

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
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Eau Claire, Wisconsin
SUMMER 2007

Saint Bede Honors Two Jubilarians

The Saint Bede Community on Sunday, May 20, celebrated the 75th and 50th Jubilees, respectively, of Sisters Lucille Hubmann and Judith Kramer. Sister Judy, who will be attending a Benedictine conference in Rome during June 6-July 10, on Sunday, August 19, will join family and friends to enjoy the songs of 12-member Rose Ensemble, based in St. Paul. The group has been widely acclaimed for their well researched and beautifully presented Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music.



Sister Lucille (Agnesine) Hubmann, OSB

Spirituality, love of learning and graciousness have been hallmarks of the Benedictine monastic vocation of Sister Lucille Hubmann. Born in Tacoma, WA in 1911, Sister was the youngest of four children – two sisters and one brother. She graduated from Holy Rosary School, staffed by the Benedictine Sisters from St. Benedict's Con-

Sister Lucille (Agnesine) Hubmann, OSB

vent at St. Joseph, MN. Sister remembers her teachers as “friendly, understanding and so human. Their lives, although rather mysterious, sparked my desire to become a Benedictine Sister.”

In 1928, Sister enrolled in St. Benedict's High School at St. Joseph. After graduation, she entered St. Benedict's convent and professed her vows in 1932. She then began her 47-year teaching career at schools at Hastings and St. Louis Park, MN.

In 1948, she joined 82 Sisters from St. Benedict's to establish an independent priory in Eau Claire, WI. In Wisconsin, she taught at St. Thomas More, La Crosse, and at St. Patrick's and Saint Bede Academy, Eau Claire. To care for her aging mother, Sister Lucille returned to Tacoma and to Holy Rosary School as 7th grade teacher.

“This was a most memorable experience,” she recalled. “It had been there where the desire to become a Benedictine Sister began and was encouraged by my teachers.”

Sister Lucille's other ministries include being director of aspirants, postulants and novices at Saint Bede Monastery. After retiring from her last public ministry in Pastoral Care at Gunderson Lutheran Hospital in La Crosse, she enjoyed her hobby as cookie baker for the guests at Saint Bede Center where she was hostess.

Love of learning is a Benedictine tradition. Sister Lucille has an MA in Sacred Theology from St. John's University at Collegeville, MN. In 2005, the university presented an

award to honor Sister Lucille and 59 Sisters from 28 states who were the first women graduates from that program.

Drawing on her interest in literature, history and writing, Sister wrote a history of Saint Bede Monastery and several personal memoirs that were published locally.

Today, Sister Lucille, with eight sisters from Saint Bede Monastery, lives in the Sisters' Unit at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation in Eau Claire. As a community they pray the Liturgy of the Hours three times daily. Meals are served in a private dining room and their kitchenette is a friendly gathering place.

Sister is an avid reader, enjoys music and is interested in current events and politics. With her rare tatting craft ability, she creates greeting cards and keeps in touch with family and friends.

Reflecting on her 75th year as a Benedictine, Sister mused that “Life is like a mosaic. Now my life's pieces are falling together. I am deeply grateful for God's gift of a religious vocation and to everyone who has guided, encouraged and supported me on my life journey.”



Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

Teacher, spiritual mentor and tireless advocate for justice and peace, Sister Judy, as she is known by colleagues, friends and others she's touched, professed her first vows on July 11, 1957. Sister grew up on a farm in rural Onalaska with a brother and three sisters, the daughter of Arnold and Celia Kramer.

At age 11, her father died in an auto accident, which left her mother seriously injured. It then was up to Sister Judy and her brother and sisters to keep the farm and family together. Those traits of courage and leadership have been hallmarks of Sister's Benedictine life as a teacher, administrator, in pastoral and prison ministries, and in service to others.

Continued on Page 4



Sister Margaret Michaud,
OSB Prioress

TIDINGS

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MONASTIC MUSINGS — Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB

Those of us Catholics who are old enough to have been around for the papacy of Pope John XXIII remember the excitement and world-wide attention given to Vatican II, the great ecumenical council of 1962-65. In the 40-some years since the Council, the Church has studied, reflected and worked at implementing the numerous documents written and promulgated by the Fathers of the Council. These writings, discussed, debated and formulated by the Council in solemn assembly, have given the Church a rich agenda for its relationship and interaction with the world of the 20th and 21st Centuries.

