



TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
VOL.14 NO.2

Eau Claire, Wisconsin
SUMMER 2001

Stability Fidelity to Monastic Life Obedience

These hallmarks of the Benedictine community are especially meaningful for three Saint Bede sisters who celebrated their jubilees this spring. **Sister Roma Paulus**, one of the community's "Pioneers," marks the 60th year of her first profession, while **Sister Maryanne Dooher** and **Sister Mary Jo Donaldson** celebrate their 50th or Golden Jubilees. All re-committed to the Rule of Saint Benedict with their community during Sunday, May 6, a day of spiritual and social bonding at Saint Bede. On Sunday, July 8, the sisters will share their joy with family and friends in a second Jubilee celebration at the Monastery.

Sister Roma Paulus 60th Jubilee

On the eve of her 60th Jubilee, Sister Roma Paulus reflects on her religious vocation and credits many a number of role models for her decision to become a Benedictine. One of ten children born to a Catholic farming family near Bloomer, she attended the local high school and later earned a teaching certificate from the former Eau Claire State College. She was a public elementary school teacher for seven years before entering the religious life.



"I was attracted to the Benedictines by my sister Moira." Sister Moira, she added, is a member of the Annunciation Monastery, a Benedictine community at Bismarck, N.D. "My sister would visit our parents frequently in Cadott, where we lived later on. I also knew the sisters who taught at St. Patrick's in Eau Claire."

In 1941 she made her first profession at St. Benedict Convent, and helped pioneer the establishment of Saint Bede Priory in 1948. "I taught the elementary grades at the former St. Benedict's Boys School and later served as teacher and principal at Altoona until it became St. Mary's," said Sister Roma. Other teaching assignments were at Ellsworth, La Crosse, Richland Center and Eau Claire." Conceding "some challenges" at St. Benedict's, she added, smiling, "We enjoyed the boys so much. They were all right."

Now residing at The Clairemont, Sister Roma recalled serving as Junior Sisters Director at the time Sisters Maryanne Dooher and Mary Jo Donaldson took their first vows. She also was a substitute teacher and during summers helped teach "vacation" school. Sister Roma also tended the sick and the elderly and served as house coordinator at Saint Bede and other missions where she was stationed.

With other Saint Bede "Pioneers" today Sister Roma actively prays for and comforts others at The Clairemont. She enjoys spiritual readings, along with biographies and history, especially the explorations of Lewis & Clark. Well aware of the career choices facing young women today, she's nevertheless confident that religious vocations will endure. Vocations are "more contemplative" today, she said, but with all the responsibilities of a religious community that reaches out to serve others.

Sister Maryanne Dooher 50th Jubilee

Sister Maryanne Dooher looks forward to celebrating her 50 years as a Benedictine of Saint Bede Monastery with community, family and friends. She and Sister Mary Jo Donaldson have the distinction of being the first vowed members of Saint Bede to join the community in Eau Claire.



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MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB

This issue of Tidings features our Jubilarians, Sisters Roma, Maryanne and Mary Jo. The celebration of these anniversaries of Monastic Profession is a great occasion for these sisters, but it is also a feast of tremendous joy for all of us in the community. We are rejoicing in the goodness of God who has sustained Sister Roma for sixty years and Sisters Maryanne and Mary Jo for fifty years in their fidelity to monastic life. For those of us who share the same commitment to monastic life, the example for these women encourages us to the same fidelity.

In Chapter 58 of The Rule of Saint Benedict we read that, when one is received into the monastery, he or she comes before the whole community in the oratory and promises stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience. This is done in the presence of God and the saints. It is a solemn promise, an awesome commitment. Notice, however, that the promise is not made *to* God, but *in the presence* of God and the Heavenly Court. God and the saints are the witnesses, but to whom is the promise made? The answer to this question comes in the words "he or she comes before the whole community in the oratory." The promise is made to the members present, to the people of the monastery, and the promising happens in the place which is the heart of the monastery, the place where the members, several times daily, gather to fulfill the purpose for which the monastery exists, the honor and worship of the Loving God.

Monastic Profession for us who follow Benedict's way, is a covenant between individuals who join together to help one another in the search for God. We promise to create and sustain the monastery as the environment where seeking God is everyone's desire. We promise to remain (stability), to keep dedicated to the task (fidelity to desire monastic life), and to listen together for the Spirit who guides us (obedience).

