

Jottings

The AIC / MHA Alumnae Newsletter
Spring 2012



Alum follows her dream

Every time I approached the refrigerator as a kid at home in Decatur, Illinois, I was greeted by a photo of an African child my mother had sponsored for the year. When I was at the Academy, the presence of international students fed my curiosity about other cultures. By the time I was 18, I had a dream of humanitarian work in Africa because I had heard so much about the need for assistance in Africa from my mother and family. But my life and career took over as I furthered my education, settled down, and became absorbed in the American way of living. At 43, a spark in me awakened my dream of going to Africa and the need for change in my life.

I began a journey in 2008 with no idea where it would take me or how it would impact my life. This journey has renewed a long dormant faith I have in myself, and perhaps in God, and the peaceful knowing that everything is as it was meant to be. I have reconnected with the values and mission that the sisters in Ferdinand espouse and instilled in students at the Academy.

I chose Tanzania because it is a stable East African country, and my neighbor had a contact there, a trustworthy source for my unknown endeavor. Through his connections as the owner of a safari company, he was able to help me when I said, "Nathan, I want you to find a really remote village where no white people go, has no tourists, and does not get any outside assistance. I also want you to help me figure out how I can help them." Nathan suggested purchasing much-needed school desks for the Kisangaji Primary School. After scraping together donations from friends and family, and my own pocket, I had a non-profit business in Tanzania manufacture school desks for the school. I

By Lisette Wright '83

made my first journey to Tanzania to volunteer, sight-see, and to deliver those newly made desks to Kisangaji in the spring of 2008. My plan was to arrive with the gift of school desks and to introduce myself to this little rural village of 3500 inhabitants of the Mbugwe tribe.

As I sat in the Land Rover heading to Kisangaji, I was increasingly more excited the closer we got. But

my excitement soon turned to anxiety when we went off-road. Despite the verbal directions from locals —

"Turn left at the next acacia tree, and then go 'that way' towards the hills" — neither my driver nor I knew where we were headed. As my cell signal became weaker, I was beginning to seriously doubt

my plan, thinking that "going alone into the bush" in rural Tanzania wasn't such a hot idea. I also did not understand a word of Kiswahili. We did eventually find the village, and I spent the next three days getting introduced to Kisangaji, and Kisangaji getting to know this person they now call "Liz."

I was the first white person to Kisangaji. Many of the children

were scared of me, thinking I was contagiously ill because I had "no color." Some of the elders looked at me suspiciously, and many others simply did not know what to make of me. Except for the school principal and a few village leaders, no one knew I was coming. To the villagers, I dropped out of the sky.



With little equipment available, most of the construction on the teachers' home is done with hard manual labor by the tribal people.

Continued

This is a remote village with no electricity, no real roads leading to it, and certainly no running water. There is a river from which residents get their cooking, drinking, and bathing water, but this practice perpetuates illness. The one water pump in the village is frequently broken, often for months at a time, with no money to repair it. I saw firsthand how the villagers struggled on a daily basis for food, access to clean water, and basic healthcare needs. I was beginning to understand the things my mother had told me about the great need in Africa and to sense that I was meant to be in Kisangaji.

On the day the desks arrived, everyone was summoned for a village gathering and celebration. As the desks were being unloaded and students were carrying them into the bare classrooms, a surge of emotion welled up deep inside me. I said to myself, "Yep, this is it. Let there be no doubt about your calling." Since that trip had been dedicated to my mother, who died in 2001, it was even more meaningful and powerful for me when I witnessed the joy and gratitude of the villagers. When the time came for me to leave, the group asked if I would return. With tears gently rolling down my face, I said, "I promise to return." This was the beginning of a relationship with an entire village.

I returned to America and immediately started the 501c3 non-profit called the Kisangaji Project. Not knowing where this journey would take me, I made the mission statement broad. It included aiding in the relief of the poor, underserved, and distressed inhabitants of the village Kisangaji, aiding in the development of the village by supporting the primary school, and enhancing the well-being of the villagers by providing assistance with health care needs. Ninety-five percent of donations go directly to the village; no one working for the Project is paid, and all trips and expenses are self-

funded by Project members.

