



FALL 2019

# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY



*Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress, and Sister Krista Ferrell (newly professed), Sister Marena Hoogland (newly professed), Sister Agatha Muggli, novice director, and Sister Mary Ruth Kayute (newly professed), and Sister Nancy Miller, director of women in first monastic profession, on profession day.*

## *Congratulations to our newly professed Sisters!*

**A**fter completing their year-long novitiate, Krista Ferrell, Marena Hoogland and Mary Ruth Kayute made their first monastic profession on October 19, 2019. Sisters and family gathered to witness and celebrate this next step in their journey.

In the stage of first monastic profession, the three sisters make initial promises to live in the monastic community, under the direction of the prioress, according to the Rule of St. Benedict.

This stage of initial formation calls each new sister to live the Benedictine life more fully and further her understanding of it. She continues her formation program of study while engaging in an assigned ministry. The stage of first monastic profession is three to six years.

*Story continues on pages 3 & 4*



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

*“The sisters should serve one another.”*

**Rule of Benedict Chapter 35.1**

Each Saturday evening at the monastery, we bless our service to one another for the week. In the Rule, Saint Benedict included several chapters describing how we should serve each other, whether that is in the kitchen, in the infirmary, or at the front door. During the blessing, we have a few moments to reflect on what ways we are called to serve one another this week. I certainly reflect upon my service to the community as prioress, but I also find myself thanking my sisters for the many ways we serve each other.

This year, our community celebrated as four women made a deeper commitment to living the Benedictine life with us. On June 22, Sister Idelle made her perpetual monastic profession and Sisters Krista, Marena, and Mary Ruth made first profession on October 19. These women have promised to seek God through the dailiness of our life with each other. That way of life certainly involves service. At the first monastic profession just a few weeks ago, the sisters chose the Gospel story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. This reading certainly highlights Jesus the servant leader. Jesus, our Lord and Teacher, comes forward and performs a service often left to the servants or slaves to do—washing the feet of others.

We are all called to be servant leaders. In following the example of Jesus as servant leader, we are called to make sure others' needs are met before our own. Each sister has learned that

living in community means letting go of your own needs and desires for the sake of the greater good. Service to each other is vital to our life in community. Without our service to one another, we are just a group of individuals who happen to live together. There are many examples of servant leadership at the monastery each day. In this issue of Tidings, you will learn about Sister Ruth Margaret who serves us through her ministry of hospitality at our reception desk and switchboard, and several of our sisters who, young and old, serve in meaningful ways.

Let me share the closing prayer from our weekly blessing of service:

Gracious God, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to be our shepherd and guide. Bless us in our monastic service of one another. Let your Spirit uphold us as we take up the responsibilities of this week. Direct our steps to you and show us how to walk in charity, peace, and joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I would like to conclude by saying thank you to all of you, who also demonstrate servant leadership through your prayerful and financial support. Your support enables us to better serve one another in our monastic community as well as in the civic community. We keep you in our prayers of gratitude. God bless you.

*Sister Nicole Kunze*





*Marena Hoogland, Krista Ferrell and Mary Ruth Kayute read their profession documents during evening prayer.*



*Krista Ferrell, Mary Ruth Kayute and Marena Hoogland on the day before their first monastic profession.*



### **Reflection from Sister Krista, 47, Kempner, Texas**

The novitiate was a very blessed year of learning. We learned about Benedictine history, took classes in chant and the Psalms, the Benedictine Rule, and how it is lived out at Annunciation Monastery.

I found my time in prayerful reflection to be very profound as it allowed me time to deepen my relationship with the Holy Trinity. The solitude of the year made that possible and helped me discern about God's will in my life. It was a gift to be at home in the monastery, where I could develop closer relationships with the sisters who showed me such affirming love and support. I think the bond that was formed confirmed God's will for me to be here.

It feels like my first profession has been a long time coming. The reality of my religious vocation feels real and it's exciting to BE a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery. I'm anxious to extend my gift of hospitality to others and learn how I can serve the community and the Church.