Among the documents of Vatican II is the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, known by its opening Latin words, *Nostra aetate*. This document expresses the Church's view of non-Christian religions in these words, "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men."

Responding to this understanding of non-Christian religions, *Nostra aetate* goes on to urge dialogue and interaction with these faiths. "The Church, therefore, urges her sons (and daughters) to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve, and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture."

On the local scene here in Eau Claire we have had an opportunity to carry out this mandate of the Council. Since 1986, as an outgrowth of the Annual Biblical Seminar and Communiversity programs at UW-Eau Claire, we have had a small, but dedicated, interfaith dialogue group. This is a conversation among the three faith groups of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and others. We meet four times a year in an effort to better understand and appreciate one another. We read books that enhance the conversation. Recent selections were *Abraham* by Bruce Feiler and *The Same God?* by Eau Claire resident Dr. J. Birney Dibble. The meetings move between the Islamic Center and Mosque in Altoona, Temple Shalom on Eau Claire's east side, the Unitarian Universalist Church and Saint Bede Monastery.

These conversations are truly enriching and enlightening. The group is most cordial and respectful. Nobody tries to "convert" others. We simply are striving for understanding and appreciation for the other's traditions, beliefs and practices. We are convinced that dialogue and mutual respect among the great religions of the world are absolutely necessary if we are ever to achieve world peace. We hope our small local effort will contribute to this goal.

We're always open to new participants. We invite you, our readers in the Eau Claire area, to join us. The next meeting will be at 2 p.m. on September 16, 2007 here at Saint Bede Center. We will continue our discussion of Dr. Dibble's book, *The Same God?*

Remembering Benedict's Vision

"Here, too, we remember Benedict's vision, how he 'saw the world in a single ray of light.' From this account we discern that he looked upon the whole world as God's one great act of love. We aspire to enter into this view of things that calls us to a prophetic and universal hospitality that extends the peace of Christ to all persons and everything else that God created. The width, height and depth of such extravagant hospitality are limited only by our fragile humanity. Yet we know that God can call us beyond ourselves." --**Wisdom from the Tradition: A Statement of North American Benedictine Women in Response to Our Times (Conference of Benedictine Prioresses)**

Photo of:
Sister Mary Maves (facing) and
Sister Margaret Michaud, Prioress



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Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB

□ **Sister Karen Streveler**, who completed her 29th year of teaching this spring and continues to teach third grade at Immaculate Conception School, Eau Claire, has been appointed Treasurer for the Saint Bede community. She succeeds the late **Sister Hildegard Geraets**. Sister Karen, an accomplished photographer and creator of specialty cards, also serves as Secretary-Treasurer for the Federation of Saint Benedict.)



Sister
Karen Streveler

□ **Sisters Michaela Hedican and Monica Mai**, representing the Federation of Saint Benedict, spent two weeks in April on a visit to St. Benedict Monastery at Tanshui, Taipei, Taiwan. Sister Michaela is president of the Federation and Sister Monica served on the visitation team and directed a spiritual retreat there. Both enjoyed reconnecting with **Sister Rosalyn Tsai**, who expressed warm memories of the hospitality she received during stays at Saint Bede's while studying English at Chippewa Valley Community College.

□ **Sisters Margaret Michaud, Mary Frances Gebhard and Judy Kramer** participated in a Busy Student Retreat during February 11-14 at UW-Stout at Menomonie, WI. During the fall various community members also conducted vocational programs for college-age women in the Eau Claire area.

□ A nephew of **Sister Mary Ann Dooher**, Thomas Dooher, has been elected President of the Minnesota Teachers Union, an organization of 70,000 members. Sister Mary Ann, who is sight impaired, resides at Clairemont Nursing & Rehabilitation.



Sister
Mary Ann Dooher

□ Members of the Saint Bede community have received a warm invitation to attend the summer Monastic Institute on July 22 at St. John's University, Collegeville, MN. The conference will focus on *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue* and celebrate the 150th anniversary of Saint Benedict's Monastery at nearby St. Joseph, original home for the 83 Benedictines who founded Saint Bede Priory in Eau Claire.



