



Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2016

Trusting in God's Abiding Love Meet Sister Nicole Kunze, Newly Elected Prioress



Sister Nicole Kunze (center) was installed as the ninth prioress of Annunciation Monastery on May 20, 2016. Sister Kerry O'Reilly (left), president of the Federation of St. Benedict, and Sister Nancy Miller (right), eighth prioress of Annunciation Monastery, extended their blessing and support to Sister Nicole, with the monastic community.

Following a period of prayer and discernment, the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery elected Sister Nicole Kunze, OSB, as prioress. She was formally installed on May 20. A public celebration was held May 21. Sister Nicole succeeds Sister Nancy Miller, who has served eight years as prioress.

"I am truly humbled and overwhelmed at the faith my community of sisters has placed in me," says Sister Nicole. "In the days and weeks to come, I will learn more about what this really means in terms of my responsibilities as prioress. I cherish and appreciate the love and support surrounding me."

Story continues on page 3



MESSAGE FROM THE

Prioress

It is wonderful to greet you, a loved friend of our monastery, in my first column as prioress.

I won't take the time to introduce myself to you since that article can be found elsewhere in Tidings. I've been touched by the kind words and greetings I've received since my election in April. It is obvious that many people care about our monastic community.

Our sisters have been an independent community in the Diocese of Bismarck for almost 70 years, though our presence actually goes back to 1878. From the first day the sisters stepped off the train in Bismarck to this day, we have strived to serve the needs of the people of this region. In doing that, we have always collaborated with others. We could not have done any of it without the help of others. Many of you have been partners with us in our various endeavors – CHI St. Alexius Health, the University of Mary, Ministry on the Margins, parish work, and parochial schools throughout the diocese. We thank you for your help and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

As part of our discernment and election process, we sisters listened to each other and raised up five major areas or directions we want to concentrate on during the next four years: leadership, membership, community life, ministries and sponsorship. We are developing goals and strategies that will call us to continue faithfully living our

Benedictine way of life while stretching ourselves to respond to the needs of this time in our history. Benedictines have been around for over 1,500 years and we are proud to be a part of that legacy. Our founding sisters dared to come to the prairies of North Dakota and start new ventures and we are called to continue on in that spirit. Trusting in God's abiding love and each other, we will move into that future ready to serve.

In this issue, we take time to thank Sister Nancy Miller for her eight years as prioress. Our community gathered on May 15 to reminisce and express our gratitude to Sister Nancy for her leadership. Through all the changes and challenges that occurred, Sister Nancy's steady and calm demeanor was what I appreciated most. In any situation, I could also count on Sister Nancy to use her quick wit to lighten up the moment. I know I rely on Sister Nancy's example, along with every sister in our community, as I assist us in moving into our future.

Sister Nicole Kunze

Sister Nicole Kunze (continued from page 1)

Born and raised near Valley City, ND, to Allen and Marilyn Kunze, Sister Nicole is the oldest of three children. She became acquainted with the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery while attending the University of Mary where she received her undergraduate degree in biology. Sister Nicole earned a Ph.D. in chemical education from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. Sister Nicole was honored with the University of Mary Regents' Award for Teaching Faculty in 2011. She recently completed her tenth year of service at the University of Mary where she was associate professor of chemistry.

A member of Annunciation Monastery since 1996, Sister Nicole taught chemistry and biology at St. Mary's Central High School for five years prior to attending graduate school. Within the monastery, Sister Nicole serves on the monastic council, sponsorship council and finance council. She is corporate secretary for the monastery.

As prioress, Sister Nicole will provide leadership in the Sisters' sponsored institutions: CHI St. Alexius Health, the University of Mary and

CHI St. Alexius Health Garrison. She will serve as president of the board at the University of Mary. As the spiritual and administrative leader of the religious community, Sister Nicole will guide the sisters in the implementation of a new long-range plan. "I am excited about the directions our community has chosen for the next four years," she says.

Sister Nicole, age 44, is an avid sports fan. Her favorite teams are the Minnesota Twins, the Minnesota Vikings and the University of Mary Marauders. She enjoys walking, riding bike and looking for wildflowers.

