



FALL 2010

Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

Rosemary DeGracia ENTERS THE NOVITIATE



(l. to r.) Prioress Sister Nancy Miller, Sister Rosemary DeGracia, novice, and novice director, Sister Agatha Muggli. Sister Rosemary is holding the Rule of Benedict.

In a touching August 15 ceremony at Annunciation Monastery, Rosemary DeGracia entered into the novitiate, a 12-month canonical period of spiritual formation, contemplation and study. It feels like a natural spiritual turning point because Sister Rosemary says she has been “living as a lay monastic for a number of years with her days beginning and ending with prayer, and lectio.” Prayer has been a part of the natural rhythm of her days and it continues to deepen as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery.

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MESSAGE FROM THE

Prioress

Typically when we think about hospitality we think about a social event maybe involving a meal or food of some sort. We think about being kind and welcoming and treating the other person as we want to be treated. These aspects of hospitality are all good, and to be known as a hospitable person is a wonderful compliment.

We Benedictines take the meaning of hospitality to a deeper level. A Benedictine monastery is a house of hospitality. We consider hospitality to be a holy encounter. In his rule, St. Benedict writes about hospitality. In Chapter 4, The Tools of Good Works, he says, “*You must honor everyone*”(1 Pet 2:17). In Chapter 53, The Reception of Guests, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me’*”(Matt 25:35).

Hospitality has a central position in every Benedictine monastery. It goes beyond a warm smile to an expected visitor. Hospitality is meant for everyone who comes to the door: expected or unexpected, friend or stranger, poor or rich, young or old, someone from near or far. When true Benedictine hospitality is practiced, one sees Christ in the other. And what a gift that is – to serve Christ who is always in our midst!

So how is Benedictine hospitality practiced here at Annunciation Monastery? It happens when a guest comes to the monastery to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and finds a peaceful atmosphere. The outer peacefulness allows for an inner peace to take hold. Benedictine hospitality happens when a guest is welcomed to our chapel to join us for prayer or to our dining room for a meal. Hospitality happens when persons are accepted and honored for who they are. Hospitality happens when we share our space of simplicity and beauty where God can be encountered and one is made whole.

In the spirit of Benedictine hospitality we invite you to come and spend some time with us here at Annunciation Monastery. We have so much to share with you. Our hope and prayer is that you will come and experience God in the peaceful atmosphere of the monastery. We know that we sisters experience God through your presence and the presence of all guests among us. The guest and host experience blessing in one another. Welcome!

Sister Nancy Miller, OSB

Sister Nancy Miller, OSB





Sister Rosemary is welcomed by the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. (Pictured at center: Sister Rosemary DeGracia and Sister Renee Zastoupil).

“The novitiate is the crucible of monastic formation by which I discern my vocation to this community through a structure of prayer, formal classes and service to the monastic community.”

As a novice, Sister Rosemary’s study includes monastic history, chant, canonical and community documents, monastic life and the Rule of St. Benedict. She is adapting to the slower-paced, contemplative period of her journey toward becoming a professed sister. She is supported by novice director, Sister Agatha Muggli, and the community of sisters.

In a journal entry, Sister Rosemary explains: “The novitiate is the crucible of monastic formation by which I discern my vocation to this community through a structure of prayer, formal classes and service to the monastic community.”

In service to the monastic community, Sister Rosemary has charge of the monastic library and helps where she is needed whether it’s at the

switchboard or to help with dishes or housekeeping. In her leisure time, Sister Rosemary enjoys long walks, knitting and quilting and practicing piano. The novitiate honors the spiritual, mental and physical formation of each individual, assuring they are engaged in activities that promote the best environment for healthy discernment.

“The novitiate is a gift of the time and space necessary to be free of the distractions of daily professional activities and social events outside of the monastery,” says Sister Rosemary. “I am becoming even more conscious of how I use my time and devote it to clarifying how God is calling me.”

HOSPITALITY

“Let all be received as Christ...”

St. Alexius Medical Center is sponsored by the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. At a recent Benedictine Awareness convocation, we were delighted to hear these testimonials from two St. Alexius employees who are extending the value of hospitality every day.