Here's how the Project works. When I go to Kisangaji, I meet with school and village committees. I do not tell them what they need. Instead, I ask them what they would like from the Project and to prioritize their



The newly constructed boma, built to house three teachers, is a source of pride for the Kisangaji village and their leaders.

needs. We, the board of directors in the U.S., then select one item for the next fundraising target. The Project supplies funding and ensures efficient completion. Since 2008, we have provided the primary school with 56 double-capacity desks and basic school supplies, which Kisangaji cannot afford. With nearly 800 students, only 11 teachers, unfinished classrooms without roofs, and one textbook for eight pupils, the Project has also supplied the entire school with textbooks in every subject.

In 2010, Kisangaji asked for a teachers' home (called a "boma" in Kiswahili) so that the District Education government would send more teachers for the growing student population. Without housing, they would receive no more teachers. In the spring of 2011, the Project raised approximately \$2500 for what I thought would be just another simple mud and brick hut in the village. Shortly after the fundraiser, I arrived in Kisangaji for a three-month stay, eager to begin the construction. But I found out the District government wanted a very modern, three-bedroom house built. I had grave concerns about having enough money for the job, despite reassurances the \$2500 was suf-

ficient. Concurrently, I became the "expert" construction site director, project manager, builder, and funder, who was thrust into a new language, culture, and business model without any real preparation. This became an enormous undertaking and a challenge I was determined to meet.

I kept an online journal during my stay so supporters could monitor the development of the boma and village. (See blog and photos at www.kisangajiproject.blogspot.com.) What the journal does not say is that we ran out of money three-fourths of the way through the construction. I had already promised the government that the house would be built, and they

in turn promised three new teachers. I was committed to build the house before my departure. As I lay in my tent one night under the stunning African sky, fretting about funds, I used my blackberry to reach out and make a plea to the Project supporters back in America. Long story short, we received the necessary funding to complete the boma.

That three-month stay changed me in some fundamental ways during a time I needed to change. From this village and my work on their behalf, I have learned many things. Reflecting on those things brings to the surface the values and lessons learned during my precious years at the Academy. Some of my discoveries during that trip are difficult to articulate but can be summed up by one word — faith. Those three months provided me with a true experience of how everything is as it is meant to be, a living example of faith. Suffering from sleep disturbance most of my life, I now sleep soundly through the night since returning from my last stay in Kisangaji. Something profound has shifted in me because of my time there, and faith is the only explanation I have so far.

The Kisangaji Project continues our passionate work to support the

village. Our 2012 fundraising target is the largest goal we have ever attempted. Kisangaji desperately needs access to clean water. Witnessing the villagers drinking river water which frequently makes them ill is heartbreaking. Besides Malaria and HIV unnecessarily claiming many lives each month, preventable illnesses originating from contaminated water takes its toll as well. One of my favorite village elders, Bebe, became seriously sick with a water-borne illness during my recent stay. Without my help, she probably

would have died because she did not have the \$4 to buy medication. What we in America take for granted is a daily struggle for the inhabitants of the village. Kisangaji needs seven water pumps, at a cost of approximately \$4000 each. Raising the money is an enormous undertaking, but the Project's goal is to begin the water pump construction in August 2012. (See www.kisangajiproject.com for more information.)

Since the inception of the Kisangaji Project, the Ferdinand sisters have been spiritual and emotional part-

ners in the process. I have asked for their prayers and thoughts during my travels. They have inquired about the progress and latest developments of the Project. Their own experiences of doing mission work in Peru and Guatemala and outreach in other third-world countries have inspired me. But most importantly, their steadfast faith in God has been a quiet presence and model for me throughout the years. My faith is no longer dormant. For that, and for the village of Kisangaji, I am grateful.

Lisette Wright, M.A., graduated from MHA in 1983, attended the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota and obtained her master's degree in counseling from the Catholic University of America. She established a small behavioral health clinic and successful private practice in psychology. She is currently providing healthcare management consulting services in the health information technology industry and devoting her time to raising funds for the Kisangaji Project. She will return to Kisangaji this March to begin preparations for the water pump construction. She can be reached at lwrightpsy1@gmail.com.



Letter from the Monastery/Alumnae Liaison

This year marks the 145th anniversary of our monastery here in Ferdinand. For 130 of those years, the Academy was a vital part of life on this hill. You, our alumnae, are still a significant part of our lives, and we would love for you to join us in our celebration at the Sisters' Summer Social on July 7.

Our Alumnae Association board is busy organizing an Alumnae Art booth for that event. See page 6 to learn how you can participate in the alumnae booth, or in other ways to be involved with the social.

