



# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2013

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



## Sister Agatha Grateful for 50 Years of Monastic Profession

With a grateful heart, Sister Agatha Muggli celebrated 50 years of monastic profession on May 18 at Annunciation Monastery.

Sister Agatha is novice director at the monastery, chair of the Initial Formation Committee, a liturgist, musician and organist. She is vice president of the Federation of St. Benedict, an active member of the American Benedictine Formation Conference and serves on the Mission Effectiveness Committee at St. Alexius Medical Center and on the board of trustees at the University of Mary.

Sister Agatha's story continues on page 3



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

**W**e had a rather unusual spring this year. An early Lent and Easter threw us off a bit and brief glimpses of green grass dissolved into a record-setting snowfall from an April blizzard. Each time we rejoice in seeing the sunshine break through the clouds, a cold, gray day seems to follow, reminding us of how we would like to snuggle back into our beds and hibernate. This pattern of highs and lows is so much like life. We are happy; we are sad. We are energized; we are lethargic. We are interested; we are indifferent. Through our roller-coaster-like humanness, may we remember God's constancy during these ever-changing seasons in life.

Constancy and stability are part of our charism as Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. We are grounded in this place and steeped in the Benedictine values that are our foundation. We are steadfast in our commitment to prayer, community and service. As sponsors of three excellent Catholic, Benedictine institutions: the University of Mary, St. Alexius Medical Center and Garrison Memorial Hospital, we are grateful for their constancy and commitment to further the mission of Jesus through service in higher education and healthcare.

On May 7 our sisters met with leadership from our sponsored ministries for our fourth annual Sponsorship Formation event, a day of learning, sharing and deepening our commitment to our mission and values. We embraced the theme, *"The Challenge of Ethical Living,"* presented by J. Michael Stebbins, Ph.D., senior vice president of Mission Services for Avera Health in Sioux Falls, SD. How exciting it was to gather together and focus on the values that assure our institutions are mission-driven. Through these face-to-face conversations, we get to know one another on a deeper level and discuss "matters that matter." From the responses we heard at the end of the day, those in attendance felt readied for their next steps in sharing and living out the mission in dynamic ways.

We are also grateful for Sister Agatha Muggli's example of constancy, commitment and faithfulness. She celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of monastic profession on May 18. Sisters, family and friends gathered at Annunciation Monastery to celebrate this joyful occasion. Her story is told in this issue of Tidings.

It is our hope that our sisters' stories might help give voice to God's call in the lives of women who may be called to religious life. We thank our friends who contributed to our recent vocations appeal so we can continue to reach out to those women and invite them to experience the vibrant life of our monastic community. Your gifts help us reach out in meaningful and multi-faceted ways through enhanced technology and communications.

We've also included several photos to offer a glimpse into our daily life and ministries. Our "Ministry on the Margins," story shows how Sister Kathleen Atkinson, and others, respond to the needs of those who slip through the cracks in society. Sister Hannah Vanorny shares one of her blog posts on the diversity in our monastic community. Her blog can be found on Annunciation Monastery's website, twitter and facebook page. We hope you take some time to take a look and "Like" us on facebook! Your comments are always appreciated.

We built our home to be a stable place of prayer and hospitality. It is our hope that all who enter our doors feel welcomed as Christ. Know that throughout the changing of the seasons, our sisters are praying for God's people. Even when we get surprised with a blanket of over 17 inches of snow, we know green grass and new life awaits. God is with us.

Peace,

*Sister Nancy Miller, OSB*

Sister Nancy Miller, OSB

*Sister Agatha Grateful for 50 Years of Monastic Profession (continued from page 1)*

Sister Agatha is the youngest of ten children born to Joseph and Barbara (Schmidt) Muggli. Her great love of the outdoors was nurtured by life on the family farm near Miles City, MT. She gained a deep appreciation for life and growth. This appreciation was the beginning, and is the foundation, for her life as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery.

