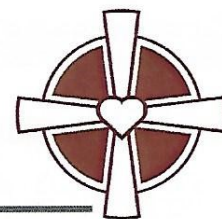


The Gleaner



An occasional newsletter of the Federation of St. Gertrude

Number 72 ♦ August, 2019

Message from the President by Sr. Jeanne Weber

In these past two years as federation president, I have become more aware of the role that our monastery and federation archives play in the preservation of our history and legacy as monastic communities of women. At the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses' meeting in 2018, Malachy McCarthy, a former Benedictine monk and now archivist for the Claretian Brothers, emphasized that our monastic archives are an expression of our mission and charism. At that same conference, Sr. Ephrem Hollerman described how crucial good archival information was to her in the research for her 1994 book--*The Shaping of a Tradition*. She stressed the tremendous value that the archives of religious houses have to researchers from a variety of disciplines.

There are a variety of resources available if you have always wanted to know more about the what, where, when, why and how of archival preservation. Videos of a July 2018 Boston College conference "Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives" situate the role of religious archives within the context of the historical cycle of emergence, stability, and decline of religious houses, and explore the challenges, as well as the importance, of archival preservation in our current situation. The information presented constitutes a valuable underpinning to the more practical questions of our religious archivists of what to preserve and the best way to do this. The videos are available at the following web address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrV9Ubl1hyg&list=PLFUPK3hS97eY6y3hv2sfl3ZxKp3lrbv->

You may or may not be aware that we also have an active inter-federation archives committee. This committee was created in November 2015 by the Benedictine Federations as the Inter-Federation Archives Digitization committee and was established to consider methods of preserving archives for future use through digitization, especially emails. A brief questionnaire to Benedictine archivists made it clear that most of the archivists weren't ready for digitization. When asked what would be most helpful to them as archivists, 83% said training and collaboration. The committee then changed its direction from digitization to education. After questionnaires, survey of Prioresses, communication with Benedictine archivists and many meetings, the committee is ready to offer a workshop to all Benedictine archivists.

The committee will host a **Benedictine Archives Workshop October 5-8, 2020** at the Sophia Center at Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas. Session topics will include digitization, ethics, confidentiality, policy and procedures, volunteers, records management, retention schedules and emails. The workshop is designed to provide training and education on multi-levels as well as opportunities for collaboration among the Benedictine archivists. An important goal will be for the archivists get to know one another and to share and compare challenges and successes.

This issue of *The Gleaner* features historical information, stories, and pictures from the archives of the federation and several of the member monasteries. Thank you to each of the monastic communities for your contributions. Your response was so generous that we will be printing your stories in several editions of *The Gleaner*.



Members of the Inter-Federation Archives Committee: Front--Sisters Rebecca Abel (Ferdinand), Chair, Mariterese Woida (St. Joseph). Back--Sisters Theresa Haydel (Cullman), Diana Seago (Atchison). Missing--Sr. Susan Doubet (Erie), and Elaine Nadeau, archivist for Atchison and the Federation of St. Scholastica.



President's Schedule

- Aug 12-17: Scottsdale, LCWR
- Aug 21-23: Rapid City, Pastoral Visit
- Sept 15/16-21/22, Nanaimo, Visitation
- Sept 30-Oct 4, Dallas, RCRI
- Oct 10-19, Martin, Visitation-Council mtg
- Oct 25-Nov 3, Cottonwood, Visitation
- Nov 18-20, Crookston, Pastoral Visit
- Nov 30-Dec 5, Winnipeg Visitation
- Dec 15-20, Mt. Angel, Pastoral Visit

To log into the Federation website

www.federationofstgertrude.org

In the middle of the home page, you'll see a box that says "Login for Federation Members." Click this button and enter this information:

User name: fedmember Password: Gertrude2013

You can now click on "Member Files" to access the directory.

55 and Under

The next *55 & Under* gathering will be held at Benedict Inn (Our Lady of Grace Monastery) in Beech Grove, Indiana, **March 26-29, 2020**. The planning committee for the event includes: Belinda Monahan (Federation of St. Scholastica), Chair, Hannah Vanorney (Federation of St. Benedict), Susan Reuber (Federation of St. Gertrude), and Maria Victoria Cutaia, (Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration). Because the length of time between this meeting and the previous meeting will be four years, anyone who was 55 on January 1, 2019 will be eligible. This means that several 57 year olds and at least one 58 year old will be eligible to attend. Mark your calendars for a fun weekend renewing your friendships with Benedictines across the country!

