



# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2015

www.annunciationmonastery.org

"God Planted Me on this Prairie for a Purpose..."

The bells of Annunciation Monastery joyfully proclaimed the good news of the Perpetual Monastic Profession of Sister Rosemary DeGracia on June 27.

Sister Rosemary was raised in Rockford, Ill., and lived in Fresno, CA, for 30 years prior to coming to Annunciation Monastery. A widowed mother of five grown children, she received her undergraduate degree in sociology from California State University, Fresno, where she also did graduate work in public administration. Sister Rosemary was a senior analyst for the City of Fresno for 23 years and served her parish and diocese in roles including RCIA director, deacon formation, and coordinator for detention ministry. Her ministries continued to enliven her desire to pursue a deeper relationship with God and others.

"The idea of becoming a sister had been percolating in the years following my husband's death," she explains. Sister Rosemary explored several Benedictine communities prior to God's tug in the direction of Annunciation Monastery. Her first visit was in January of 2008. "The prayer of the community was, and remains, the most important aspect to me. Sitting in our chapel praying the Liturgy of the Hours with the Sisters, open to God's promptings led me to realize this is where I belong." She made her first monastic profession on August 27, 2011.

Before Sister Rosemary applied for the first stage of formation, she talked to each one of her children. She says they were not entirely surprised. "They had questions, but have always been supportive." So supportive, in fact, that



*"The prayer of the community was, and remains, the most important aspect to me. Sitting in our chapel praying the Liturgy of the Hours with the Sisters, open to God's promptings led me to realize this is where I belong."*

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MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

As I gaze out my office window over the tree-filled valley and bluffs around the Missouri River, it's hard to believe the view was one of smoke and flames during the April wildfire. One would never know these lands have been touched by fire, or that the earth was scorched to an unsettling blackness. It's impossible to not be awestruck by God's healing miracles.

The day after the fire, wild turkeys that had huddled close to the walls of our monastery during the fire walked tentatively on blackened earth to inspect their home in a grove of trees. I expected to see them walk right back out, but they stayed. They stayed because it's their home. The landscape that was so changed by the fire brought tears to the eyes of many who came out to view its aftermath. Today, this same earth and trees are lush with foliage and vibrant shades of green.

What promise this holds for our future. In times of despair or discouragement, there are so many lessons that eventually surprise us -- lessons that spring from a sense of loss but also of hope reborn. Our sisters were temporarily evacuated from our home, as were nearby residents and students of the University of Mary. We are ever-thankful that nobody was hurt and losses were minimal. We were all able to return home. Our monastery was well protected due to the careful attention given to keeping the grass cut short surrounding our buildings as well as in and around the cemetery where our deceased sisters are buried. The sight of the

cemetery cross standing tall and the graves untouched by fire was a reminder to all of us of God's saving grace. We cling to God's promise that He is with us always. God goes before us, leading us through the flames to the place of ultimate refreshment and joy. We trust this and remain faithful to our mission and in service to one another.



This issue of Tidings celebrates the mission and the faith of our sisters and friends who carry on the Benedictine tradition in ways we could never do alone. From sisters celebrating jubilees, to new members, to our volunteers, oblates and donors, and all who serve in our sponsored ministries – you are the living mission of Jesus. We are truly grateful for your prayers, friendship, time/talent and financial contributions. Please know of our deep gratitude. We praise God for you. May this summer be blessed with opportunities to peacefully observe the wondrous ways of our loving God.

*Sister Thany Miller, OSB*



her daughters recently surprised her with a water sipper bearing the hashtag #mynunmom.

The Benedictine values of community, obedience and stability are ones that Sister Rosemary finds both fulfilling and challenging. “The challenge lies in embracing unknowns, but accepting new opportunities to serve the community. Some of the greatest blessings in my life have resulted from a willingness to accept challenges; there is a great freedom in letting go of the outcome – not necessarily seeing the concrete results of my efforts,” she explains.