Sondra Quinn works at St. Alexius in Patient Access Management. *“To me, hospitality means providing care, comfort and kindness to whoever is in need be it a patient, visitor or family member, by treating them with respect, a cheery attitude and a business-like behavior while they are visiting the hospital. I really listen to the patient and try to help them by following up with various departments to make sure the appointment schedule matches their scheduled appointments with areas like lab and x-ray. If necessary, I may find them a wheelchair or escort them where they need to go. Extending hospitality is rewarding because it is encouraging to the patient to be welcomed as Christ.”*



Paula Bullinger works at St. Alexius in Environmental Services. She says, *“In our department we have many opportunities to exhibit hospitality because we are everywhere in the hospital—with staff, patients and visitors. We notice people who seem lost and may be too embarrassed to ask for help so we ask if we can take them somewhere or help provide a wheelchair if they need one. We talk with them to put them at ease until they reach their destination. We try to help patients with niceties that don’t require nursing skills like reaching their phone for them, or even explaining how to use their call light if they’ve forgotten. All of those simple things are meaningful ways we can serve others in Christ’s name.”*

Sister Susan Lardy, vice president of St. Alexius Mission Effectiveness, with St. Alexius employees, Sondra Quinn and Paula Bullinger



Nearly 400 sisters attended the LCWR conference.

LCWR CONFERENCE

A Celebration of Consecrated Life



Sr. Kathleen Atkinson presented on monasticism.

“Consecrated Life, a Gift and Sign of God’s Presence: Exploring Individual and Common Good,” was the theme of the July Leadership Conference for Women Religious (LCWR) of Region XI at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn. Sisters Nancy Miller, Thomas Welder, JoAnn Krebsbach and Kathleen Atkinson joined over 375 sisters at this conference comprised of women religious from apostolic, evangelical and monastic communities. Sister Kathleen Atkinson presented on the monastic perspective of religious life. She shared the following thoughts from the LCWR Conference:

“It was a room of energy and passion. This is just what I expected, because the room was filled with women religious from North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. We came from communities that are Benedictine, Presentation, Franciscan, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and other traditions; but we came together sharing the call from John Paul II in his document on religious life, *Vita Consecrata*: “There is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life...the radical nature of the following of Christ.” We heard this call echoed in our own document by the Benedictine Prioresses: “The monastic vocation is by its very nature prophetic.” We heard this call echoed in our speakers (Sr. Mary Dacy, SSJ and Sr. Christine Vladimiroff, OSB), our table sharing, and our prayer together.



(l. to r.) Karen Schneider, Martin and Sheila White, Sister Thomas Welder, Dr. Tim Seaworth, Stephanie Sandvick and Sister Nancy Miller.

Prioress Sister Nancy Miller welcomes guests and honors Sister Thomas with her remarks. To her right is Father James Shea, president of the University of Mary.



A Patio in Honor of Sister Thomas

A gathering of generous supporters of the mission of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and the University of Mary were present at the dedication of a new patio in honor of Sister Thomas Welder. Sister Thomas served as president of University of Mary for 37 years and continues to serve as *president emerita*.

The patio now stands because of the generosity of Martin and Sheila White, MDU Resources; William Schneider, Derek Schaffer and Rob Krom of Knife River, and Wentz Landscaping who collaborated to create this peaceful outdoor space for students and guests of the University of Mary. It overlooks the lush, tree-filled valley and the Missouri River.



Inscription: "In recognition of Sister Thomas Welder, OSB, Fifth President of the University of Mary from 1978-2009.

A caring friend, teacher and visionary servant leader, modeling the Benedictine values, inspiring others to become leaders in the service of truth and giving selflessly of her time, energy, wisdom, knowledge, and belief in God to forward the mission of the founding Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and the University of Mary. God bless her now and always."



Fr. Shea Prepares Italian Feast for Sisters and Students

University of Mary President, Father James Shea, prepared an authentic Italian pasta dinner for our sisters and regional high school students who attended a Catholic studies program this summer. We enjoyed visiting with the students and seminarians who were a part of this program. They joined us for prayer, dinner and tours. Thank you to Father Shea for a wonderful meal!



Father Shea discusses the merits of cooking with olive oil with Sisters Nancy Miller and JoAnn Krebsbach.



