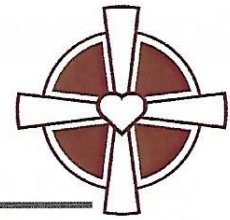


The Gleaner



An occasional newsletter of the Federation of St. Gertrude

Message from the President by Sr. Jeanne Weber

Number 74 ♦ May, 2020

When we sent out January edition of *The Gleaner*, most likely none of us had an inkling what awaited us in terms of the COVID 19 pandemic. And we can still say much the same: what lies ahead for us is tremendously uncertain. My sense, from the e-mails that have been flying back and forth among the prioresses, is that our Benedictine houses have taken the pandemic seriously and planned well to protect our members as much as is possible. I really want to thank you for that.

When a crisis like this hits, our monastic hearts look for ways to help. Many of our members are assisting with work inside the monastery that is normally done by our lay staff members. Others are sewing masks for the sisters, monastery staff, and health care workers. Some are finding themselves with more work than ever as they transition from in-person to online teaching and program delivery. Still others are reaching out by phone, e-mail, and letters to individuals who might be suffering loneliness in this time of isolation. All of us are praying, fervently, for those who are ill and dying, for their families, for health care workers, and for all who put their lives and health at risk in service to others.

One evening in February, as I had an extended time at home even before the pandemic, I said to my living group, "I could get used to this." I am getting used to being at home, along with the reality of Zoom meetings, cancelling airline reservations, and multiple postponements. What has changed:

- The sisters of Dwelling Place Monastery in Martin, KY postponed their election from March until late August;
- The 55 and Under meeting scheduled in late March in Beech Grove was cancelled;
- We held our April Federation Council meeting via Zoom, which worked quite well even with us being in three time zones;
- Visitation at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Crookston was postponed from April until mid-September;
- Direction setting and election at St. Benedict's Monastery in Winnipeg have been postponed until a date yet to be determined;
- We have rescheduled Sr. Kimberly's installation as prioress at St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith for September 4;
- An LCWR leadership forum that Srs. Barbara Lynn, Mary Luke and I were to attend in St. Louis at the end of May was cancelled.
- The Federation Chapter has been postponed from June to October.;
- We are still hoping to install Sr. Jennifer as administrator in Rapid City. The two of us will drive there soon enough to have a period of quarantine before her installation on May 22. I will quarantine again here at home after I return.



He is Risen. Alleluia!

I am grateful to the personnel of the Congregation for Religious Institutes in Rome who have facilitated the work of postponement of general chapters by granting blanket permission for those postponements and for the extension of the terms of elected leaders. I am also grateful for the flexibility and work of our prioresses, chapter delegates, election and visitation committees as we search for new dates, all the while aware that these dates may be changed yet again.

In this Easter season, I am struck by how many times we hear Jesus say to us, "Peace be with you." My prayer for each of you is that the peace of the Risen Christ may be your daily companion as we walk this unknown road. *Jeanne*



Shawn Carruth, OSB 1942-2000

It is with great sadness that we have been called to bid farewell to Sister Shawn Carruth, Prioress of Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Crookston and First Councilor for the Federation. Sr. Shawn died on Thursday, March 26 after suffering a stroke sometime the night before.

Shawn loved her monastic community and led them with courage, humility, and grace, even as the role of prioress was probably not native to her personality. Under her leadership the Crookston monastic community courageously acknowledged that they are “coming to completion,” and moved forward with decisions based on that reality.

I first got to know Shawn on the Federation Council after I was elected president in 2017. What struck me most about her were her qualities of gentleness, humility, and wisdom.

An incredibly intelligent and articulate woman, she could speak at length on many topics—and sometimes did. Once in a while I might have been tempted to get a little impatient, except that she used words in such an uncommonly beautiful way.

Shawn once shared with me that when she took on the role of prioress, she was decidedly uncomfortable being with sisters who were ill and dying. I admired her for her response to that fear; She walked head on into it, accompanying sisters on trips to the emergency room or hospital and sitting with them in their last days and hours at the Villa. In the process, she grew to love this part of her ministry as prioress. Below are some memories of Shawn shared by the other councilors.