"Benedictine sisters came to Dakota Territory in 1878 to serve the needs of the people. That pioneering spirit continues to lead us into the future. As monastic women, we invite others to follow God's call in their own lives, so together, we deepen our spirituality and enrich lives through prayer and service," says Sister Nicole.

Changing Lives Through Loving Kindness

In recognition of the 50th anniversary of Charles Hall Youth Services, Gayla and Gayle Sherman of Charles Hall presented beautiful art sculptures to Sisters Kathleen Atkinson and Thomas Welder. The art awards were created by youth from Charles Hall. An event was held in March at Bismarck's Heritage Center to kick off a "50 Random Acts of Kindness" Campaign and to honor the sisters who model love and service in the civic community. The event was also sponsored by the Bis-man Stilletos Group. Sister Kathleen is the founder and director of Ministry on the Margins, which serves at-risk youth, prison inmates, the homeless, and those in various stages of transition. She also served at Charles Hall. Sister Thomas is president emerita of the University of Mary, and recipient of the prestigious Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award in 2004.



Sister Nancy Miller Celebrates *25 Years* of Monastic Profession



Saturday, June 18, 2016

1:30 p.m. Eucharistic Liturgy

Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel
Benedictine Center for Servant Leadership

Reception will follow from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.
at Annunciation Monastery

*All are
welcome!*

It has been over 25 years since Sister Nancy Miller first observed the loving way the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery cared for one another, with joy and a real devotion to serving God and others. It moved her deep within her heart. "As a student at the University of Mary, I considered where God was leading me. Becoming a sister seemed like a real option. If I didn't try it, I knew I would always wonder, 'What if?'" When she first entered community, Sister Nancy says she never looked too far down the road. She committed herself to each phase of discernment, always feeling called to go deeper with her relationship with God. Her focus on each step of the journey helped her earn her Bachelor of Science in business administration and a Master of Management at the University of Mary.

Sister Nancy's 17-year span of ministries, prior to being elected prioress, includes serving as bookkeeper and administrative assistant at Annunciation Monastery. She also served as manager of the bookstore at the University of Mary and later became director of Campus Ministry. She enjoyed being involved with many aspects of campus life.

As prioress for eight years, Sister Nancy found it rewarding to get to know the sisters at a much deeper level. "It was a gift to spend time with them and learn about them and their ministries. Through her involvement on various boards and committees, Sister Nancy established close relationships with leaders serving at the University of Mary and CHI St. Alexius Health/CHI St. Alexius Health Garrison. "I appreciate the expertise, commitment and values that are demonstrated in these great institutions of higher education and healthcare."

Sister Nancy looks forward to an exciting future. Her hope is that "we will always be relevant in the Church and in society –where we model our core values of prayer, respect, hospitality, community and service for others. If we do that for our world, we offer the best of ourselves." She encourages women to consider religious life for living prayerfully and joyfully. "It is a gift to live in community. We seek God together, each day, supporting and challenging one another on our journey to God. Each of us grows in ways we may not have grown without being a part of this community."

Sister Nancy plans to take some time to travel and visit family. "I'm OK with being in a state of transition. I think we are all in a state of transition; nobody knows what God has planned for us on any given day, or any given hour, for that matter. We are always moving toward something."

Just as Sister Nancy allowed God to lead her through each step of becoming a sister, she will listen to His call for her future.



Sister Madelyn: A Healing Presence for the Sick

As she walks through the hospital, Sister Madelyn Louttit is greeted by several staff members who appreciate the time she takes to check in on patients, offering the sick a prayer, communion, or a listening ear. Sister Madelyn is a chaplain at CHI St. Alexius Health. While tiny in stature, Sister Madelyn has a big heart and gentle spirit, a welcome presence for patients and families. “I’m just there for them, to pray with them and be a tender presence in their day...and I’m not carrying a needle,” she adds.

