

God's Time

Called to the Journey



Postulant Rachel Geracitano

Sisters welcome new member

On August 19, Rachel Geracitano became a postulant in our community. Rachel is a 23 year old recent college graduate from Bellarmine University, a Catholic college in Louisville, Kentucky. She majored in Theology with a minor in Psychology. Rachel was born and raised Catholic. She attended Catholic grade school and has always been very active in her parish. She was also very active in the Campus Ministry program at Bellarmine University. Through these activities, she has grown deeper in her faith. Her last two years in college, she became more and more attracted to religious life. She met Sister Michelle on a Spring Break mission trip to Louisiana. Sister Michelle was also a director of a Busy Person's Retreat at BU. Through these encounters Rachel decided to visit Ferdinand. Of those visits Rachel says, "Sister Michelle, along with the entire community, was incredibly welcoming to all my visits and questions about their life. I felt drawn to the Benedictine community in Ferdinand, and am excited to learn and experience religious life with them."

On that Sunday in August, Rachel stepped through the front doors of our monastery as part of the Postulant entrance ceremony which began before Morning Prayer. With the Benedictine community gathered inside the Blessed Virgin Room, Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau invited Rachel to enter the monastery. Led one last time by Sister Michelle, the Vocation Director, Rachel 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 ceremony, Rachel was officially accepted into the first stage of incorporation into the religious community.

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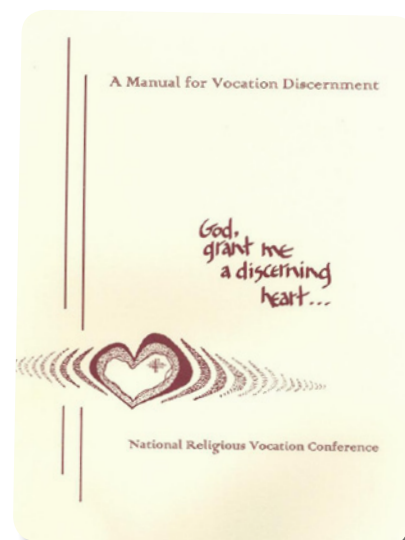
“Electronic” Discernment Programs with Sister Michelle

As young women, who are trying to figure out what and where God is calling you, you may at times feel very alone. There may not be any religious sisters that live near you or even if there are you may not feel comfortable just asking to talk or you don't have any connection to them. Can you relate to this at all?

If you do, or even if you don't, Sister Michelle has a couple of programs she is willing to use with you to help you discern God's call in your life. One program is called *Following Your Inner Call*. It is a series of short readings and reflection questions. The exercises are based on the belief that your inner call resonates within you in such a way that you can be conscious of it. The exercises are meant to help you become aware of your call by recognizing the movements inside of you.

The second program is called *A Manual for Vocation Discernment: God, Grant me a discerning heart...* This program has suggested scriptural readings based on various topics and a set of reflection questions. Then the dialogue between the vocation director and the discerner is meant to assess one's likely call to religious life. The main premise is that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.

For both of these programs, Sister Michelle can send you the exercises electronically. You would then be given however much time you need to read and answer the questions. Then, you and Sister Michelle would set up a time to “meet.” This meeting may be via phone or Skype (or any other messaging program such as Google Talk, etc.). If you live within a few hours of Ferdinand, some discussions can also take place in person.



Following Your Inner Call is meant to be an individual program made to fit each one's individual needs. If this is something you'd like to learn more about, contact Sister Michelle – her contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

More than one Sister Michelle

Many of you have been in touch with our Vocation Director, Sister Michelle. You may have received emails or phone calls from her, or maybe even a visit. Some of you may have even received birthday cards from her in the past. In our community, we have three Sister Michelles: Sister Michelle Sinkhorn (the one you know), Sister Michelle Mohr, and Sister Michelle Willett. Those of you who receive birthday cards may have noticed the handwriting has been different lately. There is a reason for that. Sister Michelle Willett is now helping out the vocation office by writing and sending birthday cards.