Ferdinand Election



On June 4, 2019, Sr. Anita Louise Lowe was elected the 14th prioress of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN. She was installed in a ceremony on July 13, 2019. Sr. Anita Louise has an MA in theology with a concentration in liturgy from Notre Dame University. Prior to her election, she served as director of liturgy at the monastery. She has also ministered as an English and French teacher, in communications and public relations for the monastery, and as vocation director. Sr. Anita Louise has appointed Sr. Rose Wildman (right) as sub-prioress and Sr. Marilyn Schroering (left) as monastery coordinator.

Fort Smith Administrator

On Saturday, June 8, 2019, Sister Kimberly Prohaska was installed as Administrator of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, AR by Sr. Jeanne Weber, Federation President. The ceremony took place at First Vespers for the Feast of Pentecost. Sr. Kimberly has been sub-prioress and vocation director for the



monastery for the past several years. She has a degree in pastoral ministry from Dominican University in Wake Forest, IL and has done post-graduate studies in the area of psychology. Sr. Kimberly has appointed Sr. Cecelia Brickell as sub-prioress and Sr. Pat Bolling as treasurer.





FEDERATION ARCHIVES

The archives of the federation are set up as a central repository for important records and documents relating to the federation and its member monasteries. Each monastery has a separate file which ordinarily contains the following: correspondence, election proceedings, visitation reports, limited financial information, alienation of property, and information on new foundations and dissolutions. In addition to the individual monastery files, there are accounts of the early history of the federation, the correspondence of the presidents, records of federation council and finance committee meetings, general chapter minutes, records of Latin American missions, and records of international meetings of the abbots and prioresses/abbesses (CIB). The archives also contain photographs of important events of the Federation and a few books of the community histories.

Short History of the Federation



This group drew up the original documents and constitution in 1934. Front row l-r: Sister Moncia Forkey (Crookston); Sister Dominca Sweeney (Cottonwood); Sister Irene Berning (Mount Angel). Back row l-r: Mother Eustasia Beyenka (Crookston); Mother Scholastica Uhlenkott (Cotton wood); Mother Edith Amort (Mount Angel); Mother Jerome Schmitt (Yankton); Mother Emilana VanDrehle (Garrison--appointed from St. Benedict's Convent, St. Joseph MN); Sister Simplicia Lichtin (Yankton).

The Benedictine Sisters of the United States began working toward forming Congregations in 1909. The Congregation of St. Scholastica was approved in 1922 and the Congregation of Perpetual Adoration in 1925. These two congregations only recognized teaching as a ministry for the sisters. So Abbot Alcuin Deutch, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, invited the convents west of Chicago to work with him in establishing congregations with more latitude. Abbot Alcuin Deutch and Father Ignatius Forster assisted five convents in the process: Crookston, Garrison (Richardton), Yankton, Cottonwood, and Mt. Angel. Mother Eustacia Beyenka (Crookston) suggested naming the federation, *St. Gertrude the Great*. Writing the constitutions, gathering community support, getting the permission of the bishops, and getting all the materials

translated into Latin was a long and tedious process. In February of 1936 the constitutions were sent to Rome with the signatures of the Crookston, Garrison, and Yankton prioresses. Mt. Angel and Cottonwood did not yet have the permission of their bishops to join.

On April 14, 1937 we received provisional approval from Rome and on April 4, 1950, final approval. The first general chapter was held in Yankton, August 18-20, 1937. The first matter of business was to elect officers. Since of the three prioresses only one was old enough according to canon law, the election was simple: Mother Monica Forkey of Crookston was elected President. Mother Jerome Schmitt of Yankton and Mother Benedict Beehler, of Garrison were elected as Visitators.

Mother Jerome shared a story about the ceremony for installation of the first President;

The First Visitator (Mother Jerome) was to give the Mother President, Mother Monica, a sisterly embrace. Father Ignatius came toward me hurriedly saying, "Now, now, that's nothing. Do it again with more intensity," and for a moment it looked as if he was going to demonstrate how it should be done, but then thought better of it and drew back, motioning for me to do it over. I did, and then he commented. "Now that's better!" We always reminded each other to make it a real hug and laughed at the memory of the first remonstrance.





