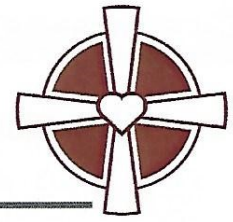


The Gleaner



An occasional newsletter of the Federation of St. Gertrude

Number 80 ♦ March, 2023

Message from the President by Sr. Jeanne Weber

As I write this, we are deep into preparations for our 2023 Federation Chapter, which will be held at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN June 10-17. Our theme for the Chapter is “See, I am doing something new.” It will feature the members of a keynote panel sharing their perspective on what Benedictine monastic women have to offer the world in our time and place, along with a panel presentation by prioresses and administrators of monasteries transitioning to new models of monastic governance.

We will bring a veritable “baker’s dozen” of proposed changes to our *Listen* norms to the chapter. Some of these changes would have been considered at the 2020 Chapter that we were unable to hold due to the pandemic. Others are necessitated by changes in law coming from the Vatican, and still others by the changes that we are undergoing as monastic communities.

As well, we will ask the Chapter to change our name from “The Federation of St. Gertrude” to “The Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude.” This is another step toward reclaiming our monastic heritage and clarifying our identity as a monastic congregation (See Listen H-2) with the Vatican offices in Rome, spurred on in part by recent changes in law coming from Rome, which define a Federation solely as a structure of support, without any juridical status. Our sister monastic congregations, The Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica and the Monastic Congregation of St. Benedict approved this change of name at their general chapters last summer.

Finally we will set directions for the federation for the next three years and elect a federation president and council. Sr. Lynn McKenzie, President of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica, has graciously agreed to facilitate our direction setting and election processes. Our prioresses, administrators, council, and delegates are diligently preparing for these sacred days together, and we ask each of you to keep us in prayer as we prepare for and carry out the meetings of our Federation Chapter.

On another note, at the end of October I had the happy surprise looking at my calendar for the next several months and discovering more white space than has been the case since February of 2021 when I started traveling again after getting the first two Covid vaccines. From November through March, I was on the road around four weeks, which meant that I had time to travel to visit two of my siblings with significant health problems. I am grateful. For many things. For the gift of this ministry to the monastic communities of the Federation. For the opportunity to get to know so many wonderful monastic women. For the generous leadership of the prioresses and administrators of our monastic communities. For the way in which this work has challenged me—kicking me out of my comfort zone and teaching me that when I don’t know how to do something, I simply need to ask for help and keep taking the next step. For the advice and support of so many. For finding out that giving thanks is the antidote to worry! Sr. Jeanne





Delegations for the 2023 Federation of St. Gertrude General Chapter



Beech Grove: Srs. Carol Falkner, Julie Sewell ,
Prioress, and Marie Therese Racine



Cottonwood: Srs. Mary Forman, Prioress, Elise Marie Martinez , and Teresa



Crookston: Srs Anita Whalen, Jane Becker, Admis-
trator, Kathy Kuchar, and Kathleen McGeary, Alter-



Rapid City: Srs. Mary Wegher, Jennifer Kehrwald, Admin-
istrator, Lorane Coffin, and Joan Tetrault, Alternate



Ferdinand: Srs. Kathy Cash, Paula Wolff, Alternate,
Anita Louise Lowe, Prioress, Rosemary Rexing, and
Karen Joseph, Alternate



Nanaimo: Sr. Barbara
Rinehart, Prioress



Left: Mt. Angel: Srs.
Jane Hibbard,
Administrator, and
Dorothy Jean Beyer

Right: Madison: Srs.
Mary David
Walgenbach, Prioress,
and Lynne Smith



Dickinson: Srs. Phoebe Schwartz and Jill
West (Prioress TBD)



Winnipeg: Srs. Dorothy Levandosky, Admin-
istrator, and Mary Coswin, Councilor



Martin: Srs. Kathy DiViao, Kathy Curtis, Prioress,
and Mary Going



Delegations, cont.



Yankton: Srs. Kathy Burt, Candyce Chriystal, and Penny Bingham ,
Prioress-elect



Fort Smith: Srs. Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress, Judith Marie
Timmerman, and Regina Schroeder



Watertown: Srs. Teresa Ann Wolff, Terri Hoffman,



Right: The Federation Council met at Beech Grove April 2-4: Srs. Mary Luke Jones and Jennifer Mechtild Horner, Beech Grove; Mary Coswin, Winnipeg, Jeanne Weber, (President) Yankton; Barbara Lynn Schmitz, Ferdinand; Teresa Jackson, Cottonwood, and Mildred Busch (Secretary), Yankton.



Yankton Elects Prioress

Following three days of discernment, the sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD elected Sr. Penny Bingham as their 17th prioress on March 18, 2023. Sr. Penny also served the community as their 15th prioress. The discernment process was led by Srs. Jennifer Mechtild Horner of Beech Grove and Marcia Ziska of Atchison. The canonical election was presided over by Sr. Jennifer Mechtild, who is a member of the Federation Council.





