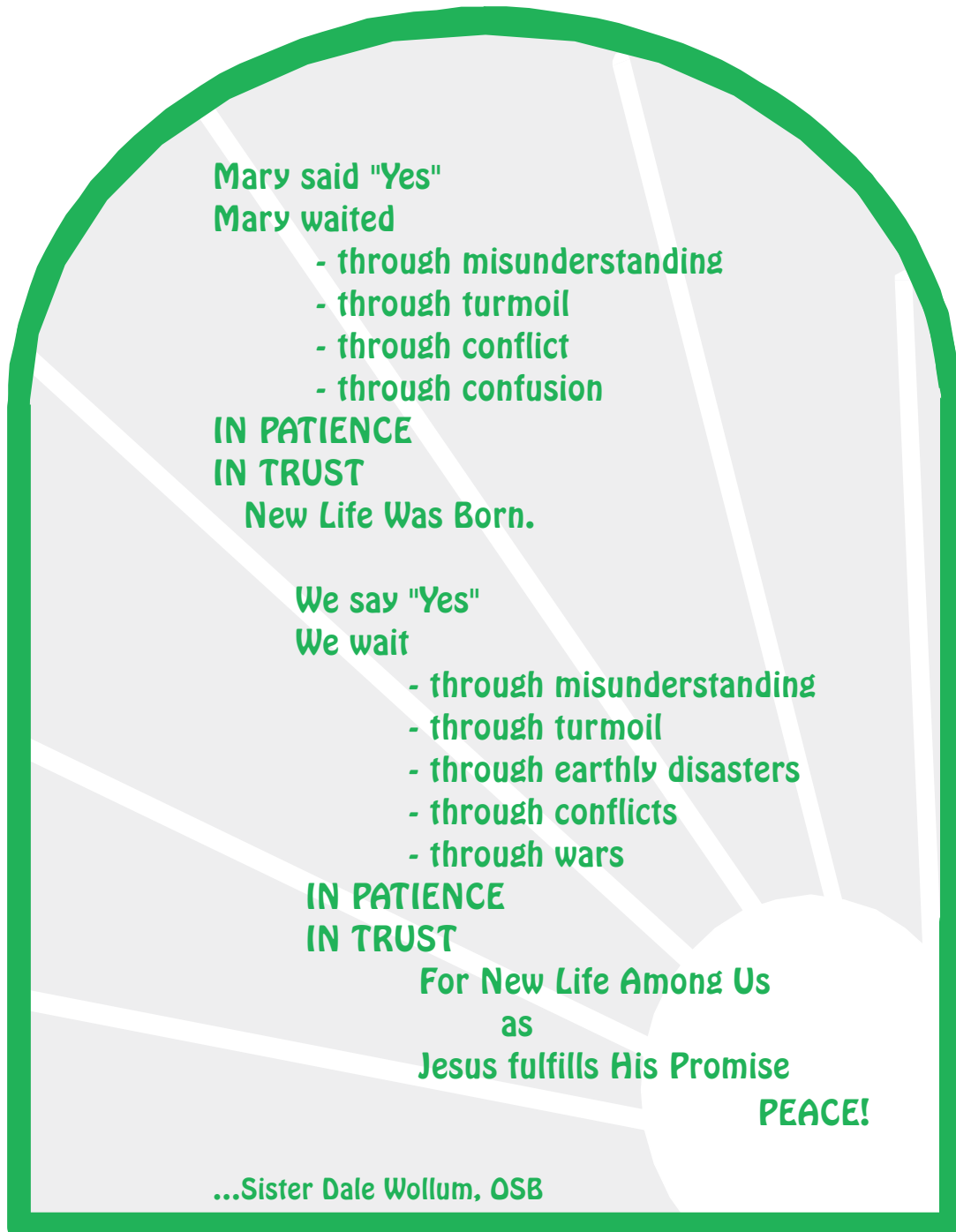


TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
VOL.18 NO. 4

Eau Claire, Wisconsin
WINTER 2005



Graphic by:
Judy Bredeson

MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB



Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB
Prioress

TIDINGS

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TIDINGS is published by the Saint Bede
Development Office and printed by
Ashbaugh Printing Company.

