

Seek. Pray. Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2 SPRING 2015



INSIDE

Helping homeless
survive

Hope @ Dome Youth
Rally

Spiritual directors'
sacred call

A flurry of 'firsts'



This issue of *Seek.Pray.Share.* begins with a look at how Sister Mary Frances Schafer's leadership and consensus-building skills is literally helping to save hundreds of homeless from dying on the streets and in the woods of Louisville, Kentucky. And how, along the way, those efforts help restore the dignity of those less fortunate, and bring some meaning back into their lives.

A nice related service is that many of our sisters and area youth are volunteering to make sleeping mats for the homeless. That idea was sparked by our recent first Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally, which you can also read about. It's so refreshing to see young people get energized, and eagerly work alongside sisters, for such a worthy cause.

And it's so gratifying to see all the other "firsts" we are involved with that are covered in this issue. There was our hosting of the inaugural Spiritual Directors Regional Meeting, which focused on how to do even better the critical job of walking with others on their spiritual journey. We live that daily in community, and it's one of the most beneficial services we offer to the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB
Prioress

Other "firsts" are the opening of our new Monastery Event Hall and the planning for a microbrewery on monastery grounds. The beer brewery, as you might expect, is generating a lot of publicity. The announcement appeared in media from Florida to Hawaii. Even more "firsts" are our recently-opened discernment house in Evansville, Indiana, and the upcoming inaugural Women of the Church conference in 2016.

While all those "firsts" have us excited about the future — you can see we aren't standing still — it's also always reassuring to look at how some long-standing ministries continue to fare well.

There's Sister Mary George Kissel, still going strong with her tutoring at age 91. It's so endearing to hear how she's formed a bond with a special needs student of age 16. There's Sister Jane Michele McClure, who received a prestigious award in Evansville, Indiana, for her work with Habitat for Humanity. And there's the unique volunteer pairing of Sister Rose Wildeman and Deacon Jerry Gagne, who deliver Compassionate Healing sessions to cancer patients in Jasper, Indiana. There is some powerful praying going on when those two combine.

So please enjoy reading about what some of us have been up to, and about our exciting new initiatives. It's a pleasure to walk with you on this journey.



Seek.Pray.Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

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Cover: Sister Traci Stutz (left) and members of a St. Henry religion class check out one of the sleeping mats for the homeless they've volunteered to make.

Left: This welcome sign stands near the entrance of the monastery grounds.

Above: Some spring scenes on the monastery grounds.

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Mission: 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.



Sister Mary Frances Schafer emphasizes a point about federal HUD funding for transitional housing for the homeless at a meeting of 18 providers in Louisville.

Homeless agony: Where will I sleep tonight? Is it safe? Will I freeze? And where's Guido?

by Greg Eckerle

The daily entries on the Ferdinand Benedictines' monastery prayer board are sometimes, well, distressing. But the sisters don't flinch. They religiously read them, and then earnestly pray for those in need. Day after day, without fail.

But one particular entry last September was more haunting, and more aggravating, than most.

"Guido, a homeless man in Louisville, was beaten up by kids on Thursday. His wheelchair was thrown into the river."

Honestly, who can make any sense out of anyone doing that to someone so defenseless?

Even more exasperating is that, a short time later, Guido was in line to receive permanent housing. Except homeless outreach workers couldn't find him to deliver the happy news. Sadly, the entire episode is not that uncommon.

Sister Mary Frances Schafer, as director of community coordination at the Coalition for the Homeless in Louisville, is doing all she can to prevent such an atrocity from happening again. She helps

secure grant money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to attack the homeless problem in the Louisville area, to get people off the streets at night and into housing. Just before her arrival in 2006, the local annual HUD funding had been cut from \$5 million to \$2 million. Under her leadership, the yearly grants have grown steadily ever since, even through the last recession, to nearly \$9 million a year.

But even Sister Mary Frances doesn't know what became of Guido. And that's one of the reasons why she is so dedicated to the cause.

"It's amazing how many homeless we hear of getting beat up," she says, "People do it just for fun, or just because they think homeless are the low life, and they don't think there's any reason to respect them. They don't think they deserve any help. Even worse, some don't see them as human beings."

Tears well up in her eyes. Such treatment, such an attitude, such insensitivity, couldn't be further from her Benedictine belief of greeting everyone as if they are Christ. And never, ever, judging them.

Jimbo (left) is one of thousands who have been rescued from sleeping on Louisville's streets. Sister Mary Frances Schafer holds the "Frances" sign that Jimbo drew for her. The sign is normally taped to her office door.



She recalled delivering furniture donated by her Ferdinand monastery to a man recently placed in housing. He had been beat up. Through emergency care, his jaw had been wired shut, but he had no idea how it was going to be unwired. That's not an emergency procedure, and he had no healthcare coverage.

But, thankfully, there are plenty of success stories, too, that Sister Mary Frances and her team are right in the middle of. Like Jimbo. He had been living on the streets for years, mostly sleeping behind buildings, when he suffered severe frostbite over a year ago. He lost 8 toes, but later landed permanent housing through the Coalition for the Homeless. He has become friends with Sister Mary Frances, visits her office about once a week, waters the plants, and even leaves treats for the staff. Such life turnarounds reaffirm for Sister Mary Frances why she doggedly pushes ahead in a job that often burns people out. "Jimbo surely would have died on the streets if he had not been helped," she says.

Sister Mary Frances skillfully meshes over 40 area homeless services to best use federal funding. She has the knack of convincing some project leaders that the funds they want could better serve Louisville by being used elsewhere. She thrives at negotiating amongst the various wish lists to head off turf wars and prepare a grant proposal that HUD will fully fund. It's a challenge to persuade HUD to continually send more money to Louisville every year, but she's gotten it done.

"We have not lost a dollar of funding since 2006," she says. "That's hugely important to me. I'm proud of that. We've had to move some money around to make the HUD

applications stronger, and that had to be agreed to by a lot of people. So it's not just me."

But Sister Mary Frances was the one getting widely varied agencies to understand what the consequences of their decision would be, and getting everyone to reach a consensus on what is best for all. She calls it "reading the tea leaves" of what HUD is looking for in an application, and she is good at it.

The result? Louisville agencies have been receiving almost double the estimated distribution of federal funds for homeless efforts as compared to other cities of Louisville's size. In 2013, providers placed 1,521 people in permanent housing. Still, the last annual census of homeless numbered about 8,000. That was down from 11,000 in 2010, but there are always new people being thrown into the predicament.

Donna Trabue of the Volunteers of America of Kentucky is one who has reduced money she wanted to request for a project, after hearing Sister Mary Frances' rationale, and steered it to another need instead.

"Sister Mary Frances is filled with compassion for homeless people, and shows them respect, dignity and care," said

Donna. "She's also very gifted with a big picture perspective. She thinks critically and analytically about how the homeless delivery system works. She brings together various agencies to talk about how to improve. She has the gift of discernment, and is a great voice for people who don't have much of a voice in our community. She has a leadership style that people want to follow, because they sense she knows what she's talking about. And she has the best interests of the community and the homeless, at heart.