At our winter meeting in January, board members welcomed Sister Linda Bittner '65 as the sister-alumnae representative on the board. She is replacing Sister Patricia McGuire '61, who has served in that position for the past 10 years. We thank Sister Pat for her service. We also welcomed Elaine (Fromme) Robertson '82 to the board. We look forward to working closely with Elaine and Sister Linda.

The board also shared ideas about having a retreat. Sister Kathryn Huber, member of the sisters' Spirituality Ministry and a 1956 Academy graduate, was present to listen and to help make that happen. The retreat will be immediately after the April board meeting. Sister Kathryn will guide members in an afternoon of input, quiet prayer and reflection time, and sharing. The board hopes to offer a similar opportunity for a retreat for alums sometime in the future.

In the spring issue of *Jottings* last year, I mentioned

about the "Alumnae News" section of *Jottings* getting shorter each issue because more alumnae are sharing their news on Facebook. Since then, we've heard from some alumnae who do not use Facebook saying that they miss reading in *Jottings* tidbits of information from alumnae. Whether you're on Facebook or not, I invite you to send us items about yourself or other Academy alumnae (with their permission) that we can publish in *Jottings*. (See Alumnae News page 4.) And if you're not a Facebook user, you can sign up for free at www.facebook.com. Just follow the directions on the screen.

If you're curious about what our sisters are doing in their ministries these days, visit our web site at www.thedome.org/news and read stories about the sisters. See how we are involved in people's lives these days. More stories continue to be added.

We wish all of you health and happiness. We pray for you daily.

Sister Paulette Seng '59



AIC/MHA Alumnae News

Dr. Peggy Scherle-Mueller '79 has gained national recognition for developing a cancer drug that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently approved for manufacturing.

A news release in November 2011 read: "The FDA today approved Jakafi, the first drug approved to specifically treat patients with the bone marrow disease myelofibrosis." Peggy has been doing research for almost 30 years and has traveled all over the world giving symposiums and conferences on her work.

When her research team for this particular project submitted its results from many studies and clinical trials, the FDA put the drug under its priority review program, "an expedited six-month review of drugs that may offer significant advances in treatment over available therapy or that provide a treatment when no adequate therapy exists." Consequently, the treatment

was approved ahead of the drug's original review date.

Myelofibrosis is a serious bone marrow disorder that disrupts the body's normal production of blood cells — a type of chronic leukemia. The current treatment for myelofibrosis has mainly focused on relieving symptoms. This drug has actually cured the disease.

Peggy obtained a degree in microbiology at Michigan State University and a doctoral degree in molecular immunology at University of Pennsylvania. She did post doctoral studies at UCLA and at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. After working at Dupont



Peggy, her husband, Alex (who also does cancer research), and their daughter, Chloe, live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Labs for many years, she and several other researchers formed their own company, Incyte Corporation, in Wilmington, Delaware. (See more at www.Incyte.com)

A few months ago **Amy (Johnson) Howton '92** received a doctorate in clinical counseling from the University of Cincinnati. After graduating from St. Mary's College at Notre Dame in 1996, she earned two M.A. degrees from U. C. — one in women's studies and one in clinical counseling — before entering the doctoral program there.

"I learned to stay focused on my studies during my four years at MHA, and that discipline helped me persevere through the intense process of writing and defending a dissertation," said Amy, who is currently the assistant director of the U.C. Women's Center. "Everything was much less difficult after the Academy experience, and I have the sisters and my teachers to thank for challenging and encouraging me during those formative years." Amy and her husband Michael, a secondary school principal, are the proud parents of three children: Kate, 11, Thomas, 7, and Meg, 2. The Howtons make occasional stops at the monastery on their way to visit their family in western Kentucky.

We welcome updates and news from our alums. Please send us items about yourself or other Academy alumnae (with their permission) that we can publish in *Jottings*. Send via e-mail (pseng@thedome.org), or U.S. postal letter (address on back cover of *Jottings*), or the "news link" on the bottom of the alumnae web page (thedome.org/alumnae).

A Transformed Life

Gleaned from years of walking with others on the spiritual journey and from her own remarkable path, **Sister Maria Tasto '55** has developed and recorded *A Transformed Life*, a DVD program filled with wisdom, insight, and inspiration for life's journey.

