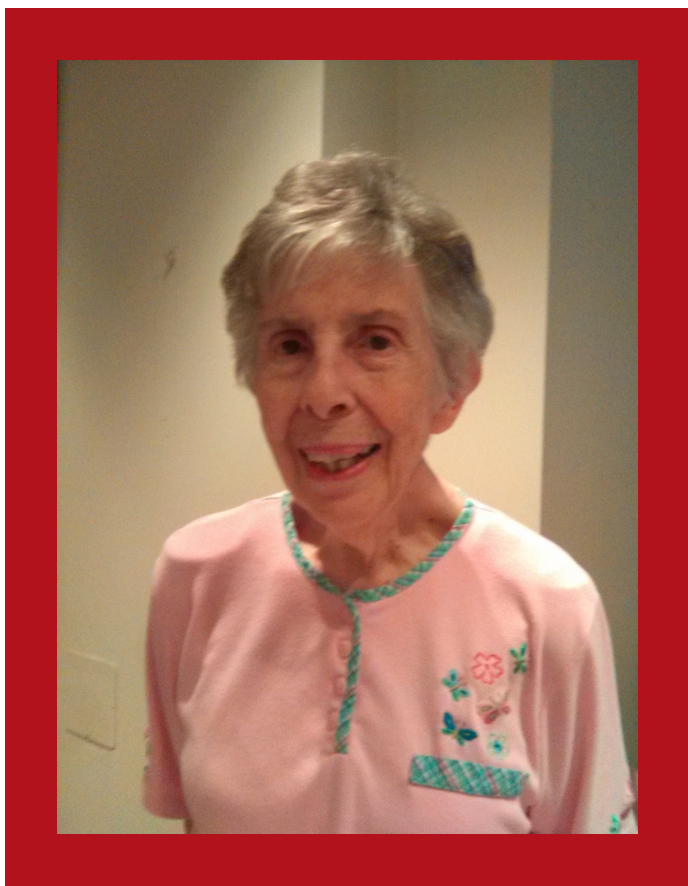
in memoriam



sr. mariana kirk



Sister Mariana Kirk, OSB was born on November 23, 1937 to William Iles Kirk and Angela Heile Kirk and given the name Mary Iles. She was their only child.



Mary Iles entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1954, became a novice in 1955, and received the name Mariana. First profession followed in 1956, perpetual in 1959, silver jubilee in 1981, golden in 2006, 60th in 2016.

Sr. Mariana taught for two years in diocesan elementary school followed by 19 years at the high schools of Holy Cross, St. Henry and Villa Madonna Academy, teaching both Spanish and English classes. She completed her bachelor's degree in Secondary Ed. and Spanish at Villa Madonna College in 1966 and her master's degree in English at the University of Notre Dame in 1974. After teaching she worked as secretary to a number of not-for-profit agencies: Amer. Diabetes Assn. and the Miami Purchase Assn. for Historic Preservation. Sr. Mariana served as VMA Development Director from 1986-92, and then became secretary of the Fine Arts Fund. Upon retirement she served in internal ministry at the monastery as director of transportation, assistant to the librarian, and driver for many sisters to doctor's appointments.

Mariana took time to be an informed citizen via news programs and print materials. A gardener, she cared for the courtyard and rock garden; she raised infant trees to be planted when they grew large enough to withstand the deer. She enjoyed music, serving as a cantor at the monastery, member of the May Festival Chorus for 16 years and then as member of the NKy Community Chorus.

Mariana was faithful to Friday night card tournaments. Her hearty laugh was a familiar sound. She could have won an emmy for her rendition of the cowardly lion from the Wizard of Oz.

Throughout her life Mariana spoke her mind frankly. As one sister said, "She could make you afraid. You had to be careful of what you said." She could be fierce; she could be gentle. She was always quick to offer her service.

After a brief illness, Sr. Mariana died on January 8, 2023, preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her cousins, friends and Benedictine community.





As the saying goes, “In like a lion and out like a lamb!” According to the Farmers’ Almanac, the weather folklore stems from ancestral beliefs in balance, meaning if the weather at the start of March was bad (roaring, like a roaring lion), the month should end with good weather (gentle, like a lamb).

by Sr. Eileen O’Connell

blossom by blossom the spring begins

The Paris Review outlines a few origin theories for the March folklore, including an astronomical connection. In March, the Leo zodiac is the rising sign and when we reach April, it is a ram. This year we had five planets align! What could be the saying for that?

