



# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2024

*this is us*

our life. our story. our home.



## The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery

Seated lt. to rt.: Sisters Gemma Peters, Joseph Dukart, Susan Lardy, Lawrence Fischer (deceased), Denise Ressler, Grace Dahmus, Patricia Schap, Margaret Nelson, Ruth Margaret Karabensh, Stephanie Dolyniuk (deceased)

Standing lt. to rt.: Sisters Janet Zander, Mariah Dietz, Nancy Miller, Rosanne Zastoupil, Rosemary DeGracia, Marena Hoogland, Eleanor Stockert, JoAnn Krebsbach, Kathleen Atkinson, Barbara Weber, Gerard Wald, Nicole Kunze, Agatha Muggli, Renee Zastoupil, Agnes Reinert, Idelle Badt, Hildegard Urlacher, Melissa Cote, Madelyn Louttit, Nancy Gunderson



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

*Getting to know you, getting to know all about you.*

*Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me.*

From the musical “The King and I” by Rodgers and Hammerstein

I don't watch many musicals, but when I was pondering the main topic in this issue of *Tidings*, the opening line of this popular song from *The King and I* came to mind. As humans, we are designed to be in relationship with others. Knowing facts, favorites and stories about another person helps us understand who they are, what we hold in common, and what is different between us.

Members of a religious community are not a homogeneous group. Annunciation Monastery is comprised of 29 women with 29 unique interests, likes and backgrounds. At the monastery, each sister is assigned to a small group. Sister Kathryn Zimmer initiated small groups during her time as prioress in the 1960s. It was, and continues to be, a way for us to relate with each other in a deeper way. In this group of six to ten sisters, we gather every Wednesday evening to visit about our day, discuss ongoing formation topics, and share about ourselves with each other. These groups also assist us in accomplishing some practical tasks around the monastery, such as liturgy assignments and decorating for feast days. One group celebrates a sister's birthday with her favorite dessert and asks the “birthday sister” to share about her family. Photo albums, family history books, and treasured mementos have appeared on those evenings.

You may think we must know everything about everybody after living together for years, but we are still learning new facts about each other regularly.

In this issue, we are giving you an opportunity to learn more about some of our sisters. The monastic way of life has room for all kinds of folks with all kinds of interests. We hope it helps you know our sisters in a deeper way and realize we are not so different from you.

To close, I will answer one of the questions posed to the sisters here in this column.

***What do I appreciate most about living in community?*** My appreciation of community grew immensely when I lived on my own in Colorado while attending graduate school. Living in an apartment is so different from the monastery. It was hard to come home to an empty house with no one to greet me or ask me how my day was. I missed praying with the sisters in the chapel, sharing a meal in the dining room and spending recreational time with them. It doesn't mean community life is easy or automatic when I'm at the monastery. Building community amongst ourselves is a continuous effort.

*Sister Nicole Kunze*

# this is us



## Sister Idelle Badt

Meet Sister Idelle Badt from Sidney, Montana

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** It just felt like home to me the first time I visited. I appreciated their prayer life, and call to meet the needs of the time and place of the area.

**Current ministry:** I am currently the vocation director for Annunciation Monastery and the CEO of Stepping Stone Ministries Medical Respite Center.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** I love the rhythm of our prayer life. Our life has a definite routine and I appreciate the schedule. I also enjoy that we do a lot of singing during prayers. I appreciate living with sisters of different ages. I love gleaning wisdom from my elders who have lived this life for so many years.

**Leisure interests:** I like to garden in my leisure time.

**How do you deal with stress?** I deal with stress or worry by praying and talking to my sisters. In community, there is always someone you can talk to when you need to.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you:** Matthew 25:40-45. It sums up my work with Stepping Stone Ministries.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Just try it. Don't be embarrassed or worried about what other people might think. Every person in the church has a vocation, whether it's a call to the married life, priesthood, diaconate, religious life, or the single life. If God blesses you with the vocation of religious life, it would be sad to waste it. It's a beautiful life!







## *Sister Agnes Reinert*

**Meet Sister Agnes (birth name: Rita) Reinert from rural Mott, North Dakota**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** One of my nursing instructors at St. Alexius Hospital, Sister Leola, asked me about answering the Lord's call to become a sister. I needed her nudge which resulted in greater awareness of my desire.