Crookston Changes Governance



Sr. Jane Becker, Commissary; Sr. Kathleen, Monastery Coordinator; and three of her four Advisors, Srs. Eileen Mohs, Kathy Kuchar, and Anita Whalen. Sue Murphy was not

The Sisters of Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Crookston, MN took the momentous step in March of asking the Federation President and Council to suspend their regular monastic governance and to appoint a commissary for them. *Commissary* is Rome’s term for a pastoral administrator that is appointed once the regular governance of a religious house has been suspended. Sr. Jane Becker of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand was appointed as Commissary. She will remain in that position until after the Federation Chapter, when, depending

on the results of the election, another sister will be appointed. Sr. Kathleen McGearry has accepted the position of Monastery Coordinator. Sr. Kathleen, along with four advisors appointed by her, will be in charge of the day-to-day life of the monastery and the care of the sisters. Sr. Jane will return to Ferdinand in early May, and will be available to the community from there for any issues that arise.

Crookston joins the Sisters of Queen of Angels Monastery in Mount Angel as the second monastic community in the Federation of St. Gertrude to make this step. The sisters of St. Martin Monastery in Rapid City are also on this path.

The Crookston community celebrated their change in governance with a ritual at Evening Prayer and a special meal afterwards. One disappointment was that Sue Murphy, their sole laywoman on the advisory group, was unable to be present at the celebration due to illness.

Update from St. Martin Monastery

As we continued the process of downsizing and realized that, because of our ages and health, we could no longer care for ourselves, discernment led us to consider moving to our neighboring Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society’s senior care facility. Built on property we sold to Good Samaritan in 2007, the facility has fifty twin homes for seniors, about 80 apartments for either independent or assisted living, and a

skilled nursing unit with 60 beds. Plans are underway for us to begin moving into apartments by the end of May 2023. With that in mind, sisters are identifying furniture and household equipment they will need in their new environment. We are grateful that the retired priests who presently celebrate the Eucharist with us are planning to continue this ministry after we move. Good Sam is providing a special room where we can pray the Liturgy of the Hours and meet for other community activities.



Srs. Mary and Therese Marie with a guest at lunch.



A recent snowstorm encouraged an artistic creation in our backyard. Initially about four feet tall, the bright sun and strong winds brought St. Benedict to his knees, but he never lost his Western-style habit.



The joy of unconditional Love



In
the depth of our hearts there are places,
The holy of holies, where the sacred resides,
That no one can touch except for the soul that lives in
there.
There are chambers of will, bowers of mystery and awe,
and balconies of bitter existence.
A man had walked these very paths,
Two thousand years ago, carrying a wooden cross.
But just one man with a spotless soul.

Pathways of yearnings where the heart and the mind
stand in a duel.
Every second of our existence, it gnaws around us.
Maliciously sharpening its claws.
To dig deeper into our being, to destroy our peace.
Let us make sign of the cross,
The cross that swallowed a man's life
It will purify our minds and hearts, spirits, and soul.

These are areas where the will to live, to die and to
believe reside.
Places that keep us alive for heaven.
Where we wait patiently for the reasons of our existence
to move forward and appear.
No shadow is cast as we cross our mental wasteland
alone.
As we await the mysteries of the Lamb unfold,
Each with great and wondrous deeds.
To all on earth the Truth is told, Amen.

We see distant images that are only illusions for a
second then they are gone.
We try to disremember what we are trying so hard to
forget,
Dredging for any remnants of a faith buried deep within
our souls.
Knowing it doesn't matter how far we travel; the past
will never be left behind.

It is like traveling between alternate realities through the
cracks of a broken windowpane.
And our lives will stretch itself out in front of our road
not travelled.
As we walk on a thin line hoping not to fall into the
abyss,
In our obsession for tomorrow's problems.
But Him besides us, we walk, and stagger and fall.
Like Him on the way to the mountain of victory.
Yes! Yes! it was for this that He died.

We strain the strength for today's battles.
As we stand in wonder and bewilderment
In these extra ordinary times to witness.
The mysterious moments of evolutionary change,
Through a revolutionary man, in a radical way.
With the wood, hammer and nails, and a bunch of ruth-
less men.
He bled! and bled! and bled!... until there was no more...

He beacons and challenges us to participate in this new
stage of existence.
Unfurling and uncurling so fast a universe ever coming
into being,
Through the irresistible and irreversible sequence of
transformation.
With a body of flesh, a tree of leaves, and a hammer of
metal.
When the sun goes down on us and our feet at the foot
of the cross...
With our hope hanging on a tree, our hearts broken and
disconsolate.

As we breathe in and climb the mountain of victory
The rising sun find our gaze set on the horizon of the
new dawn of Easter.
A promise of a better tomorrow from the summit of to-
day's conquered trials.
As foretold in the scriptures, that a man, Jesus Christ
The lamb of God, the only begotten
The word made flesh, won victory for us all.



