

Jottings

The AIC / MHA Alumnae Newsletter
Spring 2018



Touching the minds, hearts, and souls of her students

By Sister Anna Corrine O'Connor

Sister Anna Corrine O'Connor, 1969 Academy graduate, currently teaches at Presentation Academy, an all-girls college-prep high school in Louisville, Kentucky.

As graduates of the Academy, my classmates and I often gather to share our past and present life experiences. Recently, some of us managed to gather at Agaves restaurant in Ferdinand and were challenged with a trivia game that focused on our class of 1969. Of course, among all of us, we remembered the answers. We have great times together and never leave without sharing what a gift the Academy and the Sisters of St. Benedict have been for us. We are so grateful for what we have taken with us from those years of high school together.

Besides being an alumna, I am also a Sister of St. Benedict, having made my first profession of vows in 1971 and final profession in 1977. I treasure being a member of the Ferdinand Benedictines. My life experiences and the opportunities I've had helped me develop a sense of God and God's presence in my life and the lives of all people. I believe God is present to all of us, no matter our religious connections or practices. However, I know that we have to be open to God's presence and develop this relationship.

I grew up on a farm where we all worked hard and yet had time to enjoy the country. I still love walking outside and seeing the trees and hearing the birds and feeling and smelling the air around me. When I went to the Academy, I got homesick for the country. This is

hard for some to believe because Ferdinand is country.

At the Academy I worked hard to get good grades and to make the school a good place to be. I learned from my teachers how to work and to keep challenging

myself with new opportunities for learning and to connect with other people. I owe my love of learning and my profession as a teacher to them. It was their influence and the example of the Benedictine sisters who taught me in grade school that prompted me to become a teacher. And I am still teaching. I started in elementary school in 1974 with 2nd graders and have taught every grade but kindergarten since then. Currently, I teach theology to ninth



Sister Anna Corrine joins Presentation Academy freshmen and junior representatives for the kickoff of CRS Rice Bowl, a Catholic Relief Services Lenten program for putting faith into action.

graders at Presentation Academy, often referred to as "Pres," where I have been since 1996.

I like teaching, and I've always wanted to share values related to justice wherever I taught. When I think of how I became interested in social justice issues, I think of my parents and their care and respect for others. I remember a neighbor coming to our house frightened by the presence of a "hobo" that came from the railroad near us. My mom calmed the neighbor and then fed the man before he continued his journey. When a local man came looking for money, my dad hired him to paper our living room walls. The man struggled with alcohol addiction, but we were never afraid to have him around. My parents treated him with dignity and respect. From their example, I developed a sense of respect and acceptance of all

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Two juniors share their joy with Sister Anna Corrine after turning in their applications for a Senior Independent Learning Project for their senior year. A project might be publishing a book or producing a film, etc., to raise awareness about an issue, e.g. treatment of women, or to raise money for a cause such as Huntington's disease.

people. It is values such as these that I bring to my teaching at Presentation Academy.

When talking with Sister Paulette about writing this article, I was surprised to hear that the Academy had a banner that said "Educating women for leadership." That is our goal at Pres also, with the addition of "global" and "diversity" concepts. The world has grown, and social media networking makes us a global society with greater diversity.

At Pres we have a diverse group of students from all parts of Louisville and from various backgrounds and economic levels with 70% needing financial aid. This reality constantly challenges us to expand our hearts and our visions. Our diversity teaches us so much about inclusiveness – rather than excluding others – and being respectful towards all people regardless of race, creed, or culture.

Many people express fear about being in the neighborhood around Presentation Academy. They are afraid of the homeless, people of another culture. I am not afraid and Pres students are not afraid. We aren't careless, we are just not afraid of people we don't know. We talk about appropriate responses to the mentally ill people we pass on the streets and how to treat them with respect and be safe at the same time.

When I taught seniors, the discussions in my theology classes often dealt with diversity and social justice issues. Students learned eye-opening details about poverty in their midst, discrimination, racism, and gender inequality. But we didn't stop with discussion only. I encouraged students to connect their own faith life, prayer life, and the role of religion with the issues. When they made that connection, they were motivated to take action, to do something to eliminate injustices they experienced or noticed in society.

Currently, I teach ninth graders about Jesus, using the directives from the United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops for high school teachers of theology. I include justice issues and use the gospels to show how inclusive Jesus was and how he is our guide in relating to people. The gospel writers give us many examples and stories of his acceptance of all people, even those ostracized by society, such as lepers. He included and valued everyone, especially the poor, outcasts, women, and the marginalized, those considered by society to be worthless, scorned, and neglected. Jesus came for everyone, not just the chosen people. The message of the gospels is truly "good news" to people suffering from injustices today.