A sleeping bag marks one of 10 sleeping spots for the homeless underneath a highway overpass in Louisville.

“I sense there’s a spiritual basis that underlies her compassion. It’s difficult for people to stay in this work as long as she has, but I sense her faith is a good deal of her motivation.”

“She creates a safe space for honest discussion. She invites us to look at our system through different lenses, to see how maybe some homeless are falling through the cracks, and if some of us are willing to give up some things, we can more effectively serve our clients and get them into housing.

“I sense there’s a spiritual basis that underlies her compassion. It’s difficult for people to stay in this work as long as she has, but I sense her faith is a good deal of her motivation.”

Two recent milestone achievements were Louisville’s participation in the “Rx: Housing” nationwide program to place 100,000 homeless into homes, and the Coalition establishing a Single Point of Entry service.

Through the three-year 100,000 Homeless project, new funding enabled about 140 of the most vulnerable people, those most likely to die on the streets, to be moved into housing. About 30 people a year die outside in Louisville, from reasons ranging from freezing to death, to heart attacks, to cancer, to gangrene, to even being murdered.

Another big success in Sister Mary Frances’ eyes was opening the Single Point of Entry, a service one can call about nightly bed availability in Louisville’s three homeless shelters. The phone lines are usually jammed by 10:00 every morning. But it sure beats the prior process of physically going to each shelter and waiting in line in the hopes of securing a place to sleep that night.

Yet some still get turned away. There simply aren’t enough beds. So the homeless may go back to their car, which they have been sleeping in regularly anyway. Many go forlornly traipsing off to the woods, or a secluded alley, a junkyard, a park bench, or underneath an overpass. They fight the elements, and the fear of the unknown that comes with every long, dark night. This daily plight of hundreds in Louisville eats at Sister Mary Frances’ mind, heart, and soul.

She recalls a homeless man who came to the Single Point of Entry office covered with scabies. All he wanted was a shower. He had nowhere to turn. He admitted stealing anti-itching medication. After contacting a few places, the office finally got him some help. “I cried dealing with this guy,” she says. “What do you do for somebody who is literally just miserable?”

As a Benedictine, Sister Mary Frances obviously is a prayerful person. But the homeless dilemma drives it deeper. “Knowing some don’t have shelter every night, that’s a daily thing of prayer for me,” she says. “It changes me. It makes me work to accept these people as they are. So prayer for me is every minute.”

She knows, unfortunately, that not everybody easily accepts the homeless. Well, they think, they are drunks. Drug addicts. Mentally ill. Too lazy to get a job. It’s their own fault. I pulled myself up, why can’t they?

“We all make bad decisions,” says Sister Mary Frances, “but most of us have others who can help us out. Not everybody has that.”



She knows she has the support of her Benedictine community. Religious community life has also been a great training ground for her learning how to meld a wide variety of opinions and ideas into one common goal. She’s learned how to listen, how to respond, and how to work with others for the greater good.

Cardboard and sheets show where a homeless person slept on an October night.

A tarp strung up in the trees on the banks of the Ohio River is a telltale sign that this location has become somebody's "home."



"I think that's part of the gift I bring to the Louisville homeless effort, because the process is similar. Sure, there are turf wars, because you're talking about who gets money for projects they are passionate about. It's sometimes delicate reaching a consensus. Here, I call it 'righting the money,' putting it where it will do the most good for all, not just for a select few agencies. We've been successful in getting the message across that each agency should also be concerned about the other agencies' success, because that's going to affect the money we all get."

Just before Christmas, Sister Mary Frances was one of 200 volunteers who stood on Louisville street corners for two hours holding signs to draw awareness to the suffering of the homeless. Her sign said, "I have a warm place to sleep. I am here for someone who doesn't." That same day she had commiserated with a mother of six children who had no place to stay that night. And it was going to be a brutally cold night. "I knew, when I was freezing outside holding my sign for two hours, that it was nothing compared to what that family was going to have to endure," she says. So she hurt, thinking of all those without life's necessities right there in Louisville.

It's why she keeps up the relentless drive for more grant money to get more people off the streets. And why it's so gratifying when the team's effort moves somebody out of danger and into housing. Somebody like Gary Paige, who had been living on the streets for eight long years until finally getting an apartment last spring through the "Rx: Housing" program.

Upon hearing the good news, Gary, 59, said, "My heart skipped a beat. I'm loving every bit of it. It's a lovely place.

"I had been staying way back in the woods, where nobody can see me. And sometimes I went to the junkyard, when it's raining, to sleep in one of them cars, or when it's real cold. "

Gary, whose backpack had been stolen once, liked to avoid trouble by sleeping alone. He would find secluded places during the day where he could sleep that night, taking care that no one saw him. He routinely hid his sleeping bag high in a tree, where it was less likely to be spotted.

"Because there's so many homeless out there, you can't really find a good spot," he said. "When you finally think you found one, the next thing you know you hear somebody coming and you say, oh, Lord, I just can't win for losing. I don't trust people out there at nighttime, so I'd go from place to place."

On dangerously cold nights, when his thermal socks and gloves weren't enough, Gary would relent and stay in a homeless shelter. But not for long. Too many people. Too noisy. And too concerned about his backpack's security. And while Gary never got beat up, he knows of several homeless who did.

"One of my closest friends got killed out there. First, he got beat up. Some guys robbed him and knocked out one of his eyes. Then he went down to the railroad tracks. They robbed him and beat him to death, with some type of metal pole. They never did catch who did it.

"At least now I have a roof over my head. I ain't going to be out here in the cold, wondering which way to go next." ■



Gary Paige, homeless for eight years, now lives in an apartment thanks to the efforts of Louisville's Coalition for the Homeless.

Rallying for sleeping mats for homeless

by Laura Reckelhoff

Sister Rachel Geracitano's idea for a service project for the 2014 Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally has ballooned into an ongoing community wide project.

Sister Rachel suggested making plastic sleeping mats for the homeless. After a quick YouTube search of how to do it, the rally committee was on board.

To make plastic sleeping mats, plastic grocery bags are folded and cut to produce plastic loops. The loops are strung together to make "string," which is used to crochet a mat. Each 4' x 6' mat requires 700-900 bags.

The word was spread that plastic bags were needed.

Representatives from Kimball International brought large trash bags of thousands of grocery bags their employees had donated for the project. During free time, sisters started cutting bags, making "string," and began crocheting mats, to have samples ready for the youth rally.

At the Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally, attendees continued where the sisters had started, mostly cutting bags and making "string," with a few attempting to crochet. But the project did not end there.

Wednesday evenings became the night to gather at the monastery and work on mats for the homeless. Some of the Kimball employees who donated plastic bags have helped. High school religion classes have joined the sisters to make the mats. One night Sister Traci Stutz, who coordinates the mat-making time with the high school religion classes, counted 30 high school students and 15 sisters working on mats.

Those most often crocheting are Sisters Christine Kempf, Linda Bittner, Marilyn Schroering, Laura Marie Schmitt, Rose Wildeman, Anna Marie Brosmer, Doris Schepers, and Traci.