**A sister who inspired you:** Sister Leola. She was kind, a good instructor, and she believed in me.

**Ministry:** I served in hospitals: St. Alexius, Garrison, Carrington, followed by teaching students in pastoral care in San Antonio, TX, Rochester, Minn., and La Crosse, Wisc. Currently, I am semi-retired. I volunteer at CHI St. Alexius Health, distributing communion to patients. I also babysit one day a week for a student at the University of Mary.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** I love praying and singing together and reflecting on daily scripture readings and reflections. I appreciate the camaraderie of community—visiting with others at table and recreation, celebrating special occasions.

**Leisure interests:** I walk outdoors and call family and friends.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you:** Psalm 27.  
“The Lord is my light and my salvation.”

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Pray to know God's will. Come for a visit, tour, or spend a weekend here. Experience prayer, Mass, and meals with the sisters.





## Sister Marena Hoogland

Meet Sister Marena Hoogland from Catawba, Wisconsin

**When did you feel called to religious life?** After my sophomore year of college, I took a gap year and served as a live-in volunteer at Annunciation Monastery. I planned to stay for six months, but as my time in the program was nearing an end, God was calling me to explore the possibility of being a religious sister. Committing myself to each step of the discernment process, the Lord slowly revealed to me that He was inviting me to life as a consecrated religious.

**Biggest influence in terms of a religious vocation:** My third-grade religious education teacher would bring us to visit the Servants of Mary to celebrate Mass and eat dinner with the sisters. Although I didn't realize it at the time, I believe this exposure to religious women was instrumental in the discernment of my vocation.

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** The way all the sisters are willing to help in whatever ways they need and genuinely enjoy one another's company.

**A sister who inspired you:** Sister Agatha Muggli. She serves the community in a variety of ways as liturgist, organist, and formation director. She has a deep love for and understanding of Saint Benedict and his Rule and anticipates the needs of others.

**Career/ministry:** Since professing temporary vows with the community, I completed my education degree at the University of Mary and have served as seventh grade math teacher at St. Mary's Academy, Bismarck.

**Leisure interests:** Board games, playing piano, painting, spending time outdoors



**How do you deal with stress:** I usually call my mom. I journal to get the thoughts out of my head and try to organize them in some way. I've found that cleaning my room helps clear my mind too.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Just take one step at a time: the Lord will use whatever choices you make for His good. You can't make a mistake when discerning. Your vocation isn't a puzzle, and God isn't going to make you guess the "right" answer. If He seems to be leading in one direction, follow that path, and if the path doesn't end where you were expecting, it doesn't mean you've taken a wrong step. God's ways are not our ways. Just because we can't see the road ahead, does not mean He isn't already there waiting. It takes trust and patience, but it is so worth it.



## *Sister Agatha Muggli*

**Meet Sister Agatha Muggli (birth name: Catherine Ann) from Miles City, Montana**

**Biggest influence in your life in terms of a religious vocation:** I was influenced by the faith practices of our family—going to church, praying, observing Sundays, Holy days.

**Ministry:** Most of my life has been in formation. I've played organ for most of my life in community. My current ministries are in formation, liturgy/music, and caring for the plants in the monastery.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** The regularity. The chance to be exposed to more and more Scripture. I appreciate the support of sisters, the challenge to expand my horizons—of thought, of living with others.



**Leisure interests:** I like to walk outdoors and explore the countryside.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you:** O God, come to my assistance; O Lord make haste to help me. Psalm 70:1

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Religious life can challenge you to grow and gives you the chance to give yourself to something bigger than yourself. Spend some time with sisters!





## *Sister Denise Ressler*

**Meet Sister Denise Ressler (birth name: Viola) from Mandan, North Dakota**

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** As I got to know the sisters while living with them as an aspirant and having them as teachers, I felt a call to this community. It was close to where I lived and was named for the Blessed Virgin. After my mother died when I was 11 years old, I asked the Blessed Virgin to be my mother and keep me on the right path in my life.

**Ministry:** I was a teacher (17 years), an administrative assistant (14 years), and director of Alumni at the University of Mary (21 years). Currently, I serve as monastery archivist (13 years) and as coordinator of our telephone system/switchboard (12 years). I'm a people person and have always worked with people. I love what I'm doing!

**What do you appreciate most about living in community?** My community has given me many opportunities to use my gifts and talents. My energy comes from my prayer and community life.