Another theory gives the saying a biblical origin. Jesus was the sacrificial lamb, but he will return as the Lion of Judah. This may also stem from Easter, which lands sometime between late March and into April.

Whichever piece of folklore you do or do not ascribe to, the effects of the weather were felt on the monastery property with spring’s arrival: a few downed trees, a downspout blown off the monastery building, and outdoor furniture found itself at the bottom of the driveway by the garages. But the advent of spring is always beautiful here as well. First, the daffodils bloom, then the magnolias. The Canada geese stay close to their mate. And on a warm day, the sound of a ballgame drifts in the open window. The world has come back to life. As Algernon Charles Swinburne said, “Blossom by blossom the spring begins.”



BENEDICTINE OBLATES

The Meaning of Being an Oblate

“My spiritual journey has been greatly enhanced by my participation in our monthly meetings and discussions, Liturgy of the Hours, retreats, conferences and other events. The kindness and hospitality of the sisters and other oblates have helped me through difficult times, reflecting the caring community that we are. Upon entering the monastery grounds, I have, in fact, come to feel a sense of peace and comfort. As a seeker and Christian, it is a privilege and very valuable to me to be an oblate of St. Walburg Monastery.” Louise Jewitt

“Being a Benedictine Oblate is a privilege and grace that offers an opportunity to grow in faith and participate in new areas of service.” Being an Oblate of St. Walburg Monastery is important to me. I feel that I receive so many blessings from this group: friendship, support, accountability and a sense of home.” Gayle Underdown

“Being an oblate allows me opportunities to grow in my faith and journey with others. We study the Rule of Benedict through his writings and other books about the Rule. We meditate on the scriptures through lectio divina and allow God's word to speak to us. I have a history with the Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery. I went to Thomas More with several of the sisters and started working as a nurse's aid in the Infirmary, after hearing of a need from one of the sisters. The experience of working in the infirmary and meeting the sisters was a very positive. I was humbled to be at the infirmary when one of the sisters was dying and I thought it was such a beautiful experience to see the sisters keep vigil until the sister went to meet the Lord. I was happy when I inquired about becoming an oblate that they welcomed me quickly. The other oblates and sisters that I have since met, inspire me and bring me joy as we share our faith journey.” Kathleen Ford Rosing



Front row: Inquirer Yully Nieves, Sr. Dorothy, and Margie Hardebeck
Back Row: Jessie Lamantia, Gayle Underdown, Kathleen Rosing, Joan McAlanon, Louise Jewitt, and Sr. Sharon



Jessie Lamantia, Gail and Dick Michalack

“Being an Oblate at St. Walburg Monastery for over twenty-two years is foundational for my spiritual growth, anchors me in a community of friendship and support, and broadens my religious perspective.

The Oblates of St. Walburg are a committed group with outstanding leadership. Sr. Mary Tewes, OSB, continuously reaches out to potential persons interested in St. Walburg Oblates. She also keeps the community informed of prayer requests, joys and celebrations, and opportunities for service and learning. As I live in Nashville, Tenn., I am grateful for the opportunity to attend meetings and services on Zoom as well as in person when possible. The sisters at St. Walburg always greet me and make me feel welcome and at home. The welcome was there when I first arrived in 1997, and continues after 22 years as an oblate. I am grateful to all oblates and Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery.” Laura Flippen Tenzel

I was happy to read about the new St. Cosmos Deanery of Benedictine Oblates being established in the diocese. I have been an oblate with the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg since 2019, but our oblates have been in existence since 1988. It has been a joy to learn about and share in the Benedictine charism with this faith-filled community of men and women, and of course to be associated with the Sisters of St. Walburg who have been living out their call to the Gospel in the city of Covington since 1859. I will look forward to following the progress of the new Deanery and certainly trust that our combined presence in the diocese will grow the spirits of Saints Benedict and Scholastica into the future.” Margie Hardebeck