One of the service projects for the Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally held at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, last October was making plastic sleeping mats for the homeless. Here, some Sisters of St. Benedict (in purple) and youth rally participants crochet mats and make plastic "string" for the mats out of plastic bags.

Sister Laura Marie was the first to have a mat completely finished. A St. Henry sixth grade religion class was surprised to feel how soft it was, considering it was made from plastic bags.

Sister Traci says, "We have no number of mats to define an end to the project and there is no end in sight."

Possible distribution areas for the mats include Louisville, Kentucky, Chicago, Illinois, and Nashville, Tennessee.

Sister Traci says, "It is really neat to see our sisters and all the religion classes and other volunteers working together and embracing this project." ■



Lifting up our Church's youth

by Laura Reckelhoff

Sister Traci Stutz opened the 2014 Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally in the event hall of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, by saying, "We are hosting Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally because youth are our hope and our future. We want to lift you up." What proceeded after her opening was a day full of energy from high school youth about their Catholic faith.

The Monastery Event Hall swelled with the worship music of Greg Walton and Bill Bleistine as the youth danced and sang along. Sister Traci's dream was coming true.

A few years before, Sister Traci noticed a Benedictine monastery in Louisiana had been hosting a youth rally for the last ten to fifteen years and now had thousands of youth attend each year. Sister Traci dreamed of bringing a youth rally to Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand. She thought, "What a great way to bring high school youth to the monastery and it would be so good for those youth ministries that can't afford to go to the national conferences." Based on that dream, a planning committee was formed and the event started to bloom.

The planning culminated at the first Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally on October 11, 2014, with 90 people in attendance and numerous sisters as volunteers. In addition to listening to singer, songwriter, and speaker Walton and Bleistine on the drums, attendees participated in service projects, mass, and Taize.

Sister Traci felt incorporating service projects was important. "We wanted to show the Benedictine idea of seeing Christ in another," she said.

The young adults potted plants and then painted each pot. Sister Christine Marie Fendel delivered these to the shut-in people of St. Ferdinand parish. Claire Zellers, a freshman attending her first youth rally, found painting the pots to be her favorite part of the day. She said, "I loved that it would be making a difference for older people."

Plastic shopping bags and plastic "string" were strewn over multiple tables in the area dedicated to the service project of making plastic mats for homeless people to use as sleeping mats. Sister Rachel Geracitano initiated the project at a committee meeting discussion. As she demonstrated on a video posted to the Hope @ the Dome webpage prior to the rally, attendees folded and cut plastic shopping bags into loops. These loops were then strung together to make "string," which is then used to crochet into a 4' x 6' plastic mat.

The third service project was writing letters to soldiers. The young adults also had the opportunity to make their own rosary or chaplet.

Above: Sister Jill Reuber (in purple on left) and Sister Rachel Geracitano (in purple on right) participate in an ice breaker initiated by Greg Walton.

“My students found the day really enjoyable and it really deepened their relationship with God.”

After dinner the young adults walked up the hill to the monastery church for mass. Walton and Bleistine provided energizing music, Father Jack Durchholz said mass, and the young adults participated as servers, gift bearers, and readers.

A few minutes after mass the church lights went off and a single candle flickered in the back of the group. It was time for the Taize service, a worship service that incorporates short repeated chants, meditation, a period of silence, and prayers.

The young adults paraded past Sister Rachel, each picking up a candle and lighting it from her candle. The candlelit procession circled the Eucharistic chapel and everyone gathered in the wooden surround with the chapel in the center. Complete silence followed until Sister Traci offered a prayer and invited others to offer prayers for their intentions. There was a bit of silence, then a young adult voiced their prayer. Numerous prayers were brought to the group. Sister Traci ended the service with another prayer and the candlelight was extinguished.

The lights in church came back on and lots of chatter ensued as everyone talked about the day and said their good-byes. Two of the young adults, Katie Elder and Adleigh Page, said their favorite part of the day was the service projects and Taize

service. Kinsey Mills was quick to say Walton's talks and song were her favorite. When all three were asked if they would come back, they enthusiastically replied, "Yes!"

Vicki Waterbury, an adult chaperone, commented, "It was a fabulous day. The kids got involved and I got to watch them sharing openly, without encouragement. They led themselves. Greg (Walton) was awesome. The one-on-one time with the sisters was really good."

Brian Mackey, another adult chaperone, said, "My students found the day really enjoyable and it really deepened their relationship with God."

Sister Traci's favorite part of the day was watching the young people have a good time. She said, "They were really attentive on learning what Greg (Walton) and Bill (Bleistine) were teaching. It was a great group of kids."

"Youth are on fire with faith as much as adults. Adults don't give youth enough credit that they can and do have a relationship with God. This was an outlet to experience faith with other youth. It shows they are OK and are normal. The Church is an OK place for them to be."

Sister Traci's dream of a youth rally at the monastery had come true. The next Hope @ the Dome Youth Rally has been scheduled for September 24, 2016. ■

Youth rally attendees stand in candle-lit silence around the Eucharistic chapel during Taize service.





Spiritual directors 'bringing forth good'

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Betty Drewes told the 26 assembled at the inaugural Spiritual Directors Regional Meeting in Ferdinand that "sacred is our call."

Sacred, because those participating in a spiritual direction meeting, both the director and directee, are entrusted with making the holy conversation as helpful as can be. That's not always easy.

Because those seeking spiritual direction often show up with nagging self-doubts and painful struggles. Their body language is often strained, sad, angry, on the verge of defeat. Yet spiritual directors welcome them with open arms, eager to assist however they can.

Sister Jane Will told the group, "It's always exciting to me when someone calls seeking spiritual direction. It enthruses me that they're wanting this."

Sisters Betty and Jane, as two of several Ferdinand Benedictines trained as spiritual directors, were enthused enough themselves to help set up the initial regional meeting at Kordes Center last October.

In her letter inviting area spiritual directors to attend the first meeting, Sister Jane wrote, "We plan to renew, review, and learn new skills necessary to practice the art of spiritual direction. (It's) a time to hone our techniques through lectures/input, sharing our personal wisdom, experiential activities, prayer, and more."

Spiritual direction is essentially companioning someone in their spiritual life. A director listens to a person's story and is attentive with the directee to God's call and presence as it unfolds in daily life. The goal of spiritual direction is to deepen one's relationship with God by learning to recognize God's divine grace in all aspects of one's life. The director strives to become a trusted companion on one's journey of seeking God, and to help people respond to whatever they feel God's call is.

As an effective spiritual director has a loving presence and is a compassionate listener, it's little wonder Benedictines can thrive in the role and are ideal champions to promote the art in the area. Paired with sessions held on the holy ground of Monastery Immaculate Conception, it makes for a potent combination.

Above: Sister Jane Will talks about spiritual directors and spiritual directees.

Sister Betty Drewes addresses participants at the inaugural Spiritual Directors Regional Meeting at Kordes Center.



Plus, the sisters realize that listening to the wisdom of other spiritual directors can make a good practice even better.