I hope that through my teaching I am creating an interest in Jesus' call to care for everyone regardless of economic status, race, religion, or cultural differences. I used to want to convert the whole world. Now, if just one girl from my classes is impacted, I'm happy, because one person can make a difference. And it happens often.

I know that I have more to learn about the need for justice in our world, and I pray daily that I can share the love of God as a God of diversity, a God who accepts everyone.

Sister Anna Corrine doesn't boast about her 22 years of teaching at Presentation Academy, but her students, parents, and colleagues do in their comments about her.

"Sister Anna spends a lot of extra time helping our students who struggle in school. She comes up with different ways to teach all different learning styles."

"She creates an environment that encourages students to be inquisitive, caring, and non-judgmental, and where sensitive topics can be talked out as students share personal experiences."

"She cares about her students. That's what matters, and it shows. She rarely has a discipline issue in her class."

"She makes sure that everyone has her eyes opened to the teachings of the Catholic Church on social justice."

"She was very good at nurturing us to think for ourselves, and she encouraged various viewpoints."

"She always has an ear for you and a way of making you feel better."

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Spring 2018

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Do not procrastinate any longer!

It's time to register for the June 23-24, 2018, Alumnae Reunion

The 2017 summer reunion went beyond expectations with more than 200 alums and their guests in attendance. It met the challenge to be the “biggest and best reunion ever” on the hill. This year, for the 2018 reunion, the challenge is to break that attendance record.

If you haven't been to our alumnae reunions for a long time, you might wonder what draws alumnae throughout the United States and other countries to the reunion. Why go?

A few alumnae board members share reasons why they attend.

“Reunions feel like coming home. They give us a chance to share our experiences that connect us as Academy girls. I've become friends with dozens of women who attended the Academy at different times and decades. And to hug and laugh and act like my 18-year-old self with women who shaped my life was refreshing for my soul.” Tina Dalton '82

“The reunion isn't just an opportunity to reunite with your friends and the sisters; it's an opportunity to reunite with the girl you were when you arrived at the Academy and to recognize the woman you have become. A time of reflection and gratitude, a time of tears and joy, a time to be thankful for all the blessings we have been open to receiving... and a time to reminisce about how ridiculous we were in high school!” Mel McMahon Stone '01

“If ever time travel was real, it would be on alumnae weekend, returning to a time that is simpler, easier, and purer. We walk down memory lane, but we also travel forward, filling in what we have done and where we are in our lives, because we are Academy girls, sisters forged in our experiences on the hill.” Pamela Anderson Stamps '82

“The reunions are a chance to reminisce and be with your 'sisters' at heart.” Lindsey Moorman Healy '01

The spirit and enthusiasm at the reunions confirms the fact that alums value their friendships with one another and love and support each other regardless of what class they're in. Time doesn't diminish their joy in being together.

Monastery Event Hall (formerly MHA gym) will be the center of activity for the weekend, with the exception of the Sunday morning Mass in the monastery church.

The Event Hall will be open from 1-7 p.m. on Saturday. The afternoon is yours, with a variety of options. The main attraction, of course, will be meeting other alumnae and reminiscing. You can also look over the interesting displays and memorabilia, purchase Madonna Hall souvenir bricks and tickets for raffle items, and sign up for some unique silent auction items. Walk around campus with friends to see what has changed, and let your

memories unfold. Browse through renovated areas in the quadrangle and visit in the former Assembly where a multi-purpose room, when completed, will be available for alumnae to gather when visiting on the hill.

From **5 – 6:30 p.m.** enjoy a casual, leisurely cookout (no charge) near Madonna Lake. Meats will be provided. If it's feasible, you might bring a small side dish, chips, or liter of soft drinks.

On Sunday the Event Hall will open at 8 a.m.

8:15 to 10 a.m. – all alums sign in, pick up dinner tickets, register and pay (if not done earlier). Continental breakfast during this time.

10:30 – Mass in monastery church. Shuttle service to and from Mass if needed.

