

Lisle Benedictine Women

Vol. 47 No. 1

Sacred Heart Monastery

June 2024

Our Community



The Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery

Standing, left to right: Sisters Hyacintha Nepela* (Namibia), Christine Kouba, Jo Anne Form, Helen Jilek, Celestine Shakungu* (Namibia), Irene Jasien, Sharon Stola, Susanne Thome, Mary Bratrsovsky, Alberta Khwela* (South Africa)

Seated, left to right: Sisters Margaret Mary Schima, Lois Jean Jensik, Johanna Choi, Karen Nykiel, DePaul Stava

*part of our community while pursuing studies at Benedictine University in Lisle

Not pictured: Sister Regina Ann Weissmann

Photo credit: Emily Turner

Message from the Prioress...



Transitions

Lord, send down your spirit and renew the face of the earth! I write this Prioress's Reflection as we begin the Liturgical transition from the Easter Cycle, ending with Pentecost, to begin the Ordinary Time Cycle of the Church Year. We have continued to be nourished by the Scriptures and its teachings to send us into the next transition in our lives.

Here at Sacred Heart Monastery, the changes in our lives and space have continued. On December 19th, we enjoyed the presence of key persons from Benedictine in Minnesota, now the sole corporate member of Villa St. Benedict. They traveled to Lisle for the final signing of paperwork, and we celebrated with a prayer service and meal.

The Sisters have downsized our living space and moved to the 2nd floor of our Monastery (from 4 floors in 2005) at the east end of the building. Benedictine in Minnesota now has the responsibility to repurpose unused spaces to prepare for the expansion of Villa St. Benedict. The Sisters have chosen to continue to take care of the liturgical ministries in the Chapel and upkeep the Grotto for as long as we can. We have many residents, as well as non-residents, involved with various ministries in Chapel, and Father Becket remains our Chaplain – now close to 25 years in that capacity!

Our own lives have more fully transitioned into the lives of the residents here. We now eat with them, in either the Benedale or Villa Center dining room. It has been truly life-giving to get to know them and share stories.



A bit of history: The current Benedale Center dining room is located in the same area where Sacred Heart Academy girls ate from 1929 to 1967, where the Sisters and our guests ate from 1967 to 1987, and where the 32 Queen of Peace Retirement Center residents, plus workers and the Sisters ate together from 1987 to 2005. From 2005 until 2023 the Sisters had our own dining area in our Monastery section.

Our Divine Office and community prayer space is now in what had been the sewing room of the Academy. In 2020 we had transitioned our Divine Office prayers from the Chapel into our Chapter Room, and in 2022 moved again into our smaller Community Room.



To nurture our own sense of community, we try to meet and eat together on Sundays. We share thoughts and concerns by engaging in a "Wisdom Circle conversation" on one Friday night a month, and also hold Community meetings. We celebrate our birthdays and some holidays with an afternoon ice-cream or cheese and cracker social. We truly have the best of both worlds in this, "our preferred future".

God bless each of you as together we find and serve the person of Christ in one another.

Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, O.S.B.

Celebrating the Transition of Sponsorship

December 19, 2023 was celebrated with Mass, a lovely meal, and a program of thanksgiving to God and to all those involved in helping the Sisters



achieve approval to become residents of Villa St. Benedict. Key people represented BENELECTINE, the sponsor headquarters in Minnesota: Jerry Carley (CEO), Kevin Rymanowski (CFO) and Sister Joan

Marie Stelman (Vice President of Mission Integration). Ben Voit, lawyer for BENELECTINE, and Brien Nagel, lawyer for the Benedictine Sisters, also attended. Villa St. Benedict was represented by Executive Director Joe Kellogg, Director of Nursing Kathy Benjamin and other staff members. The Sisters of SHM community were present, including Sisters Margaret Mary Schima and DePaul Stava, now residents at St. Patrick's Nursing in Naperville. Sister Regina Ann Weissmann, also residing at St. Pat's, was not able to come due to poor health.



