



# TIDINGS

## Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict  
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### Sister Margaret Re-Elected, Celebrates Golden Jubilee

With the year only three-quarters through, 2004 already has proved to be pivotal in the life of Sister Margaret (Gregory) Michaud, OSB.

In April, her community re-elected her to a fifth four-year term as prioress of Saint Bede Monastery. During June, she joined two instructors and some 25 students enrolled in the Diocesan School of Biblical Studies for a tour of holy and historical places in Greece and Turkey. On Sunday, July 11, Sister Margaret marked her Golden Jubilee with family, friends and colleagues.

"It's a good life. There are many challenges, but also many rewards," said Sister, an Eau Claire native and one of five children born to the late Lloyd and Margaret Michaud. "It's a life that draws you out of yourself – a chance to seek God and serve others."

She has clear memories of her role models. "My teachers in grade and high school," Sister Margaret said. "I admired their competence and kindness."

Sister began her novitiate year at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. at age 17. With only one year of college she was given her first assignment as a grade school teacher. Later she earned a bachelor's degree from the College of St. Benedict and a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Notre Dame.

Sister taught elementary classes at St. Patrick's School, Eau Claire, and St. Thomas More School at La Crosse. Her math teaching spans 19 years, ten of them at Regis High School.

While a teaching assistant at Marquette University, she studied for a doctorate in philosophy. In the early 1980s a Bush Leadership Fellowship enabled Sister to add a master's degree in theology from

St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn. where she joined a group for a semester's study in Israel. From 1993-96 she taught philosophy and religious studies at Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Beyond serving as prioress, which will total a record 20 years

when her new term ends in 2008, Sister Margaret has held other key posts at Saint Bede. In 1986 she spurred creation of the Development Office and served as its first director. She also assisted the director of Saint Bede Center and from 1985-93 served as the community's treasurer.

During 1981-91 Sister was elected president of the Federation of St. Benedict, a consortium of 12 Benedictine sites. In recent years, she has served on the board of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, an inter-faith group working for deeper understanding of the world's religions. Sister Margaret continues to help meet the special needs of the elderly and infirm Sisters living at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation in Eau Claire. She also responds to invitations to direct religious retreats at sites around the nation.

Always teaching, Sister leavens her leadership with humor and anecdotes gained from wide experience – stories and examples that resonate with audiences within and beyond the monastery.

"The Rule of St. Benedict is my guide," Sister Margaret said. "I appreciate its healthy and realistic outlook." Today, with 38 members – down from 110 in the 1960s, Saint Bede is strategically planning its future. Acknowledging the challenges ahead, Sister Margaret said she looks for her community "to move into the future with hope and confidence."



Sister Margaret and Sister Mary Maves, Subprioress



Sister Margaret (center) with family in chapel at 50th Jubilee celebration.



**Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB**  
**Prioress**

## TIDINGS

### **Saint Bede Monastery**

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# MONASTIC MUSINGS

— *Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB*

According to the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, all the members who are permanently incorporated into the community by monastic profession vote for the abbot. The abbot is the only official, however, who is elected. The *Rule* directs the abbot to appoint others to fulfill the necessary roles for the smooth running of the monastery. He is to "choose those with whom he can confidently share the burdens of office. They are to be chosen for virtuous living and wise teaching." (*RBI 21:3-4*)

Here at Saint Bede's we had our election last April. When the term of a prioress ends, in keeping with the Benedictine tradition, the terms of her appointees end as well. Thus, when a new term begins, new appointments are made. Accordingly, we have new officials sharing in the administration of the community.

**Sister Ruth Feeney** leaves her position as subprioress and assumes the responsibility for coordinating the Sisters' unit at Clairemont, where our members who need nursing care live and pray together in a wing of the building. Sister Ruth continues as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Vocation Committee.

**Sister Mary Maves** has become our subprioress, a role that calls for assisting the prioress as needed.

**Sister Hildegarde Geraets** continues as treasurer and librarian, and also becomes the coordinator of the house at the monastery.

**Sister Judith Kramer** takes over as Director of Saint Bede Center. She continues her work as pastoral minister at St. Luke's Parish in Boyceville.

**Sister Monica Mai** assumes the role of procurator, which puts her in charge of buildings and grounds. She continues to work at Sacred Heart Hospital in the pastoral care department.