Our sisters' jubilees, then, is a time of celebration and recommitment for each of us. We renew our pledge of support and love to these faithful women, our sisters, and we draw strength for our journeys as they renew their promises to us. Of our Jubilee feast we can truly say, "This is the day the Lord has made."



**Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB
Prioress**

TIDINGS

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parish in Chippewa Falls. They have a son, Christopher, age 7. Referring to her alma mater, Suilmann said, "It is indeed an honor from an institution that has meant so much to me in shaping my adult life. All praise be to God!"

Chippewa Falls Leader in Saint Bede Program Wins St. Benedict's Distinguished Alumna Award

Deanna Suilmann, who with husband John, served a fourth time as a team leader last October at Marriage Encounter at Saint Bede Center, will receive the "distinguished alumna award" at the College of St. Benedict in late June.

Suilmann, who graduated in 1976 after majoring in biology and chemistry, credited the Benedictines for "an outstanding college education and for helping me develop leadership skills that served me really well."

A technical leader at W.L. Gore and Associates in Eau Claire, Suilmann credits her teachers for successes in fields normally considered "a man's world." She developed three patents while working with technology firms. She and John, also a technology professional, are members of Notre Dame

Sister Drusilla Zeimentz

Sister Drusilla, 80, died on March 17, 2001 at The Clairemont, comforted by members of the Saint Bede Community. Before retiring in 1990 she served as a teacher, in health care, as tutor, in housekeeping and as tender of the aging and infirm sisters. Professed as a Benedictine in July 1941, Sister Drusilla was joyfully anticipating her 60th Jubilee. Services for Sister Drusilla, one of the Saint Bede "Pioneers," were in Saint Bede Chapel followed by burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Eau Claire. Please remember her in your prayers.



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REACHING OUT

— Sister Dale Wollum

Summer brings renewal in many areas: spiritual - educational - recreational

- **Sister Dale Wollum, Sister Barbara Weiland** and **Sister Lucy Miller** plan to attend St. John's School of Theology in Collegeville, Minn., for a week's course in Benedictine spirituality.
- **Sister Ruth Feeney** will be beginning a three-year certification program in Spiritual Direction at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.
- **Sister Michaela Hedican** will be attending a week's intensive course in Beech Grove, Ind., which will update her in Spiritual Direction techniques.
- The NCEA Convention which was recently held in Milwaukee and well attended by thousands of educators from around the U.S. was a joy for **Sister Karen Streveler** and **Sister Marjorie Hill**.
- Summer will bring **Sister Karen Streveler, Sister Mary Maves** and **Sister Bernard Heit** to UW - Eau Claire for a week's course in updating teaching methods. **Sister Marjorie Hill** will attend a similar course in Wausau, Wis.
- Sunny Florida was the site for some recent well-needed rest for **Sister Clarita Selz** and a visit with relatives for **Sister Helenette Baltes**.
- **Sister Margaret Michaud** helped facilitate the election of prioress at Saint Scholastica Monastery, Fort Smith Ark., April 26-27. She made presentations on Benedictine History at Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, Ind., during June 6-7, and from August 10-15 will direct in the Community Retreat at Queen of Angels Monastery, Liberty, Mo.
- **Sister Mary Pattison** is attending a summer session at St. John's on "Differing Visions-One Communion" in June and will participate in a workshop for Benedictine Musicians at St. Benedict's Monastery in July.
- **Sister Monica Mai** on April 27, spoke at a conference of about 85 nurses in Bemidji, Minn., on "A Ministry of Caring: In Me, By Me, Through Me, Before Me." The conference covered areas such as nursing seen as a ministry, the giftedness of nurses serving others and sustaining oneself in a ministry touching others at significant and stressful times in their lives.

The Sisters of Saint Bede's

Each one chosen,
Each one unique and individual,
Each one belongs like a piece of the puzzle.
Each one has their own place in a community
of spirituality.

Living a simple life with an air of sophistication.
Learning and teaching the lessons life has to teach,
Hand picked by God for a life of dedication,
Professing their faith with their lives,
And answering the eternal calling of their hearts.
These are the Sisters of Saint Bede's.

Angela Bischel, Certified Nursing Assistant who cares for the Sisters at The Clairemont.



Students of the Diocesan School of Biblical Studies share a laugh with instructor Sister Margaret Michaud at a March study session in Saint Bede Center. The four-year program draws women and men to a curriculum of meetings, studies, presentations and other assignments. Currently 16 participants are seeking a deeper historical and spiritual understanding of the Bible and related works.