12 noon (after Mass) – dinner followed by a brief meeting, more fun, and visiting.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Make lodging reservations early. Catherine (Mott) Rydberg '88 has booked blocks of rooms and obtained lower rates in local hotels for a limited time: Comfort Inn Ferdinand, \$165.99, 812-998-2121; Holiday Inn Express Jasper, \$159.99, 812-482-3344; Hampton Inn Jasper, \$150, 812-481-1888. These rates are much lower than their regular prices, but the rates will go up and the rooms will be released after June 1. Rooms sell out quickly because of Holiday World, so book your rooms before that date (NO EXCEPTIONS). Blocks are listed under Marian Heights Reunion. In addition to hotels and B&B in Ferdinand, Jasper, Dale, and Huntingburg, check lodging in French Lick, West Baden, Evansville, Corydon, and in Owensboro and Louisville, Kentucky — all within a 1 or 1 1/2-hour drive. Rooms in Kordes Hall (on campus) will be available. Make reservations early through Anita Aders at 812-367-1411, ext. 2915, or 800-880-2777.

Registrations due by June 8: Send in the form on page 7 or register online at thedome.org/get-involved/academy-alumnae. We need a count for Saturday cookout and for Sunday dinner, so please check that on the registration form. If you register and pay by May 1, you could win a prize: a one or two-night stay in the new Benedictine Hospitality Center, or 20 tickets for raffle items, or reimbursement of registration payment of \$25. The first 100 to register will receive a souvenir key chain made from Madonna Hall bricks by Tina Dalton '82 and her mother. **Registration deadline is June 8!**

Sister Theresita Schenk honored for her gift of music



Sister Theresita poses with Indiana University Associate Professor of Music Vincent Carr after he had presented her with the Jacobs School of Music Dean's Excellence Award. Photo by Eric Tretter, Photographer and Photo Editor at Ferdinand News.

Sister Theresita Schenk is still browsing through stacks of cards and enjoying memories of the celebration and tributes that surprised her on February 9. On that day, she was honored for her lifetime accomplishments and commitments to sacred music and for her gift of music she shared with so many people for over 80 years.

The monastery church was filled with hundreds of guests who came to honor, celebrate, and thank Sister Theresita, a life-long learner, teacher, composer and performer of sacred music, and a phenomenal musician and master organist. (Her first music "lesson" was at three years old when her mother introduced her to the piano.)

As friends, family, former students, including many Academy alumnae, colleagues, and other admiring musicians filed into the church, they were greeted with organ music from Sister Theresita's CD, "Glory to God," that she composed and recorded in 2008.

In conjunction with the celebration, Indiana University ChoralFest, a group of 30 students, gave tribute to Sister Theresita by performing a concert of sacred music in her honor. They surprised her when they ended the concert by singing "Praise," one of her own compositions in which she composed beautiful music around writings taken from Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Germany, a remarkable 12th century Benedictine abbess, mystic, and composer.

The climax of the afternoon, and a surprise to Sister Theresita, came when Indiana University Jacobs School of Music presented her with the Jacobs Dean's Excellent Award "given in recognition of her lifetime of service to the music profession."

Sister Catherine Duenne, a former organ and piano student of Sister Theresita, organized the "secret" event after hearing an interesting story about her teacher. (She had also calculated that Sister Theresita taught more than 10,000 students in her life-long ministry in music.)

Even though Sister Theresita had completed most of her work and class requirements for a doctoral degree at Indiana University in the 1960s, she was unable to meet the requirement of being on their campus for a full year because she was needed to teach music and to play the organ at the monastery and Academy during the school year. Thus she did not receive a doctoral degree in music.

That story prompted Sister Catherine to contact the Indiana University Dean of Music. She explained the situation and told him about Sister Theresita's life-time accomplishments and service to liturgical music, including her compositions of antiphons, Masses, and songs, her CD, and the thousands of students she taught at all grade levels.

From there the plans were made with Indiana University to honor Sister Theresita with a special award.

Her service to the music profession continues still today. As the second oldest sister in the monastery, at age 97, she still plays the organ a few days a week for prayer services and Mass in the Hildegard Health Center and occasionally in the monastery church.

Sister Catherine Duenne said, "Her whole life and purpose of playing, teaching, or composing has been to give glory to God. When you listen, it's as if God is speaking through her and every note is returned and gives glory to God. When I took lessons from her that was evident in her teaching. It wasn't about playing notes on a page, but actually playing music while connecting on a deeper level, and letting the music sing praise."

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Theresa Bauer '67 and Sister Maura Beckman '48, both students of Sister Theresita in the Academy, reminisce with her during the reception.