I realize that living this lifestyle has played a vital part in my becoming who I am today. I am grateful for having been called.

**Leisure interests:** I enjoy reading, working on jigsaw puzzles, doing word seek puzzles, playing cards, and genealogy.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I take a deep breath and put my concerns in the hands of God through prayer. Miracles can happen!

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** The calling has to be a deep desire to seek God through the monastic life. Spend time in prayer and do God's will and serve the people of God. Know and believe it is a lifelong commitment.



*Sister Denise Ressler and monastery volunteer, Jennifer Arman, work together in the monastic archives.*



## *Sister Nancy Gunderson*

Meet Sister Nancy Gunderson from Brainerd, Minnesota

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** I had Benedictine sisters as teachers in grade school and I wanted to be like them and to live their prayer life.

**A sister who influenced you:** I feel formed by the whole community—by their faithfulness to prayer and living their Benedictine life.

**Ministry:** I have varied ministries as: sacristan, spiritual director, artist, prayer leader, breakfast cook, guest speaker in classes and organizations, and am on the board of Ministry on the Margins.



**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** The faithfulness to prayer. Everyone is there for morning and evening prayer. I appreciate the goodness of the sisters. We are guided by the Rule of St. Benedict. We go to God together.

**Leisure interests:** I like to work with fabric and design. I enjoy dyeing fabric to use in my creations.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** When God gives a call, God gives an address. Finding where you fit may be the hardest piece. Discernment is hard work.



## *Sister Susan Lardy*

Meet Sister Susan Lardy (Birthname: Suzanna) from Sentinel Butte, North Dakota

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** Benedictine Sisters taught summer vacation school (catechism) in Sentinel Butte. As a third grader, I told my teacher, “I want to be a sister!”



**Biggest influence in your life in terms of a religious vocation?** My parents, their faith and example.

**Ministry:** I taught elementary school at Cathedral and at St. Joseph's and Christ the King in Mandan (14 years), University of Mary (Elementary Methods for 8 years); and served as prioress of Annunciation Monastery (12 years). Currently, I am retired. I assist in archives and read for Sister Grace who is vision impaired.



**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** Our community/prayer is central to our life together. It is essential. I love chant and singing. I love how we share in all of our life together, from cleaning bathrooms, washing dishes, praying.

**Leisure interests:** I like to read and go for walks outdoors.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Try it! Pray about it! Live a good life of service to others—give of yourself.



*Sister Renee Zastoupil*

**Meet Sister Renee Zastoupil (birth name: Rose) from Dickinson, North Dakota**

**Ministry:** In the healthcare field, I worked in radiology, EEG, and pastoral care. I served as director of the School of Radiology at St. Alexius. In pastoral care, I offered communion to patients and was present to patients who were dying, and their families. Currently, I am retired from active responsibilities. I am now assistant Sacristan (preparing items for daily Eucharist) and I help with whatever needs to be done at the monastery. I also volunteer at CHI St. Alexius Health.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** Liturgy of the Hours and the opportunity for spiritual reading and prayer. Community life offers conversation, structure, and many resources for reading and spiritual growth.

**Leisure interests:** I like to walk, read, and play cards.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I have a gift to let it go; I lay it down at the foot of the cross.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you?** From the Prophet Isaiah: “Fear not.”



## *Sister Janet Zander*

**Meet Sister Janet Zander (birth name: Iris) from Mandan, North Dakota**

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** The warm welcome I received and the “newness” of the endeavor of this lone building on the hill south of Bismarck in 1960.

**Did you have a sister in community that you considered a mentor? If so, who, and how did they influence you?** Sister Marilyn Sieloff. She was my postulant and junior sister director.

**Career/ministry:** Office assistant at the University of Mary for almost 30 years; community secretary from 1970s to 1982, and am currently doing this since 2020, parish minister for seven years, and teacher for four years. I serve as community secretary, am the Worship Committee chair where I oversee the chapel environment, and I coordinate Triduum ministers.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?**

Its regular call to come and the “gifts” of awareness and presence, as well as rhythms of inspiration and everydayness. Being with other women in the common goal of seeking God.

**Leisure interests:** I like to walk outdoors, read, and play cards.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I am learning to hand it over to God. Also, physical activity.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Have an openness to the possibility and test it out in engaged presence.