Reverend Martha Friz-Langer, pastor at Dale (Ind.) Presbyterian Church, told the group, “Unless we’ve taken care of ourselves, we can’t take care of other people. As spiritual directors, we don’t have the privilege of ever being ‘off.’ We are ‘on’ all the time, we are always being tested, people are looking at us.”

Father Don Halpin of Louisville, Kentucky, beamed when talking about directees realizing spiritual growth. “Often time, at the end of a beautiful session, the strain disappears, they talk through their angers and frustrations,” he said. “They find that transformation that is so important. It’s a grace-filled moment.”

Sister Betty noted that personal transformation is about sustained change, and is achieved through patience and persistent practice. Underlying it all is the willingness to listen to those inner nudges that reveal God to you. Spiritual direction sessions can often be that path.

“Spiritual directors help people work out their blocks to spiritual growth, which we all have,” said Sister Jane. “The question we explore in spiritual direction is why to live life, which involves the dynamic process of love – love of God, love of others, love of self. It’s two disciples looking to the Lord under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Sister Kathryn Huber emphasized to the group the importance of spiritual directors being connected with other people “beyond our own little world.” “I have five ordained women in spiritual direction, and it is such a blessing for me, because they stretch my world,” she said.

Sister Kathy also talked about “peace” being a word common to all religions, and it’s what people coming to spiritual direction are looking for. And to have the freedom to become the person God created them to be. To get there, we must unclog our spiritual veins, overcome our biases and prejudices.

“If we are going to live in peace, it requires that we all go deeper,” she said. “That’s why as spiritual directors we need to be involved.”

Sister Rose Wildeman, who is both a spiritual director and directee, says, “My director has a way of asking questions that gets me refocused. I can come in real scattered, with all this stuff going on in my life, and through talking with her about what God is calling me to do, it gives me a new focus. I feel much better, it puts some direction back in my life, and I can go on. There’s prayer involved, too. My director helps me see where God is in all this.”

The meeting ended with the group dividing into pairs to draft statements about the ethical conduct and the mission of spiritual directors.

Among the many gems shared:

“With respect and integrity, we as spiritual directors discern our responsibility of bringing forth good, which is compassion, forgiveness, love, peace, and trust.”

“As compassionate and discerning spiritual directors, we commit ourselves to lives of courage, humility, sincerity, and patience. We make every effort to respect the integrity of each person, accepting joyfully and lovingly the Christ in each person we meet.”

"I left with a new found trust and love of God. Through the spiritual guidance a little glow of light, love, and peace developed."

"Following Christ's example of spiritual direction, we walk with others in love."

Included in testimonials from program evaluations were:

"What a delight to meet with and become acquainted with other spiritual directors. Such a rich experience." (Reverend Martha Friz-Langer)

"Each time I come, I have always gone away enriched and full." (Connie Schnapf, Newburgh, Indiana)

"My testimonial comes from a depth of gratitude." (Theresa O'Bryan, Huntingburg, Indiana)

The Ferdinand Benedictines also periodically offer directed retreats at their monastery that can include spiritual direction. Comments from those participants provide more insight into the benefits of meeting with a spiritual director.

"I left with a new found trust and love of God. Through the spiritual guidance a little glow of light, love and peace developed." (Dianne LeDuc)

"I will be forever indebted to (Sister Jane Will) for the love of God in her that she shared with me."

"I came to engage in the quiet and center myself with Christ. With the help of my director and the stillness of the monastery grounds and chapel, I feel filled." (Kathryn Curtis)

"Each time I come here I go home a better person. When I left direction this morning I think I finally got it. 'God is above me, behind me, below me, around me, and within me.'" (Judy Powers)

While each Ferdinand Benedictine spiritual director has her own approach to spiritual direction, that of Sister Michelle Mohr is fairly typical. "I listen to you and listen to God as you speak," she says. "It's an opportunity for deep listening that the environment provides. One can really open up more here sometimes. My role is to listen, and then I listen to the spirit of God speaking. I know it sounds hokey, but it works. There are insights and words that come to me. And I see people move from grieving to peace and happiness. Their relationship to God is stronger."

But the process is really not that hokey after taking a second look at the way the sisters live. The sisters know full well the Rule of Benedict constantly reminds them to use the Gospel as their guide. So how well do the sisters know the Gospel? They committed long ago to pore over it daily, to study it, to sing it, to breathe it, to live it, to pray it. What better way to become a spiritual director? ■

For more information on spiritual direction, or to schedule an appointment with a Ferdinand Benedictine spiritual director, please call Sister Traci Stutz, OSB, at 812-367-1411, ext. 2901, or Anita Aders at ext. 2915, or call 800-880-2777. You can also learn more on our website thedome.org/spiritualdirection.

Sister Kathryn Huber speaks on the "need to go deeper."
Seated is Reverend Martha Friz-Langer.



NEWS from the Dome

Ferdinand sisters welcome new member

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, have officially accepted Lynn Falcony into the postulancy, which is the first stage of incorporation into the religious community.

Falcony is the 27-year-old daughter of Mary Kaye and Joe Falcony from Evansville, Indiana. She was a member of St. Anthony Parish in Evansville. Most recently Falcony was an IV and OR Pharmacy Technician at St. Mary's Medical Center in Evansville.

Falcony lived in the sisters' Evansville discernment house for six weeks prior to moving to Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand. Currently, she is taking classes in Liturgy of the Hours and The Rule of St. Benedict at the monastery, as well as a Scripture class online through the University of Dayton in Ohio. She is also working in various areas of the monastery and with area youth groups, including as a volunteer with Teens Encounter Christ for the Diocese of Evansville.

Falcony says, "Upon joining my new parish, Saint Anthony in Evansville, I was looking for a way to get involved. I began

volunteering with the high school youth group. I was introduced to the Sisters of Saint Benedict through the youth minister at the parish, Sister Teresa Gunter. After working with Sister Teresa and being introduced and welcomed by the community, I chose to continue to explore my options in discernment with Sister Teresa and Sister Michelle Sinkhorn. During my time of discernment I learned a lot about myself and my faith and look forward to learning more and experiencing Benedictine monastic life with these amazing women."

Founded in 1867, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand currently number 150 and serve in the areas of education, parish work, health care, retreat and spirituality work, social services, counseling, and mission work in Indiana, Kentucky, and Peru.



Sisters celebrate jubilees

Five Benedictine sisters celebrated special anniversaries of their religious profession on Sunday, October 26. Sisters Helen Mauer, Benita Biever, and Dolorita Libs marked their 75th anniversary of their profession of monastic vows. Sisters Brenda Englert and Marge Sasse celebrated their 60th anniversary.



Sister Helen



Sister Benita



Sister Dolorita



Sister Brenda



Sister Marge

Opening of Monastery Event Hall

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are now offering Monastery Event Hall for public rental for events such as family reunions, weddings, anniversary celebrations, holiday parties, and other gatherings. The newly painted former Marian Heights Gymnasium offers new round tables and seating for 400 guests.