Caring for the sick has always been a part of the Benedictine heritage, in response to God’s call. The Gospel of Matthew advises, “Before and above all things, care must be taken of the sick, that they be served in very truth as Christ is served; because He has said, ‘I was sick and you visited me.’” Those who work in hospitals offer healing, hospitality, respect and comfort, in an atmosphere that expresses the full human experience of joy, pain and sorrow. “There is mystery in every situation, whether a baby is born, a patient is healed, or another is in the end stage of life.

*“I’m just there for them,
to pray with them and be a tender
presence in their day...”*

God’s hand is in there somewhere; God always has a bigger plan,” says Sister Madelyn.

Hospital chaplains are periodically on call during the night. “Interrupted sleep is terrible for me; but when I’m called in the middle of the night to stay with someone who requests a chaplain, I realize what an honor and a gift it is to be there. It is a blessing to be a source of prayerful support for a family member who may be sitting alone in a waiting room awaiting news on a loved one,” explains Sister Madelyn. “I think anyone in this ministry prays to have the right words of consolation and hope when, in reality, sometimes all we can do is care, be there, and be quiet. There is a constant element in every situation, and that is love. To witness the kind of love families and friends have for one another is a beautiful thing.”

Sister Madelyn also leads a spirituality group at CHI St. Alexius Health Partial Hospitalization Program. The program helps those with a wide variety of issues including addictions and social/coping disorders. “I love spending time with these people. They are honest and open about themselves and the challenges they face. I listen without judging or preaching and try to help them develop coping skills by bringing in a spiritual piece that might bring them spiritual peace.”

STATIO: Honoring God's Presence, Honoring Self, Honoring the Other

The Sisters of Annunciation Monastery have reinstated the centuries-old Benedictine practice of statio, an intentional pause, or transition time, to honor God in the moment and prepare to enter the sacred space of God's presence. On feast days and Sundays at evening prayer, the sisters line up outside of chapel in silence and, at the sound of the bell, walk into the chapel together and bow reverently to the altar and then to the Christ in one another before proceeding to their place. This moment of reflection is an opportunity to empty oneself of cares or anything that hinders openness of heart and prepare to chant God's praises in the name of the whole Church.

"Attentiveness takes effort and practice so it can become a part of us," says Sister JoAnn Krebsbach. "It is a challenge in today's busy world, even for monastics, to clear our minds of distraction and become centered as we prepare our hearts and minds for prayer."

In Sister Joan Chittister's book, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, she explains, "Statio is the practice of stopping one thing before we begin another. It is the time between times. It is a cure for the revolving door mentality that is common for a culture that runs on wheels. The practice of statio is meant to center us and make us conscious of what we're about to do and make us present to the God who is present to us." (pp 176-7)

The following are ideas on how to weave the sacred pauses of statio into daily life and experience God's presence in the transitions that make up each day.

- 1 Before you head out into the day, take time to pause and reflect on a positive thought, such as "God, let me be open to your graces today, guide me in your loving way." Breathe deeply and clear your mind of anxiety about the day ahead.
- 2 Before going to exercise or to a medical appointment, honor your body by thinking of it and its amazing abilities. Thank God for the gift of your body. When going to school or to work, ask God to bless your studies, your work, your part in making a difference in the lives of others. Prior to joining a meeting, reflect on how to use your gifts according to God's will. Give thanks for the gifts you have been given, as well as the gifts others share with you.
- 3 When returning home, pause before you enter. Consciously leave your stresses at your doorstep and bring your loving presence and openness of heart indoors.



Sisters Thomas Welder, Janet Zander and Denise Ressler bow to the altar and to one another upon entering the chapel.



Maria Huber, postulant, and Sister Andre Hushka bow to each other at the installation of prioress Sister Nicole Kunze.



A Blizzard of Blessings at the March for Life

JANUARY 22, 2016

Little did Sisters Idelle Badt and Hannah Vanorny know as they were about to board the bus with University of Mary students for the long drive to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. that they would not only be on the bus for the drive, but would be stranded on the highway during an epic storm that would keep them stuck on the interstate in one spot for over 22 hours.