We were blessed on Oct. 21-26 to have five sisters from outside the community conduct a Federation of St. Benedict canonical visitation. This was an opportunity for us to reflect on our growth in fidelity to the spirit of the Gospel and the *Rule of St. Benedict*. In preparation for the visitation, we also did a study on our Ministry of Sponsorship, a program designed to carry on the legacy of the Benedictine Sisters

in our sponsored institutions: St. Alexius Medical Center, Garrison Memorial Hospital and the University of Mary. In groups or individually, the visitators met with every sister in the community. They rendered a great service by offering an external supportive viewpoint, commendations and recommendations. We are grateful to them.

The Visitation Team stands with Sister Nancy Miller, Prioress

(l to r) Sisters Nancy Bauer, Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minn.; Susan Hutchens, president of the Federation of St. Benedict, St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, Ill.; Nancy Miller; Karen Streveler, St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minn.; Anne Shepard, Mount St. Scholastica Monastery, Atchison, Kan., and Sheila McGrath, St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, Ill., secretary for the visitation team.



Sisters Hannah Vanorny, Ann Schoch, SSND, and Madelyn Louttit at St. Peter's Church, Catholic Indian Mission of Fort Yates.

Sisters On A Mission

With open hearts, Sisters Madelyn Louttit and Hannah Vanorny set off for their weeklong summer mission experience at the Catholic Indian Mission in Fort Yates, ND. Being involved in service to a mission is a requirement for all sisters in first monastic profession. Here are some thoughts they shared from their ministry.

(SH: Sister Hannah, SM: Sister Madelyn)

Q: Which mission did you serve?

A: SH: We served in Fort Yates, which is part of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The reservation is made up of eight districts, both in North and South Dakota. It is home to the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people.

Q: What was your role during your mission experience?

A: SM: We were blessed to be the guests of Sister Ann Schoch, SSND, who lives and serves on the reservation. We accompanied her in her ministry of visiting the sick and the elders. She coordinated a variety of cultural experiences and tours for us. We went on home visits, did some home repair, potted plants for the upcoming fall festival, baked, worked in the food party with Father Basil Atwell, OSB. We toured Sitting Bull College, and went to McLaughlin, Selfridge and a powwow in Cannonball.

Q: As you accompanied Sister Ann on her visits, what did you learn?

A: SH: We learned it is a customary to offer gifts to the people on our visits. We brought baked goods, jelly, clothing, tobacco. We were always impressed by the hospitality, respect for elders and the tight families. It was interesting to hear how the elders of the tribes are trying to pass on their rich culture, language and rituals so it can be carried on.



SM: We were deeply touched and honored to be invited to a sun dance, which is a very sacred prayer dance. You cannot just attend, you must be invited and it is held in a secret location. It was fascinating and beautiful.

SH: The women wear long dresses and no jewelry. We were told participants spend a year preparing for this.

SM: The dancers don't eat or drink during the four-day sun dance. It is a time of fasting. However, if it rains, it's considered a gift and the dancers can drink the rainwater.

Q: What are some of the challenges facing the people who live on the reservation?

A: SM: The challenges on the reservation include poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, physical abuse, suicide, diabetes and teen pregnancy. The prevalence of abuse concerned and surprised me. It's apparent that a lot of effort is being put into measures to deal with these problems. We attended a "Day of Healing" event that featured the kids acting out real-life situations in skits and contemporary songs.

At Sitting Bull College, we were impressed by how students are encouraged to be entrepreneurs in business. They start businesses at the college and are then encouraged to take them out into the community.

Q: What stood out the most about the culture you experienced on the reservation?

A: SM: Of course the concept of time is one that is completely different. In our culture, we tend to be more concerned with "doing." In the Native American culture, it seems to be more about "being," which may be a more balanced approach to living. Everyday life is more important than keeping to a tight schedule. Sister Hannah and I experienced kindness, respect and hospitality wherever we went.



Both sisters felt a connection between the Benedictine values and the value of respect for the tribal elders. "The elders are really looked upon as the ones who possess the most wisdom and they are the ones who teach the customs and traditions to the youth so their rich heritage is never forgotten," explains Sister Hannah. "In our monastic community, our elders also share our Benedictine heritage with us. It is our responsibility to make sure it continues."

Colorful dancers at the powwow

Sister Denise Receives Leadership Award



Sister Denise Ressler was honored with The University of Mary *Presidential Leadership Award* at the University's alumni recognition banquet. This award is conferred on individual alumni for distinguished achievements as servant leaders regionally, nationally or internationally.