“In 1985 Dick and I moved to Northern Kentucky from Wisconsin. We often spoke to friends we needed to leave behind that we would find a new family through our Church. It wasn’t long before we became aware of a new program the Diocese of Covington was offering, “The Lay Ministry Program.” We applied and were accepted into the two-year program. In the process we were assigned mentors, ours were sisters from St. Walburg. We found our way to the beautiful setting on the hills above the Ohio River. We began to understand the charism of the Benedictine Sisters and the beautiful friendships of the sisters. Neither of us was raised around religious communities and we felt this was an answer to our prayers for community and family. As we progressed in the Ministry program we attended liturgy, retreats and eventually oblate meetings at the monastery. Sr. Justina Franxman became my spiritual director.

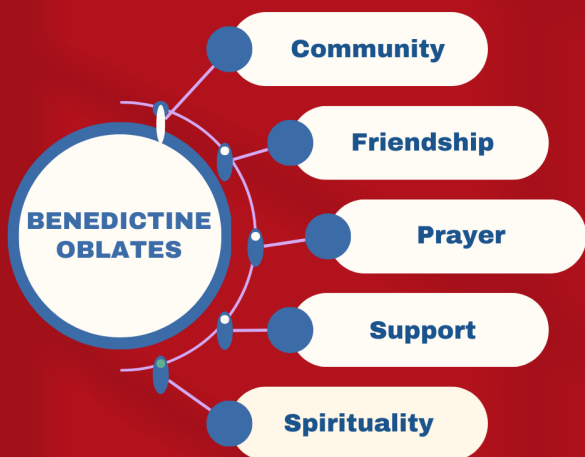
Over time we felt we wanted to become oblates and did so in 2001. The foundation of prayer, community, liturgy, lectio and monthly meetings became the foundation of our growing faith. Through involvement in many aspects of faith formation we went into volunteer and paid ministry. Dick spent eighteen years visiting jails through the Exodus program and I became a hospital chaplain. The steady hand of support the sisters gave us cannot even be underrated as to how we faced raising our sons, moving for a period of years to Royal Oak, Michigan and back to Northern Kentucky.

Whenever we find ourselves driving down the beautiful driveway to the monastery we know how deeply the community of the Benedictines has been the center of our lives and the path to facing our aging years in prayer and love of dear friends found in the support of the sisters. We not only found new friends but a deeper friendship of our God and foundation to our faith.” Gail and Dick Michalack

If you are interested in learning more about our Benedictine Oblates, contact Sr. Mary Tewes (marytewes@gmail.com) or Sr. Dorothy Schuette (dorothysosb@gmail.com) or call the monastery at 859-331-6324.



Upper Right: Joan McAlonon;
Middle: Gayle Underdown and Mary Sash;
Bottom: Louise Jewitt and Sr. Dorothy Schuette



vma: service and scholarship

The Benedictine values of service and scholarship are lived daily at Villa. Highlighting just a few here.

The elementary student council raised funds to purchase sweatpants and sweatshirts for the Emergency Shelter. They teamed up with the sisters who added to the money raised. They were pleased to show the sisters samples of the warm items that the clients of the shelter appreciated.

Mention for photography. Piper Petry won two Silver Keys for her prints. In addition, Piper won three Honorable Mentions for digital art, drawing/illustration, and print. Liam Collins won a Silver Key in the category of Personal Essay & Memoir.

Villa Madonna Academy has been selected as the recipient of the first annual NSPE-NKY STEM grant. The committee and NSPE-NKY Board of Directors have approved a STEM grant of \$10,000 for Villa Madonna Academy.



Pants and hoodies for the Emergency Shelter

Senior Brogan Callioni helped coordinate a service project at the Go Pantry. They packaged bags of food for local children.

Villa has received the College Board AP® Computer Science Female Diversity Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science Principles. We believe that in a world traditionally represented by a majority of men it is important that women are given every opportunity to succeed in this arena.



Dominic Brockman, Brogan Callioni, and Sydney Short at Go Pantry

Congratulations to our Scholastic Art & Writing Competition Winners! Olivia Mann won a Silver Key and an Honorable

Villa Madonna Academy



In celebration of Kindness Week and Valentine's Day the fifth graders made flower seed kits for the sisters in hopes of them growing and being planted outside when the weather is right! Very creative and thoughtful.