Graphic by S. Marielle
Frigge, Yankton, SD



The Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude

What is the future of St. Gertrude's? At the Monastery we hear variations on this question all the time: "Won't St. Gertrude's die out if there aren't new women becoming sisters?" It is a good question and comes from the genuine concern of our many supporters. And for all of you who have wondered and asked similar questions, we have good news.

On Monday, June 13th, an exciting event took place. The sisters, employees, and oblates of St. Gertrude's gathered at Spirit Center for a day-long meeting and gathering. The focus of the gathering was to share the work that has been going on to create a vibrant future for St. Gertrude's. After many years of planning and visioning, the sisters shared a vision for the future of the Monastery.

The vision is that the Monastery is more than just sisters. All of us who are connected with St. Gertrude's: sisters, oblates, cohousing companions, employees, volunteers, artists in residence, friends, and benefactors are the Monastery. Together we minister to a world that needs Benedict now more than ever. The sisters may be the core, but they don't do it alone. St. Gertrude's is a diverse community engaged in bringing Benedictine life, values, and practices to the broader world.

To reflect this new understanding, we say that all together WE are "The Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude." At the meeting we discussed and shared an understanding that St. Gertrude's will continue, grow and thrive even if there is a day when there aren't sisters because St. Gertrude's is a community of all who are engaged with and support our ministries.

Our new vision is summarized in these main points:

All of us: The Monastery of St. Gertrude is more than just the sisters; it is becoming the Center for Benedictine Life which includes sisters, oblates, employees, friends, cohousing, volunteers, and benefactors.

Sharing Benedict: Our purpose is to share Benedictine spirituality, values, and practices with the world.

With New Purpose & Leadership: St. Gertrude's will continue into the future as the Center for Benedictine Life, creating new ministries and supported by new forms of leadership.

Benedictines have been changing, adapting, and meeting the needs of the times for over 1,500 years. Here at St. Gertrude's, we are at the forefront of sharing Benedictine life in new ways with a world that needs what we have to offer.



WE ARE THE MONASTERY



Images from Winnipeg, Yankton, and Ferdinand



Above: The latest view of the new monastery;
Below: Sr. Dorothy Levandosky on "downsizing day."

Tree of Life
Photography by Sr. Mary Kay Panowicz,
Yankton



The before, during, and after of a new roof at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand. The previous one kept the rain out for 80 years. Hopefully the new one will do the same.

From St. Scholastica Monastery, Fort Smith, Arkansas

FOUNDERS DAY TIMECAPSULE

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica made January 23, their Founders Day, special this year, using the occasion to open the time capsule found in the cornerstone of the former monastery building that was demolished this past summer. Twenty-four monks from Subiaco came to celebrate with the sisters. The event began with a talk by Father Jerome Kodell, the archivist for Subiaco Abbey. He talked about the recent discovery of the foundation of the first Sisters' house built in Subiaco in 1878. When the time capsule was opened after a late afternoon Mass, the contents were unrecognizable because of water damage, but this did not dampen the joyful spirit that continued with a festive dinner.



MONASTIC HOSPITALITY AND MINISTRY AT THE BORDER

In January, Sister Siena Fisk traveled to Eagle Pass, Texas, located on the border between Mexico and the United States, at Mission: Border Hope to show migrant workers Benedictine



hospitality and love. Sister Siena assisted in distributing meals and clothing to the migrants as they arrived by bus and awaited the next steps of the process to remain in the U.S. legally. Sister Siena and Novice Dorothy Herring from Atchison, Kansas, crossed the border to visit orphanages of children with special needs and minister to a couple of bedridden men. Sister Siena learned a great deal while there during those eight days as she fulfilled works of mercy and

Benedictine hospitality.



Conference of Benedictine Prioresses Meets in Cullman

The Conference of Benedictine Prioresses met February 1-8, at Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, AL. The meeting included two days with the Benedictine Abbots who gathered at St. Bernard's Abbey, just down the road a piece from the sisters. Those meetings focused on the care of the sick. Sr. Esther Fangman of Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, KS, along with two of her staff from the Dooley Care Center, spent one day helping us to understand the care of persons with dementia and at the end of life. Br. John Mark Falkenhain of St. Meinrad Abbey offered some very helpful approaches to the care of members with emotional/psychological illnesses. These joint meetings, besides containing helpful input, are wonderful for developing the camaraderie between the prioresses and the abbots.

The women had several days of work both before and after our joint meetings. We set directions for the Conference for the next three years and elected a Chairperson (Sr. Nicole Kunze of Bismarck) and Coordinating Committee members: Srs. Kimberly Prohaska of Fort Smith, and Elizabeth Meadows of Cullman joined current members, Srs. Anita Louise Lowe of Ferdinand and Julie Sewell of Beech Grove. We also had rich small group discussions on a variety of topics of interest including possible ways to collaborate, the meaning of autonomy, coming to completion/fulfillment, engaging and working with consultants, and caring for members with dementia. Other agenda items included a report by Srs. Jeanne Weber, Tonette Sperando (Cullman) and Rita Brink (Covington) on options for an inter-federation archive repository, a financial report, and reports from the various groups sponsored by the Conference.