Sr. Mary Coswin (Winnipeg): With Mary Forman and Ruth Fox, Shawn could be counted on to recommend the best fiction



The Federation Council at Dwelling Place Monastery, October, 2019: Srs. Mary Luke Jones, Jeanne Weber, Barbara Lynn Schmitz, Teresa Jackson, Mary Coswin, and Shawn Carruth.



and scholarly works for our reading pleasure. I also remember Shawn musing that a day at her desk with translations of the Bible in several languages was her favourite way to pass time.

Sr. Mary Luke Jones (Beech Grove): I had known of Shawn’s renown for many years but it was not until having the privilege of serving with her on the Federation Council that I come to know her... not only know her but love her. She and I, along with Mary Forman, made up the direction statement writing committee at the 2017 Chapter in Yankton. My first memory of Shawn was that she was troubled by a split infinitive in the previous direction statements! Shawn was a lifelong learner and was always recommending books to us as we met in council. Only in reading her obituary did I fully realize how smart she was, how accomplished, how savvy and wise. Her sudden death was a shock and broke my heart. Shawn always allowed me to tease her and she was a good sport, laughing at herself and enjoying life. I will miss her smile, her challenges, her wisdom and her influence. May she rest in peace.



Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz (Ferdinand): Sr. Shawn brought a world of wisdom to the Federation Council. She also made sure we had all the "i's" dotted. We stood in awe of her willingness to accept the challenges of this time. Her faith and her utter commitment to the monastic way of life was a gift to all of us. I too remember her saying she would be happy with 5 different scriptures open on her desk while she dug into the meaning in each language. Can't you just picture her with Jesus discussing what He meant about one scripture passage or another. It was a blessing to serve with her on the Federation Council and to be her friend.

Sr. Teresa Jackson (Cottonwood): In 2014 I was privileged to be elected to the Federation Council along with Shawn. I hadn't known her before this but in the six years we served together I had the tremendous privilege to getting to know an amazing, deeply holy, Benedictine woman. There was perhaps no trait more characteristic of Shawn than her humility. My image of her will always be her laughing, and usually at herself. She seemed to revel in making fun of her own shortcomings and limitations. Our regular ZOOM meetings always began with Shawn laughing at her technological in-expertise.

I was also very struck by her humility when she was called by her community to be prioress. Although she had indicated that she didn't feel called to such a position she seemed to enter into it with the heart of a servant. She was always deeply concerned for her sisters individually and for the community as a whole as she led them through the challenges of diminishment and grief. When we shared updates about our communities at our meetings her deep love and care for her sisters was palpable as she shared their hopes and fears.

Her humility was all the more real and striking when you knew that she was a brilliant scholar. She wore her ability lightly, as if it were perfectly common for people to do be fluent in multiple languages and published in arcane fields of expertise. It was her ability to be so naturally unassuming that made her a great scholar, leader, friend and follower of Benedict and Scholastica. May she rest in peace.

Shawn is sorely missed by her monastic community. In the midst of their grief I am tremendously grateful to Kathleen McGeary for her leadership of the community during this interim time.



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,



Every spring at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, Sr. Virginia incubates and hatches baby chicks for the enjoyment of the sisters in the Care Center (and others of us who never really left the farm). Pictured above is Sr. Carmy Luke, affectionately known in the community as "The Chicken Whisperer."

President's Schedule

May 11-23-Rapid City, Installation

July 20-27-Beech Grove, Visitation

August 3-6-Crookston, Installation

August 27-31-Martin, Election

September 3-5-Fort Smith, Installation

September 13-19-Crookston, Visitation

October 4-11-Beech Grove, Fed. Chapter



From the Archives of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove

Our Lady of Grace Monastery was founded by the Benedictine sisters of Ferdinand, Indiana at the prompting of Paul C. Schulte, Archbishop of Indianapolis. It was the Archbishop's desire to have a home for the elderly in his diocese.

Because the Ferdinand community was relatively large, the sisters decided to found a daughter house and an academy for high school students in addition to carrying out the archbishop's request. The new community found their home on 30 acres of swampland in Beech Grove, Indiana a suburb of Indianapolis.

The time came to decide who would come to the new community in Beech Grove from Ferdinand. Sisters either volunteered to transfer or were assigned if they were working in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. In the 1960's the community grew to approximately 130 sisters. Today there are 50 members in the Beech Grove community.

In 1956 Our Lady of Grace Academy opened with 27 ninth graders. The academy also housed a kindergarten which was open for 12 years. The academy eventually closed in 1978 due to declining enrollment.