In six 45-minute conferences, Sister Maria guides viewers in finding meaning and purpose and making positive changes in their lives. She shares touching stories of how people have overcome their troubles, including her own near-death ordeal.

This special three-DVD set, produced by the Sisters of St. Benedict, includes a guidebook and is ideal for group discussion and reflection or for individual enrichment.



Sister Maria is program director of the Spirituality Ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict and gives retreats, programs, and spiritual direction.

To purchase *A Transformed Life*, visit www.thedome.org/ATL, call 812-367-2500, or visit the monastery gift shop in Ferdinand.

Academy Alumnae Reunion — June 23-24, 2012

Let's celebrate on the hill this summer!

Classes who graduated in years ending in 2 or 7 will celebrate special anniversaries at the reunion this summer. The class of 1962 will be the "golden anniversary class." The Alumnae Board challenges the anniversary classes to set attendance records at this summer's reunion. And if you're not in those classes, you're still bonded by a unique Academy sisterhood. Why not reconnect with your friends who attended the Academy the same years you did?

Please register for Alumnae Day by June 11. Use the form on this page or register online at thedome.org/alumnae. We need to know how many are coming in order to set up for the dinner and to order enough food.

The Alumnae Reunion schedule is as follows:

Saturday, June 23

- No scheduled activities on campus
- You are welcome to visit and spend time on campus

Sunday, June 24

- Sign in/confirm registration/pay if you didn't pre-pay — 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. EDT
- Continental breakfast in the Assembly — 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.
- Mass in the monastery church — 10:30 a.m.
- Dinner in St. Gertrude Hall in the monastery — 12 noon
- Annual alumnae meeting following the dinner: class recognitions and photos, door prizes, announcements, alumnae business, and more
- Visiting throughout the afternoon

May they rest in peace

Alumnae: Virginia "Ginny" (Quilty) Dilger '37, Sister Mary Martha (Ellen) Blandford '47, Betty (Bartley) Vonderheide Wagner '48, Julia "Judy" (Goodrum) Meyer '55, Sister Anna Rose Lueken '56, Joan (Eckstein) Wolfe '60, Carol Jean (Kitzinger) Hardin '65, Terri (Looney) Laslie '85, Erin Moore '98

Daughter of: Cyrilla Matheis '64

Sister of: Mildred (Eckstein) Stemle '50, Sister Mary Benet Goodrum '51, Margaret "Margi" (Malone) Masbaum '58, Jerie (Malone) Norman '59, Margaret (Goebel) Buechler '59, Irma (Eckstein) Gudorf '61, DeAnn (Looney) Meyer '84, Molly Wiltse '89

Brother of: Marti Stumpp '74

Father of: Antoinette "Toni" Frick '66, Mary Catherine (Dauby) Thompson '66, Kathy (Lechner) Weyer '67, Sister Agnes Marie Dauby '68, Beverly (Lechner) Mehling '69, Sister Rosemary Dauby '70, Dorothy (Dauby) Wycoff '72

The \$25 fee charged for Alumnae Day helps cover the cost of the meal, set up, continental breakfast, and the publication of *Jottings*, the alumnae newsletter. Payment may be made when you register (by June 11) or when you check in on Alumnae Day.

If you need accommodations for the weekend, check the hotel list on page 7. There will also be a few rooms at Kordes Center. For cost information and reservations at Kordes, contact Anita Aders at 812-367-1411, ext. 2915, or 800-880-2777.

Register by June 11 if you want to be included in the meal count on Alumnae Day.

We hope to see you in June!

Alumnae Reunion Registration Form

Return this form or complete the online form posted on the Academy web page by **June 11**. You may pay now or at the door, but you **must preregister if you plan to attend the dinner**. Send to:

Alumnae Association
802 E. 10th Street • Ferdinand, IN 47532

Or, register online at thedome.org/alumnae.

Alumnae—\$25
Adult guest for dinner—\$12
Children under 12—\$6

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Grad year _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

- ☐ I will be at the Sunday dinner.
☐ I will bring _____ guests for dinner.

Amount enclosed \$ _____

AIC/MHA Alumnae Board of Directors Survey

The Alumnae Board of Directors is a group of 12-16 alumnae that meets four times a year at the monastery — in June for the annual Alumnae Day (last Sunday in June) and on a Saturday morning in September, January, and April. We are passionate in our desire to strengthen alumnae friendship ties and to support the sisters' mission.