## *Sister Ruth Margaret Karabensh*

**Meet Sister Ruth Margaret Karabensh from Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** The sisters taught at church before Mass and at summer school. I got to know them. At age 17, I attended daily Mass where I talked to sisters. They talked to me about religious life. I entered community at the age of 19.

**Who was the biggest influence in your life in terms of a religious vocation?** Sr. Moira had a positive impact on me when I worked in the lab at Garrison Hospital.

**Did you have a favorite teacher and/or subject in school?** I didn't like school very much, but I did enjoy visiting with the sisters in the country school I attended.

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** I enjoy the prayer and quiet time in community.

**Career/ministry:** I served in Garrison for seven years and Tucson, Ariz., for four years. I am retired now, so my ministry is in prayer for others.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** I love the quiet and focus we have on prayer on our days of contemplation and silence.

**Leisure interests:** I like to listen to soft music, rest, and play Yahtzee.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** I recommend praying about it. Learn to pray in the quiet, and meditate on where God is calling you.







## *Sister JoAnn Krebsbach*

**Meet Sister JoAnn Krebsbach from Washburn, North Dakota**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** In grade school when the Benedictine Sisters came to Washburn to teach catechism in the summer.

**Favorite teacher and/or subject in school:** I liked everything about school—the teachers and the subjects!

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** Community life. It was like our big family.

**Ministry:** I began my almost 50 years as a teacher in the middle school grades at St. Mary's, Bismarck, St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's, Dickinson. I then taught at the University of Mary (32 years) and served as chair of the Philosophy/Theology department (24 years). I was in pastoral ministry at Corpus Christi Parish, and served as subprioress of Annunciation Monastery. At the monastery, I help with liturgy and daily life. As assistant to our vocation director, I enjoy being with students and guests. I serve on various committees at the monastery and at the University of Mary. I assist with Ministry on the Margins and Stepping Stone Ministries.



**What do you appreciate most about living in community?** I love that we truly live community, being faithful to our guiding principle to pray, eat, and spend time together.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I'm not good at it. I try to give it to God in prayer, but I can't always let go.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you:** I love Psalm 103. "Bless the Lord, my soul; and all my being bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits." It teaches me to be grateful and trust in God's goodness.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Listen to God speaking to your heart and then come and see!



## *Sister Melissa Cote*

**Meet Sister Melissa Cote from Rolla, North Dakota**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** I felt a call to religious life as a student at the University of Mary. I'd see the sisters at mealtime in the cafeteria; they had a sense of joy that drew me in.

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** I just felt like I was at home when at the monastery.

**A sister who influenced you:** I consider Sister Mariah as my mentor. She is an example of living community and is open with me when she thinks there is something I need to work on (in a loving way). She also affirms me when I'm doing well.

**Ministry:** I am a pharmacist at CHI St. Alexius Health, a sponsored ministry of the sisters.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** I find the rhythm of the prayer within the day to be beneficial since it is a constant by calling me back to be re-centered in God. I appreciate the examples of all of these women living a life of faith. I also appreciate being able to be a part of something bigger than myself. And, of course, my sisters in community.

**Leisure interests:** I like to exercise (especially running), play cards, and do puzzles.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I go for a run or journal.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation?** Visit monasteries. It is really the best way of getting a feel for religious life.





## *Sister Rosanne Zastoupil*

**Meet Sister Rosanne Zastoupil (birth name: Angie) from Dickinson, North Dakota**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** I started thinking about religious life when I was in sixth grade. My sister was entering religious life and she was happy, so I thought I would follow her.

**A sister who influenced you:** I admired Sister Thomas Welder. I reflected on her philosophy of life and acceptance of her health challenges.

**Ministry:** I spent 42 years ministering at the University of Mary as director of Financial Aid. Currently, I am subprioress and treasurer of the monastery. I also provide help, for our sisters.

**What do you love most about the prayer life of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** The rhythm of our prayer life calling us to slow down and reflect on the presence of God.

**Leisure interests:** I like to garden, read, and walk.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** I make a trip to the Blessed Sacrament and pray. I place my stress and worry in the Lord's control.

**Scripture that is particularly helpful to you:**

Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This scripture got me through my first round of chemo.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation?** Come and see! Come for a weekend and live with us to experience our life.







## *Sister Margaret Nelson*

**Meet Sister Margaret Nelson from Fargo, North Dakota**

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** I felt God's call in grade school and it got stronger in high school. After one year of college, I said yes to God and entered the monastery at age 19.