Sister Denise retired in June from her ministry as University of Mary director of alumni, a position she held for 21 years. She now serves in the monastic archives where she continues to inspire with her leadership example.

Congratulations, Sister Denise!

Sisters Receive Service Awards

Sister Renee Zastoupil serves as director of Pastoral Care at St. Alexius Medical Center. She was honored with a 45-year service award for her ministry of providing prayerful support to patients and staff, visiting patients and distributing communion.

Sister Susan Lardy serves as vice president of Mission Effectiveness at St. Alexius Medical Center. She received a 10-year service award for her ministry of sharing the mission of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and furthering the Benedictine values.



God bless you and congratulations for your devoted service at St. Alexius Medical Center.

Sister Helen Kilzer Receives Award from FLAND



(l. to r.) Jeannine Saabye, Valerie Kling, Sister Helen Kilzer, Tom Porter, John Kapsner. The people on each side of Sister Helen are all former foreign language students of hers. They spoke about the influence she had on their lives.

Members of the Foreign Language Association of North Dakota (FLAND) gathered on Oct. 22 to honor Sister Helen Kilzer for her many years of teaching foreign languages and providing cultural experiences to countless students. The "Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award" was established in her name and will be awarded to others who share her passion and dedication to the advancement of foreign languages.

Sister Helen is fluent in German, French and Spanish and is currently teaching herself Italian.

Congratulations, Sister Helen!

A Visit from the Handmaids of Charity, Rome

What a privilege it was for us to welcome the Handmaids of Charity, from Rome, who will host the students at the University of Mary Rome Campus. We feel blessed to have had this opportunity to meet the sisters and their interpreters when they recently stayed at our home. The sisters toured the University of Mary campus and the city of Bismarck and joined us for meals and prayer. Prioress Sister Nancy Miller held a welcome reception so together we could talk about religious life and share hopes for the future. It was a joyful evening of heartfelt sharing and laughter.

Mother Margherita Pierani, superior of the Handmaids of Charity, remarked (translated): “We are warmed by your hospitality. We feel united with you. We serve the same God and belong to the same Christ. We pray that you always have the courage to proclaim the kingdom of God and we will pray for you!”



Sisters offer a blessing upon the sisters from Rome and their interpreters.



Sister Gilda Aparecida DeOliveira (Rome), Sister Nancy Miller and Mother Margherita Pierani (Rome) exchange gifts reflective of their religious communities and heritage.



Let Go and

by Sister Kathleen Atkinson

I delight in discovering new words; often I stumble upon a concept in a foreign language that sheds insight into everyday experiences. Right now that word is *wabi-sabi*. This little lyrical phrase comes from the Japanese culture and describes 'the beauty of the withered, weathered, tarnished, scarred.' Wabi-sabi is simple, slow and uncluttered. It's finding beauty in imperfection; it's accepting the natural cycle of growth, decay, death and new growth. Wabi-sabi celebrates the cracks and crevices and all the other markings that time, weather, life and loving leave behind. Wabi-sabi is the season of autumn.

It is a season of surrender.

As autumn leaves release their tight grip on the tree branch, we too are invited to let go of all to which we cling. To let go of our too small images of God and of our too inflated images of self.

When we take offense at someone's sharp remark, become critical of another's lack of assistance, distraught about an upcoming deadline. Let go and remember, "It *really* doesn't matter."

When we become overly excited about a sporting event, a new purchase, or some current trivial fixation. Let go and remember, "It *really* doesn't matter."

Autumn's stripping experience reminds us that one day we all will die, too. Therefore, live a life that does matter. Day by day. In the big things and the small. Live a life that does matter and let the rest go. That is wabi-sabi.

It is a season of unpredictability.

A single autumn day can hold within it morning frost and afternoon burn. The first snowfall can be followed by a week of summer. Biting winds and gentle breeze; glistening golden leaves and barren grey trees. We too are invited to be flexible; to adapt and to learn from our own shifting moods and situations.



and Remember

When we become impatient and want to force change before it's time. Let go and remember, "God is in control."

When we demand that life unfold according to our own designs rather than that of our higher power. Let go and remember, "God is in control."

When everything within us wants to take the safe, easy route rather than the route of truth and growth. Let go and remember, "God is in control."