As you are reading this, the Church is celebrating the Season of Advent; this year it's four full weeks. During these dark winter days we reflect on God's promise to send a Redeemer who would rescue us from the power of evil, forgive our sins and call us to eternal life in God's love. Our Redeemer is the Son of God who loved us so much that he became one of us. Jesus, our Savior, fully human and fully divine, shared the full range of human experience.

He was "like us in all things, save sin." He was born as we are born; he went through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, all the stages we go through in our lives. He died as we will all someday die and he rose from the dead as we hope to rise with him to eternal life with God.

Christmas, the Feast of the Incarnation, commemorates this awesome mystery. Our God, infinite in power, majestic in holiness, took on our nature and entered human history as a person like us. For this reason, at Christmas, we celebrate the joy of being human. The greatest gift God gave us was God's son who shared our humanity and thereby bestowed a special honor and grace on the human race. To commemorate this greatest of all gifts, we give gifts to one another. As God shared life with us, we share our lives with our sisters and brothers. The gifts we exchange are symbols of our shared lives, of our desire to give of our lives for those we love.

In the best traditions of observing Christmas, human life and human relationships are enjoyed and cherished. We want to be with family and friends, with those with whom we share our lives. We also can be aware of our solidarity with all in the human family. Christmas is a time to be especially respectful, even reverent, toward all God's people. We have numerous human encounters every day. Some are with people we know well: family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers. Other human exchanges are brief, perfunctory and impersonal. There can still be a sense of respect, however, even in these incidental interactions. Every person we meet is a child of God, someone with whom Jesus shared humanity. In this sense, every human encounter can be holy, deserving of reverence.

How wonderful it would be if we were conscious of this as we shop for groceries, check out a library book, place a phone call, attend a meeting, ride a bus, wait at a traffic light, or stop to fill the gas tank. This awareness of human dignity because of the Incarnation can be the basis of courtesy, helpfulness, and kindness in all our encounters with others.

This is the true Spirit of Christmas! May this Spirit be with you this Advent as you prepare for the glorious Feast of the Incarnation!

Don't be Alone on the "Longest Night"

Saint Bede Center will again host a Winter Solstice observance on Thursday, Dec. 22, 2005, beginning at 7 p.m. Join us as we prepare to celebrate the birth of God's son who brought everlasting light to our world.

Elaine K. Olson, therapist, seminary student and wife of the late **Rev. Mark Olson**, former pastor of Eau Claire's Hope Lutheran Church, will reflect with us about Mark's book, **Notes to Eli** (Kirk House Publishers 2005). He completed his book shortly before he ended a courageous battle with cancer.

Another participant, **Ruth Rosauer**, a neighbor of the Sisters, will lead us in song/prayer in the Taize style of hymnody. Those planning to attend this annual "Longest Night" gathering are asked to bring an item of non-perishable food to be shared with the needy of the community.

Visit us at: www.saintbede.org

Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB

□ The Sisters continue to invite friends old and new friends to join them in prayer and reflection for justice and world peace from 7 to 8 p.m. each Wednesday in Saint Bede Chapel. Those unable to visit the chapel are encouraged to set aside this special hour each Wednesday for prayer at home or elsewhere.



Sister Marjorie Hill pauses with fifth grade children from Immaculate Conception School during a tour of the monastery.

□ **Sister Marjorie Hill's** pupils were among the 25 fifth graders of Immaculate Conception School, Eau Claire, who in late October learned more about Benedictine life from **Sister Michaela Hedican**. The children and their teachers toured buildings and grounds, joined the Sisters in prayer at the chapel and lunched at the monastery. Both classes reciprocated with hand-crafted "thank you" cards signed by each pupil.

□ **Sister Margaret Michaud** in October participated as a board member of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue at Conception Abbey in Missouri. Activities focused on planning for future MID dialogues with Muslim participants. Also in October, Sister spoke on aspects of suffering before an audience of 150 people at Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, S.D.

