



TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
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Eau Claire, Wisconsin
FALL 2005

National Marriage Encounter Programs



Sisters Margaret and Monica, from left chat with Sister Berthel Duepner from St. Paul's Monastery

A plaque in Fireside Lounge of Saint Bede Center celebrates the role of the Benedictine Sisters in hosting what this October will be 27 years of "generous support for National Marriage Encounter Weekends." The program, founded in the mid-1950s by a Spanish priest, Fr. Gabriel Calvo, is open to any married couple desiring to better their marriage. During the past 27 years, approximately 580 couples have completed the Marriage Encounter program at Saint Bede.

"Marriage is the most beautiful gift given to couples and to families," said **Sister Monica Mai**. Along with **Sister Monica, Sisters Margaret Michaud, Michaela Hedican and Judith Kramer** alternate as spiritual leaders for each weekend running from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. The sisters are joined by three team couples who offer insights into enriching marriage relationships through illustrating the marriage encounter process and by sharing their personal stories. The NME process is a road map for the volunteer religious and lay team leaders to guide each participating couple in a well tested process of reflection, self-discovery and private discussion aimed at renewing the love and joys of their marriage.

In 1979, Ken and Sue Ripp, attended a NME at Saint Bede Center when their dual careers, young children and daily life activities were straining their marriage. Sue said, "Our encounter weekend had such a profound affect on our marriage relationship that we became a team couple in order to enrich other married couples and to continue to nourish our own marriage."

Since then, they have been a team for 18 NME week-

Continue to Enrich the Lives of Couples

ends. Today, with two grown sons, Sue serves on the chaplaincy staff of Luther Hospital and Ken teaches economics and coaches football at Eau Claire's Memorial High School. Ken said, "The tools we gained from our NME weekend and the sharing by team couples through the years have kept our 32-year marriage renewed and unified."

The Rippes said Saint Bede Center is a perfect place for NME weekends. "There are no unnecessary distractions here," Sue said, "and when you enter you immediately notice the quiet, the warmth of the Sisters and the Center's simple but comfortable accommodations."

Sister Michaela, a former center staff member who has served the program for 20 years, credits the late **Sister Janet Mayheu**, a former Center director, and the late Tal Tischer and his wife Barbara, local marriage encounter team leaders, for the ecumenical flavor of the program.

"When one of us Sisters is on the team, we try to provide the spiritual component by leading prayer and offering meaningful rituals." Said Sister Margaret, "We also share our feeling and life experiences. The issues married couples deal with are human. As humans, we can offer support and encouragement."



Sister Michaela Hedican



Sister Judith Kramer

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MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB



Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB
Prioress

TIDINGS

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September and "back to school" rolls around again. For students and teachers a new year is beginning with new experiences, new learnings and new understandings of life and our world. The goal of education is always the enhancement of the quality of life brought about by a deepening of knowledge and the joy of learning. We, here at Saint Bede's, have a long tradition of education. The first Eau Claire Benedictine Sisters came in 1892 to staff Saint Patrick's School but they were coming from a tradition of education that dated back to the Sixth Century.

From their earliest days Benedictines have been educators. The mission of education flows from Saint Benedict's teaching on hospitality. Chapter 53 of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* begins, "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ." With this consciousness of Christ present in the person of the guest, the *Rule* directs that all guests be prayed with, have their feet and hands washed, and receive the best meals and overnight accommodations the monastery can provide.

The monastery is to have a good guest facility, with adequate staff and appropriate resources in order to be able to assist travelers on their journeys. Reverence is shown the traveler because all life is holy, having its source in a holy God. In the spirit of this reverence, teaching is showing hospitality to travelers journeying on their way to the fullness of life.

Every teacher knows that it's not possible to force anyone to learn. There is no way to compel a person to grow in knowledge. All a teacher or parent can do is provide the environment, the resources, the guidance and the encouragement to help a person do his or her own learning.