At our meetings, we plan for Alumnae Day and other events as needed, discuss ways to keep alumnae connected, and enjoy each other's presence and the peace of the monastery.

As the Board, we welcome any alumna to join us when an opening permits. Please share your interest in serving on the Board and return to: Connie Egloff, 1290 E Holiday Lake Rd, Ferdinand, IN 47532. Or, you can contact me, and I'll take your information and suggestions and answer your questions. My email is chegloff@psci.net.



Alumnae board members at their January meeting. Front row from left: Ruth Metzger '72, Ellen (Struck) Kronfli '82, Sister Linda Bittner '65, and Connie (Holmes) Egloff '73. Back row: Janie (Spahn) Nunning '58, Sandy (Schum) Troth '63, Sarah Tucker '81, Tina Dalton '82, Elaine (Fromme) Robertson '80, Mary Joe (Boarman) Kaiser '58, and Sister Paulette Seng '59. Lindsey (Moorman) Healy '01 left the meeting early to prepare for her daughter's 5th birthday party.

Calling all Academy artists!

We need artwork and workers for our Academy Alumnae Art booth at the Sisters' Summer Social on July 7, 2012. Would you, or any of your children who are gifted in art, consider donating a piece of your artwork for this fundraising effort? The Alumnae Association Board members will run the art booth (would appreciate volunteers), and proceeds will go to the Sisters of St. Benedict. Board members suggest art pieces that are valued at \$25 and higher. If you wish to donate craft items, we would share those with the Country Store booth. Please consider showcasing your art and crafts at the summer social. Contact one of the following chairs of the alumnae booth if you are interested: Mary Jo (Boarman) Kaiser '58 (beamerjo59@msn.com), Ruth Metzger, '72 (remetz6872@gmail.com), or Sarah Tucker '81 (setucker01@aol.com).

When the sisters announced plans for a summer social to celebrate the 145th anniversary of their founding in Ferdinand, the alumnae board entertained ideas of how the alumnae could participate and help raise funds for the sisters.

Why an art booth? "We all know of the Academy's strong legacy in the arts, and there are many alumnae still involved in the arts. We use art to reach out to others and to express beauty, healing, inspiration, joy, and humor. Art enriches lives. We want to share this gift. We also want to remind people of the enormous impact the education we received at the Academy is still making on the world, and to thank the sisters for what they have given us," said Ruth Metzger.

Other ways you can help with the sisters' social on July 7: volunteer to work at the various booths, donate quilts to the Quilt booth or gifts for the "theme baskets." Send an e-mail to social@thedome.org if you wish to help in these ways.

Whatever else you do, please come to the Sisters' Summer Social for good food and fun and bring along your family and friends. We want you all to enjoy our 145th anniversary celebration on July 7, 2012.

Today's date _____

Name _____

Years at AIC/MHA _____ ☐ student ☐ staff

Mailing address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I would enjoy serving on the board for these reasons:

I am:

- ☐ available now
- ☐ next three months to a year
- ☐ after a year

Jottings
Spring 2012

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Marian Heights Academy

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Ferdinand, Indiana 47532-9239

Letter from the Monastery Prioress

Dear alumnae,

A lot of good people work in schools, parishes, health care facilities, and social service agencies. And what important needs they meet – educating children, helping others spiritually and physically, and extending hands of assistance to those down on their luck.

How those services are delivered can sometimes make all the difference in the outcome. We have Benedictine sisters serving in those types of jobs in nearly 20 civic communities. But in our language, we refer to the work as ministries, not jobs. That's because our sisters' approach is more than just fulfilling a job. It's a way of life. A Benedictine way, which means prayer and values focused on the Gospels.

Our sisters often hear there is something different about the way they go about their ministries. I suspect that is rooted in the way we strive to live our lives. With respect for others. No judging of others. Showing sincere hospitality to others. Receiving each person as Christ. Always.

By supporting the Sisters of St. Benedict, you join in the joy and satisfaction we feel when touching the lives

of thousands outside of our monastery walls.

But as with any worthwhile venture, funding is a necessity. Our revenue comes from only two sources: the salaries earned by our sisters in their ministries, and contributions from individuals. And those ministries are mostly in "service" positions that earn limited income. Thus the need for ongoing financial support to help our sisters serve all those thirsting for help.