Judy Bredeson (Left) & Nancy Scobie at Grandma-tica II book signing at St. Bede



□ The Sisters hosted the launching of "Grandma-tica II" with a book signing by editor and UW-Eau Claire faculty member and author **Nancy Scobie** and designer **Judy Bredeson**, a staff member here. Second in a series, the book features the work of some 90 area authors, including a retrospective by **Sister Lucille Hubmann** and a cover comment by **Sister Margaret Michaud**. All profits will go to a UW-EC women's group and the Heyde Center for the Arts, Chippewa Falls, WI.

□ **Sister Mary Pattison** in mid-August attended the Monastic Liturgy Forum at St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, AR. Forty monks from monasteries throughout the U.S. participated in discussions of liturgy and music.

Sister Mary Pattison



□ **Sister Mary Jackle** (see story this issue) this summer spoke on "Teaching Clinical Wisdom in Critical Care" at the "International Nurse Educators' Conference in the Rockies," held at Breckenridge, CO.

□ **Sister Connie Ostrander**, who assists the Bishop of the Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies with fundraising and other projects, wrote that Hurricane Wilma in October "gave us torrential water-falls like downpours constantly for six days. One couldn't believe that much water could fall -- floods all over, even up here in the mountains." She and colleague **Sister Naomi Rosenberger**, OSB, who now staff the diocese's new office in Louisville, KY, currently are hosting three Jamaican students, ages 16, 17 and 31.



Sister Connie Ostrander

□ **Sisters Margaret, Michaela Hedican, Judith Kramer and Mary Frances Gebhard** in November began their season of "Busy Student Retreats" at Newman Community Parish and the UW-Eau Claire. The Sisters also plan retreats with students at other universities in west-central Wisconsin.

Vocation Coordinator...

The Sisters are seeking a **part-time vocation coordinator**, to work closely with the monastery's vocation director. The successful candidate will have an appreciation for Benedictine monasticism and have good communication, office and computer skills, and the ability to work effectively and comfortably with the monastery's vocation committee and advisory council members. She/he should be able to work independently on PR, marketing, public speaking and related assignments to enhance vocation awareness, interest and recruitment of qualified candidates. For more information about this key position and this Benedictine community, please e-mail vocation@saintbede.org or visit the Sisters' web site at www.saintbede.org.

Sister Mary Jackle Takes Charge In Katrina Relief



Sister Mary Jackle

Days after the September 29th arrival of Hurricane Katrina Sister Mary Jackle and others at Christus Santa Rosa Health Care System were lending a hand. Sister Mary, who has lived in San Antonio since 1984, is employed as an education coordinator.

Reacting swiftly, Sister volunteered to staff the Red Cross's phone bank, which was overwhelmed with distress calls.

"It was sad the first few days as people called for help finding lost members of the family, and all we could do was refer them to 800 numbers. Then it got to be sort of fun...people calling with amazingly generous donations, or just to say that they appreciated what the Red Cross was doing."

There were some light moments -- a stranded man called for the phone number of a motel near his favorite haunt -- a racetrack. "I might as well be making money," he said.

Later a concerned woman called about stagnant water. "I thought maybe she had a pothole out in the street and was calling the wrong number, Sister recalled. "So I said, 'Where's the stagnant water?' She said, 'in New Orleans,' then suggested the city could pour in bleach to kill the germs.

"I had all I could do not to laugh, and promise to pass it on," said Sister Mary, whose sense of humor has been enhanced by ministries as a registered nurse, educator and senior level health care administrator.

Things got even busier days later.

"The joint was jumping with (some 400) people trying to volunteer," Sister said. Applications from volunteers wanting to help at storm shelters in San Antonio were piling up and needed to be organized in a database. So Sister again offered her skills, helped by a friend who was between jobs.

"We both worked like beavers and got all the shelters staffed round the clock for the coming week."