### **Reflection from Sister Marena, 23, Catawba, Wis.**

How does one begin to summarize a year of study on the Rule of Saint Benedict when so much time has been spent expanding on its chapters and their content? Luckily, I think Saint Benedict has one answer in response to a multitude of questions: love. Throughout the novitiate I have grown in understanding and practice of love of God, love of community, love of stranger, and love of self.

One thing about the Rule of Benedict that appeals to me is how deeply it is rooted in love. Why do the sisters take special concern for the sick? Why are all items treated as vessels of the altar? Why the attention given to kitchen service? What is the "good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life?" It is all based on the self-giving love of God. God initiates the love, and we are only able to properly respond once we accept that love. This year more than ever I have come to recognize how we are each loved intentionally, individually, and uniquely by God.



It has been a gift to experience community life more fully during the novitiate. I have seen firsthand how the sisters put the Rule of Saint Benedict into practice. “They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior...” (RB 72:4-5) The sisters are there to support each other through the good and bad times, and it is humbling and encouraging that the community is willing to offer this same support to me.

“How can I love well in this moment?” is one of the most valuable questions that has been posed this year. It has helped put things into perspective, to be mindful to the now and to whomever I am with. It can still be overwhelming to think too far into the future, but this question helps remind me to give all that I can in the place that I am at.

It still seems kind of unreal that we have made our first monastic profession. Sometimes the days in the novitiate went slow, but the months went fast. I get caught between thinking not much is changing or that suddenly everything will change. It is only by God’s grace that I have been brought to this point. As I continue to grow in relationship and faith, I hope to faithfully carry out God’s will and love those I encounter.

**Sister Mary Ruth, 64, from Oshkosh, Wis.**

I enjoyed my novitiate experience and getting to know the sisters. Studying the Rule of Benedict was especially helpful, and I was able to integrate what I learned with community life at Annunciation Monastery.

Praying with the sisters has been a great blessing which unites us as we give glory to God.

Now, having celebrated my first monastic profession and being, “Sister Mary Ruth,” it feels natural to be at this place in religious formation. I am grateful to the Lord for leading me here.



**A**s part of the celebration that accompanied the burning of the mortgage on the original monastery buildings, each sister received a stone with her name written on it. Over the years, the stones of deceased sisters were collected. Eventually, the ritual of adding a sister’s stone to the collection became a part of the vigil at the time of her death.



*Sisters Mary Ruth, Krista and Marena received their name stones on October 20.*



## Sister Grace and Sister Rita

# Celebrate 60 and 70 Years

## of Monastic Profession

**Sister Rita Miller, OSB**, was one of 13 children, born to German-Russian parents, Agatha and Bert Miller, in Hague, N.D. She entered the monastery in 1947. Her primary ministries are in healthcare at St. Alexius Medical Center (now CHI St. Alexius Health). Sister Rita started the department of physical therapy and directed the program for 25 years. She also served 12 years as a surgical nurse, and chaplain for Home Health and Hospice for seven years. She felt honored to help prepare the dying for their eternal home. Sister Rita's faithfulness to prayer and Benedictine hospitality is evident each day in the monastic community and as hospitality hostess at CHI St. Alexius Health, where she loves meeting and helping people. She lives with great gratitude to God and her monastic community, according to her belief to "Reach out and do your best and let God do the rest."



*Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress, with Sister Grace Dahmus (60-year jubilarian), Sister Rita Miller (70-year jubilarian), and Sister Rosemary DeGracia, subprioress, at the Jubilee celebration. The celebration was held July 11, the Feast of St. Benedict, with the monastic community.*

**Sister Grace Dahmus, OSB**, was born in Knobel, Arkansas, the fourth of eight children of Rudolph and Catherine Dahmus. Her parents moved to North Dakota in 1940 where they farmed near Regent, N.D. Sister Grace has served as a nurse aide at St. Alexius Medical Center (now CHI St. Alexius Health) and loved her 30-year teaching ministry in Dickinson, Mandan and Bismarck, N.D. After retiring from teaching, Sister Grace received training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and served as hospital chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital in Minot and St. Alexius Medical Center. She also worked in hospice and home health care in Minot. Sister Grace has volunteered at the University of Mary library, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), in laundry services at St. Vincent's Care Center, and as a certified nursing assistant at Annunciation Monastery. She lives by her advice to, "Live one day at a time and put your faith and trust in God's hands."