**Biggest influence in terms of a religious vocation:** The call from God and going to Priory High School, the Catholic boarding school where I got to know the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.

**Favorite teacher and/or subject in school?** Sister Paschal Hanson, my English teacher, who taught me how to write.

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** It felt like coming home after one year of being a student at Minot State University.

**A sister who inspired you:** Sister Gemma Peters and Sister Thomas Welder, by example they showed me how to love God and people.

**Career/ministry:** I was a writer/editor at the University of Mary for 21 years, followed by serving as secretary of Annunciation Monastery for about 20 years. I also did creative writing in that role. Since retiring, my ministry is prayer.

**What do you love most about the prayer life of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?**  
I love the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Leisure interests:** I like to watch and listen to sports. I listen to audio books and read the Bible and spiritual books.

**How do you deal with stress or worry?** Talk to God about it.





## *Sister Rosemary DeGracia*

### Meet Sister Rosemary DeGracia from Elmhurst, Illinois

**When did you feel the call to religious life?** As a Benedictine oblate, others saw something in me that pointed to this vocational direction, and through discernment, I felt called to vowed life.

**What was it about Annunciation Monastery that felt like the right fit for you?** The prayer life—when I first visited and sat in prayer with the sisters, I felt that I had come home.

**A sister who influenced you:** Sister Rosanne Zastoupil. I worked as a human resources and budget analyst in California before entering the monastery. She made my transition to working at the University easy and enjoyable. She has practical wisdom.

**Ministry:** I serve as director of Oblates and in ongoing formation, vocations/social justice, and in hospitality.

**What do you love most about the prayer and community life of the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery?** We are faithful. The older sisters in their 90s rarely miss prayer. We do have opportunities to experience other prayer forms. We respect silence. The many opportunities to be of service to each other.

**Leisure interests:** I like to quilt, knit, garden, and bake.

**Advice for women exploring a religious vocation:** Be open to God's call and give it a chance. Vocations grow and deepen over time. Find a charism that seems to speak to you and pray about it.



# In Loving Memory



## Sister Stephanie Dolyniuk, OSB

**Born:** January 9, 1931

**Professed:** July 11, 1955

**Died:** December 27, 2023

**Mass of Christian Burial:**  
January 5, 2024

## Sister Stephanie Dolyniuk, OSB

Sister Stephanie, a Benedictine Sister for 68 years, had a keen interest in social justice and the welfare of others.

Sister Stephanie was seven when her mother died. She fondly testified to how her mother taught her to pray. Her siblings, nieces and nephews were treasured connections.

Degrees in social work and pastoral ministry complemented her service in hospital and college settings, at Bismarck's Corpus Christi Parish, in the Diocese of Reno-Las Vegas, parishes in Dickinson, and at Catholic Family Services.

In her last days, Sister Stephanie articulated the call of Jesus to be a blessing to those in need. She cherished the beatitudes and had a gift for planning special prayer services.

A natural storyteller, she shared her experiences and was proud of her Ukrainian heritage. She was a talented singer, guitar player, and cook.



## Sister Lawrence Fischer, OSB

**Born:** December 9, 1937

**Professed:** July 11, 1960

**Died:** May 21, 2024

**Mass of Christian Burial:**  
May 29, 2024

## Sister Lawrence Fischer, OSB

Sister Lawrence Fischer was the oldest daughter of a family of 14 children. The responsibilities this required carried over into her sense of accountability as a monastic in prayer and service on behalf of her community. Her faithful care and loving devotion to her family were extended to successive generations!

Gifted with business acumen, Sister Lawrence wisely stewarded fiscal resources as the monastery treasurer from 1978 to 2013. She was dedicated to her service on the St. Alexius Medical Center board of directors for 27 years. She continued to share her business experience and expertise as monastery investment officer until 2021.

Sister Lawrence had an exceptional memory and was a wealth of information. She patiently and skillfully made and repaired rosaries. Her careful listening extended to family members and others as she prayed faithfully for them. She enjoyed receiving and sharing photos of her family.



# God Bless Our Jubilarians!

## Celebrating 60 years of monastic profession!

The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery joyfully celebrated Sisters Mariah Dietz, Patricia Schap, and Gerard Wald, on their 60th anniversary of monastic profession on July 11, 2024.