Letter writing is a big part of Sister Michelle's ministry. While she is only 59 years old, two years ago she had a stroke caused by a brain tumor. That major stroke left her paralyzed on her right side. Now she resides in our community health care center. She continues to receive physical therapy for the paralysis and treatment for her cancer. While this would be enough to cause even the most chipper of souls to lose heart, that has not happened with Sister Michelle. She has remained

upbeat and optimistic through it all. While others may have given up, Sister Michelle looks at the good sides, like the fact that she is left-handed. For this reason she has made a ministry of writing to others. Besides writing and sending vocation contact birthday cards, Sister Michelle also writes to every member of her community. She sends them birthday and feast day cards, as well as get well, sympathy, and special occasion cards. She also gets the other sisters in our health center to help her reach out to other sisters and people in area nursing homes. She was recently recognized for this ministry with the Karen Bell Caring Award, given to someone who goes the extra mile to help people in nursing homes.

So, when you receive a birthday card from Sister Michelle Willett, say a silent prayer of healing for her. If you do not receive birthday cards from us and you would like to, email your address to the “other” Sister Michelle (Sinkhorn) at vocation@thedome.org.





What I do... as a Ferdinand Benedictine

Sister Sarah Cathleen Yungwirth

Current Ministry

Learning Support Coordinator

Name of the place you minister

St. Patrick Catholic School

Location of the place you minister

Louisville, Kentucky

How long have you ministered there?

2 years

Approximately how many people do you serve?

653 students and 38 teachers

What ages of people do you serve?

Ages 5-14 and the adults who teach them

What is a typical day like in your ministry?

Each day is a little different. My job is to make sure that students who need extra support and assistance get the help they need. Sometimes that involves meeting with teachers to offer suggestions, ideas, and helpful tools. Sometimes it means giving a student a quiet place to take a test. Sometimes it involves helping a student learn how to organize a locker, notebook, or planner. I also meet with parents and collect information for reports so they can get the services they need. Seeing the joy in their faces when they realize they can be successful brings Christ's love to me in such a strong way. Through God's grace, I really try to encourage and work with all students so they can grow into becoming all that they are meant to be.

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

I am currently working with a student who is struggling with Math and English. When I work with him, I remind him that we are a part of his team and

everyone on his team cares about him and wants the best for him. His eyes always light up when we talk about it, and it means a lot to me! He is growing in self-confidence, and when he slows down and checks over his work, he really can do it! His grades have also really improved the last six weeks. God is truly present to me through this middle school boy.

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

Before every meeting, I say a prayer to myself asking God to help me to be present to the meeting and to have the wisdom I need. That really helps me to focus. I try to talk about faith and God's gifts to each of us in my meetings as well. I feel like my Benedictine values bring peace, patience, and hope to all that I do. I know with all my heart that I am a better teacher because I have all my sisters behind me, supporting me! And, there are so many teachers at the monastery that I can turn to for advice and a listening ear!

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

I really feel that my current ministry call is to empower young people to become all that they can be. God has blessed each person with so many gifts. Helping students discover the God-given talents and abilities within themselves brings such a strong sense of fulfillment to me. Then, as they grow, they can share those gifts with others in whatever way God has planned for them. Helping teachers find strategies and giving suggestions to parents so that learning can flow and grow is such a gift to me as well. I am very grateful that God has placed this ministry in my life. I get so much energy from what I do!

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

There are so many educators in our community. They have all been there, done that, and truly understand. I can talk through things with them and get wonderful suggestions while they offer listening ears. Our prayer together grounds me and centers me in such a way that I hopefully bring God's presence to each interaction with a student, parent, or teacher. This reminds me that each moment is sacred and filled with the wonder of God (though sometimes I am better at this than other times).



Sister Sarah Yungwirth leads with her dance moves, and the children follow, at a Christian Song Sing-A-Long.