Faith and family were celebrated in the Muggli home and Sunday Mass was an absolute. Sister Agatha recalls Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation as days of prayer and family time. Work was kept to a minimum. Her early love of music began with memories of special time with her father who sang Stephen Foster songs. She took piano lessons and was prompted to practice by her mother, who said, "Go and practice, someday you'll be glad." Today Sister Agatha says, "Yes, thank you, mama. I am glad!"

Despite her plan to "not" become a sister, God's call became a whisper throughout her life. Fleeting thoughts of becoming a sister became more frequent as time passed. She contacted the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and, after entering, it seemed like a good fit. Sister Agatha credits her piano teacher, Sister Cecile, for planting the seed to become a music teacher. This felt like another good fit. Sister Agatha earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN. It was there that she learned to play the organ.



Sister Agatha says she "learned music by teaching it, especially teaching piano." She taught chorus at Priory High and taught school music and piano at Cathedral in Bismarck, and at St. Joseph's and Christ the King in Mandan, ND.

In 1971, at the urging of Prioress Sister Kathryn Zimmer, Sister Agatha earned her master's degree in Fundamental Catholic Spirituality from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. This prepared her to guide women in the first stages of becoming members of the monastery.

After working in initial formation at the monastery, she served in the University of Mary placement office. In 1992 she became subprioress for the monastery for eight years, under the leadership of prioresses Sister Susan Lardy and Sister Susan Berger.

In 2000 Sister Agatha became full-time initial formation director at Annunciation Monastery. She compares her love of working in a flowerbed to the experience of seeing growth in the women she guides. "There are definitely "aha" moments that reveal genuine growth in a person, rather than just compliance with expected behaviors."

Sister Agatha sums up the past 50 years of Benedictine monastic life like this:

*"As life has gone on, I have come to appreciate and prize the rich dimensions of community, especially the liturgy, prayer and Eucharist—enhanced through music.*

*I value having experienced the post-Vatican II Church which challenges me to grow in my faith. My life is greatly enriched by opportunities to learn with my sisters. I treasure being in a group of women who share hopes and values and daily commit to serving others. Monastic community calls me forth in ways that I probably wouldn't pursue on my own and for that I am grateful."*

*Sister Agatha tends to the needs of the monastery plants. Her hobbies include walking, biking and gardening. "I have tattered wildflower books that have traveled many miles with me!"*



*Katherine "Kathy" Joslin and Sister Kathleen Atkinson's friendship began at Grandma's House, a low-income, single-room apartment building in downtown Bismarck.*

## Ministry on the Margins Helps Those Who Fall Through the Cracks

Sister Kathleen Atkinson's phone rang as she sipped her favorite latte. Kathy Joslin, a mother of three, was on the line. She asked if Sister Kathleen might be able to lend her some money to buy a carton of milk. Joslin says, "Me and my kids had hit a rough patch and we were just getting our bills paid; there was nothing left over for groceries, not even a carton of milk." "What a perspective that was," recalls Sister Kathleen. "I bought her a gallon of milk for the same price as my latte."

The two first met on Christmas Eve, 2011. Kathy and her children were living in a room at Grandma's House, which provides low-income, single-room housing.

Sister Kathleen and friends were delivering gifts to those living at Grandma's. The residents were called downstairs and greeted by smiling faces and Christmas wishes. They were given pillows, socks and other personal products. Kathy was about to return to her room with her gifts when Sister Kathleen stopped her and gave her \$20, saying, "Do something fun with your kids for Christmas."

They got to know each other better through "Grocery Bingo" nights at Grandma's House, an activity coordinated by Sister Kathleen. Prizes include food and daily necessities. Although times were hard, Kathy and her children felt blessed to be at Grandma's, a place she refers to as a "little community of people who help each other with the little they have."

## *“You don’t need money to give back...”*

Even though Kathy was having a hard time making ends meet, she took note of others, saying, “I was outside one day and saw a young woman with her baby, sleeping behind a dumpster. It broke my heart.” Kathy invited her in, fed her and gave her a warm sweatshirt. That haunting memory made her want to do more to help others.

With the weather getting colder, Kathy wanted to hold a blanket and coat drive at Grandma’s. With Sister Kathleen’s help, Kathy organized the drive. She and her children made posters from notebook paper and distributed them to downtown businesses.