Between her day job as education coordinator, Sister sandwiched in other volunteer tasks -- rounding up staff to help bathe hundreds of elderly evacuees at a local shelter and sorting thousands of donated shoes in a broiling hot Salvation Army warehouse.

She also found a way to reunite a gravely ill man with an anxious daughter in Savannah, GA. After learning of his plight, Sister moved from concern to action when she remembered the generosity of an old friend, **Patrick Hunziker**. He is a nephew of the late **Sister Denis Smith**, former Saint Bede prioress who shared a residence for many years with Sister Mary in San Antonio. (Patrick and his brother Thomas, who live in the Twin Cities, have established a special fund at Saint Bede in honor of Sister Denis.)

"I got to thinking about how he (storm victim) could get there with no money," Sister wrote. "Pat Hunziker popped into my mind. He used to have a bazillion frequent flyer miles. So the next day I e-mailed him and asked if would get a ticket for this poor man, which he was very happy to do. So in two days, my friend took this very relieved fellow to the airport, with his little duffel bag with a few second-hand clothes, and a sandwich she made for him, and put him on a plane for Savannah, courtesy of Patrick."

Sister downplays her role with storm victims but remains impressed by the countless compassionate acts that continue in Katrina's aftermath. "It is inspiring to see how generous and caring people are," she said.



Book Notes — Sister Hildegarde Geraets, OSB

The Rise of Benedict XVI, John Allen Jr.

Allen, a well-seasoned writer on Vatican issues, gives readers his informed account on why he thinks the College of Cardinals chose Pope John Paul as the new Church leader. He begins by describing Pope John Paul's journey to death, and concludes this section with detailed coverage of the funeral. Allen, like the rest of the world, was impressed by the pope's worldwide influence, as shown by the huge crowds mourning his passing and the number of state officials in attendance. It became evident to the Cardinals that only a man of equal integrity and intelligence would be an effective successor.

To the surprise of many, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was seen to be the right man and he was elected in one of the shortest elections in the history of the Conclave. Many critics of Ratzinger have begun to see him in a new light. Allen discusses several of the issues, which will need to be addressed by the pope but always with a positive approach. Readers should enjoy this insightful, informative, anecdotally rich book.



Sister
Hildegarde Geraets, OSB

Forgotten Among the Lilies, Ronald Rolheiser

This collection of reflections attempts to shed light on our concerns, guilt, feelings and place in the whole Church. These reflections will help us be alive, to be healthy, and enable us to enjoy the pleasures of life. Among topics touched upon: restlessness, guilt, patience, death, social problems, and God's love.

If you struggle with Freudian psychology, you may find the topics in the first section not particularly relevant. But continue because it gets better. As John of the Cross led us through the "dark night of the soul" so too does Rolheiser lead us through the struggles of restlessness and guilt to find consolation in God. The book is arranged to meet the needs of busy parents, overworked health care workers, factory employees or the self-employed. The book's resources serve to guide us to a place "among the lilies" as we learn to cope with the struggles of life.

Leading Intercessions, John Pritchard

Are you responsible for leading prayers in public or for creating informal worship services for small groups but find yourself too busy to come up with another new idea? Here is one answer. Pritchard includes a subject index, which helps make it user-friendlier. The concise, stimulating ideas presented will make it possible for you to lead a group to a prayerful experience. Consider adding this book to your reference library.



Jan Dworschak

Jan Dworschak Joins Liturgy Team

The liturgy team of Saint Bede gained a new member in late October with the hiring of Jan Dworschak, a seasoned liturgist, chaplain and former teacher. The Arcadia, WI native joins Sisters Helenette Baltes, Hildegarde Geraets and Mary Pattison, and staff member Judy Bredeson in preparing daily and special liturgies at the monastery.

"I play piano and organ, and have trained liturgical ministers," Dworschak said. Besides her musical talents, she has taught in parochial schools and served as a chaplain, a role she continues at Luther Midelfort in Eau Claire.

"I'm looking forward to tapping the monastery's good voices," she said.

