

God's Time

Called to the Journey



Advent and Christmas in Our Monastery

By Sister Agnes Marie Dauby

Just as many families have customs and traditions that are passed down through the generations, we also have many customs and traditions that we follow in our monastic community. We began the Advent season with the blessing of our Advent Wreath on November 28 before Vespers (Evening Prayer) for the First Sunday of Advent. Each weekend of Advent, sisters carrying the Advent candles led the community procession into the church for Vespers. They also processed out of church after prayer.

On December 17 we began singing the O Antiphons at Vespers. The O Antiphons are words sung or recited during Vespers from December 17 to December 23. These words are taken from various liturgical Christian traditions.

Each antiphon is a name of Christ or one of his attributes mentioned in Scripture. During the chanting of the O Antiphon and the Magnificat, all three bells are rung.

The O Antiphons are:

- December 17: O Wisdom
- December 18: O Adonai
- December 19: O Root of Jesse
- December 20: O Key of David
- December 21: O Rising Sun
- December 22: O King of Nations
- December 23: O Emmanuel

On December 18, the community gathered for the “Blessing of the Greens.” Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau blessed the sprigs of pine, and each deanery (small living group) was given a sprig to take to their living areas. This is the official beginning of decorating the monastery for Christmas. The monastery church, however, is not decorated until December 24, which is when the church is transformed from the Advent

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season to the Christmas season with evergreen trees, the Nativity scene, and poinsettias. The church was beautiful!

The blessing of the Nativity scene in church takes place at Vespers on Christmas Eve. Our community Christmas party follows Evening Prayer on December 24. This includes dinner, gifts, and fun. Everyone looks forward to this. Following the party was our Christmas Eve Mass, which began with a carol service by the sisters. The public is always invited, and as usual we had a great crowd. After Mass, everyone was invited to join us for eggnog, coffee, hot chocolate, and homemade rolls.

Another custom for this time of year is the blessing of our monastery and those who live here by our prioress. This takes place before Vespers on the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany.

Finding the Gift of Inner Peace

Our most recent Come & See Weekend, which was held January 8-10, did not start out leading to inner peace as the theme suggested. A snow storm which swept across the Midwest three days before the weekend made the roads a little dicey for travel. For this reason two of the four women registered to come chose to stay put and not chance the snowy roads and icy overpasses. The other two, who came from southern Indiana and Tennessee, chose to go for it, making it here safely Friday night. Unfortunately one went home sick Saturday morning.

Sister Jeana Visel provided the input for our weekend. She spoke on the theme *Finding the Gift of Inner Peace*. She focused especially on finding and keeping peace when one is discerning, in particularly discerning religious life or one's direction in life.

Sister Jeana writes, "When discerning, we look for the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness (generosity), faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). When I'm in a particular situation, does it bring out greater love, joy, peace, etc. in me, or does it bring out the opposite (what Galatians calls the "works of the flesh"): anxiety, immorality, jealousy, selfishness, or lack of self-control? When I think about being a sister, or when I visit a particular community, does it bring me anxiety or deep peace? Do I sense myself being more patient and kind, or more argumentative? Am I filled with a spirit



The doorway which serves as the entrance to our monastery is blessed with holy water. Then a piece of chalk is used to write a formula above the entry of the monastery. The formula incorporates the current year with the initials of the wise men (whose names are not recorded in Scripture but were given by tradition as Caspar [or Gaspar], Balthasar, and Melchior). So, this year it was written as: 20 + C + B + M + 10.

What are some of your customs? It might be interesting to take a look at them and to recall why we keep customs. Have a wonderful year!

For more photos from Advent and Christmas, visit Home @ the Dome on our web site: thedome.org/HomeDome.



of joy, or am I filled with jealousy and anger? We know God's will for us when we feel God's peace and joy and other fruits within us. This gift of inner peace is the presence of God within us, letting us know what is good."

While this may sound easy enough, we all know it is not. When in the midst of discerning, things can get skewed in our minds and hearts and feel big and overwhelming. A sense of inner peace is nowhere to be found. Sister Jeana suggests ways to help keep that inner piece such as praying (for example, Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina*), mindful living, and working for justice. "If we are preparing our minds and hearts to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, to recognize Jesus as the Christ, when the Spirit moves and speaks within, or Christ appears, or is identified by a voice from heaven, we will be ready to respond."

Saturday night of the weekend, many members of the community gathered for a fun game of dirty bingo. This game is played with playing cards and gifts. The "dirty" part comes when people steal gifts from one another, which is all part of the fun. Everyone seemed to have a good time, even if her gift was stolen.