Peruvian sisters visit



Heavy snowfalls in January brought back many memories of sled riding on the hill. For almost 90 years, before Madonna Hall was built, the hill was the favorite place for sledding and other winter fun for sisters and Academy girls. This January was also the time when six Peruvian sisters from our monastery in Peru, South America, were staying with us in Ferdinand. Most of them had never seen snow before, but after some encouragement and demonstrations from others, each one took the challenge to try sledding. And they were eager to have pictures taken to send to their families and friends in Peru.

Thanks to a grant from “Women of the Rule” to cover travel expenses, we were able to bring these sisters to our monastery in Ferdinand for three weeks to learn more English and to get to know us better and for us to become better acquainted with them. Sisters from our Ferdinand monastery began a foundation in Peru in 1969 and eventually established it as a dependent monastery, Monasterio Paz de la Cruz, in 1983. Many of our sisters spent years of ministry in Peru serving with the native Peruvian Benedictines.



Above: Our Peruvian sisters (left to right): Sister Magna Lucia, Sister Marilú, Sister Nolberta, Sister Felicita, Sister Arcelia, and Sister Maria.

Right: Several members of the “Women of the Rule” group visited the sisters in Peru last year. They learned about the sisters and their ministries to the poor and also took time to visit the ancient Incan ruins at Machu Picchu in the mountains. When sharing about their trip, the women said that they “fell in love” with the Peruvian people. See www.thedome.org/get-involved/women-of-the-rule.

Greetings from the Hill!

There has been a lot of activity here lately, and we want to share an update to keep you “in the loop” because you have been a part of the Sisters of St. Benedict by your prayers, volunteerism, participation in events, and through gifts. Your support has been vital to our mission and to our legacy. We are currently wrapping up an ambitious 150th anniversary campaign, which has provided some major updates to our campus and to our facilities.

After infrastructure improvement within the quadrangle, the courtyard is being reconstructed and is more beautiful than ever before. The deconstruction of Madonna Hall was certainly very sad for everybody with a connection to its historic significance, but its removal has revitalized the Hill by revealing the “Annex,” a beautiful but previously hidden part of the original Academy. This has also allowed us to add a new driveway to the front of the building, making our monastery entrance more handicap accessible. The entrance also provides access to the updated Benedictine Hospitality Center. Renovations to what was once Academy bedrooms or classrooms and former guest department are almost complete, and the sisters are eagerly awaiting the first guests. This will be a place where you as well as your family, friends, or classmates can attend a retreat, spend a day (or two or three!) in prayer with the sisters, or have personal time in quiet reflection.

While we have made incredible progress on these projects, the work cannot be completely finished without your continued support. We are currently \$250,000 away from reaching our six-million dollar goal, and every gift counts. If you are interested in being a part of this campaign’s effort to revitalize our historic campus, or if you would simply like more information, we would love to talk with you.

Feel free to contact Maggie Blakeslee at mblakeslee@thedome.org/ 812-367-1411, ext. 2844.



Our deepest thanks!

Part of our Mission Statement reads: “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.” Our ministries flow from those four pillars of our monastic life.

We are happy that you are part of our Benedictine family, and we are grateful for the support you have given us in so many ways during this past year, including financial contributions.

We want to give you a brief summary of your contributions in the past year. In our database we have current addresses for 1,572 Academy alumnae, including 114 former staff members. **In the 2017 fiscal year, 304 of those alums gave a total of \$214,065.78 to the sisters. This is an increase of \$69,919.17 from 2016.** Thank you for your generosity.

Here is a summary of donations from classes and the highest percentages of donors.

Top five classes for contributions:

1956	\$39,765.00
1953	\$26,910.95
1958	\$12,755.00
1976	\$11,915.00
1952	\$11,312.00

Classes with highest percentage of donors:

1953	55% (17 out of 31)
1936	50% (1 out of 2)
1957	42% (8 out of 19)
1952	41% (9 out of 22)
1941, 1947, 1966	40%
'41 (2 of 5), '47 (2 of 5), '66 (12 of 30)	

Your contributions help us provide care for our elderly and infirm sisters, and they also enable us to carry out our mission and to minister to people in Indiana, Kentucky, and Peru in South America. You help us to change people's lives through our ministries, such as spirituality programs, retreats, music, healthcare, education, pastoral care, social services, prayer, and hospitality.

If you wish to learn more about ways to give to the Sisters of St. Benedict, visit the website at www.thedome.org and click on “Get Involved” and “Ways to Give.” Many of you have already joined a “giving group.” Currently 16 alumnae are members of the “Women of the Rule” philanthropy circle, 22 are “Partners of the Sisters,” and 57 are in the St. Hildegard Society, a planned giving group. You can also become a “Monastery Angel,” another “giving group,” even if you weren't an angel at the Academy.

