


# TIDINGS

## Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict  
VOL.16 NO.4

Eau Claire, Wisconsin  
WINTER 2003



*Celebrate my coming  
With Gift, with joy, with song.  
Then continue my living among you  
Amidst the daily throng,  
As I walk among the poor - the sick -  
Who feel they don't belong.*

*Come with me to those  
who cannot see -  
Those who've lost their way -  
Those whose lives are torn apart  
In human misery.*

*Walk with me to those in pain  
Who taste fear, and water, and death,  
While feeling all life is in vain.  
Bring them comfort and compassion  
Till their lives with intimate love  
Laced with forever -  
Peace!*



**Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB**  
Prioress

### TIDINGS

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## MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB

The Advent Season is upon us, a time of reflection and remembering. As we await the coming of the blessed feast of Jesus' Nativity, we remember the years during which God's people waited for the coming of the Redeemer. Many of us today, however, don't have much opportunity for reflection and quiet waiting. These days before Christmas can be the most hectic of the year. There just seems to be so much to do. And the Christmas parties seem to start earlier every year.

A big part of Christmas preparation, along with baking and entertaining, is centered around gift-giving. We have to make lists, go shopping, and wrap packages. We wrack our brains trying to think of the right gift for each relative and friend, for our boss and our coworkers, for the mail person and the paper deliverer. We also, we must admit, keep track of the gifts we receive. If we receive something from someone that is of greater value than the gift we give to that person, we are embarrassed. We protest that we don't deserve it; we fuss so much that often the giver of the gift gets embarrassed too. It's hard to receive gifts graciously. It takes a special kind of humility.

Did you ever wonder why we give gifts at Christmas? It has to do with the greatest gift ever given. Our loving God sent us the most perfect, most precious gift in the birth of Jesus, God's Son. We give gifts to one another to commemorate this gift which we have received. It is given to us simply because our God loves us. With the coming of Christ into our world as one of us, "like us in all things, save sin," we received the gift of salvation, the gift of eternal life. There is no way we can deserve this gift or earn it or think that we have it coming. Its value is beyond human reckoning. It is pure grace, given out of love.

A gift is not a gift if it is earned. If you deserve it, it's recompense, not gift. If a gift is given out of duty or obligation, it's not a gift; it's justice. The appropriate response to a gift received is gratitude. How wonderful it is when a person can receive a gift with grace. When we can reverence the love or esteem that prompted the gift, and show our appreciation with a heartfelt, "Thank you," we warm the heart of the giver of the gift. How foolish it is to measure and compare gifts to make sure we receive with equal value as we have given. That kind of accounting belongs in the business world, not among those united by love and friendship.

In the true Spirit of Christmas, may our giving and receiving of gifts be occasions of pure joy, blessing both the giver and the receiver. May we give with generosity and true love and respect. May we receive with grateful delight. Most of all, may our gift giving and receiving cause us to remember and be grateful for the gift given to the the human family on the first Christmas, the gift of the Savior whose life gives meaning to our lives.

### In Memoriam

**Sister Valerian Schuster, OSB**, whose science classes reflected her enthusiasm for the beauty and complexities of nature, died October 4 at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, Eau Claire. She was 91. Sister Valerian, among founders of Saint Bede Monastery in 1948, celebrated her 70th jubilee last spring.

A popular science teacher who enjoyed leading students on field trips, Sister Valerian first taught in Minnesota, then spent her classroom career at St. Patrick's High School, Regis High School and Saint Bede Academy, all in Eau Claire. She later began and coordinated a popular religious education program for special education students.

The Sun Prairie, Wis., native, one of 12 children, professed in 1932 at St. Benedict's Convent. Sister Valerian earned a bachelor's degree from the College of St. Benedict and another degree in zoology from Marquette University. Sister's funeral Mass, celebrated October 8 in St. Bede Chapel by Fr. Thomas Langer, was followed by burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.



## REACHING OUT

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB



Sister Catherine Manning



Sister Michaela Hedican

☐ **Sister Catherine Manning** recently renewed her certification as a Leader of Prayer for the Diocese of La Crosse. Prior to this, Sister Catherine had completed the Diocese's Lay Formation Institute, another prerequisite for the ministry. She is Pastoral Minister for Sacred Heart-St. Patrick Parish in Eau Claire.

☐ **Sister Margaret Michaud** in October participated in board meetings of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID) in South Carolina and later led a retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, South Dakota.