Sister
Bridget Donaldson



Sister
Mary Jo Donaldson

□ **Sisters Bridget and Mary Jo Donaldson** and their brother, **Fr. Tom Donaldson**, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Ellsworth, WI, celebrated the 75th birthday of their sibling Elizabeth in Tyler, TX. "We had nine kids in our family and she's my 'Irish twin,'" said Sister Mary Jo.

□ **Sisters Margaret Michaud, Dale Wollum and Mary Frances Gebhard** in April volunteered to make calls to alumni of Eau Claire's Regis High School on behalf of a fund drive honoring the late Bishop John Paul, former teacher, coach and principal at the school. "It was fun talking to some of my former students," Sister Margaret said.

□ On March 21, **Sister Mary Frances Gebhard** and her Benedictine colleagues invited members of the Eau Claire deanery and general public to join them at a holy hour commemorating the 4th anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq. The program included spiritual readings, hymns and group and silent prayers. Since December 2002, the Sisters have invited the public to join them for any hour on Wednesdays from 7 to 8 p.m. in prayers for peace in Saint Bede Chapel or elsewhere if individuals are unable to attend.

Sister

□ **Dan Langlois**, a member of the *Mary Frances Gebhard* monastery's Development Advisory Council, was quoted in the May 3 *Catholic Times* on the history and status of Round Hill, a scenic Chippewa River site near Durand, WI. Owned by the Diocese of La Crosse since 2000, the property is managed by a consortium of nine area Catholic parishes that currently are raising funds in hopes of purchasing the property.

Saint Bede Honors Two Jubilarians - Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

Continued from page 1

She had thought about a religious vocation as a youngster and credits “the presence and devoted work of the three Benedictine Sisters who came to open the School at St. Patrick’s at Onalaska” for her decision to join Saint Bede Monastery at age 15. She completed her studies at Regis High School in Eau Claire. She would go on to earn a BA in Education from the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN and, in 1977, an MA in Theology from St. John’s University at Collegeville, MN.

Earlier teaching assignments were at St. Mary’s School, Richland Center; St. Francis School in Ellsworth; St. Mary’s School, Altoona; St. Thomas More School, La Crosse; St. Bede Academy and Regis High, where she taught for 11 years.

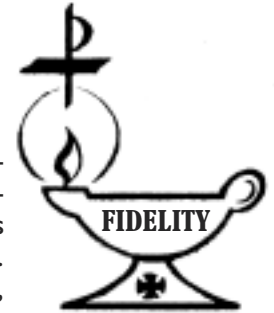
Sister Judy is currently is in her second assignment as Director of Saint Bede Center. She also has supervised the maintenance staff at Saint Bede Monastery, a job that encompasses buildings and grounds, automotive services and safety and sanitation issues. For the latter responsibility she gained state certification in waste and ground water operations.

Other sources of pride are working six months as a cook in the Collegeville Jerusalem Program, twice attending Mount Sinai, and attending a Latin American conference of Benedictines in Bogotá, Columbia in 1975. This month, Sister Judy will be attending an international gathering of Benedictines in Rome.

During 1971-77 Sister was teaching English and religion with **Sister Clarita Selz** at Antofagasta, Chile with Benedictine Sisters from St. Scholastic Monastery, Duluth, MN. Those were dangerous years in Chile, marked by political upheaval, violence and the murder of President Salvador Allende. Sister Judy once faced interrogation by an armed soldier during a curfew check.

Her years in Chile, Sister said later, ignited an abiding concern for social justice. In 1991 she was appointed to the Diocese of La Crosse Office of Justice and Peace by Bishop John Paul. Sister serves as part-time pastoral minister to St. Luke Parish, Boyceville and, participates on a prison ministry team that makes monthly visits to inmates at Black River Falls.

Known for her directness, compassion and affinity for hard work, she offered some advice for women considering Benedictine monastic life. “Think carefully,” she said, “a new form is emerging, so don’t cling to the old or current (structures).”



Three Lay Associates Make Commitments

Members of the Benedictine Lay Associates in March celebrated the three-year commitments of three members and their Benedictine sponsors and discussed chapters of *Wisdom of the Tradition*, and commentary by **Sisters Mary Pattison, Dale Wollum and Mary Frances Gebhard**.