We will continue to pray for you and your families. Prayer is the primary ministry of our sisters in our Hildegard Health Center, and they take seriously people's requests for prayers. We call them our “powerhouse of prayer.”

God bless you and your loved ones. We ask you to pray for us, also.

Sr. Barbara Lynn Schmitz, OSB

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, Prioress



New doors, with stained glass salvaged from Madonna Hall, enhance the entrance to the Academy Alumnae Center, the former assembly room that will now serve as a multi-purpose room where alumnae may gather when visiting on the hill.

Sister Theresita, continued from page 4

A few out of many comments from alumnae: **Kendall (Gecsei) Doogan '98** "Sister Theresita was my cello teacher for my first year and then my accompanist for the rest of my high school career. We traveled to competitions together. She helped me prepare for my senior recital. I loved all my time with her."

Marti Stumpp '74 "I love hearing her play. She really makes the organ in the church come to life! She puts so much of her soul into her music. Beautiful people make the world more beautiful. She makes the world such a beautiful place with her music."

Theresa Bauer '67 "Sister Theresita has been a major influence throughout my musical life. She encouraged my abilities by allowing me to play several recitals as well as Sunday liturgies for the sisters. Since my student days, some 50 years ago, we have remained friends and keep in touch. In addition to music, she has also been a big help on my spiritual journey as a Benedictine Oblate. During the year of preparation and study for Oblation, she was my Sister Companion. Her quiet manner and strong faith are always an inspiration to me. I continue to cherish every minute I can spend with her."

Whether or not Sister Theresita taught them music, Academy alumnae will remember her grand recessional at the end of Masses on special occasions and her familiar and long-awaited rendition of "Pomp and Circumstance" at senior graduations.

May they rest in peace

Alumnae: Anita (Laake) Russ '41, Sister Emily Emmert '42, Betty Mullen '49, Mary Jo (Backer) Uebelhor '51, Carolyn "Kay" (Voges) Etienne '53, Jean Ann (Peake) McCoy '59, Joanne (Stader) Buchanan '63, Kathleen (Seng) Ebert '64, Sheila Winston '79

Husband of: Mary Katherine (Hering) Schrader '56, Shirley (Ziliak) Ankenbrand '57, Jeanette (Blume) Becher '57, Sharon (Holland) Hedinger '60, Judy (Dekemper) Feigert '64, Rose (Eckerle) Bradley '70

Daughter of: Mary Ann (Mayer) Morris '58

Son of: Anika Brewster '90

Mother of: Susan Anderson '63, Barbara (Anderson) Retting '64, Nancy (Anderson) Vaught '67, Julie (Uebelhor) Buechler '76, Laura (Uebelhor) Roggenkamp '82, Julie (Ebert) Becher '87, Jill Ebert-Lasher '93, Kim Ebert '95

Father of: Peggy (Kleeman) Heubner '67, Nanette Bulebosh '76

Sister of: Sister Phyllis Backer, M.M.S. '49, Sister Jeanne (Martha) Voges '49, Bernice (Laake) Weyer '49, Alice (Smith) Kimmerly '50, Dolores (Laake) Schwinghamer '52, Marge Backer '53, Sister Paulette Seng '59, Ramona (Seng) Pfaff '63, Jane (Seng) Benda '65, Marilyn Seng '69, Diane Winston-Allen '80

Brother of: Sister Mary Philip Berger (faculty)

June 23-24, 2018 Alumnae Reunion Registration Form (Due by June 8)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Grad year _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Please check:

- ☐ I will attend the free cookout on Saturday.
- ☐ I will be bring _____ guests to the cookout.
- ☐ I will be at the Sunday dinner.
- ☐ I will bring _____ guests for dinner.

Alumnae registration fee — \$25

Adult guest at dinner on Sunday — \$12

Children under 12 at dinner on Sunday — \$6

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

**Register and
pay by May 1 to
qualify for a prize!**

All registrations due by June 8!

Pay when you register or when you check in on Sunday, June 24. Send to:

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



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AIC/MHA Alumnae Association

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Through May 31, 2018, get 20% off all items.

Use the code *WELOVEALUMS* online at www.monasterygiftshop.org.

When you visit the gift shop, tell the clerk that you are an Academy alum.



Stop by Monastery Gift Shop during Alumnae Weekend to take advantage of the special giveaways and discounts for alumnae. Purchase Madonna Hall souvenir bricks online or anytime you're in the shop.