Sister Rosemary earned her Master of Business Administration from the University of Mary where she currently serves as Director of University Compliance. She serves as assistant oblate director at the monastery. Her Benedictine vocation began as an oblate, and her goal is to help oblates grow in appreciation of their part in the greater Benedictine family.

In her leisure time, Sister Rosemary enjoys quilting, knitting, reading, baking and taking long walks.

On June 27 as Sisters, family and friends gathered to celebrate her Perpetual Monastic Profession,

Sister Rosemary felt completely at peace because, in her heart, she had already been 100% invested. “I didn’t feel any hesitation whatsoever. I look forward to what the future holds. Whatever it is, I trust that God planted me on this prairie for a purpose which will unfold as God wills.”



*The Bell Banner of Annunciation Monastery framed by flowering trees.*

# A Jubilant June

## Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, OSB - 50 Years

Others come first for Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, who celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary June 20 as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery.

“Service to others is important to me,” she says. “Servant leadership is not about me; it is stepping out of myself and thinking of the other person in my ministry and at the monastery.”

Sister Rosanne is the youngest of nine siblings, seven of whom were brothers. They grew up on a farm southwest of Dickinson. A close knit family, everyone pitched in and helped with the chores and in the large garden. They raised chickens, pigs and milk cows.



*Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, OSB (Then and now)*

Sister Rosanne’s seven brothers were protective of her. Once when she was too sick to walk the two miles home from school, one of her brothers carried her on his back. At dances, they told her what boys not to associate with.

There are nine years between Sister Rosanne and her older sister, Sister Renee who entered Annunciation Monastery some years before Sister Rosanne. Sister Renee had a great influence on Sister Rosanne’s monastic vocation as did the Annunciation Monastery Sisters who taught her CCD.

Becoming a nurse or a flight attendant were Sister Rosanne's early goals because she thought these professions were glamorous. But as she grew, service to God and the Church became more important to her. At an early age, she wanted to step out and help others through becoming a Benedictine Sister.

For 41 years, Sister Rosanne ministered at the University of Mary in financial aid, accounting services and payroll and benefits. As director of student financial aid for 25 years, she especially enjoyed her contact with students. “I really miss the relationships with students, she admits. “Students are important; I liked to assist them with finances and other matters. Sometimes all I did was listen.” Now as she sees University of Mary graduates making a difference in the lives of others, she beams, “Our graduates make me proud.”

Sister Rosanne continually extends herself to others. She is the canonical treasurer for Annunciation Monastery and oversees the financial affairs of the community. She also serves on the board of directors for CHI St. Alexius Medical Center, the monastic council and chairs the monastery’s Finance Council.

It was the call to serve the Church that led Sister Rosanne to become a sister, but it is the strength of the Benedictine life – community, prayer and service--that has sustained her in community for 50 years. “My God and my Benedictine sisters are my support,” she says with gratitude.

## Sister Helen Kilzer, OSB - 75 Years

Sister Helen Kilzer, well-known for her passion for studying and teaching world languages and cultures, has reached her 75th anniversary as a Benedictine Sister. Family and friends are invited to visit her anytime at Maple View North in Bismarck.

Sister Helen, a native of Richardton N.D., graduated from St. Benedict's College in St. Joseph, Minn., and entered St. Benedict's Monastery. She was there for four years before she volunteered to help found what is now Annunciation Monastery.



*Sister Helen Kilzer, OSB (Then and now)*

From 1944-1960, she taught junior high students in Bismarck, Dickinson and Mandan. "How I loved them," she exclaimed. At St. Joseph's School in Mandan, she served as principal from 1955-1960.

Then she became involved in teaching languages which changed her life and the lives of many of her students. She taught French at St. Mary's Central High School, Bismarck, and at Ryan High School in Minot. At the University of Mary she taught German and French and expanded the curriculum to include Spanish. She was 75 when she went to Spain to learn Spanish. She also taught German to students at St. Mary's Grade School in Bismarck.