It was the sixth March for Life for Sister Hannah Vanorny and the first for Sister Idelle Badt. For many people, this year's march would be the most memorable. A winter storm was headed directly for the nation's capital, threatening busloads of students from across the country who were enroute to the "Pro-Life Pro-Woman" March for Life on January 22, 2016. This is the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision (January 23, 1973) which overturned pro-life laws protecting unborn children. In most states, this made abortion legal, resulting in over 58 million babies being killed through abortion. While the media downplayed the turnout, tens of thousands of pro-life people braved the snowstorm to show their unwavering support.

Even before the March For Life began, everything in Washington, D.C. was ordered to shut down at noon, the exact time the march was scheduled to begin. The city announced the closing of all schools, museums and government buildings. Undaunted, the marchers, dressed in layers of warm winter gear, displayed their commitment to be a unified voice for the unborn and marched onward.

Snowflakes gained momentum as they marched the length of the National Mall. "By the time we were nearing the end of the march, we were seeing heavy, wet snow," said Sister Hannah.

With their marching mission complete, students and chaperones quickly boarded the bus in an attempt to beat the storm before it hit full strength. Their bus, along with a multitude of travelers who had the same idea, ultimately ended up stuck on the highway for over 22 hours.

To pass the time, the travelers, including Monsignor James Patrick Shea, president of the University of Mary, shared food and water with one another, told jokes, watched movies, sang songs and held

talent shows and cell phone karaoke. They prayed the rosary and made a very conscious effort to stay positive. "It was inspirational to see how the students responded to this unexpected situation," remarked Sister Hannah. "Nobody on the bus seemed to doubt we would be OK, but they were concerned about those stranded in cars who were running out of gas, with no heat or bathroom. A couple in a car nearby was invited onto the bus to get warm and use the facilities during the long wait."

Sisters Hannah and Idelle laughed as they recalled the cheers and excitement when the bus was finally able to get moving again. A stop in Eau Claire, WI, offered an opportunity to celebrate Mass at a church in a tiny chapel where Monsignor Shea invited the sisters to select and provide the music. "Even our bus drivers attended our Mass and shared their stories," explained Sister Idelle. "It was probably my favorite Mass ever!"

Sisters Idelle and Hannah credit the bus driver with staying calm and the students who stayed positive throughout the experience. "We knew through texts of friends and family and facebook messages that we were covered in prayer," said Sister Idelle, who led the bus in singing the calming hymn, "It is Well With My Soul."

When the bus finally pulled onto the University of Mary campus, several Sisters of Annunciation Monastery were gathered to welcome the road-weary home. Surprisingly, sisters and students said they would do it all over again!

"Nuns don't work out, right?"

This tongue-in-cheek comment made us chuckle. After taking a tour of Annunciation Monastery, a student remarked, "I was really surprised, like REALLY surprised, to see that the nuns had their very own work out room. Nuns don't work out, right?"

Even back in the times of St. Benedict, physical activity was encouraged to ensure a life of moderation and balance. Most of our sisters strive to adhere to an exercise regimen. If it's not a regular routine, the errands and ministries they are engaged in make up for it!

Sister Terence Glum (94) walks daily. She says the length of her walks depends on how she is feeling, but she tries to make several laps around the monastery when she can't get outdoors. "I'm a retired U.S. Navy nurse and I taught anatomy so I'm a firm believer that if you don't use it, you'll lose it. This is why I stay active."

At 99 years of age, nary a day goes by when Sister Elizabeth Novy doesn't get out for her walk. She is grateful for each day she can walk, she says. She is also a believer in the "Use it, or lose it" theory. She encourages people to keep moving. Sister Elizabeth walks back and forth from the monastery to the sisters' landmark bell banner every day.

Between noon prayer and lunch, Sister JoAnn Krebsbach regularly walks the treadmill and does stretching exercises. "I think when we're feeling good physically, we are more alert and ready to face the day." Other regular treadmill users are Sister Lawrence Fischer and Sister Patricia Schap. Both sisters prefer walking outdoors but the treadmill is a good option during the frigid winter months.