Attached to the monastery building is the Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center (formerly the academy). The Inn hosts thousands of people annually for programs focusing on women, families and spiritual growth.



Sr. Mary Seghers, Archivist Emeritus

Also located on the monastery grounds is St. Paul Hermitage Retirement and Nursing Care facility. A new nursing care wing was opened in 1997,. The Hermitage offers 24-hour care for the aged and infirm and retirement care for the well elderly.

In 2012, the building that had served as the gym for Our Lady of Grace Academy, housing also a pool and meeting rooms, was demolished. Rising costs made it impossible to maintain. After much discussion, the community decided to use that space to establish a Peace and Nature Garden. Filled with native plants and flowers, the garden has become a place of quiet beauty, both for the sisters and their neighbors. Artwork by local Catholic high school students can be found along the winding paths.

The Beech Grove Benedictines continue to serve in schools and parishes in the Archdiocese, and in their corporate ministries of the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center and St Paul Hermitage. Members also serve in a variety of other ministries such as nursing, massage therapy, social work and library work.



Karen Oddi, Archivist

Our Archives, while very compact, are a wonderful representation of the history of the community. Thanks to Sr. Mary Seghers, who recently retired as Archivist, the stories and significant memorabilia have been well preserved.

Several of our more interesting items are displayed in our Heritage Room. Among these are the roller skates worn by Sr. Petronilla Fritz. During the early days of the monastery and academy, the present day laundry building served as a skating rink. Our senior sisters always smile as they reminisce about their skating adventures.

Sr. Helen Wagner's metal horn often evokes stories. She would use it to 'encourage' the sisters to get out of her path as she maneuvered through the monastery halls.

A special teddy bear, dressed in a state trooper t-shirt, reminds us of Sr. Marian Yohe, who died very young of a brain tumor in 1997. It was a gift from the state troopers with whom she had formed relationships through her ministry at the Benedict Inn. They presented it to her as they declared her an honorary state trooper.



Sr. Susan Marie Lindstrom, Archivist



Our newest unique item is a small stuffed groundhog. It is a memory of Sr. Rachel Best, a former prioress, whose love for groundhogs stemmed from having been born on Groundhog Day. Everyone who knew Rachel knew she loved groundhogs. Sr. Rachel passed away this July.

A funny story found in our archives follows:

One day, sometime in the spring of 1954, as the monastery building was being constructed, the phone rang. In those days, there were just a few sisters in the building, those who had come from Ferdinand to prepare for the new mission. There were actually more construction workers on site than sisters, and it was not unusual for them to answer the phone if they happened to be closer than the sisters when it rang.

The worker picked up the receiver, and a male voice said, "Is this Our Lady of Grace?"

"No," said the workman, "but I will go get her for you." He made his way through the halls, looking for Sr. Salesia, who was in charge of the workmen and the construction efforts.

"Sister," he said, "someone is on the phone for you. He wants Our Lady of Grace." Sister Salesia laughed as she told the sisters about the call, but never corrected the construction worker who thought that SHE was Our Lady of Grace.

From the Archives of House of Bread Monastery, Nanaimo

A brief history compiled from the master's thesis of Andreas Eckerstorfer. "To Do Some Good Among The Indians".

In 1895 Father Brabant approached Bishop Lemmens with the desire to establish a Catholic School for Indians. The school was built in 1899 on Meres Island on the West Coast of Vancouver Island B.C. Four Benedictine Monks from Mt. Angel Abbey and three Benedictine Sisters from Queen of Angels Monastery in Mt. Angel, Oregon arrived at Kakawis

(which means "place of berries) on May 16,1900. The monks staffed the school until 1938 and the Sisters remained until 1960.



Native wood carving by Ben Dick Kwakiutu 1986

While we have no actual history regarding this particular beautiful carving, it was likely given as a gift to the Sisters of the House of Bread from a native artist on Vancouver Island.

In 1972 Bishop Remi J. DeRoo of the Diocese of Victoria met with the General Chapter of the Federation of St. Gertrude and requested "that the Benedictines return to Vancouver Island so that their spirituality might be shared with the people of the area." In response, the House of Bread Monastery was established as a Dependent Priory of the Queen of Angels monastery and became an Independent monastery in 1993 in the Federation of St. Gertrude. Sister Jean Ann Berning became the first prioress.