SACRED HEART MONASTERY, RICHARDTON, ND

We are a daughterhouse of St. Mary's, PA. Bishop Vincent Wehrle requested sisters; former prioress, Sr. Pia Tegler and three other sisters came to Elbowoods, ND, in 1910 to begin our ministry with the Native Americans. On October 22, 1916, we became the first independent community of Benedictine women in ND, with Mother Pia as the first prioress. Our motherhouse moved four times and at this very time we are in the process of our fifth move of our motherhouse from Richardton, ND, to Dickinson, ND.

One famous story: The journey from St. Mary's, PA, to Elbowoods, ND, was long and arduous, perfect training for what the sisters found waiting for them at the Sacred Heart Indian Mission, run by the Benedictine monks of Assumption Abbey. The welcome by the Indians and the monk missionaries was warm and comforting, but the living conditions proved to be neither. The Sisters were to live in the same school building with the Indian boarding students, a building that left as much to be desired as their store of supplies. As there was no bread, butter or meat on hand, Sister Hilda set about to make biscuits for supper. Unfortunately, the can labeled "Baking Powder" actually contained plaster of paris. Those biscuits turned out just like our early years: hard. We ministered to the Native American people on the Fort Berthold Reservation well over 100 years.



Our monastic community of 17 members is moving to a right-sized monastery site in Dickinson, ND. Thus, for the past couple years we have been finding new homes for our precious artifacts and all items in the museum section of our archives. We have collaborated with the State Historical Society of ND, which has agreed to accept a number of our ND related artifacts: two coif machines and a couple coifs for display (they were fascinated with the coif story), our entire collection of host-making equipment (labor intensive and used by Sr. Philomena Tschida, our first altar host baker), and an over 100-year old Native American headdress given to Fr. Conrad Paul Lotter who was at Elbowoods when the sisters arrived in 1910. The ND archives section accepted all our Sacred Heart Academy yearbooks and countless other valuable paper items, all ND related. We have sold many artifacts at sales we have hosted. Local churches have purchased some of the religious items

and some were put on consignment at a national religious store. What was not sold will be given to foreign missions. We are taking with us the desk Mother Pia used, along with some of her personal items. The prioress and all the sisters have been kept informed as to where the items are going. Hopefully that will assure the sisters that the artifacts, which are a huge part of our story, have been treated with loving care. The ND State Historical Society will house our artifacts with professional care into longevity; that in itself is comforting for us to know.





SACRED HEART MONASTERY, YANKTON, SD

Even though Sisters from Maria Rickenbach, Switzerland arrived in Missouri as early as 1874, the establishment of Yankton, SD as the mother house for Sacred Heart Convent occurred only in 1889. Where were the sisters in the interval?

November 17, 1880 was the official birthday of the Convent of St. Gertrude in Maryville, MO, where the sisters were engaged in teaching in the parish school. Bishop Martin Marty, who persuaded the sisters to come to America, was eager to move northward to minister to the Indian people. He convinced Mother Gertrude Leupi to send three sisters to Fort Yates, ND to teach in a government farm school. After a ten day trip but the sisters found a home in a long building which they first mistook for a cow barn.

Over the forty years of service ending in 1923 the government salaries kept the community afloat many times.



These items were a gift to one of our Sisters who ministered on the Standing Rock Reservation. Our Sisters began ministry to the Lakota people in the Dakota Territories in 1881. We continued to ministry to various Native American communities in the Dakotas for the next 130 years.



Archivists: Srs. Jennifer Kehrwald and Julie Peak

A similar foundation was made in the center of South Dakota at Maria-Zell (later called Zell) in Dakota Territory. Two sisters homesteaded claims and others followed. The claims shanty only had to be lived in periodically, so the German settlers built a convent school for the sisters in the town of Zell. A novitiate was established in 1886.

It was life in the claims shanty that produced a bit of convent lore. "The Mystery of the Disappearance of the Milk." One morning the sisters were mystified to find that the milk that had been set on the table the previous evening had disappeared. When this happened a second night, the sisters took turns keeping watch for the thief. Imagine their terror when in slithered a long bull snake intent on enjoying the delicacy. Bull snakes do bite but are nonvenomous and are good mouse catchers. They only drink milk when parched, so the prairie must have been dry that year.

Bishop Marty had a building in Yankton which he eventually offered to the sisters (along with the debt). This became the academy and motherhouse. When Bishop O'Gorman asked the sisters to start a hospital, the motherhouse was moved to Vermillion to make room in the Yankton building for a hospital. In 1908, when it was determined to move back to Yankton, the sisters took the wood and bricks apart, transported them to Yankton, and built an additional wing to house the community.