Autumn's unpredictability reminds us to simply be faithful to the process, living intimately with a God who cares about us and about the entire universe. That is wabi-sabi.

It is a season of bounty.

Autumn is the season of harvest. Squash and pumpkins, wheat fields and sunflowers, fresh new potatoes, even *zucchini* delight our eyes and palates.

Trick-or-treaters roam the streets. Tiny snowmen bravely stand, scraped together from the first snowfall. Fallen leaves are collected, displaced, collected again. New flannel shirts and old favorite sweaters are brought out from the closet. Pictures are drawn in the frost of car windows and breath hangs in the chilled air.

Autumn's bounty reminds us that the greatest gifts of all are not costly or luxurious. The greatest gifts come from our generous God who invites us to likewise give freely from the goodness of our own lives. The *withered, weathered, tarnished, scarred* goodness of our lives transformed in His. That is wabi-sabi.

Vermont Guests Make Annual Retreat

Four years ago, Eileen and Bruce Burk left their cozy cabin in the woods of Barnet, Vt., to set out on a pilgrimage. As long-time Benedictine oblates, their interest in monastic life sparked the idea to travel the countryside and visit many different monasteries along the way so they could experience the distinct charism of each one. It brings great joy to our sisters that Annunciation Monastery was one of their stops. Since that first blessed visit, the couple has become like family and they make a retreat here each year.



Eileen and Deacon Bruce Burk

"We can do that here." Bruce recalls the time they attended prayer at one particular monastery, "We noticed a sign that said, 'Do not chant with the monks.' We didn't like that. It was a stark contrast to here where we can sing, pray and eat with the sisters!"

"Every time we visit, we feel like we are a part of the family, not just spectators," says Eileen. "We wanted to experience Benedictine life, see it in action, and participate in it. We can do that here."

The reason they keep returning to Annunciation Monastery can be summed up in a single word -- hospitality. "Every time we visit, we feel like we are a part of the family, not just spectators," says Eileen. "We wanted to experience Benedictine life, see it in action, and participate in it."

In Loving Memory

Born: September 10, 1914

Died: October 20, 2010

Sister Moireen Kelly's 75 years as a Benedictine Sister were dedicated to her love for God and teaching music. She taught music in schools, directed choirs in parishes and gave private piano lessons. She served at St. Mary's Parish in Bismarck, St. Joseph's Convent, Mandan, and at St. Patrick's Convent in Dickinson. She was a founding member of Annunciation Monastery and was procurator for Annunciation Monastery for 10 years. For many years she was music instructor and piano instructor at Annunciation Monastery and the University of Mary.

She will be fondly remembered for her ability to tell a good story, her faithfulness to the Benedictine life and her love of family, friends and community.



YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR MINISTRIES COUNT!

We are deeply grateful for your support of our continuing ministries! Because of your belief in us, we are able to carry on Jesus' mission of peace and love in a troubled world.

We offer our convenient electronic giving program so you can continue to partner with us without having to lift a pen to write a check. Our web site (www.annunciationmonastery.org) is secure and allows you to transfer funds directly from your checking or savings account to an account for the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. In addition, one-time or recurring donations can be made online and designated to a ministry you would like to support.

We are always humbled when we hear about a friend who has left a legacy gift to the sisters in a will or planned gift. If this is something you have done, or plan to do, please let us know so we can express our gratitude. Our legal name is: Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, BMV.

If you would like to visit about giving options, please contact Jill Ackerman, director of development, at 701-355-8907. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!



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For more information, contact Jill Ackerman, director of communications and development, (701)355-8907 or: jill@annunciationmonastery.org



IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BECOME A SISTER OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY?

Learn more at one of our "Come & See" Vocation Live-In Experiences

January 22-23, 2011

"Come & See" Live-In for Women (Ages 17-30)

February 12-13, 2011

"Come & See" Live-In for Women (Age 30+)

This 24-hour glimpse into our rich prayer and community life is a unique opportunity to examine where God is calling you. Get to know our sisters in a comfortable and non-threatening atmosphere where you can pray, reflect, journal or just listen to God in the peace and quiet of our home. We welcome you with listening hearts and hospitality!

There is no charge. Preregistration is required. For more information, please contact Sister Gerard, vocations director, at 701-355-8909 or 701-255-1520, or e-mail: vocations@annunciationmonastery.org