For more information on upcoming Come & See Events, see page 6.

What I do... as a Ferdinand Benedictine

Sister Catherine Marie Duenne

Current Ministry

Teacher

Name of the place you minister

Notre Dame Academy

Location of the place you minister

Louisville, Kentucky

How long have you ministered there?

4 ½ years

Approximately how many people do you serve (typically)?

430 students

What ages of people do you serve?

3 year olds to 8th graders

What is a typical day like in your ministry?

Most days I run around like a chicken with my head cut off, but I enjoy it. My days are filled with teaching general music once a week to 3 year olds to 8th graders. When I'm not doing that, I'm planning for the school liturgies (practicing with the cantors, servers, choir and helping the class who has the Mass create the focus and petitions). When I'm not doing that, I'm working with the technology, taking pictures, helping the teachers, updating the school webpage or working on the yearbook. When I'm not doing that, I'm assisting in the 5th and 6th grade

math classroom. When I'm not doing that, I'm having Mass singing practice with about 150 students twice a week or working on a school program. Once a week, I attend class at Indiana University Southeast, working on a master's degree.



Tell a story about something that has happened in your ministry.

In 2008 when I made perpetual monastic profession, one of the students heard that I was becoming "a full-blooded nun." She thought I was having some kind of surgery.



How do you do what you do differently (from someone else in your position) because you are a Ferdinand Benedictine? How do you share our Benedictine and Monastic values?

I am aware that I represent the Ferdinand Benedictines. I am also aware that I may be the only religious sister some may encounter. Therefore, I strive to act like Christ and be a walking example of the Gospel and the Rule of St. Benedict. When people meet me, I want them to know that religious life is a viable and lifegiving option. There is much to gain. I believe that I am aware of my many blessings; therefore, I go through my day with peace and joy.

How do you find meaning in the ministry in which you are presently engaged?

I have been very blessed to take music lessons from our great musicians here at the monastery. I believe what I have been given is a gift, so I find meaning by sharing that gift with others. Because it has been freely given to me, I try to freely give. Others have helped me, so I in turn carry on their mission by helping those around me. I desire to help others use their talents and bring joy and praise to God.

How does your Benedictine, monastic community life support you in your ministry?

I am always able to find someone "who's been there." I have a wealth of resources and knowledge at my fingertips. I find support in everything I do. I am encouraged and challenged on a daily basis to become the person God calls me to be. The prayer life is rich and provides focus, stability, and meaning to my ministry.

Sister Mary Karen Hill's Story

I attended St. Michael's School at Madison, Indiana, for my elementary years. I was taught by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Kentucky. After my eighth grade, I came to the Academy Immaculate Conception here at Ferdinand as a freshman in 1947, and I graduated from the Academy in 1951. I felt a closeness to the religious schedule — daily Mass, religion classes, and, of course, the regular education classes that were taught by the Sisters of St. Benedict. I actually didn't think about religious life for myself until halfway through my senior year.

In community life we were all teachers, and there was a bondedness on the missions where I served. Our schedules were very much the same, which was helpful. I learned much about community living and the good example of others. Having taught in Evansville, Indianapolis, Vincennes, Fort Branch, the Academy and Jasper, I had lots of experiences with teachers, parishioners, clergy, and students.

I do find God in prayer, in the Psalms, and in the daily Mass readings. Each day, each year, there is a newness of understanding and a real feeling of gratitude of what I have received in my life. I do like to accept each day as a gift from God and to work on seeing God in those that I come in contact with each day.

In community, where I live at the monastery, I like to greet our employees and recognize their working with us. I know they have left their homes early in the morning and in all types of weather. If I am in the hallway here and I see them leaving for the day, I always like to thank them for being here and for their working with us.

Through service and ministry to others, I feel that what I can do in my music ministry is a gift from God. By our chanting the Psalms, singing the hymns at the Liturgy of the Hours

and Eucharist, I feel the responsibility to lead others at prayer when I am at the organ. I pray that my music

Sister Mary Karen gives piano lessons to area students who come to the monastery after school hours.

will give glory to God. I do have private music students who come for piano lessons here after school hours. They are interested and eager to learn. I admire the parents for giving them the opportunity to learn music and their encouragement.