**Sister Dale Wollum** keeps her role as community secretary and will work with Sister Hildegarde in some of the house matters.

**Sister Clarita Selz** continues to direct our Benedictine Lay Associates Program and retains her pastoral care ministry at Sacred Heart Hospital.

**Sister Mary Frances Gebhard** stays on as director of our Justice and Peace activities as well as coordinator of health and wellness for the community.

These Sisters have taken on large responsibilities, many of them in more than one area. Each accepted her appointment or reappointment with grace and generosity. Thus we move ahead, striving to seek God as the *Rule* directs for the next four years.

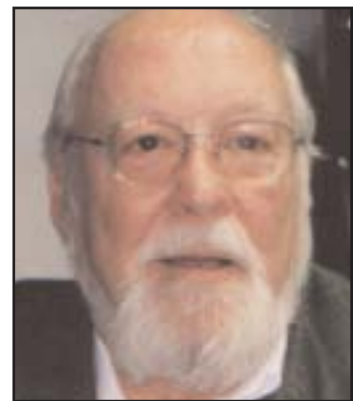
## In Memoriam

Fr. Thomas E. Langer, Saint Bede's chaplain since September 2003 and resident priest at St. Joseph's Parish, Rock Falls, died August 20 at his home. He was 74. Father also had been serving as an assistant chaplain at Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire.

An Eau Claire native, Fr. Tom was an alumnus of St. Patrick's High School, where he also held development director and guidance counseling posts.

An avid writer, he authored four books on the sacraments and free-lanced for various publications. Father also had been working on a doctorate in marriage counseling from Loyola University in St. Louis.

Funeral services were held August 25 at St. Joseph's Church, followed by burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Eau Claire.



*Rev. Thomas E. Langer*

## REACHING OUT

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB



Sister Mary Jackle

- Twenty-two Sisters and Saint Bede's Lay Associates participated in the Benedictines' annual retreat June 20-25 at the monastery. The retreat was led by **Rev. Benet Amato, OSB**, of St. Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana.
- **Sister Connie Ostrander**, who works with the Bishop of the Diocese of Jamaica on projects that serve those most in need, wrote, "I spent the summer meeting with donors, speaking for medical care, raising funds and 'settling in' to our new satellite office for Jamaica. We will be working in Louisville, (Ky.) when we come state-side," she said, referring to a long-time colleague, **Sister Naomi Rosenberger, OSB**.
- **Sister Mary Jackle**, a skills development specialist for a San Antonio-based health care system, said her busy summer has included developing English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and grant writing to benefit hospital staff and provide professional opportunities for Mexican-schooled nurses trapped in low-paid jobs in other fields.



Sister Connie

- The Sisters in June invited the public to join them in prayer for justice and peace and for each participant's personal needs for all or part of the 7 to 8 p.m. hour each Wednesday during the month. They continued the initiative during July and August, and recently decided to continue in September and October.
- **Sister Petronelle Marthaler** in mid-May realized a long-deferred goal of visiting Washington, D.C. when she accompanied friends to the nation's capital and Connecticut. Now retired from in-home caregiving, Sister toured many historic sites. She said she especially enjoyed viewing the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights at the National Archives.



Sister Petronelle

- **Sisters Margaret Michaud** and **Michaela Hedican** in August attended the Leadership Conference of Women Religious at Fort Worth, Texas. In July, Sister Margaret was the presenter at the Villa Maria Retreat Center in Pennsylvania.
- In late July, 400 copies of **Sister Dale Wollum's** book of poetry, "Glimpses Into Life", rolled off the press. The book, with photos by **Sister Karen Streveler**, is available at Saint Bede Center's gift shop. For information about purchasing a copy, contact the Development Office. We're online at [development@saintbede.org](mailto:development@saintbede.org).



Sister Dale

## Summer Institute at St. John's University Focuses on Benedictine 'Native Language'

In his *Rule*, St. Benedict cautions, "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and again at fixed hours in sacred reading."

Fifteen hundred years later at Saint Bede Monastery such scriptural readings, known in Latin as *lectio divina*, is a means for each Sister to learn, reflect and "listen with the heart" for God's word.