Dworschak holds a bachelor's degree from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, a MA from the Rensselaer (Ind.) Program of Church Music and Liturgy, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, CA. Prior to moving to Eau Claire she completed a year-long residence in Clinical Pastoral Education at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN. She also served as a full-time interim staff chaplain there.

Clairemont Sisters

For the eight Benedictines living at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, November 8 brought new living quarters. Aided by Saint Bede colleagues, staff and helpful Clairemont personnel, the Sisters moved to new quarters in the 900 wing, northwest from the suite they have occupied since fall 2001. Sister Ruth Feeney, coordinator for eight resident Benedictines, said the Sisters' former space was needed for expansion of the Clairemont's rehabilitation department.

Although outside views have changed, the new unit also has well furnished bedrooms, kitchen and laundry areas, and a community room that will double as the Sisters' chapel. The Sister's Unit includes Sisters Dorothy Eisold, Haroldine Malinowski, Lorayne Andre, Lucille Hubmann, Michaela Murrey, Pauline Hoffart, Roma Paulus and Therese Roth.



Carleen Tiefenthaler with Sister Dorothy Eisold



Judy LaFave shows yarn to Sister Therese Roth



Sister Michaela Murrey



Sister Lorayne Andre

Sisters' Strategic Planning Taps Religious, Lay Advice

Benedictine life, community, hospitality and stewardship of resources were among items introduced in a planning statement issued to Saint Bede's Development Advisory Council at their quarterly meeting in September.

The statement presented by Sister Margaret, Prioress, is focused on the Sisters' future. It expresses the Sisters' commitment to Benedictine life and information distilled from numerous planning sessions in recent years. Sister Margaret said the community now is expanding its reach for appropriate advice from religious and lay sources.

"We are not in crisis," She emphasized, "but we recognize that our community has been diminished by age and social trends that work against religious vocations."

Sister Margaret capsuled Benedictine history in Eau Claire and elsewhere in Wisconsin, beginning in 1892 when seven nuns from St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, MN accepted an invitation to teach at St. Patrick's Parish. In 1948, the convent established a permanent presence in Eau Claire when 83 Sisters from St. Benedict's volunteered to establish a priory at a Wilson Street residence. By 1964, these Benedictines, with help from friends and donors, opened what today is Saint Bede Monastery on rural acreage just south of the city.

Despite periods of significant growth since then the community today has dwindled to 37 members with a median age of 74. Fourteen Benedictines hold full or part-time salaried ministries locally and at other sites. Nine Sisters reside in nursing homes. However, every Sister contributes to the monastery's charism of prayer, service and gracious hospitality.

"Our future direction may include new arrangements for the Center, remodeling the monastery, or selling a portion or all of our property and relocating elsewhere," she added. "We are exploring options and are seeking advice," she said. "Recognizing this new reality calls for changes in our situation. We have been working at strategic planning since 2000 and now are ready to consider major adjustments. As yet we have made no firm and final decisions."



Visit us at: www.saintbede.org

Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Gifts from the Heart

The spirit of generosity, as we experience it here, goes far beyond material gifts. The Sisters are blessed with friends whose kindness range from gifts of self and resources to expressed memories of the Benedictines in schools, hospitals, parishes and elsewhere where their influence endures.

Most of these gifts from the heart go publicly unacknowledged because recognition is not the motivation by those who consider themselves part of the Sisters' oneness in an ecumenical ministry. But their impacts are invaluable.

For example, over the years, numerous friends have maintained ties at Clairemont with companionship, caregiving and more for the Benedictines residing there. Their gifts also result in social and spiritual interaction with the Sisters, who welcome others to join them in prayer. Other gifts: the celebration of Mass at Clairemont by local clergy and ensuring the Sisters' access to the sacraments.

Our communications mailings stay timely, thanks to a loyal cadre of some 45 volunteers. They alternate at sessions in groups of 12 to 15 to assist us in preparing *Tidings* newsletters and special solicitations for mailing. Their dexterity with envelope inserts, taping and labeling are critical to our fundraising efforts. The volunteers' energies and good humor carry over to social visits and lunch with the Sisters when the job is done.