It is interesting to note that Bishop Remi, at the age of 95, continues to be the part time chaplain for the faith community that worships together in Nanaimo.



Antique Iron Wafer Press-cast mold for Eucharistic Host baking.
Long handles to use over fire or wood stove.

Anyone asked to bake hosts today with this heavy cast iron press would be challenged by the vow of obedience!





News from Monastery Immaculate Conception:

Our celebration of the Triduum was a little different from past years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not had a monk from Saint Meinrad coming to our monastery for Mass since March 20. We did as much of the ritual as we could with the prioress taking the role of the president. We are having communion services on Sundays and solemnities until we are able to have a priest return to the monastery. A few of our sisters have chosen to wear a mask due to their own health concerns.



In addition to having fewer sisters at each table in the dining room, we have recently adapted our meal service so that sisters are serving the food rather than having every individual touch the serving utensils.

We all are missing interaction with our sisters who are in our Hildegard Health Center. Since the center is licensed, we are unable to visit, and the sisters there are unable to gather for meals, prayer, and other activities.

The sisters are all adapting well, but we look forward to the time when we can begin to ease some of the restrictions which we have put into place.



Spring Pictures from Fort Smith:



Sr. Judith teaches online for family literacy ; Sr. Madeline bakes pies for Holy Thursday; A concert for the sisters ala COVID 19.



Centenarians at St. Martin Monastery:

We have just celebrated two 100th birthdays. In February we celebrated Sister Jane Frances's 100th birthday with an open house. Sister Marmion was 100 on March 29. We celebrated her birthday just with the Sisters because of social distancing. Some of her friends found a way to send their birthday greetings outside the dining room window.

Sister Jane Frances (below) received the "Century Reader" award from the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Club for readers who are over 100 years old. She is now a member of the *Ten Square Talking Book Club*.



April 28 is the anniversary of the Founding of St. Martin Monastery. This year our celebration of the day was enhanced by Sister Therese Marie's art.

Conference of Benedictine Prioresses Meeting

The annual meeting of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP) was held at Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton January 28 through February 4, 2020. Sisters came from the United States, the Bahamas, Canada, and Mexico.

The theme of the meeting was "Called to Serve: Pray, Listen, Lead." At the business meeting, Sr. Aileen Bankemper was elected chair of the organization for three year term and Srs. Anita Louise Lowe and Susan



Rudolph were elected to a term on the CBP Coordinating Committee. They will serve along with Srs. Rosann Ocken and Maribeth Wentzlaff. This year's retreat was led by Sr. Michaela Hedican OSB of St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, who challenged the prioresses and presidents to practice their leadership through the lens of the beatitudes."



The Mask Makers



Sisters from around the Federation have been busy sewing up a storm. At **Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston** Sister Eileen Mohs (left) is using her sewing skills to make masks for monastery staff members, clinics, the local hospital, and the Crookston community. A member of their dietary staff mentioned seeing a news story about people making masks for hospital staff during the pandemic. That is all that Sister Eileen needed to hear; so far she has made 400 masks, and counting.

Fifteen sisters at **Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton**, coordinated by Sr. Jeanne Ranek, set up shop and began cutting fabric and



Olson Mask

sewing masks. They forged ahead in the face of difficulty finding one-ply cotton fabric and 1/4" elastic. In a little over a week, 165 masks were completed--many of them the Olson design needed for health care staff at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital and Majestic Bluffs nursing facility. Others were made for monastery employees.

Srs. Anna Marie Megel, Carol Falkner and Bernardine Ludwig (below) are three of several **Beech Grove Benedictines** who are making masks during the outbreak of the coronavirus. Each afternoon, the sisters gather in the monastery sewing room and have produced in excess of 500 colorful, cloth masks for the staff and residents of their ministry at St. Paul Hermitage, for the monastery staff, other nursing homes, families and friends. Friends of the sisters have donated elastic and fabric in support of the effort.



Part of the Yankton crew: Srs. Patricia Ann, Jeanne, Penny, Bernadette, and Phyllis



Along with many other communities, our bells ring every afternoon at 3 o'clock reminding us and our neighbors to pause and pray for the victims of this disease and for their families. Beginning with first vespers for the Feast of St. Benedict, the community has live streamed Evening Prayer to an ever-growing audience of viewers.

Staying home and staying well is our gift to one another and to others. Praying for people, worldwide, is our mission.