This is what good teachers do. They are on hand to provide the resources, to offer support, to celebrate successes in the individual's process of education. This sounds very much like the monastic effort to provide the resources of a traveler to be refreshed, encouraged, enabled to continue the journey. The result is the enhancement of the quality of life. With education a person lives a fuller, richer, more satisfying and productive life.

With this background it is not surprising that from the very beginning of monastic life Benedictines have been involved in education. It is the natural way to extend hospitality to other members of the human family in order to help them enjoy the fullness of life.

We are proud of our Sisters who have taught in the past and are teaching today. We pray that their ministry has worked and will continue to work toward the enhancement of life for their students. To all students and teachers alike we say, "May the new school year be filled with joy and the satisfaction that growth in knowledge and wisdom brings."



*Benedictines:
Teachers, Learners,
and Guiders of
Spiritual Growth*

*Right:
Regis High School
students on retreat
in St. Bede Chapel*



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Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB



Sister Bernard Heit at St. Mary's celebration of her teaching legacy.

□ **Sister Bernard Heit**, who celebrated her 50th Jubilee this spring, also was feted for her 29 years of teaching at St. Mary's Parish, Altoona, by friends, colleagues and pupils.

□ The Catholic Area Schools of Eau Claire Deanery (CASE) this summer gave an award to **Sister Therese Roth** for her many years of staff and volunteer service to St. Mary's library and new instructional media center.

□ Spring and summer have been busy times for **Sister Margaret Michaud**, who with **Sister Mary Pattison** in late May attended a two-day conference at Viterbo University. The ecumenical conference focused on ecumenicalism in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Papal Document *Ut Unum Sint*. During July Sister also led retreats for Benedictines at Sacred Heart Monastery at Lisle, IL, and for Women Religious at Saint Bede Center. During Sept. 28-Oct. 8 she will direct a retreat at St. Benedict's Monastery in Tanshui, Taiwan.

□ Four members of Eau Claire's Ryder family -- Don, Jim, Mark and Richard -- former students and continuing friends of the Benedictines -- in late July visited with Sisters at the monastery and later shared memories over cake and ice cream with community members at Clairemont.



From Left: Mark, Don, Jim, and Richard Ryder visit with Sisters at the monastery

□ During June 19-24, the Sisters held their summer retreat at Saint Bede Center. The retreat was directed by the **Rev. Timothy Schoen**, a Benedictine based at Conception Abbey in Missouri.



*Father Timothy Schoen, OSB
Conception Abbey*

□ **Sister Berthel Duepner, OSB**, a member of Saint Paul's Monastery in Minnesota, in Mid-July entertained some 35-music lovers -- young and old -- with a piano recital in Saint Bede Center. Schubert, Brahms, Mendelsohn, Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt were among her featured composers.



Younger generations a hit at Selz family reunion.

□ **Sister Clarita Selz** in late July joined about 100 family members in Osseo, WI for a reunion that included a skein of generations, including grandchildren and great grandchildren. The biennial event, begun in 1977, drew family from the Boston area and other distant points.



*Sister Thelma Barahora, Sister Maria Sanchez,
Sister Judith Kramer and Sister Francisca Maria Colomer*

□ During June 29-July 7, Sister Judith Kramer served as a Spanish language translator at the Summer Chapter Meeting for the Sisters of Saint Agnes at Marion College in Fond du Lac. The international gathering included nearly 20 members of the congregation from Nicaragua.

National Marriage Encounter

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Although priests and other Christian clergy serve as NME spiritual leaders, Sister Monica said the programs reflective; "I segment" is a good fit with her vocation as a



*Ken and Sue Ripp
NME Leaders*

Benedictine monastic. "Each of us can grow when we take time to look at ourselves, our feelings, our ways of relating," she said. "These lead to the "We" phase when each person can reflect and share with his/her partner on how they relate to one another as a couple. The third phase looks at how the couples relate to their world around them in serving others."

"NME is not designed as a quick fix to the myriad of problems that can challenge even the most solid of marriages," said Ken Ripp. "Marriages," he added, "could be strengthened by the NME journaling and dialogue techniques just as regular exercise can enhance physical health."