More examples: Lay Associates from many walks of life who seek mentoring by the Sisters for spiritual activities that involve temporary commitments to aspects of Benedictine life.

Other women and men who work behind the scenes as volunteers at the Sisters' annual Celebrity Banquet - Dinner Beyond the Hill, ensuring its many successes. Last year, their personal gifts of included auctioneering, serving reception and dinner guests, facilitating checkouts, helping with cleanup -- even merging event photos with music to produce a lively CD of banquet highlights. **Deo Gratias!**

Briefly...

☐ Thanks to the organizers and attendees at the **St. Patrick's High School Class '50 Reunion** in September. They remembered the Benedictine Sisters with individual gifts exceeding \$12,700.

☐ **Celebrity Banquet** -- Dinner Beyond the Hill, set for Saturday, Feb. 11, at the Best Western Trail Lodge & Suites in Eau Claire, could use these donations for the event's popular auctions: catered meals, holiday vacations or time-share accommodations. If you can help, please call Linda at (715) 834-7130.

☐ **Tax time is coming.** Consider how a donation to Saint Bede of appreciated stock, unneeded IRAs, insurance policies or other assets might best serve your needs while benefiting the Benedictine Sisters and those they serve. Explore the positives of making an estate gift by becoming a **Heritage Companion**. For more information, call the Development Office at 715/834-7130.

peace on earth



Late summer saw major repairs to the monastery's driveway. Crews worked for several days installing asphalt patches, repairing cracks and sealing the surface. The \$11,000-plus project improves safety for walkers and motorists, and provides a fresh, well-marked entry for visitors.

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.

- **Dec. 17: Feb. 25:** Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **Dec. 19 - Jan. 1:** Labyrinth available for meditative walking
- **December 22:** Observance of the Solstice:
The Longest Night of the Year
- **February 24-26:** Marriage Encounter Weekend

Mark Your Calendars

Lenten Series: (evenings)

- **March:** ...details to be announced.
- **March 10:** Twilight retreat - **Compassion: The Heart of Faith** with Fr. John Heagle
- **March 14:** Taize music with Ruth Rosauer
- **March 28:** **The Passion Narratives** with S. Margaret Michaud

Summer:

- **July 9-14, 2006:** **Retreat for Religious** with S. Margaret Michaud.

* A book discussion group meets monthly at the Center.
Current book: **Problems with Atonement** by Stephen Finlan

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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A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Bede Monastery

FALL 2005

BITS AND CENTER PIECES

– Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

The leaves crackled under my feet as I trudged through the Mayer Trail. The beautiful blue sky peeked between the bouquets of scarlet and yellow leaves. The smell of Fall was distinct and I could hear the birds discussing their winter plans.

I enjoyed the walk but my journey had a purpose. I wanted to see the lower section of the trail being renovated by another Eagle Scout candidate and his crew of volunteers. The Mayer Trail is named for one of our chaplains who originally took off through the woods with an old lawn mower, determined to carve a path on the west side of the wooded area.

We share these knolls with a wide array of creatures: deer, turkeys, a family of red fox, and many common animals. Several years ago we housed a black bear and even a fisher.

Several benches have been added to the trails over

the years and a small, sandstone, cave-like ledge forms a simple shrine for a small statue of St. Benedict. Each project and hour spent renewing existing trails or carving out a new trail helps to bring the beauty of our natural surroundings closer to all. At certain points, our trails intersect with the 'highways' probably used for centuries by deer.



Sister Judith Kramer

The phenomenon of the "devil's ditches," where trees cling breathlessly to the walls of deep caverns, gives new respect for the power of rain and wind. So, thanks to the monastery maintenance crew, and to Matt, Aaron, Bruce, Joe, Frank, Mike, Craig, Colin, Evan, John and the many volunteers over the years who have helped to bring all of us closer to God's boundless seasonal beauty. Come see for yourself!