On a whim, Kathy walked into MOJO radio station and asked if they would hang one of her posters. The station manager stopped her and asked, “Before I take the sign, tell me exactly why you are doing this.” She says, “I explained my situation and about the countless people who are in such dire need. A few days later he called and asked if I’d be on the radio. Now that was something I would never expect, or ask for. I was so nervous and was glad Sister Kathleen came with me for support. The radio interview went well and we were all in tears by the end of our conversation.”

The drive was a success; blankets and coats filled 39 big black garbage bags. Kathy says, “It felt really good; I realized

we don’t need money to give back. We can always do something.” Some days she and Sister Kathleen would walk or drive around handing out blankets and coats to those who wanted them. She was careful to donate them to places that will give items out with no questions asked. “Homeless people don’t always have the resources like cars, phones, or computers to get referrals for the things they need.”

### *Moving into Homelessness*

As much as Kathy’s family loved Grandma’s House, they could no longer afford the rent. During Christmas of 2012, she and her children had to leave. Sister Kathleen admits, “Moving someone *into* homelessness is one of the most difficult things I have ever done.” Kathy and her children have moved into a tent until they get on their feet again. Kathy’s health prohibits her from working so she is awaiting her disability hearing.

### *Slipping Through the Cracks*

Kathy now joins Sister Kathleen at the monthly meetings of the Missouri Valley Homeless Coalition. They join the ongoing discussion on how to address the dramatic increase in homelessness in and around Bismarck. Sister Kathleen represents the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and “Ministry on the Margins.” As for Kathy, “I represent myself. I represent the homeless. I’m one of those on the margins, who slipped through the cracks.”

After moving out of Grandma's House, Kathy and family lived with a friend for a brief period. The following reflection is from Kathy during that time.

## The Walking Weary

*“Sometimes I look out the window and see men from the Ruth Meier’s Hospitality House, in the freezing cold, walking to work and dragging themselves back again in the evening.*

*They are cold and exhausted. It breaks my heart and I feel guilty. I can relate because my children and I had to walk everywhere when we lived at Grandma’s House. If we needed groceries, we walked. If we needed anything, we walked. I am fortunate to have a few people I can count on to give me rides sometimes. If you look, you can see them everywhere – the walking weary.”*



*~ Katherine Joslin*



*Sister Stephanie Dolyniuk, Sister Patricia Schap, Toni Staudinger, Helen Helm and Sister Nancy Miller, prioress, gather after the oblation ceremony.*

## Welcome New Oblates, Toni and Helen!

Congratulations to Toni Staudinger and Helen Helm who made their oblation during a special ceremony on October 7 of last year. As oblates, they join other Christian lay women and men in their desire to associate themselves with Annunciation Monastery and live according to the Rule of St. Benedict.

Through monthly meetings and relationships with sisters and other oblates, these individuals seek God and integrate prayer and work into their daily lives, demonstrating Christ's presence in the world.

For more information about becoming an oblate, contact Sister Patricia, oblate director, at 701-255-1520.



## Sister Rosanne Receives 40-Year Service Award

**S**ister Nancy Miller, prioress of Annunciation Monastery, and Monsignor James Patrick Shea, president of University of Mary, congratulate Sister Rosanne Zastoupil (center) on her 40 years of service at the University of Mary. Sister Rosanne serves as director of Payroll and Benefits.



Children from St. Mary's Grade School brightened our day as their classroom volunteer, Sister Patricia Schap, led them on a tour of the monastery. They spent time in the monastery chapel and learned about St. Benedict and joined the sisters for treats in the dining room. Sister Patricia gave each child a Benedictine medal.



**C**ongratulations and best wishes to Dean Mattern. We are grateful for his six years of service as administrator of Garrison Memorial Hospital and Turtle Lake Hospital. We keep Dean and family in our prayers!