Another piece of lore: In the early years, a cow got into a corn field, ate the corn and bloated. After listening to the cow cry out for hours, two novices were sent to dispatch the poor animal. They took knives to do the deed but did not have the heart to complete it. A local farmer suggested that they give the cow some tea, as that would cure the bloat. Returning to the convent, they could not find any tea, but there was coffee

on the stove ready for breakfast the next morning. They fed the coffee to the cow, who recovered without any ill effect. There is no word about the reaction of the Sisters when they discovered their morning coffee was gone.



Samples of embroidery done by our European Sisters. In 1899, Sister Beatrice brought the first Swiss and German candidates trained in embroidery to Yankton to establish the Vestment Department.



ST. MARTIN MONASTERY, RAPID CITY

Bishop Martin Marty of the Dakota Territory invited the Benedictine Sisters of Melchtal, Switzerland to his diocese to serve the homesteaders there. Mother Angela Arnet and four other sisters arrived in Sturgis, South Dakota on April 28, 1889. No place had been prepared for them so they had to live in an abandoned restaurant-saloon until a suitable convent could be built. While living in these temporary quarters they had to put up their umbrellas when it rained whether they were inside or outside of the building. Within ten days after their arrival, they began classes for local children. In the fall they offered a full academic curriculum.

Although the sisters had no formal training as nurses, at the requests of citizens of other Black Hills towns they opened two hospitals with nurses' training programs within 13 years. Another hospital opened in 1927 with a school of nursing. From early in the 20th century until 2010 the sisters staffed grade schools and did pastoral ministry in 10 states within the United States and in South America. Slowly but surely the sisters were educated and became qualified for their professional positions.

Having outgrown the campus in Sturgis, in 1962 the community built a new Priory and Academy in Rapid City. In 2009 the community built a smaller monastery and sold the large monastery



buildings to the Diocese of Rapid City who use it as a retreat center and grade school. The sisters also sold some land to Good Samaritan Society who have built homes and care facilities for the elderly. In these transactions

the community ministries of education and health care are being continued. The sisters continue with their ministries of presence, prayer, and hospitality.

There are many interesting items in the archives. Among these is Mother Angela's trunk. It is addressed to: *Blak Hills—South Dakota Nordamerica Venerable Sister Angela Arnet Saint Martin....Sturgis Lawrence [County]*. Another significant treasure is the ornate miter of Bishop Martin Marty. This picture shows Bishop Gruss holding Bishop Marty's miter at the celebration of the monastery's 125th anniversary.

MONASTERY IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, FERDINAND, IN

As first archivist of Monastery Immaculate Conception, Sister Mary Kenneth Scheessele will be remembered for her contributions of "gathering" into one collection, the documents and artifacts of the first 125 years of monastery history. Many will remember the second archivist, Sister Mary Dominic Frederick who retired in April 2019 due to health issues. Sister Mary Dominic took the archives collection and organized it into the record groups, adapted policies and procedures, and entered all into the ARCS database program. The newly appointed archivists, Sister Rebecca Abel and Sister Mary Philip Berger will work to bring the archives into the digital age. The future of the archives continues into the 21st century.

The most important documents in the archives are the papers of the prioresses, which tell the story of the accomplishments of the community at Ferdinand. Every community has one or more outstanding prioresses. At Monastery Immaculate Conception one of our outstanding prioresses was Mother Seraphine Kordes. In 1884, at age 14 she entered the Monastery. For 28 years she served in the various schools run by the Ferdinand Benedictines. Then in 1914, Sister Seraphine was elected Prioress and continued in that role for the next 35 years.

Continued . . .



Her first great accomplishment was to provide better education for the sister teachers. In September of 1914, a summer school was opened and remained in session for 12 weeks. "St. Benedict's Normal" was accredited as a state teacher training school by the state superintendent. Later it became St. Benedict's College.

Mother Seraphine is also responsible for the current monastery church. The community had become too big for the first chapel and was in need of a larger space. Mother Seraphine contracted an architect from St. Louis to plan the new church. The cornerstone was laid May 30, 1915 and the dedication was June 20, 1924. This new church not only provided ample space for the community but is an architectural monument that today attracts tourists from all over the United States.



Mother Seraphine initiated the first missionary endeavor of the community in 1933, by sending a band of 4 sisters to St. Ann's Mission at Belcourt, N.D. These sisters began their work among the Chippewa Indians on the Turtle Mountain Reservation. They eventually founded Queen of Peace Monastery.