Over the years, the program has elicited scores of testimonials from participating couples. Many echo the comments of a woman who wrote, "I gained a greater realization of our need for dialogue ... deeper assurances of my husband's love for me and insights into the spiritual depths of my husband."

Some couples, after completing an NME weekend, join Image groups to keep the momentum going. Beyond the social benefits, these NME "alumni" share insights on how their experience continues to affect their lives and their marriages. There are 13 Image groups active in the Chippewa Valley, averaging five couples each.

A \$25 registration fee is charged for the National Marriage Encounter weekend, held in October and February at Saint Bede. Participants also are asked to consider a free will offering to cover the cost of accommodations, meals and program materials. However, no couple is refused the opportunity to make an encounter because of lack of funds. For details about upcoming weekends, please call the Center Office at (715) 834-8642 or email: center@saintbede.org

Sister Lucille Hubmann, Others Honored for Theology Studies

Sister Lucille (Agnesine) Hubmann, one of the 83 members who established Saint Bede Priory in Eau Claire in 1948, was recently named a recipient of the Sister Mary Anthony Wagner, OSB Award.

The award, presented in June by the Saint John's University School of Theology Seminary, cites the accomplishments of the first 60 women graduates of the Benedictine Institute of Sacred Theology.

A vision for such an Institute began with Abbot Primate Bernhard Kaelin, OSB, who desired a House of Studies for the Benedictine Sisters of America. At a retreat of American Benedictine prioresses in 1957, a resolution was passed to establish the Institute at a Benedictine college of women that was in close proximity to an abbey.

In October 1957 Paschal Botz, OSB of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN was appointed the first director of the Institute. Sister Mary Anthony, OSB, Saint Benedict's Convent, St. Joseph, MN, was named the Assistant Director. The Institute opened in 1958 at St. Benedict's Convent and was fully accredited as a "Master of Arts in Sacred Studies" in 1961. Two years later the program became the School of Theology at Saint John's University.

Sister Lucille, who was professed in 1932, said she completed the theology program during six summers. Her classmates came from 20 states and 27 Benedictine motherhouses in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

"It was a very challenging program," said Sister, a native of Tacoma, WA. She graduated from the Saint Benedict's Academy and earned a BA in elementary education from the College of Saint Benedict.

"Our teachers, all Benedictine monk scholars, came from Rome, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Montreal and various Benedictine abbeys in the United States," Sister recalled. "The program focused on the main branches of theology, balanced methods of research and a "sound and critical theological mentality."

Sister Lucille taught 47 years in parochial schools in



*Sister
Lucille Hubmann*

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Honored

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Minnesota, Wisconsin and Washington State. She also served as Saint Bede Monastery formation director and house coordinator and was on staff at Saint Bede Center. She spent five years before retirement as a member of the pastoral care department of Gundersen Lutheran Hospital in La Crosse, WI.

The St. John's citation recognizes Sister Lucille and her

1963 classmates as being among "the first women to earn a degree from a Roman Catholic theologate in the United States." In an accompanying letter from Kaira J. Adams, director of development and external relations for the School of Theology, the graduates were cited for their "pioneering spirit in opening a new door of leadership for women in the Church."

Book Notes — Sister Hildegarde Geraets, OSB

THE DEATH OF INNOCENTS by Sister Helen Prejean -- Sister Helen, who champions eliminating capital punishment in the United States, has given us another book to raise our awareness of how unjust our system of justice can be. She details the process of two men being condemned to death row and later executed. Her conclusion is that race, poverty and publicity play a major role in determining who dies and who lives.

Sister Helen has done research of executions done in this country. She tells us that 80 percent of the executions carried out in the past 25 years have occurred in former slave states. To date, over 100 wrongfully convicted persons have been freed from death row.

After reading the book, you will ask, "How can these stories be possible if protections of the Constitution are being observed? Why were these victims convicted in the first place? Though most of our allies have eliminated capital punishment, why is our country hanging on to it? Why can't long term imprisonment replace it?"

The answers are not there, but the book will make you think and perhaps stir your involvement in her campaign to eliminate capital punishment in the U.S.