We can help each other by seeing the needs of others and offering some "helps." I think it is good to greet the sisters in the hallway and at table. This recognition, I think, can brighten up the days of those who may be experiencing some difficulty. Our deaneries are very important to me, our conversations with each other, our recreational times, and our discussions on topics that we have read and prayed over. Times of jubilees in our deaneries are always special times of much gratitude for the Sister(s) who have lived the Benedictine way of life for 25/50/60+ years.

I think we have a good spirit here and in our community. Our community days are an indication of the interest our sisters have in being with the community. These times bring nearly all of our community members together for discussions, questions, and future planning. The desire that we all have is to grow stronger in our values and understanding. We don't know the future, but all things are possible with faith and prayer. May we all continue each day in doing our appointed tasks, remembering that each day we are striving to do God's will in our lives.



We would like to come visit you!

It is our hope to get to know you all better in the coming year.

Do you attend a college that has a Newman Center? We can present a discernment program for all the Catholic students who are a part of Newman!



Please email Sister Michelle or Sister Agnes Marie at vocation@thedome.org.

Other contact information is on page 6.

What's In a Day?

By Sister Michelle Sinkhorn

Every year during Vocation Awareness Week in January, several of us sisters go to elementary, junior high, and high schools and religious education programs to talk about vocations and religious life. This is a wonderful way to spread awareness about religious life and priesthood.

Always during these talks we allow time for the students to ask questions. Probably 98% of the time one of them will ask, "What is a typical day like for you?" or "What do you do all day?" So I thought that if that many young people wonder about that, probably many of you do as well.

First of all, there is no such thing as a typical day for any of us; however, I can probably give you a good idea of what most days are like for many of us.

All of our sisters, whether living here at Ferdinand or in one of our mission houses, pray Liturgy of the Hours two to three times a day. Here at Ferdinand, we pray Morning Prayer at 7 a.m. So what time one gets up is up to each

individual sister. I usually get up at 4:40 a.m. so I can have time to walk/exercise and take some time for personal prayer. For my personal prayer, I pray *lectio* with the daily scripture readings as well as listen to a daily meditation called *Pray as You Go*. Then I go to communal prayer, which is Morning Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) and Mass.

After Mass we have breakfast, in silence. Then each sister goes to her ministry. For me this is working in the Vocation Office, traveling to visit women or to do talks, or attending meetings. Our sisters have a variety of ministries. Some are in the medical field, education, parish ministry, social work, Hispanic ministry, etc. If a sister's ministry is in Evansville, Louisville, or Indianapolis (one to three hours away), she lives at one of our mission houses there. Those sisters also pray, live, and eat together, the same as we do at Ferdinand. Each house sets their own time of prayer and

meals, to fit all the sisters' ministry schedules.

Here at Ferdinand we pray a shortened version of Liturgy of the Hours for Midday Prayer, and this is followed by lunch. The afternoon is spent working at our ministry. I try to get out of my office by 4:15 p.m. or so and take some time for spiritual reading and quiet before Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) at 5. This is followed by supper.

The evenings, most of the time, are free to recreate or do whatever we wish. Many sisters like to watch the national and local news after supper. This is also a time to play cards, visit with sister friends, watch TV, go for a walk, play the Wii, read the paper, etc. For me, I try to spend one night a week making phone calls, to get in touch with women like you who are discerning religious life.

So, that's it in a nutshell. Obviously some days hold more excitement than others. But it is the consistent, dependable day-in and day-out that makes up the monastic horarium (schedule), and it is that monastic horarium that makes up our daily lives. Personally, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Above: Sister Rose Wildeman, Sister Susan Ann Necas, Postulant Alex Larsen, and Sister Kathy Bilskie enjoy a card game in the evening.

Left: Sisters Mary Francis Schafer, Jeana Visel, and Barbara Jean Luebbehusen pray Vespers at their house in Louisville.



2010 Come & See Events

February 26–28 (high school) • March 19–21

June 25–July 1 • October 15–17

- The weekend is free.
- Room, meals, and input are provided.
- Participants will pray, eat, and recreate with the sisters.
- This is a chance to visit with other women who are discerning religious life.
- Your parish, a local Serra Club, or Knights of Columbus may be able to help you with transportation costs. You never know — just ask!

For more information or to register, call the Vocation Office at 800-738-9999, email vocation@thedome.org, or register online at thedome.org/vocations.



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SISTERS
OF ST. BENEDICT
FERDINAND, INDIANA

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Seek. Pray. Share.

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are monastic women seeking God through the Benedictine tradition of community life, prayer, hospitality, and service to others. By our life and work, we commit ourselves to be a presence of peace as we join our sisters and brothers in the common search for God.