For Heaven's Sake Gift Shop is located in the Monastery Event Hall building. Having moved to the new location in October, 2014, it continues to offer artwork made by the sisters, nativity sets, Simply Divine bakery cookies, religious items for baptisms, first communions, weddings, and more.

St. Benedict's Brew Works will be opening this spring in the building



north of Monastery Event Hall. The three businesses bring a new vibrancy to two buildings on the Sisters of St. Benedict campus that had not been regularly used in recent years.

For more information on renting Monastery Event Hall or for a tour, contact Laura Reckelhoff at 812-367-1411 extension 2635.

Brewery planned for monastery grounds

A vacant building on the monastery grounds is on track to become a microbrewery sometime this spring.

The sisters have entered into a lease agreement for their former art studio with the two outside owners of the brewery – Vince Luecke, an area newspaper editor, and Andy Hedinger, a local attorney and wine maker.

The operation, to be called St. Benedict's Brew Works, will be part of a 1,500-year-history of beer being brewed in various monasteries to support their ministries and way of life.

A variety of high-quality craft beer will be produced at St. Benedict's Brew Works. Guests will be able to sample beer in a tasting room, tour the operation, and purchase beer in bottles.

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, prioress, said, "The brewery can enhance our monastery grounds as a tourist destination, be a revenue opportunity, support our ministries, grow the local economy, and be a good use of a vacant building. The marketing and publicity potential of this venture could be vast. New visitors would increase the opportunity for even more people to connect with us as partners on their spiritual path. Monies raised will go toward the ministries that our donors so loyally support.

"Rest assured this will not be a bar, but mostly a 'tasting' spot. Overindulging is not the style of fans of craft beer. Our grounds will always remain a sacred place, intended to promote fellowship and a peaceful experience."

Federal employees can designate donations to sisters

All U.S. federal employees can now designate the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand to receive donations through the employees' workplace charitable giving campaigns.

The donations are channeled through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Each year, federal employees can designate some of their payroll money to go to certain charities through the CFC. The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand are one of these charities. For those wishing to choose the sisters, their unique agency code is 99375.

CFC is the world's largest annual workplace charity campaign. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors support eligible non-profit organizations.

In the sisters' case, this giving can now be set up from federal employees anywhere in the world. Before, it could only be done from Indiana and Kentucky.

For all others who wish to support the sisters with a financial contribution, you can easily make a donation online at www.thedome.org/give or over the phone at 812-367-1411.

Opening our house to young people

The five Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, who live on mission in St. Theresa's house in Evansville, Indiana, never really know who will be joining them in the evening for prayer or for dinner. One or more young adults, usually invited by Sister Teresa Gunter, might drop by the house. The sisters are always ready to welcome the visitors with open arms.

St. Theresa's is the first discernment house of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand. Young women who are considering religious life are invited to visit, and possibly even live with these sisters on mission. It gives the young women another view of religious life different than what they will experience when visiting Monastery Immaculate Conception.

Sister Teresa envisions the discernment house as a place for young adults to come and pray and spend time with the sisters. She explains, "I want the young adults to receive love and acceptance when they visit. I want them to feel our support and know someone will listen about what is going on in their life and provide them a time to just be in the quiet and pray if that is what they need at the time. I want the discernment house to be a way for them to step out of the chaos and see a different life that may be considered going against the norm."

The discernment house is also a place young women discerning religious life can live to get a perspective of what life is like on mission as a Ferdinand sister. There are rooms for up to four more people to live in the house, but Sister Teresa says, "We also have air mattresses and chairs and recliners and couches," if more young women want to just spend a night or two.

Postulant Lynn Falcony was the first to live at the discernment house prior to joining the religious community. She lived there for six weeks prior to moving to Monastery Immaculate Conception as a candidate for entrance into the religious community. She became a postulant in January.

One of the things that excites Sister Teresa about the discernment house is her fellow sisters living with her. "I love to see the sisters interact with the young people of the church. The young adults are laughing and goofing off for whatever amount of time and all their worries are gone."

Sister Teresa is quick to compliment all the sisters living at St. Theresa's for making the discernment house such an inviting place. She says, "The sisters who live with me are so flexible and open to young people coming in whenever and joining us for dinner or prayer or whatever. We certainly have the right personalities for this. They are so good at being present with the visitors." The sisters living at the discernment house, in addition to Sister Teresa, are Sisters Judy Dewig, Doris Marie Knebel, Jackie Kissel, and Rachel Geracitano.

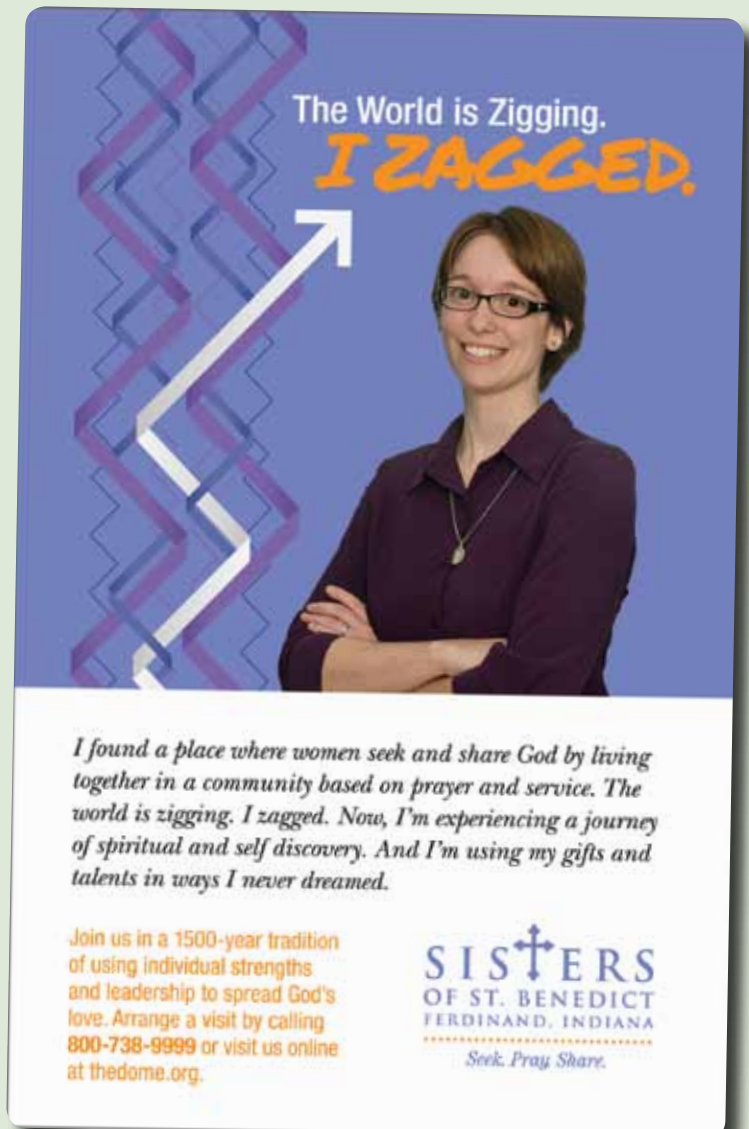
Sister Rachel Geracitano appears in an advertisement that is part of our new vocations marketing effort.