The associates concluded their April 22 meeting with Evening Praise and dinner with the Sisters. Accompanied by their sponsors the following Associates made three-year commitments: Bob Hollern, **Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer**; Jerry Kappus, **Sister Clarita Selz**, and Evelyn Mulhern, **Sister Mary Frances Gebhard**. Sister Clarita, former director of the Associates, now lives at Clairemont.

Highlights of the April meeting were an informative presentation to Ireland’s Glenstal Abbey by Sue Zabel. She shared a videotape about the abbey, which was founded in the 1920s by Belgium monks who operate a boys school and are widely known for their environmental stewardship and religious artwork.

The Associates later discussed chapters of *The Rule of Benedict for Beginners*, especially the author’s theme that “Benedictine spiritually can be fruitful outside the monastery.”



*Benedictine Lay Associates: from left
Bob Hollern, Evelyn Mulhern and Jerry Kappus*



Thanks for Passing Through

Thank you God for passing through
You make your world look brand new

The sky with ne'er a cloud in sight
You paint light blue for our delight

Your sun shines bright as if on cue
To scatter brilliant rays thither and yon
enhancing the mystery of what lies beyond.

You sprinkle your grass with morning dew
To color the greenness with a fragrant hue.

The leaves respond to the morning breeze
And open to hear the serenade of trees
As hundreds of our feathered friends
Emit a charm in various keys – all in clear, chirping melody

The fields are primed and ready for seed
Anticipating the promise of fulfilled needs.

I awake – I look – I see—I delight
In my early morning stretch of life.
I sing my praise to you, my God!

Thank you for being you – and for blessings you left us in your passing through!



Poem By:
Sister Dale Wollum, OSB

Photos By:
Sister Karen Streveler, OSB

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Sister Hildegarde
Geraets, OSB

In Memoriam...Sister Hildegarde Geraets, OSB

A Benedictine who epitomized spirituality, learning and a wide range of contributions to her community and others, Sister Hildegarde Geraets, died March 8 in Sacred Heart Hospital after suffering a massive stroke. She was 78.

Sister Hildegarde, who first professed in 1956, celebrated her Golden Jubilee last year. Born into a large rural family at Elmwood, WI, Sister spent 25 years as a teacher/administrator. Her many assignments at the monastery included the post of treasurer and roles as Center director, librarian/archivist, liturgy team member and book reviewer for *Tidings*.

Learned, versatile and multi-talented, Sister enjoyed sharing an avid love of books and talents as musician, seamstress, baker and nurturer of flowers and plants. In a eulogy, **Sister Margaret**, prioress, estimated that Sister Hildegarde, filled at least 14 roles since joining the community in 1954. Sister held undergraduate and graduate degrees in educational fields at two universities, and later studied finance and administration at other schools to prepare for new assignments.

Family members, Benedictines and many friends filled Saint Bede Chapel for her funeral mass, celebrated by one of Sister Hildegarde's six surviving siblings, **Abbot David Geraets, OSB**, of San Obispo CA. Burial was in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Eau Claire.



Retired Library Director Shares Skills at Saint Bede

Sandra Robbers, retired director of the Indianhead Federated Library System, has booked a volunteer assignment at the Saint Bede Center library. With some 24 other students, Robbers in May also will complete the diocese's four-year Biblical Studies course taught by the monastery's prioress, **Sister Margaret Michaud**.

She joins another library volunteer, **Carleen Tiefenthaler**, who is retired after a long career as the Benedictines' financial manager.

"Right now, Carleen's mainly doing the cataloguing and I'm looking through lists of checked-out books and calling people," said Robbers, smiling. Cataloguing became more urgent after **Fr. Frank Corradi**, retired pastor of Eau Claire's St. Olaf Church, donated boxes of books from his personal library.

"His books have filled numerous gaps in our collection, Tiefenthaler said.

She said Robbers' touches already are apparent at the library with new book displays and improvements to the check-out system.

Robbers, who has a master's degree in library science from UW-Madison, said she has been a teacher, Peace Corps volunteer and worked in another library system before joining Indianhead in 1982. She spent her last five years there as director, heading an organization serving 53 public libraries in ten counties.

Asked about Saint Bede's library and potential, Robbers said the collection is strong in theological and spiritual works. Although books and periodicals on other subjects are available, she added, "the public library is the place to look for the latest fiction. "We're now weeding outdated science and medical books from the shelves."