*Sister Nancy Gunderson and Sister Paula Hagen create their colorful wisdom dolls.*

## *On Sabbatical - Renewed Roots: New Wisdom*

“It is customary in Benedictine communities, for an outgoing prioress to take a sabbatical to find renewal, and rest, and explore where God might be leading her next,” explains Sister Nancy Gunderson of how Sister Paula Hagen, former prioress of St. Paul’s Monastery, connected with her.

When the sisters in her community encouraged Sister Paula to do what she always wanted to do while on sabbatical, she reached out to Sister Nancy to inquire if she could spend a month of her sabbatical with her at Annunciation Monastery, creating art and learning new techniques that would tap into and awaken her creative side. Sister Nancy agreed and the two spent the month of July creating and exploring art together.

For the sabbatical at Annunciation Monastery, Sister Nancy offered some suggestions for art projects to consider. Sister Paula chose five. Among the projects was a story quilt. Sister Nancy invited her to think of a memorable life event that Sister Paula would like to record. Having just come off a 30-day retreat, with 10 days in silence, she chose the theme “Sabbatical” and named her art quilt, “Renewed Roots: New Wisdom.” Displayed on her quilt of orange and yellow hues are symbols, names, scripture verses and quotes, that represent her story. She says, “What gives you renewed energy is the process of creating, learning to use a paint brush, or whatever medium you prefer, to express spirituality, values and ideas.”



“I had worked for 30 years in family ministry with the Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS) group that was sponsored by St. Paul’s Monastery, and that was a very creative ministry.

After being prioress for five years, I didn’t have much time for creative activities, and I missed that. Each year, St. Paul’s Monastery hosts a juried art show which visitors and sisters enjoy viewing. When people walk by and view this beautiful art, it is tremendously life-giving! I was energized by how it connected to spirituality. The art was so beautifully tied to the sacred, that I asked if the art could be professionally photographed and used for retreats and meditation. From there, a beautiful book was created in honor of the 70th anniversary of St. Paul’s Monastery, with photos of the art pieces, quotes from the artists, poetry and scripture.

This experience motivated me to contact Sister Nancy about being part of my sabbatical. It has been a very sacred and fun experience to live here with the sisters and work with Sister Nancy!”

~ Sister Paula Hagen



*Sister Paula paints her story quilt.*

Another project that delighted both Sister Nancy and Sister Paula alike, was creating wisdom dolls. Sister Paula says her wisdom doll has been with her, in a sense, for her entire life. As a young girl, her father acknowledged and affirmed her rare gift of seeing what needs to be done and doing it. “This gave me a chance to express myself into the form of my wisdom doll.”

Sister Nancy shares, “We have had so much fun creating art together. The projects we have created are not only fun, but they are a form of prayer, calling us to self-reflection and how God directs our lives. God is creative and stirs our hearts!”

Now that their month of creating and what Sister Nancy describes as “playing,” is over, Sister Paula will continue in the next stage of her sabbatical. She plans to research and reflect upon Women’s Benedictine Spirituality and learn more about the history of the Benedictine women who established Benedictine communities in the United States.



*Sister Idelle Badt with director, Sister Susan Lardy, who affirms Sister Idelle's readiness to make perpetual monastic profession. (Lt. to Rt.: Father Anthony Baker, Father Boniface Muggli, Monsignor James Shea, Father Robert Shea, Father Craig Vasek)*

# *Sister Idelle Badt* Makes Perpetual Monastic Profession

Sisters, priests, family and friends of Sister Idelle Badt gathered on June 22, 2019, to celebrate her perpetual monastic profession, the final step of becoming a Benedictine sister. It has been seven years since she first visited Annunciation Monastery, the place she says “instantly felt like home.” Sister Idelle shares thoughts from the day, “The vow of stability that I took on this day has left me with a wonderful sense of freedom. Stability and freedom might seem to contradict each other, but not in the life I have chosen. The stability of knowing that I am rooted to this monastery allows me the freedom to go out into the community and do whatever God calls me to do. I love this life!”