The senior class spent a day sorting and packaging clothes for people in eastern Kentucky and the African nation of Togo. It was a source of joy for the students as can be seen in the picture.



VMA 5th Graders



Master Provisions (right to left): Brooklyn Pickens, Sydney Agriesti, Griffin Slazyk, and Hunter Pickens



Ian Halpin and Liam Collins, National Merit Finalists

High school and junior high students were active participants in the Kentucky YMCA Youth Association Middle School Kentucky United Nations Assembly. Our students represented Trinidad and Tobago and Ryan McLagan served as secretary general. Several of our team's resolutions were endorsed and they received Outstanding Security Council team.



Ryan McLagan at KUNA

Seniors Liam Collins and Ian Halpin are National Merit Finalists. The National Merit Scholarship Program determined which of the 16,000 Semifinalists named in September 2022 have met all requirements to advance to Finalist standing in the competition. All Finalists will be considered for National Merit Scholarship awards to be offered in 2023. More than 1.2 million juniors entered the National Merit competition.



And Still She Persisted . . .

The Gouley Sisters

There is an interesting chapter in the history of St. Walburg Monastery that is not well known. Before the Civil War a few free women of color established religious communities in America (e.g., the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1942 to care for orphaned children and the elderly in New Orleans.) After the Civil War, women of color and free women of color expected religious communities to be open to them, but few were.

In 1872 twins Marie Emilie and Marie Gouley, free women of color from a New Orleans family, entered the postulancy of St. Walburg Monastery. They had probably come in contact with Benedictines at Holy Trinity Church and School which was close to their family home. The Benedictines of Covington had established Holy Trinity Convent and School in 1870.

In 1873 they both received the habit from the Bishop of Covington, Augustus Maria Toebe. Marie Emilie received the name Cunegundes and Marie received the name Radegundes. In 1875 Sr. Radegundes received the assignment of portress, and Sr. Cunegundes was assigned to teach French at Annunciation School in Paris, Kentucky. She held that position from 1875-1877.

It is not clear what Sr. Cunegundes did from 1877 until 1882 when Sr. Radegundes made perpetual profession. She had shown signs of “non-conformity to religious life” but it is also speculated that when she was teaching at Annunciation School, someone identified her as a woman of color. She was not given the opportunity to make her perpetual profession with Sr. Radegundes. After five years of observing her, Mother Alexia Lechner concluded she was not suited to religious life and notified her well in advance of Sr. Radegundes’ profession. She was allowed to stay for Sr. Radegundes’ ceremony but was expected to leave after it.

Sr. Cunegundes, however, stayed and requested that the sisters admit her to perpetual profession. As Bishop Toebe became involved, he noted that “again and again she was rejected by the votes of the Chapter.” She was offered a permanent home . . . with a position at St. John’s Orphan Asylum. She responded that she would accept only on the condition that she be admitted to perpetual profession. She then requested to join the Holy Trinity Convent in New Orleans. When she arrived there, the sisters refused to receive her as a member but offered to take her as a guest. She declined the offer.

Still wearing the habit from Covington, Marie Emilie (as she now was) appealed to the new Archbishop of New Orleans, Archbishop Perche. She asked him to draw up a letter for her to return to Covington. Thus ensued correspondence between Bishop Toebe and the Coadjutor Bishop Leray of New Orleans.

Marie Emilie began to envision a new plan of her own. She says “the Spirit came upon me to establish a new order in honor of the very Virgin Mary . . . You will establish your order under the name of the Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes.”

To make this story shorter than it actually was, she went through many more roadblocks and evaluations from spiritual



In 1997 Holy Trinity was closed and deconsecrated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans. In 1999 the Archdiocese removed the stained glass windows and organ from the building. The structure was badly damaged by flooding from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In 2011 the church building was bought and converted into a performing arts venue, and renamed as the Marigny Opera House.

Interior of Holy Trinity Church
ca: 1947



directors, Mother Alexia, Bishop Toebe and Archbishop Perché before she was allowed to establish her convent in New Orleans with two of her biological sisters on February 25, 1883. She then became Mother Marie Euphrasia, O.L.L., superior and founding member.