Sister Helen believed that the best way to learn a language is to speak it. Therefore, her students could only speak the language they were learning in the classroom. She took groups of students to Europe, Mexico and Quebec to immerse them in the language and culture of the people. "I wanted my students to learn to respect and appreciate the differences in others," she said.

*"To learn a new language is to gain a new heart."*

*-Goethe*

A quote by German writer, Goethe, was posted on her bulletin board, "To learn a new language is to gain a new heart." Sister Helen instilled in her students a heart for other people and cultures. One student said, "Sister Helen did something very few people who stand in front of classrooms know how to do. She made us believe that what we were doing was important, significant in some way which perhaps we had yet to discover. We sensed in her a fellow student, who had a deep passion for learning. She brought us along on the strength of that commitment and drew us into sharing it. There is no better reason for calling someone teacher.

Active in the Foreign Language Association of North Dakota (FLAND), Sister Helen served as its first president in 1968. In 2010 she was honored with the Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award, which was created in appreciation for her dedication to teaching world languages and cultures. This award is now being given to others who impact the language arts in significant ways.

This lifelong learner truly has a heart for God, languages and people. Sister Helen ends her monastic vocation story with "One lifetime is really much too short for all there is to do and be and become."

## Sister Elizabeth Novy, OSB - 75 Years

“It’s mind boggling to be celebrating my 75th jubilee!” exclaims Sister Elizabeth Novy. “I am almost 99 years old and I’m healthy overall. My advice is to keep moving. I don’t sit in front of the TV unless there is something really special on, like the Pope.”

Sister Elizabeth has influenced the lives of thousands of children and their families through 67 years of teaching, 46 of them in the first grade.

“I knew in the first grade that I wanted to become a teacher,” she says. “I liked my first grade teacher and wanted to be like her.” She didn’t meet Benedictine Sisters until she was in high school but as a child already had a love for Jesus. “I felt it inside me,” she says.

Sister Elizabeth grew up on a farm near Wing with eight siblings, four girls and four boys. She went to a one room school near Wing until she graduated from 8th grade. Since there was no high school close to home, Sister Elizabeth went to Bismarck to attend St. Mary’s High School and boarded at St. Mary’s Grade School which was in the same building. She recalls, “Even though I had never been away from home, I never felt homesick. I think it’s because I wanted to be a teacher so much.”

She liked the Benedictine sisters at St. Mary’s. “Our dormitory was above the chapel and we could hear them chanting the Liturgy of the Hours,” she says. The Sisters had Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament monthly and Sister Elizabeth always prayed there. “I think that helped my decision to become a sister.”

She wanted to go to the monastery after graduating from high school in 1933 but her mother didn’t think her father would approve. She attended Dickinson College to earn a teaching certificate and taught in a one room school near Wing for four years.

One day she dared to ask her dad if he would take her to Bismarck. When he asked why, she said, “So I can take the bus to St. Benedict’s in St. Joseph, Minn. to become a sister.” To her surprise, he said, “That’s the best thing you could do!”

She made her monastic profession at St. Benedict’s July 11, 1940. She recalls a visit by Bishop Vincent Ryan in search of sisters for the Bismarck foundation. Since Sister Elizabeth was from North Dakota, Bishop Ryan told her, “You belong to North Dakota.” In 1944 she volunteered to become a founder of what is now Annunciation Monastery.

Sister Elizabeth taught at St. Joseph’s and St. Patrick’s schools in Dickinson, St. Vincent School, Mott; St. Mary’s School, Bismarck, and finally landed at Cathedral Grade school where she taught first graders for 32 years.

“I enjoyed first graders,” she says. “In those days, there was no kindergarten so they came to me knowing absolutely nothing about reading. In about six weeks they were reading. I was delighted.”



*Sister Elizabeth Novy, OSB (Then and now)*

Sister Elizabeth has a heart for the poor. She coordinated a fundraiser at Cathedral and taught students how to grow plants and make religious items to sell. The first sale raised \$26. That amount increased to \$2,000 four years later. "It was a special day when first grade teacher Mrs. Renner, the students and I made the trip to the Bishop's House to give him the money for the African Mission. Then we took the other \$1,000 to Father Tom Kramer for the God's Child Project."