*\*To read more about our 60-year jubilarians, refer to: [annunciationmonastery.org](http://annunciationmonastery.org) (Happenings)*



### **Sister Mariah Dietz, OSB**

Sister Mariah says her greatest gifts of the past 60 years have been her sisters in monastic community. “I have been mentored by the best women ever. They taught me to pray. I love the Divine Office and lectio divina (private reflection on the Scriptures). It brings you back to God, hour after hour. I’ve been so blessed. I’ve done everything I’ve wanted to do in my 60 years of being a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery. As a sister, teacher, and nurse, I am grateful for the opportunities to care for others,” says Sister Mariah Dietz.

Most of her professional life has been teaching nursing courses at the University of Mary. She loved this ministry and her students. She was spiritual director at St. Gabriel’s for three years. She served on the St. Alexius Board of Directors, the Sponsorship Council for Annunciation Monastery and was a director of women in initial formation. In addition, she was vice president of Mission Effectiveness at CHI St. Alexius Health. Sister Mariah continues to offer her companionship and health care assistance to sisters in community.

She feels being a sister is a great option for women who are called by God. She says, “This life hits at the very essence of who we are. We are created to know, love, and serve God. You get so much support and encouragement in our community. I am grateful I was chosen for this life.”



### **Sister Patricia Schap, OSB**

Sister Patricia feels fulfilled daily by the richness of communal and personal prayer. As she reflects on the past 60 years, she explains what she loves about monastic life: “To live with others who seek God together and support one another on the journey to God, is a blessing. We love one another, we have fun, and we live the Gospel values. Each day is a new beginning to grow in God’s love.”

God and teaching are the great loves of Sister Patricia’s life. She began teaching right out of the novitiate at St. Mary’s grade school in Bismarck. She taught at Christ the King school, Mandan, for 12 years and again at St. Mary’s as director of religious education for 23 years.



When the sisters moved to their new home just south of the University of Mary in 2000, Sister Patricia accepted Prioress Sister Susan Berger’s invitation to serve as subprioress, a role she fulfilled for eight years. She also served as director of the Oblates of Annunciation Monastery, a group of people of varied faiths who desire to associate with a monastery and live according to the Rule of St. Benedict. She volunteered faithfully at St. Mary’s Grade School where she helped children with reading.

Sister Patricia served on the St. Alexis Board of Directors, on the University of Mary Board of Trustees, Annunciation Monastery’s monastic council, and is a certified spiritual director and retreat director.



### **Sister Gerard Wald, OSB**

As a 60-year jubilarian, Sister Gerard says the most rewarding aspects of being a Benedictine and living in community are liturgical and personal prayer, sharing in the joys and struggles of other community members, and being a part of a group of women who sponsor the works of the church through healthcare at CHI St. Alexis Health, the University of Mary, and Ministry on the Margins. Her joyful spirit shines through as she says, “I look on my life as a gift from God for which I am deeply grateful!”

Her varied ministries include starting the printing department at St. Alexis. She loved that line of work but felt God was also calling her to become a nurse. Sister Gerard began the nursing program and was residence director at the University of Mary, and worked as a nurse at St. Alexis. After graduating from St. Louis University, she directed and coordinated staff and patient education at St. Alexis for two years and was coordinator of adult education services at the University of Mary for 15 years. She loved her ministries as director of student volunteers at the university and as vocation director at Annunciation Monastery. Sister Gerard served on the monastery sponsorship team, the St. Alexis Board of Directors, and many committees at the University of Mary.

She adds, “Our prayer life is structured into every part of our day. I love how strong and active our community life is. I’ve always been in love with education and health care so our commitment to our sponsored ministries is very life-giving. We demonstrate daily our commitment to Benedictine hospitality in our service to others.”



**Annunciation Monastery**  
7520 University Drive  
Bismarck, ND 58504-9619

[www.annunciationmonastery.org](http://www.annunciationmonastery.org)

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## RB 72 Retreat: "Prefer Nothing to Christ."

Our sisters hosted an "RB 72 Retreat" for girls in June. The name "RB 72" is from the Rule of St. Benedict, which explains what it means to "Prefer Nothing to Christ." These young women had fun getting to know each other and used their creativity to paint and journal. They experienced prayer with the sisters, played games, and completed a service project at Stepping Stone Ministries.