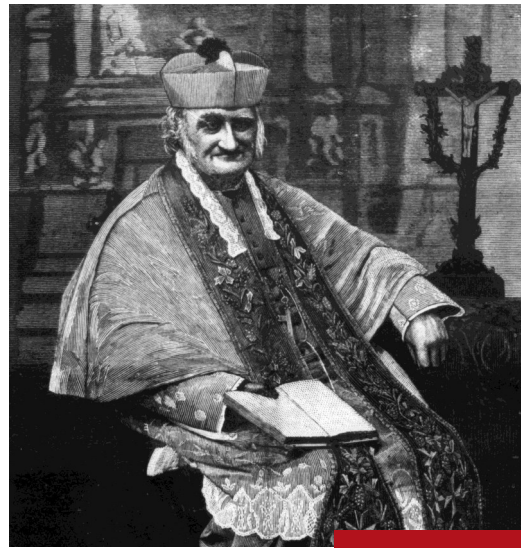
In the late 1880’s her twin Sister Radegundes left the Benedictines in Covington to join her, taking the name Sister Marie Anastasia. The convent’s membership would eventu-

from the archives

by Sr. Deborah Harmeling



Bishop Toebe



Archbishop Perché

ally be nine members, all relatives in the Gouley family. Archbishop Perché officially granted the convent permission to wear a habit consisting of a black dress with a cape and a black headdress similar to a bonnet. They dedicated themselves to education as their primary ministry although they also engaged in charitable works and promoted the growth of Catholicism.

The order lasted until 1928 when the last member died. The Archdiocese of New Orleans generally ignored its existence. The three buildings where they lived and had their school were unsanitary because of damp conditions and poor ventilation and they were repeatedly in dire financial situations. Between 1902 and 1928 at least half their membership was ill at any given time.

The story of Marie Emilie Gouley and her sister is a story of a persistent woman who would not believe that she was unsuited to religious life. Mother Alexia felt that Marie Emilie was not obedient and she was probably right! But it would seem that nothing would keep Marie Emilie from doing what she felt she was meant to do. Her story is a fascinating chapter in St. Walburg Monastery's history and in the history of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.



Sr. Alexia Lechner



While no pictures of the Gouley sisters seem to exist, they did have a brother, John William Severin Gouley, who received a classical education, and was graduated M. D. at the College of physicians and surgeons in New York City in 1853. He then established himself in practice in that city. He served as a surgeon during the Civil War. After the war, he taught anatomy at the Vermont Medical College and at the University of the City of New York and was a noted urologist and inventor of a number of specialized medical instruments.



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 Rick and Anne Gaunder
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 Mr. & Mrs. John Blau

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 Mary Elizabeth Garcia
 Mr. & Mrs. Gregory West

Sr. Stella Marie Gough
 Suzanne Louise Grethel
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**Srs. Deborah Harmeling and
 Emmanuel Pieper**
 George W. Harmeling

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 Mrs. Helen F. Keesee

**Sr. Ann John Kotch in
 Celebration of 80th Birthday**
 Gail Farrell

Sr. Ann John Kotch
 Patricia Lee

**Sr. Ann Middendorf, OSB on
 her 96th Birthday**
 Miriam Miller Hays



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Sr. Emmanuel Pieper on her 75th Anniversary
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Sr. Emmanuel Pieper's Birthday
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Maris Helfrich
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In Honor of Sr. Dorothy Schuette's 60th Jubilee
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Sr. Henrietta Seiler
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Erma McDermott

Sr. Barbara Woeste & Fr. John Cahill
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In Memory of . . .

All the Benedictine Sisters who taught us at Mary, Queen of Heaven, Blessed Sacrament and Villa Madonna Academy
Tom & Carol Rasp

Sr. Gwendolyn Ankesheilm
Brenda Pirozzolo

The Anneken Sisters (Srs. Gemma, Clarita, Xavier & Juanita)
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Dr. & Mrs. Howard Anneken, Jr.

Sr. Clarita Anneken
Susan Hodge

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Mary Ann Nestheide

Henrietta Seiler -- her 70+ year commitment as a Benedictine Sister
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Presented by **Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp**, the spiritual leader of Temple Sholom in Cincinnati, Ohio

Saturday, April 22, 2023

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