The discernment house was established because the community of sisters wanted to provide other options to explore religious life in addition to visiting the community at the monastery. Sister Teresa refers to it as a "gentle entrance" into their religious community and believes it may be less intimidating for some ladies than to come to the monastery and be surrounded by all the sisters at one time.

"The men and women visiting may not be called to religious life," says Sister Teresa, "but they may know someone who is called. I want more people to get to know our sisters and see how we truly are."

One planned event at the discernment house was a "Sushi with the Sisters" night. The participants were quick to ask when they will be doing it again.

Sister Teresa says, "I am excited about the discernment house. It gives me so much life."



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Women of the Church Conference Planned for October 7–9, 2016

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are responding to Pope Francis's call for "a more incisive presence" of women in the Church with a conference, "Women of the Church: Strength of the Past. Hope for Tomorrow. A Catholic Leadership Conference." The conference, to be held in Ferdinand October 7-9, 2016, is a joint project with Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in nearby St. Meinrad.

The conference seeks to make manifest and support the many ways that women participate in the mission of the Church. Although the conference is more than a year away, the planning committee has already prepared a well-rounded program of keynote speakers, breakout sessions, liturgies, and cultural events. The conference will feature three nationally known keynote speakers.

Carolyn Woo, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, directs relief and development programs that serve over 130 million people in 93 countries. Kathleen Sprows Cummings, director of the Cushman Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, brings to light the contributions of Catholic women in the history of 19th-early 20th century United States in her teaching and research. Mary Catherine Hilkert, O.P., professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, received the 2012 Ann O'Hara Graff Memorial Award in recognition of her contributions on behalf of women through her research, teaching, and mentoring.

Archbishop Joseph Tobin of Indianapolis and Bishop Charles Thompson of Evansville will also participate in the program.

Topics for the breakout sessions include leadership formation, vocational discernment, spirituality, Catholic health care, youth ministry, the Benedictine charism, and cultivating leaders for a multicultural Church.

The conference is designed for both women and men in the Church, including but not limited to professional lay ecclesial ministers, theologians, active parish leaders and volunteers, youth ministers, and women religious.

As the plans develop, details will be available at thedome.org/woc. For more information, contact the conference coordinators at woc@thedome.org.



Carolyn Woo



Kathleen Sprows Cummings



Mary Catherine Hilkert

Sisters of St. Benedict Spirituality Ministry

Please join us for Benedictine spirituality!

April 2–5, 2015	Triduum Retreat
April 6–8, 2015	Come Away Retreat
April 16 and 30, 2015	The Labyrinth: Walking Our Way to Wholeness
April 18, 2015	Who is My Neighbor? The Challenge of Living a Life of Justice
April 25, 2015	Basics of Bread from a Benedictine
May 2, 2015	Wise Women in the Benedictine Tradition
June 29–July 3, 2015	Private/Personal Retreat
July 12–19, 2015	Directed Retreat
July 26–August 2, 2015	Centering Prayer Retreat
September 11–18, 2015	Directed Retreat

Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB

Sister Linda Bittner, OSB

Sister Jackie Kissel, OSB

Sister Jean Marie Ballard, OSB

Sister Mary Ann Verkamp, OSB

Personal retreats, lodging for group retreats, and spiritual direction are available by contacting Kordes Center. The Sisters of St. Benedict Spirituality Ministry holds retreats at Kordes Center, on the spacious, relaxing monastery grounds. It's an ideal place to pray, think, and reflect. Come experience a sincere hospitality and religious environment that's difficult to find elsewhere.

For more information, or to register: 812-367-1411, ext. 2915 • 800-880-2777 • www.thedome.org/programs

In memoriam

by Sister Paulette Seng

Sister Mary Charlotte Kavanaugh

March 16, 1916 – August 29, 2014

A remarkable woman who showed us how to live as people of love, compassion, prayer, and joy.

Sister Mary Charlotte believed laughter and joy were fundamental for a good life. She enjoyed life, had fun, and made people laugh. Less than a week before she died, she was telling stories and entertaining family members at a jubilee celebration.

That same joyful, optimistic spirit characterized her professional life — a 63-year career in education that included kindergarten through university, consultant, and administrator. As supervisor of new teachers, she instilled confidence, self-esteem, and love of teaching. One said, “I learned from her everything I knew about teaching.” Former students fondly remember her as their favorite teacher.

In her later years, a debilitating stroke caused impairment of sight, hearing, and walking, but did not diminish her mind or spirit. Sustained by a deep faith in God, she remained engaged in life around her and in relationships with people. She became an example of acceptance, courage, patience, and perseverance. People sought her wisdom and prayers even more.

When she could do little else, she spent hours in prayer in the chapel or in her room. And she reached out to many by way of letters and phone calls, usually assisted by her sister companions.

“When Irish eyes are smiling... in the midst of Irish laughter, you can hear the angels sing.” With her smile and twinkle in her Irish eyes, Sister Mary Charlotte can now hear the angels sing.

Sister Mary Roman Dall

March 5, 1934 – November 14, 2014

Sister Mary Roman was a faith-filled and faithful woman who lived each day with prayer and service to others. Her love of life, the fullness of life, overflowed into her relationships with others. She loved many and was loved by many.

The impact Sister Mary Roman had as a life-long educator is remarkable.

As a teacher of nearly 1,000 children, she saw their potential, gave them unconditional support and love, and asked for their best efforts. No wonder she was greeted so enthusiastically, almost celebrity style, by former students when they met her anywhere.



Sister Mary Kenneth Scheessele

December 5, 1922 – October 28, 2014

As a life-long learner, Sister Mary Kenneth valued ideas and information and eagerly shared her knowledge with others as a teacher, librarian, and archivist for 62 years. Intelligent and curious, she was never satisfied with the superficial but explored subjects to their depth.

She had an extensive, global view of things and a great interest in world affairs. She was ahead of her time in her commitment to social issues, a leader in initiating ecumenical dialogue, and deeply involved in Benedictine studies and movements on a national level.

As a true archivist and following what Benedictines have done for centuries, she gathered and preserved whatever was of value in the monastery's past and present — artifacts, documents, records, artwork, writings, rituals, traditions — anything that would tell the story and history of the monastery for future generations.

In addition to her talents in ministry, Sister Mary Kenneth was funny, sociable, generous, compassionate, and kind. Never shy in speaking out at community meetings, she spoke the truth in love. She loved others wholeheartedly, endured through times of crisis, and helped in times of need.

Sister Mary Kenneth was a woman of integrity whose goodness left its mark on the lives of many.



As a “master teacher,” she served as a mentor and guide for many adults, especially other educators. Colleagues credit her for shaping their lives through her quiet wisdom and example, instilling in them her own gentleness, care, and patience.

Devoted to her family and her Benedictine community, she was described as “the glue that held each of them together.”