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Sister Maryanne Dooher

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She came to Saint Bede in 1949 to seek God in the way she had experienced the praying, happy, holy, fun-loving Benedictines of her home parish of St. Anne's in Minneapolis. Her friends, Theresa Knight (Sister Daniele), Mary Kempf (Sister Gilmary), Barb Inhoffer (Sister Mary Claire), Barb Juettner (Sister Leona) and many others from the parish chose the Benedictine life about the same time, "making it quite a normal Catholic path to take."

Sister Maryanne made her profession as a Benedictine in St. Patrick's Church on July 11, 1951. Her first teaching assignment was at St. Pat's. Later assignments were at Onalaska, Ellsworth (Thomas More for one semester), St. Pius in La Crosse and finally concluding in 1997 at Sacred Heart/St. Patrick's in Eau Claire. "In every situation I loved the people and teaching," she said. Over the years, Sister Maryanne also served as Director of Postulants during 1964-67 and sub-prioress in 1997.

To prepare for these ministries Saint Bede gifted her with a year at the College of St. Teresa, Winona, Minn., where studies included Benedictine history under Sister Claire Lynch. She later earned her degree in Elementary Education from Viterbo College, La Crosse. Later came graduate studies in theology and workshops in religion and education.

Teaching little children was the joy of her life. Sister Maryanne laughed in recalling the confidence of a child at St. Pius: "Sister, when other people smile at me their smiles stay on their faces. But when you smile at me you smile comes right off your face over to me."

A self-described "professional aunt," Sister Maryanne has 32 nieces and nephews, and more than 80 "grands (nieces and nephews). Acute glaucoma caused many adjustments in her life, making loved ones more precious. "They mean the world to me," she said, "along with all my living family here and in heaven."

Sister Mary Jo Donaldson 50th Jubilee

As celebration of her Golden Jubilee approaches, Sister Mary Jo Donaldson looks for new ways to extend social justice to those most in need. Her career in teaching, school administration and, for the past ten years, pastoral ministry, reflects the values of a strong Catholic family and a Benedictine life that fed her hunger for the spiritual, the intellectual and service to others. "One of my role models,



Dorothy Day, taught us about serving people but in a way that was deeply spiritual," said Sister Mary Jo. "I've also been motivated by the spirit of Vatican II, the model of what non-ordained leadership can accomplish."

A pastoral associate for St. Bernard's Parish in Abbotsford since 1990, she developed sacramental programs, oversees religious education and adult education, brings prayer and the Eucharist to the homebound and ministers to the needs of the elderly. She also served as parish liaison to Abbotsford's police, chamber of commerce, social services and other organizations.

The Donaldsons, today led by mother Josephine, 98, had eight children, three of whom chose religious vocations (Sister Bridget, also of Saint Bede and pastoral associate at Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Holmen, and a brother, Fr. Thomas Donaldson of St. Francis Parish in Ellsworth). Five of her siblings chose marriage. Besides her parents, Sister Mary Jo credits teachers at St. Ben's and St. John's colleges who encouraged spirituality and learning, social justice, the Church's Liturgical Renewal and empowerment of the Catholic laity. Their advice guided her in assignments in Wisconsin and places as distant as South America and Africa.

For example, after studies at the College of St. Teresa, she taught the primary grades at La Crosse and Edgar, Wis., English and history at Regis High School, served as teacher and principal during the last eight years of the former Saint Bede Academy, then prepared for a teaching assignment at a secondary school in Zimbabwe, where she taught from 1985-87.

"I teach American history," Sister Mary Jo said, after her return from Africa. "I like being American; being in Africa gave me the opportunity to see America as other see us. That probably was one of the most valuable things that I could bring back to my community and to the Church here in America." Before taking the St. Bernard post, she spent a year as a graduate student at St. John's.

New goals include a brief transition to "indulge my travel bug" before returning to Saint Bede to develop a "one-on-one" ministry of direct service to others. Summing up her first 50 years as a Benedictine, Sister Mary Jo said, smiling, "I've been doing the Catholic thing."



Photo of (from left to right) Sisters Mary Jo Donaldson, Roma Paulus, Maryanne Dooher and Margaret Michaud, prioress.