Sister Dolores Folz's story

The two main influences which drew me to become a member of the Ferdinand Benedictines were the sisters who taught me for twelve years of schooling and my faith-filled parents. I grew up in a large family where the practice of our Catholic faith was a part of our everyday lives — prayer together, sharing of our lives and an encouragement of service and generosity toward others. In my parent's eyes a call to the religious life was held in high esteem and this caused me to consider that option seriously.

The Benedictine sisters who taught me in grade and high school also had a very positive influence. With few exceptions, I saw them as happy, down to earth people who were devoting their lives to the education of children. Their way of life was something that appealed to me and was a part of my considerations about "what I wanted to be when I grew up." In my senior year, a group of us girls made a trip to Ferdinand, and that gave me the final push. For some reason this place felt like home.

Fundamentally, I find God in the people and environment around me. God is there in the beauty of a sunrise, well-kept grounds and buildings, in the power of a storm and the changing of the seasons. God is there in the person I sit next to at table or in church and the sister whose snores I hear in the next room at night. God is there in the sister who presents a differing opinion at a meeting or causes me to "go set" in a game of Bridge.

One of the more vivid experiences I feel of God's presence is when I show up for prayer in the morning and I find the rest of the community there to pray with me. The same is true when we gather for our community meetings.

The people who come to the monastery — whether it's to leave a donation, ask for prayers, enjoy the peaceful environment, or ask for gas or food to tide them over — are all opportunities to experience God's presence. The same is true for the people I have taught or touched in any of my ministries. It is not always easy to see God in every situation, but through the encouragement and support of others, as well as taking time to reflect and pray, a perspective of faith usually comes through.

Life as a Ferdinand Benedictine means LIFE to me. The values and opportunities which are a part of the life enable me to live in a way that provides a deeper meaning to whatever I do and convinces me that we are all part of the whole, and whatever we do in our little corner of the earth can influence the future of all life for good or ill.



As the manager of central purchasing, Sister Dolores is supply hub for sisters and employees around the monastery. Here, she helps an employee find items she needs.

Come & See Weekend: Learning About Stability



The theme for the most recent Come & See Weekend in October was “Stability: Commitment to a Particular People and Place.” Three women attended the weekend. Sister Michelle provided the input. She spoke of how stability in a place makes one feel secure. It provides a place where one can stop hiding, take off masks, and enter into honest, caring, deep relationships. She acknowledged that in this world of easy, quick travel, staying put is not always easy, but when one does so, she can put down roots and get to know herself and other deep down. She compared this stability to a plant putting down roots.

Sister Michelle ended her talk with a quote from Cardinal Basil Hume: “We give ourselves to God in a particular way of life, in a particular place, with particular companions. This is our way: in THIS community with THIS work, with THESE problems, with THESE shortcomings. The inner meaning of our vow of stability is that we embrace the life as we find it, knowing that this, and not any other, is our way to God.”



Vision newsletter ads

Have you seen our ads in any of the latest Vision e-newsletters? Here is a sampling of what you might see.

**If God didn't
want you
to consider
a calling,
why are you
reading this?**



Sisters of St. Benedict
Ferdinand, Indiana
thedome.org

**While we're
happy to open
the door to
your call,
we promise
not to lock it
behind you.**



Sisters of St. Benedict
Ferdinand, Indiana
thedome.org

**Common
Life.
Common
Prayer.
Uncommon
Service.**



Sisters of St. Benedict
Ferdinand, Indiana
thedome.org

**We believe
molds are
for cookies.
Not nuns.**



Sisters of St. Benedict
Ferdinand, Indiana
thedome.org

Future Come & See Events

January 4–6, 2013 • February 15–17, 2013 (*High School Come & See Weekend*) • **March 15–17, 2013**

- 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
- Register online at thedome.org/vocations.



Contact Information

Director of Vocation Ministries

Sister Michelle Sinkhorn

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Yahoo Messenger: sr_michelleosb@yahoo.com

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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.