Many of you have talked about wanting to make a difference for those less fortunate. Through your prayers and gifts for our mission, you indeed serve God, you show love, you change lives, and you sustain a rare and vibrant community.

It's a pleasure to be associated with you. Together, supporting our sisters' ministries, we can make the world a better place.

Blessings to you,

Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, OSB, Prioress



Class of 1967

Our deepest thanks!

AIC/MHA Alumnae Contributions to the Sisters of St. Benedict from January 1 to December 31, 2011

In our Mission Advancement database, we have current addresses for 1608 alumnae. We know there are other alums for whom we have no correct address. Of the 1608, 316 (approximately 20% of them) made contributions to the Sisters of St. Benedict in 2011, for a total of \$114,537.57. Former staff members contributed \$5,361.

Classes with the highest percentage of members who made contributions are

1937	100%
1961	61%
1943	53%
1953	41%
1960	40%

The top five classes for total amounts given are

1953	\$25,975
1958	\$14,175
1956	\$8,325
1949	\$5,733
1975	\$5,500

Ten alums are members of the Women of the Rule group, 41 are Partners, and 47 are members of the St. Hildegard Society. (If you would like to learn about ways you can support the sisters and their ministries, visit the website at www.thedome.org and click on "support us.")

We are grateful for our alumnae who support us in so many ways, and we pray daily for all of you.

Need a place to stay during the reunion?
Check out these local accommodations:

Harvest Moon B & B, Ferdinand.	812-367-1881
Comfort Inn, Ferdinand.	800-424-6423
Best Western Inn, Dale.	812-937-7000
Motel 6, Dale	812-937-2294
Sleep Inn, Jasper	800-424-6423
Days Inn, Jasper.	800-742-7482
Hampton Inn, Jasper	800-426-7866
Jasper Inn, Jasper	800-872-3176
Holiday Inn Express, Jasper.	888-465-4329
Santa's Lodge, Santa Claus.	812-937-1902
Quality Inn, Huntingburg.	800-228-5151

Tina Dalton '82 has generously offered to accommodate some alums at her house in Jasper during Alumnae Reunion weekend. Contact her at tinadalton@yahoo.com for further information.



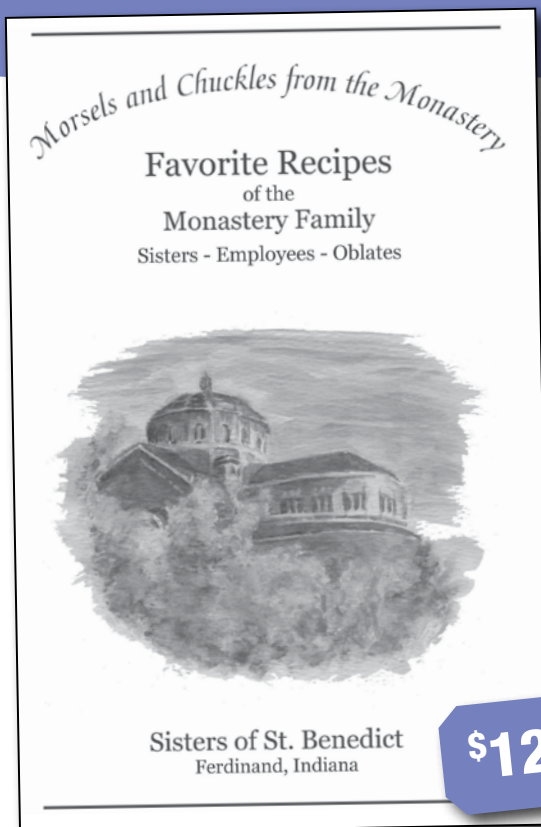
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AIC/MHA Alumnae Association

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The new cookbook has arrived!

We are excited to announce the release of our new cookbook *Morsels and Chuckles from the Monastery*. The 287-page cookbook features favorite recipes and humorous stories from the monastery family, including the sisters, their families, Oblates, and employees. You'll also find information about the *Rule of St. Benedict*. (St. Benedict mentions food in six chapters of his Rule.)

You'll find over 450 recipes for appetizers and beverages, soups and salads, vegetables and sides, main dishes, breads and rolls, desserts, cookies and candy, and this and that.

The cookbook is for sale at the gift shop on the monastery grounds, in the basement of Benet Hall.

Order online at www.forheavensake.org!