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Celebration Marks the Commitments of Ten Benedictine Lay Associates

— Sister Clarita Selz, OSB, Director

On March 25, six Benedictine Lay Associates made an initial commitment for one year and four renewed their commitments for three years. During Evening Praise in the monastery chapel, with the community of sisters, other associates and friends present, they publicly stated their intent: "Responding to the invitation to seek God, I commit myself for year(s) as a Benedictine Lay Associate of Saint Bede Monastery to live according to the spirit of the rule of Saint Benedict under guidance of the gospel." The sisters pledge themselves to support and guide them on their spiritual journey.

Associates signed their commitment form on the altar along with the prioress, **Sister Margaret Michaud** and each associate's sponsor. They then received *The Rule of Saint Benedict* and a Benedictine medal as a symbol of mutual commitment.

Several days later I received a card from **Susan Zabel**. "The ceremony was very lovely and meaningful. Now the real challenge is to try to live according to Benedictine ideals and values. The help of you and the sisters is truly needed in that regard."

Evelyn Mulhern, who has been an associate since January 1989, wrote the following: "What appeals to me about being an associate of Saint Bede Monastery is meeting people with similar ideas. With the help of Sister Clarita, the Spirit of God surrounds us. I always leave our gathering with renewed faith and friendships."

Larry Martin, who made an initial commitment along with his wife, **Claire**, stated, "I find Benedictine way of scripture-based prayer and *lector divina* seems to work for me in terms of providing the spiritual nourishment that I need."

Sister Alicene Tucker Marks 104th Year With Loving Memories of Benedictine Life

-- Sister Michaela Hedican, Coordinator Sisters Unit at The Clairemont

As Sister Alicene enjoys her 104th year, her reflections on her long life return to her days as a telephone operator in Tintah, Minnesota. One of the sisters in the parish commented to her that she felt God had something more for her to do. Sister Alicene thought it might be nursing, but the community asked her to become an educator. And thus began a long career of cultivating the minds and hearts of young people. Saint Benedict is one of Sister Alicene's favorite saints and role models because he brought to Italy and eventually the world a love of learning and a deep desire to seek God. For Sister, one of the great memories of her life was the celebration of her 75th year of profession when she walked forward to the altar to renew her profession before God and her community. She was 101 years old. When asked what she would tell someone who was becoming a Benedictine sister, she said she would encourage them to put their whole heart into serving others and loving God. Her hope for her community as she offers prayers for strategic planning at Saint Bede is that the sisters are able to stay together and grow in God's love.



Lay Associates Renewing Commitments - (front row from left) Carol Forster, Barbara Wood, Evelyn Mulhern. (Back row) Sister Margaret Michaud, Sharon Biegel, Sister Clarita Selz.



Making initial Commitments on March 25 were (front row) Claire Martin, Mary Hofferle, Susan Zabel, Trudy Eron. (Back row) Sister Margaret, Larry Martin, Kristine VanDellen, Sister Clarita.

Benedict's Rule is an eminently reasonable and helpful guide for the path of life I'm on. I'm also inspired by how the Rule is lived by the sisters - and how they care about each other but also allow plenty of room for each person to be a strong and distinct individual."

If you would like more information about the Benedictine Lay Associate program, please contact me, Sister Clarita Selz, OSB, Director, at Saint Bede Monastery, P.O. Box 66, Eau Claire, WI 54702, or call (715) 834-3176.

Sister Alicene died peacefully on Saturday, May 26, at The Clairemont. A wake was held Tuesday afternoon in Saint Bede Chapel, followed by a Wednesday morning funeral Mass celebrated by Father Frank Corradi, pastor of St. Olaf parish. The Fall Tidings will feature a Memorial Tribute to Sister Alicene.

BY THE LIBRARY LAMP

— Sister Lorayne Andre, OSB



Late spring and throughout summer are wonderful times to slake thirsts for spiritual direction and renewal of the mind and heart.

At Saint Bede Library, in the Center, you'll find the following among our fresh titles. Enjoy.

In the Monastic Line

- *Seeking a Purer Christian life*; sayings and stories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers.
- Moore, Thomas J. *The Wisdom of Jesus*; his life and teachings in calligraphy and illustration.
- Behrens, James Stephens, OCSO. *Memories of Grace*; portraits from Holy Spirit Monastery in Georgia, as well as his youth in New Jersey - lingering memories of grace.
- Claasen, William. *Alone in Community*; journeys into monastic life around the world.
- Fitzpatrick, Gail, OCSO. *Wisdom from the Cloister*; spiritual lessons from the monastic tradition.