*Sister Idelle makes her profession promises with Sister Nicole, prioress, at her side.*



*Sister Idelle Badt with parents, Robert and Clydette*





*“Receive me, O Lord, according to your promise  
and I shall live. Do not disappoint me in my hope.”*

## SISTER RUTH KARABENSH

# *A Peaceful Presence*



**T**he Benedictine motto, “Peace to those who enter,” is special to Sister Ruth Margaret Karabensh, who embodies this as she welcomes guests to the monastery. Her peaceful presence adds to the prayerful environment of the monastic home of the sisters.

Sister Ruth Margaret Karabensh (birth name: Ruth) was born in Milwaukee, Wis., during the Great Depression. She is the fourth youngest of 10 children born to Charles and Catherine Karabensh. Charles was an out-of-work bricklayer in 1937. Perhaps, as a child, Ruth learned to live gratefully and peacefully from her mother. She recalls, “I knew we were very poor, but in those days, everyone we knew was poor. I never heard my mother complain. She would always look at the bright side and say things like, ‘At least we have a cup of milk,’ or ‘At least we have a chicken.’” With so many children, clothes were passed on from one child to the next until they were too tattered to wear. Ruth didn’t think much of it until she overheard her father admit to her mother, “Katie, I only have 35 cents left.” Her mother calmly instructed him to go downtown, use that money to get himself a cup of coffee, and go find a job.” Jobs were scarce and defeatedly, he came back home with no job prospects in sight.



*Ruth as a young girl in May of 1949, before entering the monastery.*

Sister Ruth Margaret’s next memory is of her family boarding a train to Bismarck, N.D., with a shoebox full of food to share amongst them. She assumes her grandfather paid their train fare. An immigrant from Russia, he had experienced success in the clothing industry and was quite wealthy. He owned three homes and a farm by Sweet Briar, N.D. The farm became their new home. After relocating, Charles found work as a bricklayer in different rural towns.

Ruth attended church daily and was curious about the sisters who walked single file into church every day. “I wanted to know more about them and get to know them.” One day, her sister, Elsie, asked her if she had ever thought about becoming a nun. Sister Ruth Margaret explains, “Sister Bernadette Fischer had mentioned to Elsie that she thought I might have a vocation. I couldn’t believe it because I had been thinking about becoming a sister. I took that as



a sign for me to do some discerning.” She had been working in a bank in Mandan, N.D., at the time, and was at the brink of a promotion, when she realized that was not where she wanted to stay. There was a different yearning in her heart. Sister Ruth Margaret’s own words surprised her when she told her boss she was going to become a nun.

At the age of 20, after having kept in communication with Sister Bernadette, Ruth expressed interest in joining the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. Her mother was happy for her, but warned, “Your father will not be happy about it.” And he wasn’t. “I don’t know why but it was very hard for him to accept,” recalls Sister Ruth Margaret. When she became a novice, she chose her father’s name, and went by “Sister Charles” for 20 years.

After completing the novitiate, she was sent to work in pediatrics at St. Alexius Hospital. “I was not a nurse and had no medical background, but I enjoyed tending to the children, feeding them, changing and washing diapers. Of course, that was before disposable diapers!” Her ministry was both fulfilling and heartbreaking, especially when caring for the little ones who were afflicted with polio.

One day, while at work at St. Alexius Hospital, she was told she had a visitor in the parlor. “My dad was standing there with a box of chocolates. I hadn’t seen him in five years, so I was in complete shock. It was an answer to years of prayers. It changed everything for the better. He was touched when he learned I had chosen the name Sister Charles, in his honor.”

When the sisters were given the option to return to their baptismal name, Sister “Charles” decided to go back to her given name, Ruth. There was another Sister Ruth in community, so she took the name “Ruth Margaret” to distinguish between the two sisters.

Sister Ruth Margaret’s gift of hospitality poured into her other ministries as laboratory and physical therapy aide at Garrison Memorial Hospital, Garrison, N.D., and in housekeeping and food services at San Raphael Mission in Tucson, Ariz.