POPE BENEDICT XVI: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH RATZINGER by John Allen Jr. -- As indicated in the sub-title, this biography includes the life of Ratzinger from birth up through 1999. Before this report, Allen spent several years in Rome where he became familiar with the workings of the Church and becoming acquainted with key personnel.

As with his other works, Allen makes every effort to remain objective and present both sides of each issue he asks readers to consider. He is thorough in his research and backs his opinions with accurate information.

Two Ratzingers are presented in this book: the liberal of Vatican II and the conservative of the '70s. What caused the reversal of Ratzinger's thinking is often a topic of discussion. Theologians describe his writings as solid, clear and well ordered. One Jesuit is quoted as saying, "If Joseph Ratzinger did it, you can count on it being a solid, respectable piece of work."

Yet others say the real test of his writings is how many of them will be read 100 years from now. However we judge his thinking, we should be mindful that he is looking at what the needs of the Church will be a century from now, rather than the needs of today.

Allen concludes his book by reminding us that Ratzinger sacrifices his own intellectual interests for the sake of serving his Church. One can question his policies but not his fidelity. The major problem facing Ratzinger as pope is how to unite a Church that is filled with extremes -- a responsibility not only his but also those of the people of God.

A PATRIOT'S HANDBOOK by Caroline Kennedy -- This book is a collection of songs, poems, stories and speeches that extol our country, "the land we love." You likely will not read this collection straight through, but rather use it as a reference or a source of inspiration or an attractive addition to your coffee table.

Much research went into this work of art. There is an extensive index as well as a general topical index, to help you find the information you may be seeking. When you feel disenchanted by the path our country seems to be following, pick up this book and discover a passage that will make you once again feel proud to be an American.

In the Center Gift Shop...

Notes to Eli: Reflections of a Samuel Who is Engaged in the Adventure of Pastoral Leadership, by Mark Olson

Hope was the church he served. Hope was the gift he gave us. Mark Olson was pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, WI from 1996 until his death in 2002. He has left a legacy of hope in these series of reflections on what it means to be a faithful pastor, especially as he faced his own death. It is an honor for us to have Mark's book in our Center gift shop. Mark's life touched many people and his passion for ministry continues to be an inspiration. We are most grateful to Elaine, treasured friend of Saint Bede's, and to their son Brent and daughter Sara for sharing this thought-provoking and tender book. --Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB



Sister Ruth Feeney, OSB

Sharing Oneself With God Through Spiritual Direction

— *Sister Ruth Feeney, OSB*

(Editor's Note: Sister Ruth, who coordinates the Sisters' Unit at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, this summer completed studies for credentials as a spiritual director at Creighton University, Omaha, NE.)

This summer in Cycle I of the Lectionary for Ordinary Time we read a faith narrative of the Israelites. From the call of Abraham and Sarah, to the wrestling and holy dreams of Jacob, through the provident liberation of a nation, we recognized something of our own stories of faith. What is recounted in Scripture is mirrored in our own lives. While none of us would equate the ordinariness of our days with the epic tales of Joseph and Moses, still there are resonances, which connect us deeply with the stories of Genesis and Exodus. We may be reluctant

to call our own life "holy," but the same God who interacted with our ancestors in faith is actively engaged in each of our lives. Salvation history is as much about our lives in the making as it was about the holy ones in Sacred Scripture.

It is good exercise to do a lifeline of one's personal history and there find those times and experiences where God had a special hand. One discovers times of personal growth, of formative experience which shaped character, moments of transcending self to care for others and expanding soul through the gift of commitment, faithful love and service. Failure, grace and transformation are also found there. The journey of every person through life is a pilgrimage of faith. It is in the reflection and sharing of that very personal journey that the "God story" emerges.

Spiritual direction provides an opportunity for reflective individuals to discover the engaging presence of God in past and present. As companions in grace, director and seeker discover the varied and myriad ways that God acts, responds, intervenes, invites, guides and personally cares.