Five years earlier the Sisters conducted a self-evaluation study, as they realized their years as a monastic presence were gradually coming to fulfillment. On August 18, 2018, Monastic Council members Sisters Mary Bratrsovsky, Sharon Marie Stola, Judith Ann Heble, Helen Jilek and Carolyn Sieg met with Villa St. Benedict sponsors Jerry Carley and Kevin Rymanowski to formally apprise them of the Sisters' desire to be folded into the care of Villa St. Benedict. At the time both BENELECTINE from Duluth and the Lisle Benedictine Sisters had dual sponsorship of the Villa. The



Sisters would cede their sponsorship portion in exchange for becoming residents of Villa St. Benedict. The Monastic Council then had to inform the proper authorities and receive permission to move forward with the Sisters' decision. The work-up to the final authorization included the Bishop, the Vatican, the Monastic Congregation President, plus civil authorities of the county and state. The sense of accomplishment and gratitude ran deep

when all the details of the process became final. We are especially grateful for Sister Judith Ann Heble's foresight and hard work to accomplish our preferred future.

Depicted above (with photo credits to Emily Turner, VSB Marketing Coordinator):

Sister Joan Marie Stelman, Mission Coordinator at Benedictine, giving us a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict.

The light of the mission being passed on (Sister Helen Jilek)

Joe Kellogg with the cross presented to Villa St. Benedict by Sister Joan Marie Stelman. The cross is now displayed above the entryway leading to the Great Room.

Congratulations!

Sister Alberta Khwela, OSB (pictured right) graduated from Benedictine University, earning a BA with a major in Psychology and minor in Theology. She will continue her education at Ben U pursuing a 2-year program for her Master of Science in Business Analytics.

While working in administration at a boarding school, Sister became aware of the many problems and challenges that students and families face. Following her natural instincts, she followed through by helping and counseling them. Her degree provides educational credibility, more knowledge and also aids her understanding of community members and life balance. Her clinical practice taught her to forget about self and focus on understanding the pain that everyone carries inside.

After returning to South Africa, her goal is to combine office administration, business, psychology, and theology. She plans to be an integral part in advancing her community, to benefit those both inside and outside her religious community.



Sister Hyacintha Nepela, OSB (left) completed her Master of Science Degree in Integrative Physiology from Benedictine University. Her 10-month intense program included a combination of biology and biochemistry, focusing on interactions in all the systems of the human body and what is necessary to maintain homeostasis.

Sister Hyacintha was particularly fascinated by the renal system – the kidney is a small organ yet has responsibility for filtering all toxins and waste from the blood, and it affects all other systems in the body.

Pharmacology also piqued her interest, as she learned about medications, their usage and interactions with other medications. This has led to her next chapter: attending a 3-year accelerated program at Midwestern University, starting this June, to study for her Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD).

Sister intends to focus on research and hopes to teach at the university medical school and work at the hospital when she returns to Namibia.

Sister Hyacintha's niece Ligamena traveled from Namibia to celebrate the occasion ... she was also here last year for her aunt's BS & BA graduation!





Some of those who gathered to celebrate the graduates:
(left to right) Sister Scholastica Mpanza (South Africa), Ligamena Kakoma (Namibia), Sister Mary Bratrsovsky, Sister Alberta Khwela, Sister Lynn McKenzie (Cullman, AL), Jacqueline Zulu (South Africa), Sister Theodora Ntuli (South Africa), Sister Celestine Shakungu, Dr. Zandile Nkabinde (South Africa), Charlotte Mkhize (South Africa), Sister Christine Kouba

Sister Anna Duong, LHC, doing very well in her Vietnamese Community

Our community was gifted with the gentle and joyful presence of Sister Anna Duong, LHC (Lover of the Holy Cross) while she studied at Benedictine University from 2012 - 2018. She lived with us while pursuing her Master's degree in Psychology and minor in Theology.

She writes: "Reflecting on my journey, I always find myself grateful for the support and guidance from cherished individuals like the Benedictine Sisters and the professors, friends and companions at Benedictine University who played a pivotal role in shaping my academic and spiritual growth. I extend my heartfelt thanks and am forever indebted to all who walked alongside of me. Your presence in my life has been a constant source of strength and inspiration."

Sister Anna celebrated her silver jubilee in her Vietnamese community on March 18, 2024, surrounded by 27 other Sister jubilarians as well as 2 golden jubilarians and 4 first professiondees.