☐ The **Benedictines** were recognized with a plaque from **Ken and Sue Ripp**, lay friends and Marriage Encounter leaders, on the Sisters' 25 years of sponsorship of the popular program in Saint Bede Center.



Ken and Sue Ripp, Marriage Encounter leaders, present a plaque to Sisters Michaela and Margaret.

☐ **Sister Michaela Hedican** was honored in October with the "Sunshine Award" from WEAU-TV, which recognizes the special contributions of citizens to their community. Sister Michaela, now serving as president for the Federation of Saint Benedict, was nominated for the award by the staff of Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, where she had served as coordinator of the Sisters' Unit.

☐ Regis High School, celebrating its 50th anniversary on November 15, recognized the teaching and administrative contributions of the Sisters of Saint Bede at a public reception that celebrated a successful capital campaign for area Catholic schools. Former Benedictine Regis teachers who reside at Saint Bede or Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, include **Sisters Britta Coyne, Lorayne Andre, Margaret Michaud, Mary Jo Donaldson** and **Monica Mai**.

☐ Retirement from a long ministry in health care, including establishment of an associate degree in radiography at what is today's Chippewa Valley Technical College, hasn't curbed the energy or creativity of **Sister Doris Steinfeldt**. Her jellies, condiments, candies, art-work and other "products" have been mainstays at Saint Bede events. Gifts from her kitchen, sewing machine and art board have touched the lives of her friends and those of this community. Sister Doris, who tended a garden at her apartment this summer, also makes berry wines, and designs and sells greeting cards. Her decorating and other touches also brighten dining for the Sisters and guests, and contribute to the monastery's annual Celebrity Banquet -- Dinner Beyond the Hill.

☐ Vocation Coordinator **Sister Ruth Feeney**, assisted by **Sisters Dale Wollum, Mary Frances Gebhard, Karen Streveler, Margaret Michaud, Jo Ann Dold, OP,** and **Judy Kramer** in October participated or were preparing for Busy Student Retreats at Newman Community, Eau Claire, and on UW campuses at Menomonie, Stevens Point and La Crosse.



Sister Doris Steinfeldt

## Biblical Studies Program Earns "A" from Graduates

Biblical studies have become increasingly popular with Catholics. **Sister Margaret Michaud**, Prioress and Scripture teacher, has been at the forefront of the trend. She is one of five faculty members of the Diocesan School of Biblical Studies.

"People are seeking to deepen their faith," said Sister Margaret. "Most Catholics, older ones especially, were not 'raised' with the Bible. There is new interest since Vatican II affirmed Scripture as a source of revelation."

The four-year DSBS programs since 1996 have been held at Saint Bede, Viterbo University in La Crosse, Saint Elizabeth's in Holmen and Newman parish in Stevens Point. To date, 128 students have graduated from the programs and current DSBS courses, which began in September, report healthy enrollments. Classes meet one Saturday a month for nine months. Students who complete all four years of the program receive a Certificate of Completion. Sister Margaret said 33 students have graduated from her two previous courses.



DSBS Class of 2003 celebrates. Sister Margaret (top left) looks on

### Course is Challenging

Students, who can take classes at any of the three DSBS sites, study all 73 books of the Catholic Bible over four years. In addition, they are assigned special readings, reference works and other materials as background for understanding the Bible -- from Genesis to Revelation. They also turn in required papers and take periodic exams.

"The course was challenging in that it demanded reading, study and extensive preparation," said **Sister JoAnn Dold, O.P.**, liturgist at Saint Bede and coordinator and catechist for the RCIA (Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults) in the Eau Claire Deanery.

**Jeanne Reber**, who hopes to start a Bible study program at Sacred Heart-St. Patrick's Parish next spring or fall, said her DSBS experience was deepened by Sister Margaret's teaching style and familiarity with the Holy Land. "She does not try to impress you with her knowledge," Reber said. "She encourages students to speak up and discuss topics in class."

**Phil Chenier**, retired UW-EC chemistry professor, described his DSBS experience as thought-provoking - - "not just spiritually, but in determining what the Biblical authors are getting at," Chenier said. "Most Catholics are familiar with the significant Biblical stories from hearing the Scriptures read at Mass."

"But the diocesan program adds depth and continuity," he said, noting that his interest in biblical studies came in the 1960s during studies at St. Mary's College in Winona, Minn. Chenier, now assisting with Sister Margaret's course at Saint Bede, has taken classes at all three DSBS sites. Students who miss a class at their regular venue, he said, can attend a monthly class at an alternate site.