A model of Benedictine life, she “lived and breathed Benedictine hospitality,” seeing Christ in others and extending a warm and genuine welcome to all she encountered. Those who called or e-mailed the monastery asking for prayers experienced her kindness, loving concern, comforting words, and promise of prayers.

Sister Mary Roman was self-giving and fun-loving, a blessing to the world, and “simply the best!”



Complete obituaries can be found at thedome.org.

Sister Jane Michele receives Spirit of Giving Award

by Greg Eckerle

Sister Jane Michele McClure, major gifts officer at Habitat for Humanity of Evansville, Indiana, was recently honored with Vanderburgh Community Foundation's Spirit of Giving Award.

In a front page article in the Evansville Courier & Press, reporter Megan Erbacher noted the annual award is "for being a local philanthropist who serves by making resources available to do good."

Sister Jane Michele works diligently to raise funds to carry out Habitat's goal to "build safe, decent, and affordable houses with low-income families in partnership with God's people in need."

The Evansville Courier & Press article further stated: McClure admitted she was overwhelmed when she learned she would receive the award.

"And realizing that it's really not about me, but it's about all of us working together to achieve something," she said. "It's really a celebration, I think, of what has taken place at Glenwood (Community Development) and what continues to take place. Because we'll never be finished. A world where everyone has a decent place to live - we're not going to be finished any time soon."

Jean Blanton, president of the Vanderburgh Community Foundation, said no one else in Evansville better exemplifies the term philanthropist than McClure.



"Without a doubt the first philanthropist we have ever honored who has taken a vow of poverty, Sister Jane Michele makes our community richer because of her love and support for those amongst us most challenged in life," Blanton said.

McClure believes everyone has a calling in life, oftentimes something that's larger than themselves. Hers was to enter the sisterhood.

Sister Jane Michele, 65, joined Habitat of Evansville in 2005.

"I want to dedicate my life to something that will outlast it," she said.

Habitat's stated mission on its website: "Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope."

The group was founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a simple, durable place to live in dignity and safety, and that decent shelter in decent communities should be a matter of conscience and action for all.

Habitat for Humanity of Evansville builds houses in partnership with people in need and then sells the houses to homeowner partners. Homeowners are selected based on their need for housing, ability to repay a no-profit mortgage and willingness to partner with Habitat. Since the Evansville group was founded in 1984 it has built 437 homes. ■



Above: Sister Jane Michele McClure (far right) speaks with a Habitat for Humanity house-building volunteer during a lunch break.

Left: Award-winner Sister Jane Michele McClure outside her Habitat office decorated by co-workers.



Special needs student and ‘my nun’ of 91

by Greg Eckerle

Getting through to a special needs student often takes a special teacher, and that’s surely what Sister Mary George Kissel is.

And the pairing is even more extraordinary than that – the special needs student, Russian-born Katya Kelly, is all of 16, and her teacher, Sister Mary George, is all of 91. But the combination works like you wouldn’t believe.

Katya is the adopted daughter of Katrina Kelly, who traveled to Russia in 2001 to bring her back to the United States. Katrina, a single parent, attends a class taught by Sister Barbara C. Schmitz sponsored by the Family Scholar House at Oakland City University’s satellite location in Rockport, Indiana.

Upon learning of Katya’s situation — she has a speech impediment and was behind in learning how to read and write — Sister Barbara C. knew of the perfect teacher who could help her: Sister Mary George. She had recently retired from operating the Reading Carrel in Evansville, Indiana, for 37 years, where she specialized with her late biological sister, Sister Margaret Carolyn Kissel, in tutoring over 5,500 children severely struggling with reading skills.

So Sister Mary George, who relishes the one-on-one teaching of challenged students, has periodically traveled with Sister Barbara

C. to Rockport since November, 2013, to tutor Katya while Sister Barbara C. teaches the class that Katrina attends.

“At first, I couldn’t understand Katya,” said Sister Mary George. “She slurred all her words together, and talked so fast.” So she continually encouraged her to slow down, to open her mouth wider, to speak more distinctly. Katya also couldn’t divide words into syllables at the time, or know about prefixes or suffixes, and had a limited vocabulary. But thanks to Sister Mary George’s patience and style, a bond rapidly formed between the two. And progress quickly followed.

“Sister Mary George goes the extra mile with Katya that she doesn’t have to do,” says Katrina. “She works with Katya on whatever she needs. It’s been a great support.” In their first meeting, Katya didn’t get a single word right on a spelling test. Not long after, she spelled all 10 correctly. Sister Mary George then asked Katya what words were important to her. The two discussed the importance of those words, and even how they were related to God.

Above: Katya Kelly sounds out a vocabulary word for her tutor, Sister Mary George Kissel.

“Sister Mary George goes the extra mile with Katya that she doesn’t have to do. She works with Katya on whatever she needs. It’s been a great support.”

Says Katrina, “Sister Mary George is very patient, and her encouragement goes a long way. We’re still working with Katya on her social skills, but sister has made great strides with her. That one-on-one is a great help. And sister praising her, telling her how good she’s doing, has done a lot for Katya’s self-esteem. They’ve really made a connection, and that’s made an effect on her.”

It’s motivated Katya to want to learn more. Katrina points out that if someone has to get tutored, they usually don’t want to go. But she says Katya loves to meet with Sister Mary George. So much so that she used to ask when she was going to see her sister again. That confused people, who mentioned that her sister didn’t live near here. Katya responded, no, I’m talking about my nun. So now she always refers to Sister Mary George as “my nun,” which endears Katya to sister and Katrina even more.

After an extended recent pause from tutoring because of the holidays and a semester break, Katya had asked her mom, “Is my nun forgetting me?” At the next session in January, Katya told Sister Mary George, “Are you finally back? I missed you. I thought you forgot about me. I’m happy to be back here now.” Sister Mary George beamed, “It made me feel real great.”

Katya also benefits from special needs classes at South Spencer High School, where she is a sophomore. “Her reading has so much improved,” said Sister Mary George. “And she is speaking slower. She is altogether turned around. I gave her some 8th grade vocabulary words, and she is dividing those words and sounding them out. She couldn’t do that before.

“The most important thing is her attitude. She wants to come, and she doesn’t want to waste any time while she’s there.”

Katya also can’t yet write all the letters of the alphabet, so she’s asked sister to help with that, too. Which, of course, is right down sister’s alley.

The bond between the two has grown into them exchanging gifts. Katya had given sister a Chinese doll that had six more dolls inside, plus a scarf. When sister mailed Katya a couple of thank

you cards, Katya immediately posted them on her bedroom wall. The stuffed teddy bear that sister gave her at Christmas sits on Katya’s bed. And Katya is hard at work on another surprise gift for “her nun.”

Katya has even become comfortable enough with Sister Mary George that during one lull in a tutoring session she blurted out, “I want to talk about God.” She couldn’t have asked a better person.

“It’s so worthwhile working with Katya, because she’s willing and she wants to work,” says Sister Mary George. “Once they have that attitude, you can talk to them and get through what you want.”