Sister Michaela Hedican and Sisters Lucy Miller and Marjorie Hill this summer attended the 19th Monastic Institute at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn. They, like Benedictines and lay affiliates from around the nation, heard presentations by **Sister Irene Nowell**, a Benedictine from Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kan. on *Lectio Divina: Our Native Language*.

"I'd heard Sister speak on other occasions," Sister Michaela said. "She not only teaches -- she exudes. Her insights enhanced my commitment to the scriptures."



*Lectio divina* students (from left) Sisters Michaela Hedican, Marjorie Hill and Lucy Miller

Course notes taken by Sister Lucy suggest ways that deeper understanding of *lectio divina* or holy readings, are enhanced through references to Biblical notes, related commentaries and cross-references.

"We have a right to expect God to speak to us through scripture," Sister Lucy wrote. "It is the foundation of our spiritual lives. We need to ponder what we've read." She said related resources include the study of religious art, oral traditions and "the fruit of other people's *lectio*." "Throughout all this," Sister added, "we need the Holy Spirit to guide us."

Sister Michaela smiled in comparing the mental and spiritual seeking of God's guidance to cattle digesting their cud by chewing and rechewing.

"The monks would reflect on and digest their readings during times of manual labor." Today, she continued, each Sister at Saint Bede prays the *Liturgy of the Hours* as a community but also sets aside a half-hour or more of quiet time to "digest and redigest God's word in her daily life."

Sister Marjorie said a "strong message" from Sister Irene's presentation is the primacy of the Bible in *lectio divina*.

"We read, meditate, pray and contemplate," Sister continued. "We relate scripture to our lives, let it become flesh within us, and let it change our lives. "Listening with the heart involves clearing out the blockages -- unnecessary noise, worry and busyness, praying with a certain centeredness of heart, as well as opening our heart to wonder."

*Catholic Times* columnist Christopher Ruff last described *lectio divina* as having four stages -- reading, reflection, response and rest or contemplation.

For Sister Michaela, faithful adherence to the process sharpens one's understanding of God's presence. "*Lectio divina*," she said, "was held up to us by St. Benedict to show how these readings can be woven into our daily lives."

### Celebrity Banquet 2005 Seeks Sponsors, Auction Items

Saint Bede's major social event to benefit the Sister' Retirement Fund is seeking sponsors, auction items and volunteers.

Consider becoming an event sponsor (\$500) or table sponsor (\$300) for your social group or for the Sister and guests. Volunteer servers and others play a vital role in the successes of this popular Saint Bede tradition.

If you can sponsor, donate or participate for this year's annual Celebrity Banquet, set for Saturday, Feb. 12, at Park Inn and Suites, Eau Claire, call Linda Dekan at the Development Office at 715-834-7130.



## Love of Children and Learning Draw Benedictines to Classrooms

With "back to school" season here, it's encouraging to note that the legacy of Benedictine teaching in Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley continues to enrich the learning, self-discipline and values of their students. At Saint Bede, Sisters Bernard Heit, Marjorie Hill and Karen Streveler recently spoke about the spiritual, mentoring and creative aspects of their educational ministries. Sister Lucy Miller, who did not comment for this article, is "retired" after many years of full-time teaching in parochial schools. This fall she began a fifth year as a substitute teacher in area Catholic and public schools.



Sister Bernard

**Tidings --** *What new approaches or resources will you introduce to pupils this year?*

Sister Bernard, who teaches first grade mornings at St. Mary's School, Altoona, said pupils would benefit from an updated Harcourt Brace Reading program.

"I'll also be surfing the Internet for new ideas and, hopefully, doing more religion plays," she said.

Sister Marjorie Hill, a fifth grade teacher at Immaculate Conception School in Eau Claire, also is unveiling new learning resources. "I'll be teaching a new reading and spelling series with our new language arts curriculum," Sister said.

For Sister Karen Streveler, an avid photographer who teaches third grade at IC, the challenge is to merge these skills with new technology to enhance learning. "I hope to continue learning more about computers and make use of that in my classroom," Sister said. An especially appealing goal, she added, is applying tips gleaned from a summer course in digital photography to enliven presentations and study materials.