Sandra Robbers

Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Summertime at Saint Bede doesn't mark the end of Development activities. But it is a good time to reflect on reach and breadth of Benedictine Sisters here.

While the pace slows a bit for Jubilee and other gatherings with family and friends, the retreat and conference center continues to welcome groups and individuals. The ambience and scenic setting, just minutes from city's noise and traffic, appeals to professional groups and individuals just wanting to think, read, pray or solve a personal or creative problem. Downstairs at the Center it's not unusual to see a group of quilters setting up sewing machines and supplies for a weekend of camaraderie and crafting.

The season brings visitors to celebrate Benedictine jubilees or to renew old ties with Sisters who have made a difference in their lives. Whether the visits take place at the monastery or Clairemont, home for nine of the community's senior members, they are always appreciated.

Some of the Benedictines will take advantage of the extra time for personal or professional travel. Last summer, for example, **Sister Marjorie Hill** satisfied an urge to explore the real north – Alaska. During June 6-July 12 **Sister Judy Kramer** will participate at a Benedictine conference in Rome. The annual Monastic Institute at Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, which parallels the celebration of the 150th anniversary of nearby Saint Benedict's Monastery, will serve as a reunion of sorts for many of our Sisters.

In the Development Office, part of summer will be used to plan activities for autumn, a busy time for publications, meetings and pre-Celebrity Banquet arrangements.

Soon after this issue of *Tidings* reaches readers, the Sisters and Development staff will be thanking donors old and new for making fiscal year 2006-07 a success. Credit also goes to volunteers, advisers, Lay Associates and the many Sisters whose prayers, good works and welcoming natures are part of a long Benedictine tradition of making good things happen.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer!



James A. Schwartz
Director of Development



Sister Dale Wollum
and
Warren Petryk

Donor Appreciation Day 2007

Over 100 people attended the 2007
Donor Appriation Event



Warren Petryk
and
Vocalist Tara Metcalf



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UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

As an ecumenical retreat and conference site, Saint Bede Center welcomes church, civic and service groups to use the facilities for retreats, seminars and workshops. The Center also offers a variety of religious, spiritual, cultural and educational programs. Private retreatants are always welcome as well!

- **June 3: Book Discussion Group**
Everything Belongs - by Richard Rohr
- **June 17-22: Community Retreat on The Psalms**
directed by Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB
- **June 23-24: Here at Home Bus Tour Visits Saint Bede**
- **August 19: The Rose Ensemble performs at Jubilee celebration**
- **September 18: Faith Enrichment Day**

* 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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SUMMER 2007

BITS AND CENTER PIECES

– Sister Judith Kramer, OSB



The many 'bits' of my life and ministry as a vowed member of a Benedictine monastery have accumulated to a major Center Piece of history as I celebrate my Golden Jubilee this summer! The years have slipped away rapidly and now, after 50 years, my heart is filled with jubilee and gratitude to a God who has sustained me and a community which has supported, challenged and loved me.

To the people and places where I have taught St. Mary's, Richland Center; St. Francis, Ellsworth; St. Thomas More, La Crosse; St. Bede Academy and Regis High School in Eau Claire, thank you for being companion and friend on the path of life.

To my students, their families and friends at Colegio San Jose' in Antofagasta, Chile, profound gratitude for having helped me see the broader world and acquire knowledge of another language and culture. The seven years of love and life with you changed me forever.

To the men and women with whom I worked as the Diocesan Director of the Office of Justice and Peace, my respect and gratitude.

To the members of Saint Luke Parish in Boyceville and your pastors over the past 12 years, you have warmed my heart and taught me to be a pastoral woman.

To the men and women on the staff of Saint Bede Monastery and Center with whom I have worked, my admiration and great loving gratitude. To the maintenance crew with whom I have scrubbed, cleaned and watched carefully to meet standards in drinking water and waste water, thank you forever. You keep me smiling and eager for the next emergency!

To my mother and my family, yes, you can take the Wisconsin girl off the farm but you never take the farm spirit of good food, fun and a hearty beverage out of the old girl. Your loyalty and love have kept me true to my roots.

And to you, friends of Saint Bede Monastery and Center – rejoice with me as I celebrate 50 years of adventurous service and fidelity to my vows to live a monastic life of work and prayer amidst my religious family! I declare a jubilee!