Sister Mary George has been getting through to students for over 71 years. She was lovingly reminded of that recently when a former second grade student approached her at a gathering in Haubstadt. Years before, the student had come to her in tears, talking about a teacher that didn’t understand her and didn’t have time to help her. So she proudly announced recently to Sister Mary George that she is going to graduate from Ivy Tech in May, and then go to the University of Southern Indiana to become a teacher. And she said, “I’m going to watch out for the kids who can’t keep up, like you did with me.”

“That was so good to hear,” said Sister Mary George. “I told her, ‘You made my day.’”

Just like sister has made the day for thousands who couldn’t keep up with their school work and were so frustrated and embarrassed. And somehow she is still doing it. “She’s a wonderful lady,” says Katrina. “To be her age and still up and moving, her stamina is really good. And she’s still got that personality. She’s always excited to see Katya. Always.” And likewise. ■

Katya enjoys a successful tutoring moment with Sister Mary George.





Compassionate Healing: peace through prayer

by Greg Eckerle

Jill Ernst has a form of leukemia for which there is no proven cure. And she has a son, 12, who is struggling with her diagnosis. So it's no wonder she was a bit stressed going to the Lange-Fuhs Cancer Center at Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper, Indiana, for another treatment in early December.

But this happened to be a morning that Benedictine Sister Rose Wildeman and Deacon Jerry Gagne of Jasper's Precious Blood Church were volunteering their Compassionate Healing service to cancer patients at the center.

Their six-minute session, based in prayer, consists of them applying a gentle, prayerful touch to the patient's feet, shoulders, and hands. All the patient must do is lie still, says Sister Rose, "and just concentrate on breathing in the goodness and gifts of God, and breathing out all the bad stuff you want to get rid of." The whole time Sister Rose and Deacon Jerry pray for the patient, praying for God's love to go into them, and to take away the things

that don't belong in their body and that hinder their healing.

The practice relies on the energy field that surrounds every living thing. Then, through prayer and the light touch, the idea is to help the energy flow through the patient's body to help facilitate healing by allowing medications to have their fullest effect. That healing can take place on a physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual level.

Sister Rose and Deacon Jerry offer the service to each patient in the cancer center. It's their choice whether to participate. Jill didn't hesitate to agree.

"I'm interested, I need all the prayers I can get," she said. "It's very nice of you to take your time out for others.

"I've done almost every drug possible, and now I'm going to have to go somewhere else for a clinical trial. I have a little boy, so it's going to be hard. He's having a hard time.

Above: Deacon Jerry Gagne of Precious Blood Church in Jasper and Sister Rose Wildeman deliver Compassionate Healing to cancer patient Jill Ernst at Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper, Indiana.

"So if (the clinical trial) doesn't save me, at least I tried for somebody else. If I wake up every day, I feel blessed."

After the Compassionate Healing session was over, Jill quickly said, "My heart feels a lot different now than it did earlier today. You don't know how much. When I came in, I had a very heavy heart, with the pain, and the stress I have with my son, but this (service) really took away the hurt I was feeling. It was very nice. I feel very spiritual right now."

The Compassionate Healing practice was created by Ferdinand Benedictine Sisters Anita Louise Lowe and Michelle Mohr several years ago. They have since given periodic classes on the practice, and always encourage attendees to volunteer to give the sessions at the cancer center. Sister Rose and Deacon Jerry both attended the same class in early 2011, and have paired up to volunteer at the hospital ever since.

But Deacon Jerry wasn't quite sure what to think about Compassionate Healing at first.

A newspaper article about the class piqued his curiosity, and he decided to check it out. "You're always leery about something like that," he said, "but I volunteered to be the first one to get the healing. Let's see what this does. When their hands came off me, there was two times that I felt a wave, a flow of air that came over my whole body and up over onto my head. I said, OK, there's something to this. It wasn't what I expected, but became more than I expected. It would've been different if they did it to a bunch of people and nothing happened. But since I felt that wave, OK, there's something here. I always will remember that flow that came over me. That gives you the drive to keep on going."

Deacon Jerry immediately volunteered to help other people. He simply enjoys it. "And I was with a nun, I thought that's a pretty good deal," he said, smiling. "What else can you do better than having a nun with you? I don't think I'd want to work with anyone else but Sister Rose. She's that good. She's very caring. We work well together, that's the main thing. I enjoy her company."

Just like the cancer patients end up enjoying the company of Deacon Jerry and Sister Rose.

"What I notice the most is the patients just become much more peaceful just in that six minutes," said Sister Rose. "It's real calming for them. And I'm usually breathing in and out with them, breathing in God's blessings and peace and breathing out the bad. And praying for them for what they're going through."

"They're really grateful and thankful afterwards. Most describe it as very peaceful and very calming, and say they hope we come again." Some of the patients become so relaxed and peaceful that they fall asleep during the session.

The two have gone to the cancer center about once a month for almost four years, sometimes seeing up to 10 patients a trip.

Sister Rose thoroughly enjoys being part of helping bring some peace and calm to the patients, especially considering what they are going through, and their having just come out of a chemotherapy treatment.

"I like to bring some peace to them through the prayer," she said. "I feel good that I can be there and be a part of that for them. The most important work we have as Benedictines is prayer, which enables us to be of service, to be compassionate and helpful for other people." ■



Sister Rose Wildeman administers
Compassionate Healing to cancer patient
Judy Selvidge.



Monastery Event Hall

Ferdinand, Indiana

Now available for rent!

Host your event such as a wedding, anniversary celebration, family reunion, holiday party, birthday party, or other gathering on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana.

- Round table seating available for up to 400 guests at the Monastery Event Hall (former Marian Heights Gymnasium).
- Rental fee of \$395 includes full day rental and decorating time the day before your event.

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To reserve or schedule a tour, contact Laura at 812-367-1411, ext. 2635, or lreckelhoff@thedome.org.

Calendar of Events

April 5, 2015	Easter
April 11, 2015	Oblate Meeting - Obedience
May 3, 2015	Celebrate Ferdinand's 175th Anniversary with the sisters
May 9, 2015	Spring Recital
May 16, 2015	Volunteer Appreciation Day
May 17, 2015	Oblate Meeting – Restraint of speech
June 8-11, 2015	Camp Marian (5-8th Grade Girls)
June 14-21, 2015	Ferdinand's 175th Anniversary Celebration
June 19-25, 2015	Come and See Week
June 27-28, 2015	Academy Alumnae Reunion
August 16, 2015	Oblate Picnic
August 17, 2015	Dome Golf Classic (Victoria National)
August 22, 2015	Golden Jubilee Celebration
August 29, 2015	Women of the Rule Banquet
September 19, 2015	Oblate Meeting – Rite of Reception
September 19-20, 2015	Ferdinand Folk Fest Fondo

Introducing our new *Simply Lemon Cookie!*

Lemon lovers rejoice!

Simply Lemon is the newest cookie to be added to Simply Divine Bakery's menu of gourmet cookies baked by our sisters.

They are just like Grandma used to make, a little crispness, with a light lemon flavor.

Simply lemon. Simply divine.



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