*Lt. to rt.: Sister Nancy Miller, Val Fast, Dean Mattern, Anne Reinholt, Sisters Madonna Wagendorf, Rosanne Zastoupil and Rose Schweitzer.*



## Sponsorship Formation Event Inspires Leaders

**T**he Sisters of Annunciation Monastery hosted the fourth annual Sponsorship Formation Day event on May 7. Over 130 leaders gathered from the sisters' sponsored ministries: St. Alexius Medical Center, Garrison Memorial Hospital and the University of Mary to engage in the theme, "The Challenge of Ethical Living." The day was facilitated by J. Michael Stebbins, Ph.D., senior vice president of Mission Services for Avera Health, Sioux Falls, SD.



*Most Reverend David Kagan, Bishop of Bismarck, (center) joins the discussion on ethics and living out the mission each day.*



Dr. J. Michael Stebbins (center, back row) and sisters gathered after an exciting day of sharing at the Sponsorship Formation event. Pictured (Lt. to rt., front row): Sisters Nancy Miller, Mariah Dietz, Denise Ressler, Agatha Muggli, Agnes Reinert, Madonna Wagendorf, Madelyn Louttit. (Lt. to rt., back row): Sisters Susan Lardy, Melissa Cote, Thomas Welder, Nicole Kunze, Renee Zastoupil, Patricia Schap, Rosanne Zastoupil, J. Michael Stebbins (speaker), Sisters Janet Zander, Claire Schmitt, Rosemary DeGracia, JoAnn Krebsbach, Nancy Gunderson, Hannah Vanorny, Gerard Wald and Kathleen Atkinson.

## A Joyful Spirit: Girls, God and Fun!



**Friday, August 2**  
**Annunciation Monastery**  
**10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Back by popular demand! Learn about God and inspirational women of the Bible. This day is packed with laughter, learning, crafts, fun and food. It is a unique opportunity to meet new friends (including our sisters)!

**For more information**, contact Sister Hannah at 701-425-9734. Preregistration is required. Suggested donation: \$5/includes food and craft supplies.



*The group took in some cultural attractions while in Washington, D.C.*

## Sisters Join Students in March For Life

One bus, packed with 44 University of Mary students, two sisters of Annunciation Monastery, and one chaperone made for an interesting 28-hour drive to Washington, D.C. for the March for Life in early April. It was Sister Hannah Vanorny's second march and Sister Melissa Cote's first. Sister Hannah serves as advisor of the Collegians for Life student organization at the University of Mary.

The group took part in the pro-life Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine. From that powerful and emotional experience, they visited other sights including the Lincoln Memorial and Vietnam Memorial. The next day, they enjoyed a tour of the Capitol building before the march. The inclement weather didn't dampen the spirit of the marchers said Sister Hannah. "Our huge University of Mary banner captured a lot of attention." While it was a challenge to keep such a large group together in a crowd of 500,000, the sisters were impressed with the positive atmosphere of the rally. "To join that many people who are praying for an end to abortion and to meet others for the purpose of honoring life was inspirational."

Sister Melissa was amazed by the turnout and response of younger people. She says it gave her great hope to see signs proclaiming these powerful words, "We are the pro-life generation!"

*"Having never been in the March for Life before, I had no idea what to expect. I was rather concerned as to what would happen with the walk from the Smithsonian to the Supreme Court building. Would I be approached by a pro-choice activist? If so, how would I respond? Luckily, I never had to worry about that. I was quite overwhelmed by the amount of people in attendance. I heard that there were more than 500,000 people marching for the same great cause. I was greatly touched by the sheer amount of people there are who believe that all life is beautiful and should be protected."*

*~ Stephanie Sauter, University of Mary Student*

# Sister Rebecca's Music Sings Itself!

When Sister Rebecca Mayer was 12-years-old, she informed her mother, "I'm going to take piano lessons from the sisters." Her mother replied, "But we don't even have a piano!" She determinedly persisted and accepted Sister Lea Marie's invitation to practice piano at the sister's convent over the lunch hour. Sister Rebecca instantly loved to play.

She also took note of the joyful atmosphere at the sisters' convent -- something that would lead to her openness to God's call in her own life.