"Each site covers the same material on a different weekend of the month and all the teachers are excellent," he added. After completing three years in Saint Bede's program, Chenier now coordinates Bible classes at St. James the Greater Church in Eau Claire, which draws students from several local parishes.

### Sharing The Experience

Reber, with 17 years of religious education teaching in her parish, termed her DSBS experience "a gift of a day each month. "There were a lot of creative writing assignments that were both spiritually and intellectually challenging," she said.



**Margaret Glose**, a former Sister who more recently taught RCIA and religious education classes at Holy Ghost Parish in Chippewa Falls, Wis., said she plans to create a weekly scripture program there with help from two young RCIA students. Asked about her DSBS experience at Saint Bede, she replied, laughing, "I've already raved on about the DSBS to others and two friends are taking Sister Margaret's course now."

Another Biblical Studies graduate, **Aaron McCann**, has dedicated himself to spiritual exploration and service to others since his beloved wife Gwen died in 1995. Author of four books and prolific writer of poetry, McCann described his time in the DSBS as "probably the best four years of my life. The plan of our studies was to show you how to live on a daily basis," he said.

Sister Jo Ann , said the course prepared her to present a session of the Gospel of Luke at the Parish of St. James the Greater. She also is participating in *According to the Scripture* graduate course for Biblical research, given by **Fr. Thomas O'Neill, S.J.**, DSBS instructor and chaplain at Viterbo University, LaCrosse.

A scholar herself, with a doctorate in ministry, Sister Jo Ann continues her enthusiasm for her hard-won DSBS credentials. "Whether you know little or much about the Bible," she said, "Sister Margaret and the Diocesan School of Biblical Studies have much to offer.



Sister Jo Ann Dold, OP



Phil Chenier



Aaron McCann

## Fr. Thomas Langer Accepts Chaplaincy at Saint Bede

Fr. Thomas Langer, 74, resident priest at Saint Joseph's Parish, Rock Falls, became chaplain at Saint Bede in September, succeeding **Fr. Thomas Krieg**, now a pastor in Menomonie. A native of Eau Claire, Fr. Tom is an alumnus of St. Patrick's High School where **Sister Ralph Minette** was among memorable Benedictine teachers.

He then earned an associate degree from Mount Calvary, near Fond Du Lac, a bachelor's degree from St. Francis Major Seminary, and a master's degree in administration/guidance from Catholic University of America. He currently is working on a doctorate in marriage counseling from Loyola University at St. Louis.

Fr. Tom spent 28 years teaching at Regis and other high schools in the Diocese of La Crosse. He also held development director and guidance counselor posts at Regis. Author of four books on the sacraments and free-lance writer for diverse publications, he also continues as assistant chaplain at Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire.



Fr. Thomas Langer



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## LIBRARY NOTES

Christmas season, with celebrations and family gatherings, also can be stressful. The following books, along with thousands of others in Saint Bede Library, can be enriching ways to recharge your mind and spirits. Come see how satisfying this quiet space can be.

- JAS



- **FULL-TIME CHRISTIANS: The Real Challenge From Vatican II.** William Droel. The vision of Vatican II, calling for greater participation by the laity, goes far beyond the commendable services of lay lectors, catechists, providers of pastoral care for the sick, and elderly, and other roles within the Church. The author, a founder of the National Center for the Laity in Chicago, also discusses the 1977 *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern* as a call and a blueprint for lay persons to reach their "apostolic potential" by applying the Gospel message of Christ in their daily lives.
- **TRULY OUR SISTER: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints.** Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University, delves deeply into the Church's teachings and interpretations of Mary, a humble woman from Galilee selected to be the mother of Jesus. Renowned for her feminist approach to theology, Johnson constructs a scholarly and intriguing portrait of Mary drawn from the Gospels and theological, historical and other sources. The result is a greater understanding of Mary as woman, virgin mother and feminine exemplar of God's perfection.
- **THE INSIDE STORY**, by Donald G. Ryder. The author, an Eau Claire native and longtime friend of Saint Bede, in 1985 published this inspiring little book about living and coping with life's good times and adversities. Beautifully illustrated, this slim volume uses the allegory of an ancient stump continuing to mentor a neighboring young tree about doing one's best, no matter the sunshine and storms that God sends us. The message: Never give up, no matter how much we suffer along the way. Still positive, after memories of lightning strikes, wind storms, drought, and, finally felled by loggers, the old stump tells his now towering neighbor, that accepting and overcoming adversity makes us stronger - more able to share our gifts with others. Young and old readers will find inspiration and wisdom in this parable, told in terms of the life cycle of a great tree.
- **THE NONVIOLENT ATONEMENT**, by J. Denny Weaver. Violence, as it pertains to theological and philosophical explanations for its role in Christ's death, is explored in depth by Dr. Weaver, professor of religion at Bluffton College in Ohio. Those seeking to comprehend the role of violence in the redemption of a sinful humanity will delve into explanations offered in classic theology, and those developed by religious scholars viewing the Christian doctrine of atonement from black, women's and feminist perspectives.