Sister Marjorie

**Tidings --** *Which Benedictine teachers or mentors inspire your teaching today?*

Sisters Monica Mai and Michaela Hedican, and "the positive attitude and affirmation of others," noted Sister Karen. A continuing influence for Sister Marjorie is "Sister Mary Magdalen Dunn, who knew how to encourage each student and obtain the best from them." For Sister Bernard, "Sister Mary Jo Donaldson has always been a guide for me. And I've learned lots organization and retrieval ideas from Sister Karen Streveler."

**Tidings --** *What achievements do you wish for the youngsters you teach?*

- Sister Bernard: Maintain a good self-image; be a good friend of Jesus; respect all adults and children, and strive to excel in all academic fields.
- Sister Marjorie: That all students will do their best (and) gain a knowledge of their subjects, especially their Catholic faith, and will be able to live that faith throughout their lives. That they will become good citizens -- kind and generous -- and be of service to others.
- Sister Karen: That students will grow in love and respect for themselves and others. Also, that they continue to develop their own unique talents and gifts, and learn and live their Catholic values.



Sister Karen

**Tidings --** *What do you expect to be among your greatest challenges this year?*

"Working with hyper active children and helping them deal with emotional problems," said Sister Bernard. She also wants to enhance what she terms as "horizontal learning." "Children tend to want to climb the learning ladder vertically," she said.

Sister Karen said her focus is on "meeting the everyday needs of each of my students, helping each of them to feel unique and special and loved by God." For Sister Marjorie, the challenge, as always, is "meeting the needs of all her students."

*Continued on page 6.*

## Love of Children and Learning Draw Benedictines to Classrooms

Continued from page 5.

**Tidings** -- What advice would you offer beginning teachers today?

"Love your students," said Sister Marjorie. "Treat them fairly and be a good example to them. Have high expectations and your students will strive to meet those expectations."

Sister Karen would advise that they "build on the positive, be flexible, and let your students know that you care about each one of them. Communication with parents is also essential,"

she added. "Let parents know that you really need to work together to find ways to help their children learn and grow."

Leading and guiding are vital traits for any teacher, said Sister Bernard. They contribute to a "happy learning atmosphere" that enhances each student's creative talents. "Most of all," she said, "let your children know you love them and that they can depend on you."



## REMEMBERING THE GOOD TIMES

On August 7, some 100 Saint Bede Academy alums, former teachers and staff checked in at the Center for a long-awaited all-class reunion.

The previous reunion for the academy, which closed in 1978, was in 1988.

In addition to countless social highlights, attendees gathered for a memorial service for deceased SBA classmates and enjoyed an all-trimmings chicken picnic. Some joined the Sisters for Sunday Mass and brunch.

The consensus? Let's do this again within five years of so.

### Photos:

Sister Mary Pattison greets and serves.

Sister Mary Jo McDonald, former SBA Principal, shares memories with alumnae.

Storytelling is animated at reunion.

Barbecued chicken anchored a diverse menu.

Alums swapped tales at "Remembering" site.

Sister Michaela (center) was key to reunion's success.



Visit us at: [www.saintbede.org](http://www.saintbede.org)

# Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Donors who sometimes wonder if their gifts make a difference are invited to drop by Saint Bede Monastery to see for themselves. Although still a work in progress, funds donated toward last spring's air conditioning project have been paying cool dividends in Saint Bede Chapel, the adjoining Sunshine Dining Room and the monastery's Community Room. Recently, portable AC units were placed in the Sisters' residence area and the Center and Development offices.

Summer here is traditionally a time of planning, repairing, spiritual and personal development, and celebrating God's blessings with others. In recent months, your generosity has helped fund replacement of moisture-damaged walls in monastery bedrooms, outdoor drain and driveway improvements, and construction of a small, already well-used patio behind the Center.

During July, the Sisters and maintenance staff

completed annual top-to-bottom cleaning and waxing of floors and hallways, window washing and other spruce-up projects. Judging by the positive comments of visitors and guests, the results are being noticed and appreciated.

Benedictine hospitality in the well-maintained Center continues to be an attractive option for individuals seeking quiet reflection, library visits, and for religious, professional and other conferences. In July, family, friends and other guests joined Sister Margaret in celebration of her 50th Jubilee. In early August the Center was the hub for a well-attended all-class reunion of Saint Bede Academy.