She states: "Currently I am the vice-superior of LHC of Nha Trang where I find immense joy in accompanying young sisters on their journey of faith. It is a role I embrace wholeheartedly, knowing that God's providence guides and sustains me every step of the way."





The Sisters hosted their traditional celebration with employees and non-resident volunteers. Here are some happy memories from February 18th:





Volunteers at Sacred Heart Monastery

The Sisters are blessed with many friends who volunteer time and talents to assist us on our Board, and with our Chapel and Monastery needs.

The Sisters have certainly felt enriched and uplifted by your love and support in 2023.

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With grateful thanks

We sincerely regret any omission or errors in our acknowledgements, and have also done our best to honor our friends' wishes to give anonymously with such generosity. Please call the Development Office (630.725.6013) with any questions or corrections.

Here and There . . .

In March, Sisters Alberta Khwela and Celestine Shakungu traveled to Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, FL to learn Aqua/Hydroponic techniques for raising tilapia fish and fresh vegetables. Sister Hyacintha Nepala had visited the Florida Benedictines last August for this training course.

The three Sisters expect this knowledge to be very beneficial to their communities in Africa, helping to provide homegrown food, as well as job opportunities for the surrounding areas.



The Sisters' attention was drawn to the sky in April, as they viewed the solar eclipse with the help of solar eclipse glasses and DIY pinhole projectors.



Sacred Heart Academy Alumnae

We are searching for all of our Alumnae. If you received this issue of the LBW, but did not receive the March ~~Club~~, or invitations to our last October Homecoming, you are on our mailing list, but not coded as a Sacred Heart Academy alumna.

Please help us update our records by contacting Beth Hemzacek at ehemzacek@shmlisle.org, or send a note to Benedictine Sisters attn.: SHA Alumnae, 1910 Maple Ave, Lisle, IL 60532.

Homecoming is planned for Saturday, October 19th at Villa St. Benedict. Invitations will be mailed in September.



Sisters Barbara and Christine

Late in April, Sisters Mary Bratrsovsky and Christine Kouba drove east to spend some time with Sister Barbara Pavlik in Warren, Ohio. Sister Barbara is currently busy working on several committees for the 100th anniversary at SS Peter & Paul Parish.

They continued on to Pittsburgh to visit Sister Marion Dobos and attend the Women's Day of Reflection that she directed. (refer to article on page 18)



Late May brought catalpa blossoms to our campus, along with the emergence and din of Brood XXIII 17-year cicadas.



PLANNED GIVING

Benefits of making a Planned Gift, which include wills, bequests, life insurance and other estate plans:

- Provide a lasting tribute that offers ongoing support for the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.
- Make a gift today without spending current income or retirement resources.
- Realize income tax and future estate tax advantages while providing for your heirs.
- Become a partner in ministry with the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.
- Be remembered in the prayers of the Sisters each day.

The Sisters thank you for considering a bequest to the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.

By virtue of our listing in the Official Catholic Directory, the Treasury of the United States has ruled that contributions to the Sisters fully qualify for federal income, estate and gift tax deduction purposes as provided within the law.

The legal title of our monastic community is:
Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Our FEIN is 36-2169170

Persons interested in making special gifts or bequests are asked to contact:

Development Office
Sacred Heart Monastery
1910 Maple Ave. Lisle, IL 60532
630 725-6013
development@shmlisle.org

Our Byzantine Sisters

- Sr. Marion Dobos



“When you look for me, you will find me.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

The 19th annual Women’s Day of Reflection sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchial Office of Religious Education took place on April 27, 2024 at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, PA.

Seventy-two women attended the program. The basket auction raised over six hundred dollars for the children and women in Ukraine.

Today rivalry, self-absorption, and excessive individualism are prevalent in our culture. Two gifted presenters shared personal experiences contradicting this perverted disposition.

Pictured to right: committee members, with Sister Marion seated on left



Pictured below: committee members with Susan Koeppen



Susan Koeppen, journalist and anchor for WPXI-TV, shared her story of survival and gratitude. At age 39 while out for a run, she experienced cardiac arrest. Two bystanders, who happened to be medical students, immediately performed CPR and saved her life. This gratuitous life-giving deed on the part of strangers gave Susan a profound sense of compassion and gratitude. Ten years later, she herself had the opportunity to return the favor by administering CPR to a gentleman who was also under cardiac arrest and saved his life.