To this day, at the age of 90, Sister Ruth Margaret greets guests of the monastery and answers phones. Her welcoming smile and gentle spirit exude Benedictine hospitality that brings “peace to those who enter.”



*Sister Ruth Margaret at the Karabensh farm,  
July 1954.*

# Update on Our Home!

*Thank You  
for Your Support!*

**T**hanks to the generous support from friends and family, improvements are being made in the monastery chapel. A new sound system has greatly improved the listening experience in chapel and the new baldachin will offer optimal lighting and harmony with the chapel design. Heartfelt gratitude and prayers to all who helped make the environment in the chapel more conducive to praying and praising God, for our sisters and guests.

One of the beautiful things about prayer is that it can happen in any place and at any time. While work was being done in the monastery chapel, the sisters moved to the downstairs community room for prayer and Eucharistic liturgy.

*The new baldachin adds to the prayerful environment of the chapel.*



*The blue baldachin was removed.*



*Sisters Madonna Wagendorf and Joseph Dukart supervise from the doorway.*



*The community room served as a temporary chapel during renovations.*





# Hungarian Film Crew to Produce Breuer Documentary

We were happy to host special guests from a Hungarian filmmaking company called Kinofabrik. They are producing a documentary on Hungarian-born architect, Marcel Breuer, and his stunning architecture throughout the United States, including the University of Mary.



We are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this important project. Thank you to the production team and to Sister Thomas Welder and Jeannine Saabye, who responded to their questions on Breuer's architecture. Thank you to the University of Mary for allowing the space and time to explore and discuss.

## Welcome New Oblates of Annunciation Monastery!

**W**e were so blessed to welcome five new Oblates of Annunciation Monastery on October 6!

May God bless you in every step of your faith journey as you live according to the Rule of St. Benedict as your state in life permits. Know of the prayers and support of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery!



*Sister Patricia Schap, oblate director, welcomes new oblates: Loretta Arntz, Sarah Freidt, Kristi Wanner, Hannah and Dan Cahoon, with Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress, and Sister Rosemary DeGracia, assistant oblate director.*



# SNAPSHOTS

*Sisters Madonna Wagendorf, Rosanne Zastoupil and Agnes Reinert, thank friends, Steve and Roxanne Hasenwinkel for a great day of fishing!*



*Sister Denise Ressler plays catch with a little guest.*



*Sister Hannah Vanorny displays her stilt-walking skills.*

## Oblate Picnic

Oblates and sisters gathered for a fun-filled day at the annual oblate picnic on August 4, 2019. We are grateful for our oblates!



*Oblates enjoy good conversation and good food.*



# Lots of helpers pitched in during rhubarb season!



*Sisters Krista Ferrell, Clarice Carroll and Elizabeth Novy wash and cut rhubarb.*



*Sisters Krista Ferrell, Nancy Miller, Elizabeth Novy, Eleanor Stockert (with Ellie), Sister Marena Hoogland (with Estelle) and Sister Terence Glum*



## Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club Luncheon

It was a joy having Bismarck-Mandan Serra Club members join us for lunch and a presentation by Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress, on Sept. 27. Serrans are lay Catholics – men and women of all ages, and from all walks of life, dedicated to promote and foster vocations.

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

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

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## Legacy Wall at CHI St. Alexius Health

The sisters attended a “Mission Week” celebration at CHI St. Alexius Health on July 8. A special focus of the celebration was the viewing of the legacy wall in the solarium that depicts the founding of the hospital.

Special thanks to Sister Mariah Dietz, who chaired the committee to bring this project to fruition. The text for the legacy wall was written by Sisters Mariah Dietz, Denise Ressler, JoAnn Krebsbach, Susan Lardy and Sister Thomas Welder.



*Sisters attend Mission Week celebration at CHI St. Alexius Health. (Lt. to rt.: Sisters Marena Hoogland, Mariah Dietz, Agatha Muggli, Gerard Wald, JoAnn Krebsbach, Nancy Gunderson, Krista Ferrell, Janet Zander, Nicole Kunze, Thomas Welder, Susan Lardy, Denise Ressler, Idelle Badt).*