At age 83 she was given a trip to Guatemala to help children in the God's Child Project. "It was important for the children to realize that I cared enough to leave a comfort zone for their sake. These are very special children and I enjoyed being with them."

Over the past 75 years Sister Elizabeth has encouraged others to "put the focus on God and your ministry, and to not worry so much about other things. Have faith that everything will work out as God has planned."

## Sponsorship Formation Day Brings Leaders Together



On May 14, leaders from CHI St. Alexius Health/CHI Garrison and the University of Mary gathered for the sixth annual Sponsorship Formation Day event hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.

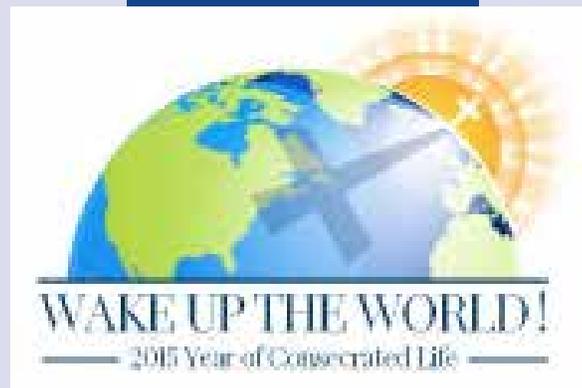
"We realize the tremendous amount of pressure people face in the workplace and in their personal lives," explains Sister Nancy Miller, prioress. "Our theme '*Balance, Moderation & Benedict*,' seemed very fitting as we work together to fulfill the mission of Jesus while learning ways to find balance and respond to situations in a Christ-like manner."

With wisdom and sensitivity, speakers Claudia Dietrich and Zanne Ness offered ideas to promote a sense of balance, while incorporating the Benedictine values of respect, hospitality, community and service.

# Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life

Pope Francis' proclamation of 2015 as the "Year of Consecrated Life," inspired religious communities to reflect upon the gift of consecrated life," shares Sister Nancy Miller, prioress. "In conjunction with the Diocese of Bismarck, Assumption Abbey and Sacred Heart Monastery, we enjoyed the opportunity to host public open houses to share the many blessings of consecrated life with the civic community."

In addition to these individual open houses, a public celebration sponsored by the Diocese of Bismarck, Annunciation Monastery, Assumption Abbey and Sacred Heart Monastery was held on April 25 at the University of Mary. The day included keynote speakers, Sister Anna Laura Karp and Father Cary Landry. Breakout panels on a variety of topics were offered. The day concluded with a Mass celebrated by Most Reverend David Kagan, bishop of Bismarck.



*(Photos by Deacon Joe Krupinsky)*





# Safe in the Hands of God

April 13-14, 2015, are days many will never forget. The dry, windy conditions were just perfect for a wildfire which started on April 13 and seemed relatively contained until gaining strength and jumping Apple Creek the next day. Consuming flames and smoke raced toward Annunciation Monastery, the University of Mary and homes nearby. Sisters, students and residents were evacuated as fire crews worked to extinguish the fire. The North Dakota National Guard dumped thousands of gallons of water via Black Hawk helicopters from above. The Sisters of Annunciation Monastery express deep gratitude to the countless people who helped, ensuring nobody was hurt. Sister Lawrence Fischer may have summed it up best, “We are safe in the hands of God.”