Even when it appears that nothing is happening in a person's life, he/she can detect movements of grace. The seeker becomes more reflective as attention is given not only to prayer and the detail of daily involvement but to one's reaction to them -- to surfacing feelings, to what draws the heart and what directs it away from deeper, truer yearnings.

As the seeker and director listen to God together in all of this, it becomes clear what path the seeker desires. The "director" does not tell the person what to do. The seeker comes to know it in the sharing of his/her emerging hopes and needs. What is significant about the spiritual direction session, is that God is actively present in helping the seeker to be honest, hopeful, reflective, motivated. Both director and seeker deepen insight and expand gratitude in the process.

God talk is not comfortable for many people. Sharing one's life is easier. In spiritual direction God talk results when faith and life converge. What is desired is an integration of the two. Spirituality then becomes the essence of life...all of it.

Like Moses, we experience moments of glory and times of desperation. Like the wandering Israelites we wander in confusion, shifting between wonder and weariness. We see the hand of God at one time and feel abandoned later. While it seems that we're going nowhere, it is with hindsight that the path is seen, that God is detected in the meandering ways. The stories of faith that are shared from life are the stories of God and human endeavor. It is sacred and has meaning.

Benedictines in Japan and Taiwan Impress Sister Michaela Hedican

Wherever she travels in her role as president of the Federation of Saint Benedict, Sister Michaela Hedican finds beauty in the daily liturgies and songs, common life and various ministries that mark Benedictine monasticism.

Elected to a six-year term in July 2003, Sister Michaela already has visited many of the federation's eight monasteries in the U.S. and recently returned to be with Benedictine Sisters in Japan and Taiwan. She also has participated in activities of the Benedictines in Nassau, The Bahamas, and plans a September trip to Puerto Rico.

"I am deeply touched by the beauty of the chant in each monastery," said Sister Michaela, adding that in the Far East, "one is inspired by the Sisters' practice of "monastic silence" and "natural deference for the elderly and those in authority."

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Sister Michaela Hedican

Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Benedictines' Prayers: Always in Season

Summer, now melding into early autumn, again is serving as a welcoming time of renewal and anticipation at Saint Bede. Sisters have traveled far and near on learning, spiritual and personal assignments. The Center has hosted Catholic and other retreats, professional conferences, and extended hospitality and amenities to a wide range of individuals and groups.

Interior spaces have undergone their seasonal scrubbing and waxing. Landscaped areas have been trimmed, tended and groomed. Behind the scenes, various improvements have maintained and enhanced the physical plant.

Some upgrades have made immediate impacts. Among these are the air-conditioning units that have served the monastery's prayer, living and gathering places. These cooled spaces brought more than comfort during prolonged heat spells. They reminded us of the loyal and generous friends whose gifts helped fund the AC projects.

Beyond their expressed gratitude for these and other gifts, the Sisters continue to reciprocate with prayers and hospitality for the opportunity to share their resources with others in God's name. For example, their "Donor of the Day" program honors individual donors on a specific day of the month, a cycle that takes more than four years to complete.

Donors and other friends who pen notes on *Tidings* or spring/fall solicitation envelopes, or otherwise notify the community of special needs or intentions, also are remembered in the Sister's daily liturgies. Many of these prayer requests are recorded in the Sisters' *Book of Prayers* at the entry to Saint Bede Chapel.

In keeping with their 1,500 years of Benedictine monastic tradition, the Sisters include friends past and present in their hearts and prayers. It's not a stretch to say that, at Saint Bede, prayer is the coin of the realm.

Sister Michaela Hedican

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The Japanese monastery, at Sapporo, and the Taiwanese monastery at Tanshui, both bear the name Saint Benedict, whose Rule continues to guide Benedictine monastics around the world.

Sister said government constraints of religious communities are not problems in those Asian nations. However, she added, "The Sisters in Taiwan would like to reestablish their roots in China, where Benedictines were among those expelled when the Communists took over."

At Taiwan, Sister Michaela presided in the election of a prioress. She also re-established ties with **Sister Rosalyn Tsai** who spent time at Saint Bede's while developing her English skills at Chippewa Valley Community College. Known by many for her paper art creations with spiritual and animal themes, Sister Rosalyn now directs her monastery's retreat center.