Exercise has always been a habit for Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, who was very happy when she was gifted a Fitbit so she can reach her goal of 10,000 steps a

day. She feels, "Exercise is so important for physical, mental and spiritual health and it's critical for an integrated and balanced life." Sister Rosanne enjoys walking to clear her mind, take in the fresh air and commune with nature. "I have a sedentary job so I have to think about my health," she adds. "I stand as much as possible and include stretching throughout the day. Most of our sisters exercise. If they can, they do!"



Sister Rosanne hits the treadmill.

Sister Hannah Vanorny says she is somewhat of a running addict. "I run four miles a day – no more, no less. I really love the adrenaline from running. It makes me feel alive to be out in the fresh air. It's almost a spiritual experience to get out there, especially in the early morning when most people aren't even up yet. To run in the stillness and see the sunrise fills my spirit." She enjoys playing racquetball with Sister Nancy Miller and riding bike. Sister Hannah plays volleyball with her Young Professionals team and enjoys sand volleyball in the summer. Sister Agatha Muggli is also an avid runner. Her love of the outdoors extends into another healthy form of exercise, gardening. Prioress Sister Nancy Miller's favorite activities include playing racquetball, riding bike and walking.

Sister Gemma Peters doesn't need to schedule any extra exercise into her day. As coordinator of the Hospitality Center, she cleans the retreat rooms and is usually up and down the monastery stairs 20-30 times per day!

"If we don't exercise at 5:00 a.m., we know it just won't happen later in the day," admits Sister Nicole Kunze about herself and Sister Gerard Wald. They use the weights and cardio machines at the exercise facility at the University of Mary. Sister Idelle Badt participated in a customized program offered at the University of Mary which include strength and balance training, treadmill and the stationary bicycle.

Exercise classes keep Sister Madelyn Louttit's back troubles at bay. After being diagnosed with several spine issues and having injections that weren't providing adequate relief, she started mixing cardio



Sister Elizabeth Novy (99) (above) and Sister Terence Glum (94) (below) are advocates of the "Use it, or lose it," theory!



classes with core exercises and weight training. Her pain began to diminish. She says, "I believe that when you are fit, you are more at home in your body and you have an overall feeling of well-being." Sister Melissa Cote also trains on weight machines.

Sister Eleanor Stockert teaches T'ai Chi Chih® Joy Thru Movement to those who find the peaceful movements healing and energizing. She began this practice many years ago to relieve her debilitating migraines, which she no longer has, and became a certified instructor.

In Loving Memory



Sister Rebecca Mayer, OSB

Born: September 1, 1937

Professed: July 11, 1956

Died: December 29, 2015

Sister Rebecca Mayer, OSB

Sister Rebecca's joy in music and song was evident every day. She was faithful in sharing her musical abilities with people in her life. Her appreciation and love for the celebration of the liturgy was a special way of offering praise to God.

Sister Rebecca served her community with diligent oversight in developing and producing our common prayer books. We will be mindful of her service to us, as every day we praise God with the books she created. A teacher at heart she offered her understanding of worship and praise in the classroom, in her role as organist and choir director.

Always faithful to the common way of life, Sister Rebecca's daily example was one of loving kindness. She often expressed her gratitude for those who prayed for her and cared for her in her illness. She treasured her relationship with family members and extended family.

Sister Rebecca is fondly remembered by her community, her family, and the many students she taught – both youth and adults. We pray that Sister Rebecca now enjoys the music of God's praise forever.



Sister Glenna Raybell, OSB

Born: June 29, 1932

Professed: July 11, 1955

Died: April 18, 2016

Sister Glenna Raybell, OSB

Sister Glenna, a Benedictine sister for 61 years, was committed to working for the well-being of people. With a passion for social justice, she served people as a teacher and social worker in North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois and Michigan and as a canon lawyer in California. She also had a strong commitment to the welfare of military veterans.

Sister Glenna, always interested in state and national issues, served on state government boards including the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women and the North Dakota Parole Board.

An outspoken woman, Sister Glenna was courageous in expressing her views especially when it came to championing the downtrodden. She may have seemed tough on the outside, but inside she had a warm, soft heart. We pray that Sister Glenna is rejoicing in the love and peace of God's presence.