As Christians, we are called to show compassion to people most in need. Even the iconic fashion designer, Oscar De La Renta once said, “The qualities I most admire in women are confidence and kindness.”



*Lee Goldman Kikel and
Sister Marion*

The second presentation was given by Lee Goldman Kikel. In the midst of the rise in anti-Semitism, her story could not have been more gripping and inspiring. After her father's death, in 2015 she listened to tapes left by her father, a Holocaust survivor. The story of his Jewish faith, tenacity, and will to survive is compelling. Lee managed to bring to life the narrative of her father's words and documentation of his experience in a book she authored entitled "Perseverance." Lee said, when growing up her father would often say, "Most people are not bad, they are often misdirected." This story needs to be heard. (More information can be found at www.leekikel.com.)

***Benedictine Sisters of the Byzantine Rite
Queen of Heaven Convent
Now Members of Sacred Heart Monastery***

COMMUNITY HISTORY, part 4 by Sister Mary Bratrsovsky

Since 2001, the Sisters at Queen of Heaven Convent had been discerning their future, as their numbers were beginning to diminish. In 2007, the Monastic Chapter voted to become a dependent monastery of Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle, Illinois. On October 2, 2010, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome, decreed that Queen of Heaven Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, Warren, Ohio, was officially permitted to change its independent status in order to become a dependent of Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle, Illinois.

The Lisle Sisters unanimously agreed to grant their request. In a ritual of change of status on November 21, 2010, the seven Sisters in Warren were welcomed by Sister Judith Ann Heble, Prioress, as members of Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle.



Pictured, left to right: Sr. Glenna Smith, OSB, President, Federation of St. Scholastica, Sr. Mary Martha Kacmarek, OSB, Sr. Judith Ann Heble, OSB, Prioress, Sacred Heart Monastery, Sr. Barbara Pavlik, OSB, Sr. Marion Dobos, OSB, Sr. Mary John Semon, OSB, Sr. Agnes Knapik, OSB and Sr. Margaret Mary Schima, OSB

continued on next page



Sr. Glenna Smith, OSB, President, Federation of St. Scholastica and Sr. Judith Ann Heble, OSB, were present for this change of status.

Pictured signing the agreement document are Sister Judith Ann Heble, OSB, Prioress, Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL and Sr. Margaret Mary Schima, OSB

The Sisters planned to remain in Warren, retaining their unique Byzantine spirituality, traditions and liturgical life, and ministering to the people of the Byzantine Church.

At this time in their history they sold Queen of Heaven Monastery on Squire Lane and moved into one wing (8 apartments of the 42 available) of the newly built Infant of Prague Manor on the campus of the parish of SS. Peter and Paul Byzantine Church.



Sisters Mary Bratrsovsky and Helen Jilek were present in Warren when:

On June 1, 2021 the Trustees of Queen of Heaven Monastery admitted that the internal life of the community was no longer sustainable or viable and thus voted to begin the procedure for the dissolution of the Corporation of Queen of Heaven Monastery by a unanimous vote of the three trustees present. At that point they became members of Sacred Heart Monastery.

It was agreed that, if necessary, for health reasons and care, the Sisters would live at Villa Maria in Pennsylvania.

Come and Be Oblates of St. Benedict

Are you searching for more on your spiritual journey? Is your workload or busyness in competition with your relationship with God? Have you found some distance between you and Church?

Consider becoming an Oblate, sustained by the way of life presented in the Rule of Benedict.

Oblates are men and women, married or single, who hunger for a deeper experience of God.

Join others in prayer, Lectio Divina, and work in the context of an extended Community.

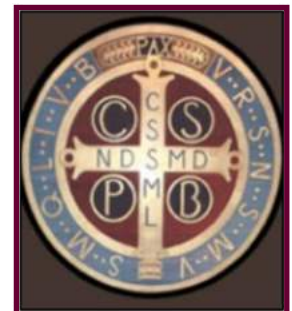
To date we have had 40+ women and men make an Oblation (a Promise) to Sacred Heart Monastery. We meet once a month to socialize, reflect on Lectio Divina, and share the values taught in the Rule of Benedict and how these values have enhanced our lives. Oblates volunteer to assist here at the Monastery with garden work, as receptionists, praying with us at Lauds and/or Vespers, and in our Eucharistic ministries. Needless to say, they also share in the needs of their local communities.