A short while after she started lessons, Sister Rebecca was surprised to come home from school to find a brand new piano in the living room. From playing simple songs to her favorite, "Silent Night," Sister Rebecca would often play long into the night. "My mom would almost have to pull me off the piano bench," she says. Her life has been filled with music—learning, teaching, playing and eventually composing.

Sister Rebecca's most recent musical endeavors include composing two Masses. "I wasn't asked to write the first one. I was trying to find Masses in the new translation that were simple enough for us to use at the St. Alexius Medical Center chapel—something that was rhythmically simple with a simple accompaniment. I studied a lot of material before deciding to write my own. It is written in a limited range, so it is easy to sing, and is based on Gregorian chant," she explains. She solicited advice from Sister Thomas Welder and Sister Agatha Muggli, both accomplished musicians, as she tweaked her *Annunciation Mass*. In her second Mass, *Mass of Faith*, she tried her hand at a metered setting and again used a limited range and simple rhythms.



Sister Rebecca Mayer displays her Mass compositions.

*"I'm going to take piano lessons from the sisters." Her mother replied, "But we don't even have a piano!"*

Sister Rebecca says the creating process is a mixed bag, both extremely frustrating and exhilarating. She compares it to a massive puzzle that has to be put together with a gratifying end result. "I can hear the music in my head as I write it down; it sometimes keeps me awake at night!"

The *Annunciation Mass* was used during a meeting of the sisters of the Federation of St. Benedict and some of the sisters asked for copies and are using it within their monasteries. It is also being used at St. Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C. It brings Sister Rebecca joy knowing that her music is being used at other monasteries.

Sister Rebecca tried out her second Mass with the sisters at their choir party. She admits being nervous until choir director, Sister Thomas Welder, exclaimed, "I can tell Sister Rebecca wrote this because the music sings itself!" Sister Thomas shares, "Sister Rebecca has a beautiful gift for composing; it's her creative work. We are so fortunate to enjoy the fruits of her time, talents and labor."

Sister Rebecca plays the organ for daily Masses at St. Alexius Medical Center and for prayer at St. Alexius convent. She also assists in the monastery development office.



# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR SISTERS...

These photos show some of the ways the sisters in our monastic community serve others. As we participate in the Benedictine life of "ora et labora," or "pray and work," we also balance our lives with leisure, art, beauty and solitude.

**HOSPITALITY**  
*"Let all be received  
as Christ."*





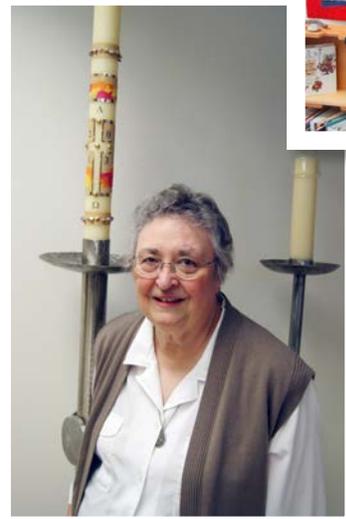
**Prayer is the center of our lives.  
We gather to pray for God's  
people three times every day.**



**Living in Community**



**Ministry/Service**



# Cupcake Community

by Sister Hannah Vanorny

I have been thinking quite a bit lately about the Benedictine values. Our University of Mary students memorize six important values and at the monastery we focus on many more. I am currently shooting a short movie in which each sister states a value that has significant meaning for her. This has been interesting. I have been hearing everything from the more usual values (prayer, hospitality) to ones that are stated less frequently (kindness, thankfulness).

However, actually becoming a sister has made me realize that no matter how diligently one memorizes values or how well a person can talk about them, there is nothing quite like actually LIVING the values. It is one thing to talk about community; it is quite another to live in a monastic community of 30 or so women.