Reimagining the Church

- Lobinger, Fritz. *Like His Brothers and Sisters*; ordaining community leaders.
- Zagano, Phyllis. *Holy Saturday*; an argument for the restoration of the female diaconate in the Catholic Church.
- Hellwig, Monika. *Guests of God*; stewards of divine creation. Religious aspects of ecology.
- Nhat Hank, Thich. *Going Home*; Jesus and Buddha are brothers.
- Paprocki, Joe. *Renewing Your Ministry*; walking with Jesus in all that you do.

Personal Renewal

- Janek, Robert W. *Thoughts Along the Journey*; reflections on living as a Christian.
- Richard, Lucien. *Living the Hospitality of God*; How can we welcome the stranger?
- Morneau, Robert F. *A Tale from Paleface Creek*; Barry the Beaver, a workaholic, is taught the meaning of prayer, leisure, and enough.

Spiritual Direction

- Ruffing, Janet K. *Spiritual Direction*; beyond the beginnings.
- Stinissen, Wilfrid. *The Gift of Spiritual Guidance and Care of the Soul*.
- O'Hea, Eileen. *In Wisdom's Kitchen*; the process of spiritual direction.
- Green, Thomas. *The Friend of the Bridegroom*; the personal encounter with Christ.

Reflections on Our Faith Journey

- Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible*; a novel. A tale of domestic tragedy in the Congo that blends with Old Testament themes.
- Bosco, Antoninette. *Shaken Faith*; hanging in there when God seems far away.
- Waters, Chris Ann. *Seasons of Goodbye*; working through loss.
- Carter, Jimmy. *An Hour Before Daylight*; memories of a rural boyhood on a Georgia farm.
- Armstrong, Karen. *The Battle for God*; a review of fundamentalism and "militant piety."



Sue Zirngible, on household staff at Saint Bede, enjoys a work break with a Center Library book.

Springtime Again Makes Saint Bede a Distinctive Place for Praying, Learning, Sharing and Enjoying Woods, Fields and Trails.

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Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Sisters' Strategic Planning Explores New Ministries

Strategic planning begun more than a year ago by the Saint Bede sisters with a consultant, includes explorations of ministries for intentional prayer and development of outdoor prayer, meditation and nature appreciation amenities on the Monastery grounds.

The process, which involves the entire community, also involved study committees on Benedictine spirituality, personal and community welfare, new membership, ministry and service, and Saint Bede Center. In a presentation to the Development Advisory Council in March, **Sister Margaret Michaud**, prioress, said sisters are seeking new ways to involve the entire community, attract new members and serve the needs of current and prospective donors and friends. "We've made a concerted effort to not stay stuck," she said.

The prayer ministry, as outlined by **Sister Michaela Hedican**, would respond to growing public recognition of the power of prayer, a ministry sisters at The Clairemont now are practicing with fellow residents and others who ask for prayers for special intentions. A focused prayer ministry, she suggested, might begin in the Chippewa Valley and eventually expand to individuals and to education, legal, health care, government, business and other professionals serving them. Contacts would be by various modes, including the internet.

"This is something we can all do now and as we 'semi-retire,' become ill or live at a distance, Sister Michaela said. "Our Associates also could assist us."

Retirement Campaign, Funding Benefits from Generosity of Donors

Donors contributed more than \$230,000 to the various ministries of Saint Bede, smashing our \$184,000 target. Although a fall solicitation was deferred when the Retirement Funding Campaign (RFC) was extended for an additional year, the total already is the second highest in Development's history.

Many friends with outstanding pledges for the RFC also have responded, moving Saint Bede to within about \$7,000 of reaching the \$300,000 goal set in 1997. The spring solicitation for Saint Bede Center also is off to a good start. Nearly \$14,500 has been raised since early April toward the \$50,000 needed for the new windows, carpeting and other improvements to Saint Bede Center. To all who hold the sisters in your hearts, **Deo Gratias!**

Vocation Project, "Stepping Stones," Gives Glimpse of Benedictine Life

Those considering a religious life and wanting to know more about the Benedictine sisters should circle three dates on their calendars.

Sister Ruth Feeney, OSB, who coordinates vocations, said the "Stepping Stones" project offers opportunities to explore Monastic life in phases. Participants start with "Step Into Action" on Sunday, **July 29**, a day of prayer, service and enjoyment at Saint Bede. The schedule calls for orientation at 9 a.m., followed by Mass, a break period, then prayer and an opportunity to join sisters in serving others from 2 - 4:30 p.m. at Eau Claire's Community Table, followed at 5 p.m. by supper and recreation at the monastery.