The Sisters in Taiwan, who also operate a women's hostel in Taipei. Like their counterparts in Japan, Sister Michaela added, they have a "flourishing" oblate program, the equivalent of Benedictine Lay Associates here.

From her perspective with the federation, which serves approximately 750 Sisters, Sister Michaela senses a renewed confidence that Benedictine spirituality and service is making a difference in people's lives.

"We're reclaiming the vision of who we are as Benedictines and rededicating ourselves to a 1,500-year monastic tradition in these times of world violence and hostility," she said. "Just as St. Benedict lived, prayed and led during unsettled times, so are Benedictines continuing to reach out to others and work for justice and peace. "Our Sisters in Japan and Taiwan," she added, "are enthusiastic and vibrant" about their Benedictine way of life."

Briefly...

Mark your calendar for **Saturday, Nov. 19: Community Day** again will be hosted by Younkers in Eau Claire. This event -- sales, shopping, entertainment and refreshments -- last year raised nearly \$500 for Saint Bede as well as funds for other participating area non-profit organizations in the Chippewa Valley.

Heritage Companions are helping to ensure Benedictine traditions at Saint Bede Monastery and Center. To join, please alert us to your intention to include the Sisters in your estate by checking the appropriate box on *Tidings* envelopes. Or contact the Development Office for more information.

Celebrity Banquet -- Dinner Beyond the Hill, a community-wide event that combines fine dining, entertainment and silent and live auctions, will be held on Saturday, February 11, again at Best Western Trail Lodge Hotel and Suites, Eau Claire. This gala event offers opportunities for sponsors and those wanting to host tables for family and friends for a lively evening that benefits that Sisters' Retirement Fund.



UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

As an ecumenical and conference site, Saint Bede Center offers a variety of religious, spiritual, cultural and educational programs. Listed below are some of the upcoming events which might be of interest to you.

- **September 12-13:** Wisconsin Garden Club Symposium
- **September 14-15:** ALOA (Association of Lutheran Older Adults) Senior Fest
- **September 17, October 22 and November 19:** Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **September 20:** Annual *Faith Enrichment Day*
- **September 25:** Book Discussion*- Current Book: *Forgotten Among the Lilies*, by Ronald Rohlheiser
- **October 21-23:** *Marriage Encounter Weekend*
- **December 2-3:** *Advent Retreat - "Prepare the way of the Lord"* - Directed by Jolynn Brehm, FSPA

* For information on current or future book selections, meeting dates and times, call **Saint Bede Center** at (715) 834-8642.

Are you part of an organization, committee or support group looking for a place to hold your meetings, workshops or retreats? Consider Saint Bede Center - peaceful, private accommodations in a natural setting - perfect for accomplishing the task at hand. Let us be your host. **Call us at 715-834-8642**



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FALL 2005

BITS AND CENTER PIECES

– Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

A youth said it well...

He didn't wiggle as much as I thought he would. His sister, who is just a year older than he, even tried to follow all the verses of the hymns. They were eager to drop the folded dollar bill in the collection basket and we had a three-some holding hands during the Lord's Prayer. At the greeting of peace my young friend took my hand, looked me in the eye and solemnly proclaimed, *pleased to be with you!* He then turned to his sister and repeated his version of the greeting of peace.

Obviously, this is what he has heard for a greeting of peace and a charming greeting it is! So, may I say to all of you have been with us for a retreat, a recital, an enriching class or an educational event, *we were pleased to be with you.* To those who have plied your crafts, learned more about scripture, or pondered God's love for you, *we say, pleased to have been with you.* And to all who will

be coming for events, sessions, study, or quiet or rest, *we'll be pleased to have you with us.*

And before you go back home, do check our little gift shop for some of the latest best selling books, charming greeting cards, and other items to delight and remember others. We feature **Sister Karen Streveler's** original greeting cards, frameable photos and book marks. We try to keep unusual items on hand.



Sister Judith Kramer