Catholic Schools Week

Our sisters appreciate the hard-working students who came to the monastery from Light of Christ Catholic Schools to do some housekeeping during Catholic Schools Week. Thanks to all of these kids for sharing your time and talent!



Several of our sisters brought their show on the road during Catholic Schools Week. They visited Catholic schools in Bismarck and Mandan, where they shared stories, songs and crafts with the children.





Sister Nancy shares a laugh with long-time employee Murray Ereth.

Thank you, Sister Nancy Miller, for your generous spirit and visionary leadership! *May God bless you, always!*



Sister Hannah Vanorny – “Sister Nancy, I think you are the best prioress I have ever had! Of course, you are also the (only) prioress I have really known since joining the community... Things I appreciate about you and your leadership style: your always calm and easy-going demeanor, your willingness to try (most) of my new ideas, your strong support of vocation ministry, your understanding of all mechanical and (some) technological things, your forgiving nature, and your great smile along with your fabulous sense of humor!”



Sister Agnes Reinert – “Sister Nancy's calming presence and warmth is an ongoing gift to our community.”



Sister Mariah Dietz – “A listening heart is just one of the gifts Sister Nancy so graciously bestowed on each and every one of us over the past eight years.”



Sister Lawrence Fischer – “Thank you, Sister Nancy, a leader, a prioress, a friend. Thank you for your response to God's call to our Benedictine community, and especially, for your past eight years of servant leadership as our prioress. Your deep faith, your commitment to our Benedictine community and values, your listening heart and your ability to work with others has enabled you to lead us through these years of major changes in our sponsored ministries, as well as the long range planning for our community.”



Jill Ackerman – “Sister Nancy has a gift of listening and responding with logic, compassion and with a real desire to understand the impact decisions have on others and the big picture. She is honest, steady and calm under pressure, and has the greatest laugh!”



Sister Denise Ressler – “With a joyful heart, I thank you Sister Nancy for your years of leadership and service, for being the person you have been, still are and will continue to be. Blessings and my prayers!”



Brian Lardy – “I am very grateful for the leadership and guidance from Sister Nancy as I transitioned into the role of director of finance. The Benedictine hospitality that she shows to everyone every day is an inspiration to me.”



Sister Thomas Welder – “In her leadership role as prioress, Sister Nancy created a climate of goodness and trust. Whatever the situation or event, she responded to each person she met with love, concern for their well-being, and unhesitating acceptance. She is blessing to us all.”



Sister Janet Zander – “Not only have you shown in word and generous deed that love is approachable, Sister Nancy, but in the blessing which the prioress prays at the conclusion of morning and evening prayer, you have consistently kept before us the reminder of God's abiding love and the call to be open to and extend that love to one another. On that foundation, may God's love be your joy and sustaining blessing always!”



Sister Renee Zastoupil – “Sister Nancy always served with grace, humility and a jovial spirit. She has a listening heart, good word, and a prayerful stance. She led our community with wisdom, vision, and strength in all of her endeavors.”



Sister Rosanne Zastoupil – “Thank you for your support, trust and encouragement during your years of leadership.”



Sister Eleanor Stockert – “Thank you, Sister Nancy, for your words of wisdom, courage and hospitable spirit!”



Sister Kathleen Atkinson – “Thank you, Sister Nancy, for helping Ministry on the Margins become a reality. Your support, challenging questions, and deep interest have guided us along these early ventures.”



Sister Rosemary DeGracia – “What a wonderful eight years of leadership you have given us, thank you! Always a Benedictine servant leader, you have embraced the many changes facing the community, you have grown in wisdom and strength and have shepherded us by your example.”



Sister Hildegard Urlacher – “Thank you for making us proud in your leadership!”



Sr. Nancy Gunderson – “Sister Nancy, thank you for encouraging us to grow and to try new things.”

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God Bless Our Benedictine Volunteers!



Patricia Nguyen, center, is the coordinator of the Benedictine Volunteers program. We are grateful for her efforts in directing volunteers to monasteries where they can volunteer and experience the daily life of sisters. Special thanks to Natalie Brown (left) and Kathryn Hunter (right) who have touched our lives in countless ways. You are a blessing to us!