"Step Over the Threshold," August 3-5, is designed to let participants get to know the sisters of Saint Bede with a weekend "live-in."

A few group sessions will provide background on their Benedictine life and activities, said Sister Ruth. "Time will be offered for personal leisure, conversation with individual sisters, and following the usual weekend schedule," she added. "This weekend would be good for anyone who has thought about religious life and wants to know more about it."

Part three of the program, **"Step Across the Way,"** involves a **Saturday, September 22**, trip to the Sisters of St. Paul Monastery in Saint Paul, Minn., in a 40-foot bus remodeled as a mobile home. Owner and driver of the "Vocation Voyage," Larry Agema, is deacon for Sacred Heart/St. Patrick's and St. Raymond parishes in Eau Claire. Sister Ruth said the travelers will find hospitality and gain perspectives about religious life at the Saint Paul "Benedictine Home."

For more information about "Stepping Stones," write Sister Ruth Feeney, OSB, at Saint Bede Monastery, or telephone (715) 834-3176. You also can e-mail her at Ruth@saintbede.org.



Donated bikes, medical surplus, paper products and other items are picked up at Saint Bede for transport to Wausau and later military cargo flights to Jamaica, West Indies. Area donors include the Bike Doctor and Eau Claire Bike and Sport, Luther Midelfort Mayo Health System and Plainwell Tissue. Saint Bede's **Sister Connie Ostrander**, assigned to the Diocese of Mandeville in Jamaica, helps ensure the gifts reach children and families most in need.

UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

As an ecumenical retreat and conference center, Saint Bede Center welcomes church, civic, and service groups to use the facilities for retreats, meetings, seminars, and workshops. In addition, the Center offers a variety of religious, spiritual, cultural, and educational programs. Private retreatants are always welcome as well! Listed below are some of the upcoming events which might be of interest to you:

- **June 10-14 - Christian Leadership Institute**
-sponsored by the Dioceses of La Crosse and Superior
- **August 3-5 - Monastic Experience**
- **September 7-8 - Lay Ministry Weekend**
- **September 18 - Faith Enrichment Day**
-sponsored by Saint Bede Center
- **September 29 - Diocesan School of Biblical Studies**
- **October 12-14 - Marriage Encounter Weekend**
- **October 18 - Retreat/Workshop for Nurses**
-directed by Sisters Monica Mai and Michaela Hedican, OSB
- sponsored by Saint Bede Center
- **October 27 - Diocesan School of Biblical Studies**

Catholic Soup for the Soul book discussion group meets monthly at the Center. If interested, call for date and time.

For more information about these events, please call
SAINT BEDE CENTER - (715) 834-8642



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CENTERING

– Sister Hildegard Geraets, OSB

We have recently moved through the Lenten season and into the ordinary season of the Church year. Ash Wednesday ushered in the Lenten season with entire community support. Special devotions were available and support materials could be found in book stores as well as in book racks in churches. Lent was followed by the Easter season which was introduced to the worshipping community with great jubilation. The alleluias were reinstated in the liturgy, fresh flowers adorned the sanctuary and excitement filled the air. Everything that had been promised to God's people had been fulfilled and Jesus returned to the Father. New life in the spirit was about to begin in what we call ordinary of the year.

We find ourselves pretty much on our own to keep the spirit alive and growing during this season. Vacation begins and the community has less stability than before; church choirs take a break so there is less group participation, and there are few major feasts to interrupt the routine. How can we keep the ordinary from becoming too ordinary? Can we keep the new spirit alive and well?

If you're traveling during the summer months, include a stop at some monastery. Take a walk around the grounds and enjoy the quiet. Join in community prayer and perhaps share a meal in the monastic dining room. Overnight accommodations often are available. The peace of the surroundings will bring quiet to the soul. Or, take a tour of Wisconsin's retreat centers. A list of such facilities is available in the Center office. If travel is not in your plans, try volunteering in some community project such as working with the homeless, serving at Community Table, or volunteering at hospitals or nursing homes. It is working with the marginalized that brings us close to God. Taking time out at Saint Bede Monastery and Center can be an enriching experience. The chapel is there for your use. Walk the monastery grounds or try a trail through the woods. Maybe just relaxing in the Center's library with a special book can be the source of your renewal.

However you choose to spend your ordinary time of year, try to vary your schedule so that it includes a change, for change leads to growth, growth in the spirit. Enjoy the ordinary of the year and it may turn out not to be too ordinary.



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