As the community of sisters increased so did the need for additional living quarters and in 1934 the contract was signed to begin building a new wing, Saint Benedict's Hall which was finished in the summer of 1936.

Perhaps Mother Seraphine's greatest accomplishment was to replace praying the Little Office of Mary with the Divine Office. Seventy years after the founding of the Monastery, the Divine Office was chanted for the first time in the Immaculate Conception Chapel on the feast of St. Gregory the Great, March 12, 1937! This exceptional lady left the sisters at Ferdinand a remarkable heritage. It is only a pity that before she died, she had most of her papers burned. The archives at Ferdinand is seriously lacking in correspondence of this great leader. In her 35 years of Prioress, the archives has 31 letters. If any archivists from other communities should have correspondence from Mother Seraphine Kordes, a copy would be greatly appreciated!



Phyllis Pitney, assistant, and Sr. Gerarda Pura, archivist, examine the files.

ST. BENEDICT'S MONASTERY, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

This is a story of vision, of hope, of courage, of a group of monastic women who set out on a road together in 1912 with hearts expanded with zeal, determination, and spirit to respond to a call to serve, and who, today, continue to seek God together. In 1903 the Benedictine community in Manitoba began with a response from five sisters in Duluth, MN to an invitation by Archbishop Adelard Langevin, OMI to teach and minister to Polish and German immigrants in Winnipeg.

Four of these sisters were persuaded to remain in Winnipeg and establish a Canadian foundation which was incorporated into the province on August 19, 1912. With no convent (that they could call their own) and with only 27 cents to their name, these four courageous women went forth under the valiant leadership of Mother Veronica Zygmanska.

Continued . . .



At that time the sisters taught at Holy Ghost School on Selkirk Avenue but by September 8th that same year they were also caring for 20 orphans, many of whom had been left on the convent doorstep. In 1915 the orphanage was transferred from Winnipeg to the village of Arborg where a farm could provide food for the children. In 1923 the building at Arborg was enlarged and the Motherhouse was relocated there.

The sisters continued to teach at Holy Ghost School until 1989. At Arborg a grade school and then a high school was established which closed only in 1961 when the sisters moved to Winnipeg.

During the next decades the sisters established several hospitals and expanded their education ministry. They also provided catechism by correspondence as well as summer catechism programs for young people in the rural areas where there were no Catholic schools.

To provide education for young women, a new Motherhouse and school, St. Benedict's Academy, were erected in Winnipeg in 1961. The academy closed in 1970 and reopened, after renovation, as St. Benedict's Educational Centre (later Retreat and Conference Centre) to provide hospitality, spiritual formation and a place of peace and tranquility for spiritual seekers. Many sisters began studies in theology, religious education, spirituality, spiritual direction and administration to prepare for new ministries. For nine years Sr. Anselm Hammerling (now Sr. Mary Rose) was president of the Federation of St. Gertrude.

In 2006, as the community became smaller, one wing of the monastery was renovated and named St. Benedict's place, a residence with 20 suites for independent living for seniors seeking to age meaningfully and gracefully in a peace-filled environment. A new ministry!

Today, our community of 14 monastic women and 1 novice continues to respond to various calls of the Church and the world. We serve communities in and around Winnipeg through spiritual formation and hospitality at St. Benedict's Retreat and Conference Centre and seniors' housing at St. Benedict's Place.

The Benedictines of Manitoba see themselves as monastic women discerning the future, drawing constant energy from St. Benedict's Rule, the monastic tradition of prayer and work and the dream: that in all things God may be glorified.

DID YOU KNOW?



The Inter-federation Archives Committee is only one of the ways in which the Benedictine communities from across the U.S., Canada, and Latin America work together. Other cross-federation organizations and projects include:

- Conference of Benedictine Prioresses
- Under 55 gatherings;
- American Benedictine Formation Conference (ABFC);
- T-4 (Video library for initial and on-going formation; networking program for members in initial formation);
- Inter-federation Heritage Committee (working to preserve the history of Benedictine women in this country);
- A committee working on guidelines for changes in monastic governance structures;
- Workshops for visitators (**Upcoming--Oct 28-31, 2020**) and election facilitators.



Foundress, Mother Veronica Zygmanska, with items from her desktop. Tablecloth hand made by Sister Candida Jakubik, co-founding member.