Community is the value that is on my mind lately. I live in a fairly diverse community. I can discuss 90s music or current trends with other sisters in my age group (30-40) and then turn around and have a deep discussion on pre-Vatican II days with some of the older sisters. Talking with women who lived a somewhat enclosed life in the 1950s through the mid-1960s can be alternately interesting and exasperating. It is fascinating to hear about religious life “back then” and hear legendary stories of sisters long gone, but at other times I am frustrated by our lack of shared understanding. In the pop culture realm, most older sisters have never heard of the thousands of (pretty useless) names that roll around in my head: names of TV shows, characters, movies, songs, clothing brands from the 1960s to today. My looks and activities challenge some sisters who cannot understand how a person can: make it to age 32 without learning how to sew; eat chocolate for breakfast (I learned this was a no-no when I tried to make chocolate-chip muffins for breakfast once); wear boots for fashion (not weather-related) purposes; have time for that “facebook” thing; keep a (gasp!) somewhat untidy bedroom; drink *flavored* coffee; and actually like those strange, sugary cereals (example: Captain Crunch).



Of course, I am just as baffled by many of the older sisters’ activities and looks as they are of mine at times. Sister Gerard and I, for example, have an ongoing battle about what constitutes a proper pant-length...

Despite all of the superficial differences listed above, there is a deep unity that binds our community of sisters. It is a unity built of traveling on the same path together through life. We are a group of women with the same goal: to seek God together in community under the Rule of St. Benedict. Our daily common prayer unites us as we support each other through good times and bad.

Since I am a baker, I’ll put my idea of community in baking terms: we are like a giant batch of vanilla cupcakes, but all with different frostings—we have chocolate, maple, orange, caramel, mint, cinnamon, strawberry, and more. Like the cupcakes, our base is the same, but each sister represents a slightly different flavoring, which of course makes us interesting! I love variety when I bake and the same is true of my community; we are all different, unique women and I would not have it any other way!

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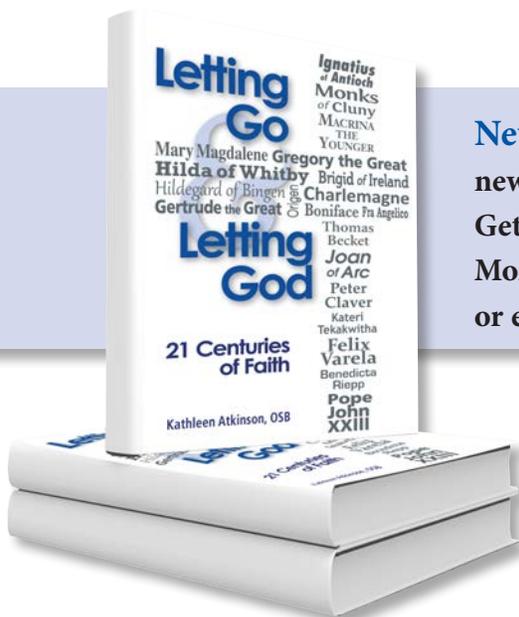
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If you are interested in making a donation in support of our ministries, please use the enclosed envelope. Thank you. Please remember us when making or revising your will. Our legal name is: Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, B.M.V. For more information, contact Jill Ackerman, director of communications and development, (701)355-8907 or: [jill@annunciationmonastery.org](mailto:jill@annunciationmonastery.org)



**Newly Released from Liguori Publications! Sister Kathleen Atkinson's newest book, "Letting Go & Letting God. 21 Centuries of Faith." Get your copy at your local bookstore, Annunciation Monastery, Amazon, Liguori Publications or ebooks today!**



What challenges do you suppose existed for early Christians...for those from the Middle Ages, or even for those who lived faithfully within this past century? Can you imagine that some of these extraordinary witnesses of faith could have had similar moments of questioning as they pondered the choices before them?

Our lives are weaved together by God. In her book *Letting Go and Letting God*, Sister Kathleen Atkinson features one person from each century who attempted to listen to the still, small voice of God. Atkinson tells us that "some periods of history were flourishing times for mystics, missionaries and saints; while other times were undistinguished." In this book, she attempts "to balance male and female personalities, various ethnicities and economic backgrounds, people who were actively involved in the world around them, and those who were inner travelers from their monastic cell."

God is calling you to join the cloud of witnesses—the saints. This is your century. Listen and let go, as God leads you to abundant life and witness to our Lord's goodness and love in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.