*Sister Lawrence Fischer watches the advancing fire.*



*April 15, 2015*



*Idelle Badt and Sister Hannah Vanorny bake cookies for the firefighters.*



*Monastery grounds on June 23, 2015*



## Sister Kathleen Atkinson Finalist for 2015 Lumen Christi Award

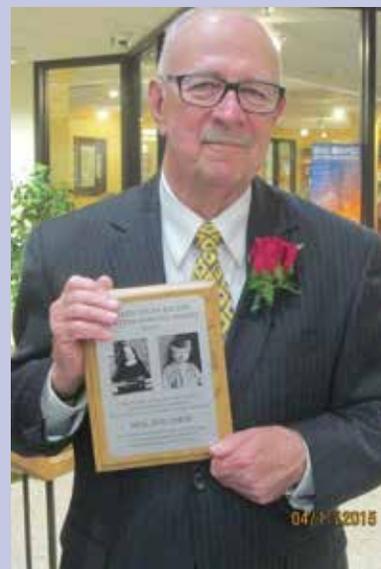
Congratulations to Sister Kathleen Atkinson, one of the top ten finalists nominated for the Catholic Extension Services “2015 Lumen Christi Award.” She founded *Ministry on the Margins* to support those who often fall through the cracks and are living on the margins during times of transition, including former prisoners, the homeless, and at-risk youth. Since 2014, the program has served over 2,000 people and provided basic support including food, clothing, gas vouchers, and household items. God bless all of the nominees for their dedicated service and commitment to the least of God’s people.



## Souther Awarded the Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award

Neil Souther, former Latin, French and English teacher for Bismarck Public Schools and later Mandan Public Schools, has been awarded the Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award by the Foreign Language Association of North Dakota, of which Neil was an active member. Neil taught in Bismarck for over 35 years, and, after retiring from the district, returned to the profession to teach Latin in Mandan for eight years. He retired in 2013. He was instrumental in bringing the Junior Classical League to North Dakota, in the writing of the North Dakota foreign language standards, and in developing the introductory foreign language classes at the middle schools in Bismarck. He was, and continues to be, an inspiration to his students and fellow educators because of his passion for and dedication to learning languages.

(contributed by: Valerie Kling, Susan Devine and FLAND)



Neil Souther was awarded the Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award by FLAND.

*The Sister Helen Kilzer Lifetime Service Award was created for two purposes: first, to honor Sister Helen Kilzer, who has demonstrated a lifetime of service to the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures; second, to honor those, such as retired teachers and professionals who have served in the profession of the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures; and who, like Sister Helen Kilzer, continue to demonstrate a lifetime commitment to the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures even after retirement.*

## Sister Thomas Welder Receives Honorary Doctorate

On May 16, 2015, Sister Thomas Welder received an honorary doctorate degree, the highest honor bestowed by any college or university, from Belmont Abbey College, Charlotte, NC.

Sister Thomas served the longest tenure as female president at any college or university (University of Mary) in America at the time she retired in 2009. She served as president for 31 years.

Active in community, state and national professional, civic and religious organizations, Sister Thomas has promoted and modeled the Benedictine values. Under her leadership, Mary College expanded to university status in 1986 and added undergraduate and graduate degree programs at locations throughout the state and region. During her presidency, enrollment grew from 925 students to nearly 3,000 in 2004. She continues to serve as president emerita at the University of Mary.

Congratulations and prayers to Sister Thomas. Thank you for your inspirational leadership!



## Sister JoAnn Krebsbach Award for Distinction in Theology

On May 1 the University of Mary inaugurated the Sister JoAnn Krebsbach Award for Distinction in Theology at Baccalaureate. The award will recipients who demonstrate the values that speak of the University of Mary's heritage and hope.

Sister JoAnn Krebsbach, a University of Mary alumna, served as a faculty member of the division of philosophy and theology for 28 years, including 24 years as chair. A woman of the Gospel whose deepest heart held our Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine mission in sacred trust, Sister JoAnn invited students to a broader and deeper understanding of God, who is Love. Her students discovered in her a renewed sense of their dignity as human persons, as children of God, and as members of the Church.

Graduating students nominated for the Sister JoAnn Krebsbach Award for Distinction in Theology demonstrate high academic achievement, engage the study of theology in a spirit of prayer and service, participate in the liturgical life of the University, demonstrate commitment to the University's Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine mission and identity, and show promise that they will use their studies in theology in faithful service to the academy, the culture, or the Church.



Text courtesy of Monsignor James P. Shea, president of the University of Mary.