See for yourself how your spiritual life can include a new depth and comradeship as you continue to journey through life.

Sister Karen Nykiel, O.S.B.

630-632-2216

knykiel@shmlisle.org





The Sisters hosted their traditional High Tea luncheon on April 6th for Villa St. Benedict residents who volunteer their time and talents at Sacred Heart Monastery. Some images from that lovely gathering:



Villa St. Benedict

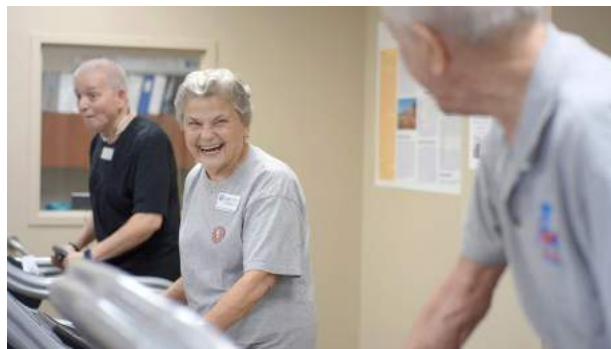


Villa St. Benedict is at the height of its beauty when spring turns into summer. Lovely displays of flowers in bloom line our streets and gardens. When driving through our Villa Home neighborhoods, in front of the Villa Center, and all around Benedale, we are greeted with the beautiful colors of this season.



As a continuing care community, our staff works tirelessly to provide excellent services. We encourage our residents to take advantage of everything that Villa St. Benedict has to offer. Living with a purpose has residents participating in a variety of activities ranging from educational presentations, social outings, musical entertainment and much more.

We are kicking off this summer with our block party in early June - one of many events this season. When we are able to get together, we celebrate! Enjoying each other's company is one of the great joys of Villa St. Benedict.



A legacy remembered...

If you make a visit to Villa St. Benedict do not miss our new edition to the Villa Center library: a beautiful glass cabinet donated by a Villa Center resident. The cabinet houses artifacts from the Benedictine Sisters, an homage through the decades that built this



incredible legacy. Sister Christine Kouba helped to collect and write descriptions for the individual items. Displaying this history honors the

Sisters past and present, who dedicated their lives to servicing others and encouraging good faith. Following the Sisters' tradition of hospitality, Villa St. Benedict continues to be a unique senior living community. The Sisters shared this land for their legacy to continue in good graces, a sacred feeling known to those who come and visit.



Just around the corner from our library is our Treasure Box Gift Shop, currently selling greeting cards that feature watercolor prints of some classic Villa St. Benedict scenes painted by a resident artist. Be sure to stop by and check out what's new.



*Photo credits:
Emily Turner, Marketing Coordinator*





Lisle Benedictine Women

Sacred Heart Monastery
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MISSION STATEMENT

The Corporate Mission of the Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart is Hospitality. Directed by the Gospel and the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict, the mission is based on a commitment to use time, talent and resources of the Community for those in need.

We, the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, Illinois, proclaim hospitality to be our corporate commitment. This mandate, found in the Hebrew scriptures, the Gospels, and reiterated by Benedict to be the cornerstone for our interaction with one another (Rule of Benedict, Chapter 72) and our reception of strangers & guests (RB 53), is our particular corporate response to the needs of this 21st century.

We are proclaiming our commitment to hospitality as one significant way of being

counter-cultural in the midst of global fear and mistrust. We are determined to create an environment of non-violence among ourselves that will allow our own members to experience gentle warmth and reverence for the gift each is to the community. We will create an atmosphere in which the stranger will be recognized as a guest - received as Christ Himself - the gift of God among us.

We are willing to risk and model that strangers, coming together as friends, can nourish one another in the prayerful atmosphere of cenobitic community, can share resources, can host and reverence the other as sacred. In the act of "opening our door" to the other, we in fact open our hearts - emptying ourselves of ourselves. This will be our gift to those "who knock." With open hands, we receive the gift they are to us.