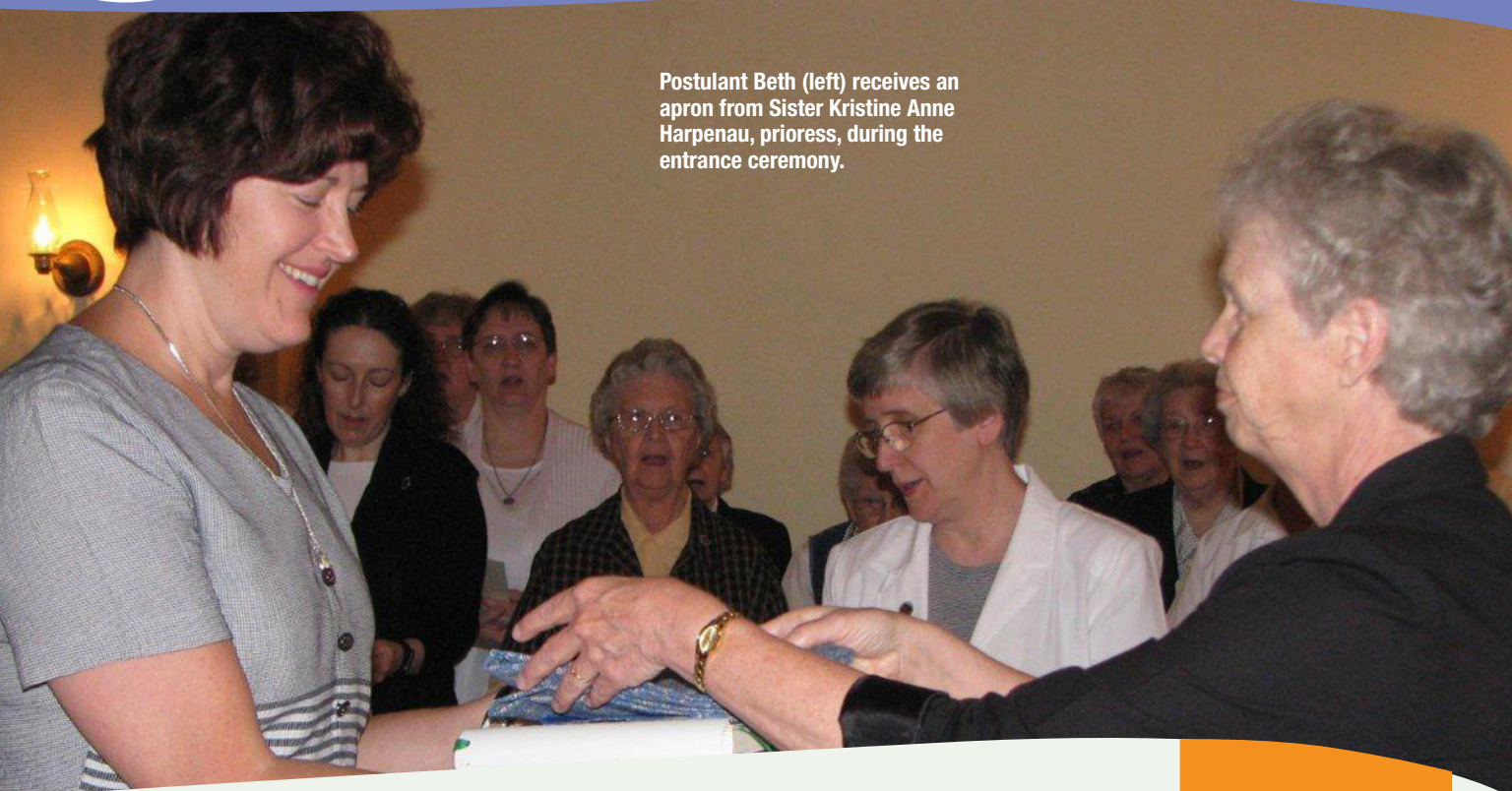


# God's Time

*Called to the Journey*

Postulant Beth (left) receives an apron from Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, prioress, during the entrance ceremony.



## Beth Fritsch becomes a postulant

*On August 21st, Beth Fritsch stepped through the front doors of our monastery as part of a ceremony which began before Morning Prayer. With the Benedictine community gathered inside the Blessed Virgin Room, Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau invited Beth to enter the monastery. Led one last time by Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, the vocation director, Beth stepped into the room and received from the prioress a St. Benedict medal as a sign of her intention to seek God within this community, Liturgy of the Hours books for her daily community prayer, and an apron as a symbol of work and service. With this simple yet profound ceremony, Beth was officially accepted into the postulancy, the first stage of incorporation into the religious community.*

**By Postulant Beth Fritsch**

Many factors have influenced my choice to enter monastic life. The first factor is my own contemplative inclination which only became more apparent to me as I matured. A second factor was attending a monastic experience as an "alternative" spring break experience when I was a junior in college. That

experience helped me to discover my own monastic heart and exposed me to many resources. As a result of this personal experience, I continued to nurture this part of myself all through my life, finding more and more aspects of monastic life that resonated with me, such as communal living, the common observance of the Liturgy of the Hours, and *lectio divina*. I have also enjoyed many friendships with Benedictine monastics, and these women have been helpful, influencing, and inspiring.