# Happenings



(above and right)  
A big thank you to Assistant Fire Chief Dan and Lieutenant Casey from the Bismarck Rural Fire Department for coming out to teach fire safety and instruct our sisters and staff on how to use a fire extinguisher. They brought a simulator that offered a hands-on opportunity to extinguish a “fire.”



(left)  
As the school year drew to a close, we were blessed with a visit from students from Light of Christ Catholic Schools. Sister Patricia Schap, who volunteers in their classroom, gave them a tour, answered questions, and presented them with Benedictine medals. The kids had treats with the sisters after their tour.

# In Loving Memory

## Sister Francis Schweitzer, OSB



Sister Francis Schweitzer, OSB

Born: June 24, 1920

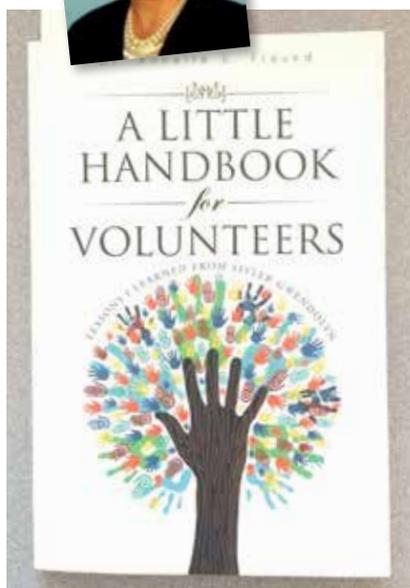
Professed: July 11, 1942

Died: March 23, 2015

Sister Francis cherished God, family and her Benedictine community. An excellent cook and baker she delighted in bringing joy to others through her delicious meals and baked goods. She was a cook at St. Joseph's Convent in Mandan for 14 years and manager of the dietary department at Garrison Memorial Hospital for 34 years.

She loved nature and enjoyed fishing, gardening and watching wildlife. Warm, friendly and compassionate, Sister Francis took a great interest in people. With a grateful heart, she always appreciated the care and love she received from others. A wise person, Sister Francis said, "Be yourself and be happy. Be thankful every day for what God has given you."

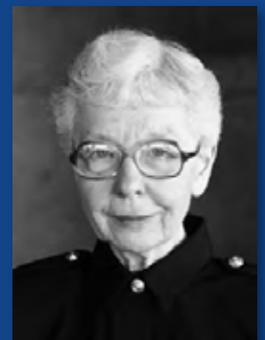
## A Little Handbook for Volunteers



With gratitude, we added a new book to the monastic library, a gift from Dr. Annette S. Freund, author of *A Little Handbook for Volunteers: Lessons I Learned from Sister Gwendolyn* (Pattock) of Annunciation Monastery.

The book is based on the wisdom Dr. Freund has gained from more than 30 years working on volunteer boards. Through a series of cases, she explains the ten most important lessons she has learned as a board member and from her beloved mentor, Sister Gwendolyn. Anyone considering volunteering for a board or currently serving on one will benefit from Dr. Freund's experience, sense of humor, and advice.

Dr. Freund says, "Sister Gwendolyn Pattock, OSB was an early mentor, teacher, role model, and inspiration. She was a Benedictine monastic attracted to divine goodness and beauty, finding it imaged in music, in flowers, and in the faces of children. A versatile and dedicated religious woman, she spent a half-century in pediatric nursing. Later she served as a mental health consultant and alumni director, then as assistant to the president of the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. She died in 2005 at the age of 93."



Sister Gwendolyn Pattock

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## A Joyful Spirit Retreat for Girls Entering 5th-10th Grades

Friday, July 24 - 9:30am to 3:30pm

Enjoy a fun day of activities with the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery, including: meeting new friends, prayer with the Sisters, games, crafts, skits and food. Everyone will receive a "Joyful Spirit" t-shirt. Suggested donation: \$5/scholarships available.



To register contact Sister Hannah at 701-425-9734 or email: [hvanorny@gmail.com](mailto:hvanorny@gmail.com)