Donors' friendship, generosity and services continue to enhance the charism of this Benedictine community, enabling the Sisters to share their spirituality, hospitality and ministries with others. **Deo Gratias!**

## LIBRARY NOTES —

— Sister Hildegard Geraets, OSB

Jesus, Christians and Muslims: the three major monotheistic religions of the world. The rise of conflict and tensions between these major religions is not new. All three religions claim the same spiritual forefather, and all were nurtured in the same historical soil, yet most of their history tells a story of conflict.

**Frances E. Peters** has captured this history in his recently published books, **THE MONOTHEISTS, JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN CONFLICT AND COMPETITIONS.**

Volume I is devoted to **THE PEOPLES OF GOD**; Volume II to **THE WORDS AND WILL OF GOD**. Peters is not a new writer in this field. He was able to put the three religions side by side for easier study and the writings are easy to follow. Bruce Feiler has covered the same subject, but in a much narrower scope in the book, **ABRAHAM: A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF THREE FAITHS**. This is a popular book for the reader not expecting great detail.

After pursuing the three major monotheistic religions, you may be ready to study in detail a specific religion. **SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS** by **Roy H. Schoeman**, who traces the development of Judaism from its beginning through modern day atrocities. Schoeman grew up studying Judaism under preeminent Rabbis and after receiving degrees from a variety of universities, converted to Catholicism. He has a new way of looking at the Holocaust, the state of Israel today, and the modern day anti-Semitism. **Richard Wightman Fox** in his book, **JESUS IN AMERICA**, makes a study of the role Jesus played in American history. Fox helps us understand that religion and politics is not a new issue.

In a lighter vein, try reading **CHOCOLATE FOR A LOVER'S HEART** and **CHOCOLATE FOR A MOTHER'S HEART**, both by **Kay Allen Baugh**. Each book contains inspiring stories and leaves the reader with a good feeling about people.

## UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

As an ecumenical and conference center 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 21 - Annual Faith Enrichment Day

- sponsored by Saint Bede Center - New this year!  
- general session featuring Doris Murphy

### September 24 - Exploring America by Boat

Illustrated talk about the adventures of retired teachers Mary and Stephen Mayheu. Please call the Center for details.

### October 23, November 20, December 18

Diocesan School of Biblical Studies

### October 22-24 - Advent Retreat

directed by Rev. Simeon Thole, OSB from St. John's Abbey, Colleville, MN

### December 21 - "Observing the longest night of the year"

Watch for details

A book discussion group meets monthly at the Center. Current book: **"On Being Liked"** by James Allison. If interested, please call for date and time.

For more information about these events, please call

**SAINT BEDE CENTER - (715) 834-8642**

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## BITS AND CENTER PIECES

— Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

Mary's eyes danced and her dimples flashed as she quipped, "We can bring back **Bits and Center Pieces**"! Mary had been my right hand assistant and executive secretary when I was Center Director back in 1983. At that time we had begun a simple newsletter named **Bits and Center Pieces** to communicate with our friends, neighbors, families and co-workers about the plans, hopes and projections we had at the Center.

Now, twenty-plus years later, I am back as Director and Mary, with two of her and Greg's three children now married and a grandmother to two, is still at my side and probably the most accurate source of information on just about any Center-related topic. In fact, Mary worked in this building while it was still Saint Bede Academy!

In addition to succeeding Sister Hildegard as Director (please see Sister Margaret's *Monastic Musings* column) I also continue as Pastoral Minister at St. Luke's Parish in Boyceville. Sister Margaret will serve at the Center when I am away, and she and Carleen Tiefenthaler will run the gift shop. Change will always be a fact in human life. At times change

stretches us and as I return to this position, I come with hope that, through the outreach and hospitality of Saint Bede Center, we can continue to invite people to share our space, resources and prayers and our "home on the hill."

We have been here since 1964 and many changes have taken place in the church, our families, and in our society and our personal lives. How we deal with the changes around us makes all the difference. Recently, a guest who had been with us for a few days of quiet time left a message in her room noting that she had been "blessed to have been here" and that she "felt stronger as she faced some very difficult days ahead." It is our purpose and fervent prayer that the bits and pieces of our lives will fit together with your lives and bring us all in harmony to God.



Sister Judith Kramer