After much searching, I attended a Come & See Weekend at Ferdinand. I feel that this particular community was put in front of me or that I was directed to it by God. I was

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## Beth Fritsch becomes a postulant

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given a sister prayer partner, and she and I communicated via email. I then moved on to the Companion stage, and my companion sister and I read several books together and discussed questions on the phone. This was a good way to get to know the community in a gradual way over time. Through the guidance of the vocation director, Sister Michelle, I was assisted in my discernment process and knew I was ready

to proceed to the next step of becoming a postulant. I also had a Benedictine spiritual director who was very helpful to me and provided an excellent example of one who has lived monastic life for many years. A vocation is a personal experience, but many other people also play a significant role in the process. I am very grateful to all who helped me in my discernment process.

## Initial stages of formation in this Benedictine monastery

by Sister Rose Wildeman, postulant and novice director

When a woman wants to enter this Benedictine monastery, she goes through the testing, interviews, and evaluations led by the Vocation Admissions Board. Once she has done all of that and has been accepted, she has two possibilities for entering the monastery. She may choose to come in April/May as a candidate or she may choose to come in August as a postulant. The earlier entrance date as a candidate allows the woman to live, pray and work in the monastery for three or four months before becoming a postulant in August. She lives with the Formation Living Group, prays with the community, does duties such as dishes, cleaning, etc. — just like everyone else. She may also have a part-time job in the area. This is a time to get to know the community better and further her discernment regarding her decision to join this community. In August, she will be officially received as a postulant, along with any other women who chose to come at that time.

Another option for entrance into the community is to arrive in August. At that time, the woman will be officially received as a postulant. The entrance ceremony is held near the front door of the monastery. During the postulant year, she lives with the Formation Living Group, prays with the community, does assigned chores around the house, and takes three classes. The first class on the Psalms is taken at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. The other two classes are held here at the monastery — one on the Rule of St. Benedict and the other about the Liturgy of the Hours. The woman's time as a postulant usually lasts from eight to nine months. It is a time for her to get to know the sisters and discern her desire/call to live in this monastic community. It is also a time for the community to get to know her and discern her suitability. During her postulancy, she meets weekly with her director, who walks with her on her journey through this time of study and discernment. In addition, she meets several times with the prioress (the superior of the community).

After successfully completing her postulant year, she will become a novice. The ceremony of entrance into the novitiate is held in the dining room. She and her director receive a special blessing for the year. She is given her religious name and receives the books of study as a novice.

During the novitiate year, she continues her Rule of St. Benedict class and takes two other classes. The first is a Monastic Profession and Practices class, where she learns about the professions (vows) she will make at her first profession. She learns about the other practices and values of Benedictine life as well. The other class is Monastic History. In this class she studies monastic life from the second century through the present time. Her time as a novice is 15 months. It is a special time when she continues to discern her call to this monastic life and community. The community also continues to discern her suitability to be a member of this community. During her novitiate, she meets weekly with her director and several times with the prioress. After completing her novitiate year, she will spend several months preparing for her first profession and her ministry.



New members take a formation class studying the Rule of St. Benedict.





# What I do... as a Ferdinand Benedictine

## *Sister Jane Michele McClure*

### Current Ministry

Major Gifts Officer

### Name of the place you minister

Habitat for Humanity of Evansville

### Location of the place you minister

Evansville, Indiana

### How long have you ministered there?

6 years

### Approximately how many people do you serve?

25 partner families, 4000 volunteers

### What ages of people do you serve?

Very young children to way past 80

### What is a typical day like in your ministry?

I do a lot of building relationships with various individuals who have the interest and ability to support our ministry. Therefore, I might spend a lot of time meeting folks one on one, calling them, answering and following up on email communications.

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

I really enjoy being around our regular volunteers. Most of them are over the age of 75 and really love having a purpose and meaning in their lives. They get that from building Habitat houses.

Sister Jane Michele at the site where a Habitat house is being built.

### How do you do what you do differently (than someone else in your position) because you are a Ferdinand Benedictine?

I try to keep in mind that framing my day around personal prayer and morning and evening praise is a way of uniting what I do with all people of good will who want to work toward the reign of God.

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

I find it very meaningful because any time I get to practice forgiveness, patience, and any number of virtues that I still need to work on (that's all of them) then that's where I find meaning.

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

All the world would love to have what we have... to be on a spiritual pathway, to be following that pathway with others who want to do likewise, to be able to have support from each other, that is all a wonderful thing.



# Sister Celeste Boda's story

**“Let us go rejoicing,  
to the house of our God.”**

I am the only child born to Glynn and Leola Boda (both deceased), and was raised in a small town in Minnesota. My parents owned and operated a small hotel and restaurant and our lives revolved around that business. There was no Catholic school in Rush City, so my contact with women religious was restricted to two weeks each summer. Yet, there was one time, when I was a sophomore in high school, when I told my mother I wanted to become a nun. She told me to go to sleep, and the feeling would pass in the morning. For the most part it did, but I enrolled in the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota, primarily because I wanted to go to a Catholic school.

Once I was on campus and observed the sisters, I knew that I had come for more than a college education. My decision to pursue this possibility was solidified when I watched the community processing to the cemetery one late afternoon in October. They were singing as they processed and I thought, “This is the way it should be! Funerals should be joyful if we truly believe that death is our door to eternal life.” I entered St. Benedict's Monastery the following August. Five years later, even though I truly loved the Benedictine way of life, I knew I had some growing up to do.

The following 20 years were filled with a search for some meaning in my life, with many paths taken of which I am not proud. Finally, I was tugged back to my Benedictine roots and the desire for community prayer, the search for God with and through the community, the balance, the sensibility of the Rule. I became an Oblate at St. Ben's and that led me to Ferdinand. I knew I was home the first time I walked into our monastery church.

I truly believe that Benedictine monastic life is the best kept secret in America. The way we live, the common life, sharing all we have with one another, caring about one another and about God's creation, continue to be what the human heart seeks, but what has been lost in a society searching vainly for meaning in wealth and property. Our common prayer, steeped in Scripture, continues to speak to that deepest hunger, and as I grow older, I find my personal time with God more and more precious.

While I was in ministry at St. Joseph Church, I encountered the faces of God in the parishioners and so often in those who came to the parish office asking for financial assistance. It was there that I was most challenged to see that the dirty, unattractive, toothless face is indeed the face of God — and my own dirty face is reflected back to me. I am on the journey, but have a long way to go. I won't go far without this Benedictine family.

As to our future, I believe that as long as the human heart hungers for the mystery of God, we will be viable. Whether we witness as teachers, pastoral associates, accountants, or whatever needs in the Church we feel we can fill, so long as we are faithful to our monastic call of seeking God through the cenobitic life, we will have a future.



Sister Celeste does research in the monastery archives as part of her position as pre-editor of spiritual resources.

## Happenings around the monastery



### Perpetual Monastic Profession

Left to right: Sister Kristine Ann Harpenau, Sister Kathleen Marie Cash, Sister Jill Marie Reuber, and Sister Ann Francis Hillenbrand

Sister Jill Marie Reuber and Sister Kathleen Marie Cash made their perpetual monastic profession as members of our community on Saturday, October 1. Sister Jill Marie is a teacher at St. Patrick School in Louisville, Kentucky. Sister Kathleen Marie is a math teacher and soccer coach at Trinity High School in Louisville.

### Jubilarians

Front: Sister Martha Marie and Sister Mary Charlotte  
Back: Sister Joanna, Sister Mary Dominic, and Sister Lorraine DeVault

On Sunday, October 30, five of our sisters observed their jubilees — special anniversaries of their monastic profession. Sister Mary Charlotte Kavanaugh (75 years), Sister Martha Marie Tempel (70 years), and sisters Joanna Trainer, Lorraine DeVault, and Mary Dominic Frederick (60 years).



### Come & See Weekend

Front: Sister Mary Beth, Sister Sarah, and Sister Kate  
Back: Jen, Sister Michelle, Nicole, Sister Corda, and Sister Ida

Two women and six sister team members participated in the Come & See Weekend this fall, October 14–16. The theme for the weekend was “Rooted Through Change.” We learned about the vow of stability — which Benedictines make — and much more.



## Survey Says

We would like to offer our extra special gratitude to all those who completed our survey. We had 170 women take the survey, which is awesome! This information will help us focus our efforts. It will also help give our community a better picture of what young women are looking for in religious life. Here is some information from the survey.

The top three web pages that are visited most often were Facebook, YouTube, and Amazon. For vocation sites, you listed diocesan sites, Vocation.com, and VISION as your top three. As for social media sites, 86% of you are on one or more and 93% of those are on Facebook, followed by 42% on YouTube, and 29% on Twitter.

Where do you get your news? 85% get it from the internet while 40% get it from their local newspaper. Not far behind were local radio and television stations. As for time spent

online most of you spend one to four hours a day. Your favorite search engine of choice was by far Google at 95%, with Yahoo coming in second but with only 24%.

How do you spend your time? Not surprising, the highest number stated that they spend their free time involved in Church activities. Second to that was hanging out with friends, then volunteering.

Again, thank you so much to those who helped us out by taking the time to complete the survey! As always, if you have any comments or suggestions for our vocation efforts, please let Sister Michelle know. We are always striving to be supportive during your discernment while sharing our community with you.



# Future Come & See Events

**January 6–8, 2012 • March 16–18, 2012 • June 22–28, 2012 (week)**

- The weekend or week is free.
- Room, meals, and input are provided.
- Participants 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 the Knights of Columbus may be able to help you with transportation costs. You never know — just ask!

## For more information or to register:

- Call Sister Michelle
  - 812-367-1411, ext. 2830
  - 800-738-9999
  - 812-661-9104 (cell)
- Email [vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org)
- Register online at [thedome.org/vocations](http://thedome.org/vocations).



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*Click here if you have a new mailing or email address.*

**SISTERS**  
OF ST. BENEDICT  
FERDINAND, INDIANA

*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.