## Development Advisory Council



Sisters greet members before their September 11th quarterly meeting. Pictured clockwise from left are Tom and Terry Koziol, Sister Lucy Miller and Doug Heit, Jane Pichler (left) and Sister Michaela, Sister Margaret (left) and Jane O'Meara, Sister Monica and Jim Smith, and Elaine Olson (left) and Joanne Klink.

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## Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

As we focus on "touching the bases" during the holiday season, it's easy to forget the gifts we've already received. Like the contributions of the Benedictine Sisters. Many of the oldest members of this 38-member community, graciously served as teachers, nurses, school administrators and in parish posts while earning tiny stipends and few, if any, retirement benefits.

With a median age of 71, fewer Sisters today hold salaried ministries. All, however, even those in their nineties, contribute to their community and others with prayer, as volunteers and sharers of their personal gifts. All have a stake in the graciousness, hospitality and concern for others that are hallmarks of Saint Bede. All are exemplars of a Benedictine tradition of prayer, work and service that are increasingly rare commodities in a society with precious little time for reflection and daily acts of selflessness.

As our donors, volunteers and other friends know, the Sisters' charism calls for reverence for all God's creation, wise stewardship of talents and gifts, and adherence to the monastic way of life according to the *Rule of Benedict*. We hope that as you plan for the holidays and charitable giving before year's end, you'll consider honoring our Benedictines past and present. Please contact us if we can help with information about the following:

- **Heritage Companions** -- recognition for those planning to leave a bequest to the Sisters
- **Endowments** -- designated funds in memory of a deceased Sister or in honor of a Benedictine whose daily prayers and good works resonate with you
- **Gifts** of appreciated stock, mutual funds or insurance policies
- **Advice** on special needs of Saint Bede Monastery and Center

Your being one with us is a gift of the heart – the kind Christmas is meant to represent. We wish you and your loved ones health and joy of spirit, mind and body, prosperity and personal growth, and opportunities to serve others in God's name.

**Merry Christmas!**



## Briefly...

**Mark Your Calendars** for Saturday, February 14, for the fourth annual **Celebrity Banquet - Dinner Beyond the Hill**, again sited at Park Inn & Suites, Eau Claire. Sponsor a table of your guests, donate items for the auctions or consider volunteering your talents for this gala event ...

In the last fiscal year, 116 donors supplemented revenues of **Saint Bede Center**, which served about 8,000 guests. Now completing 25 years of service, the Center is the ecumenical hub for the Sisters' hospitality ministry.



## Dedicated Volunteers

Pictured left are some of the people who help the Sisters ready *Tidings* and other publications for mailing. They always make a difference here. **In Row 1**, from left, are Mary Ann Bluem, Midge Blumhardt, Susie Boylan and Grace Roskos. **Row 2**: Marcellus Bluem, Angie Elliot, Geri Sleep, Shirley Yeager, Catherine Mayheu, Mary Rosolack, Joan Polus, Dora Irvine, Frances Boylan, Patricia Hoffman, Linda Dekan and Lori Schwartz.

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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. In addition, the Center offers a variety of religious, spiritual, cultural and educational programs. Private retreatants are always welcome as well!

**December 4-5** - Advent Retreat  
"Doorways and Windows to the Soul"  
- directed by Rev. Robert Staes, OP

**December 20 - January 24 - February 28 - March 27**  
Diocesan School of Biblical Studies

**December 23 - January 1** - Labyrinth available for meditative walking

**January 15 - February 19 - March 18**  
Spirit of Living Network

**February 27-29** - Marriage Encounter Weekend

**March 19-20** - Lenten retreat with Rev. John Heagle

*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**



## Saint Bede Monastery and Center

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## CENTERING

– Sister Hildegard Geraets, OSB

Nature is reminding us that fall is winding down. Some asters are still in full bloom as if to remind us that not all plants have terminated their growing cycle. Falling leaves are covering the ground to serve as a blanket when the snow begins to fall. As the bright colors of fall give way to November's barren colors, we are reminded that the year is also winding down. Before we close the year of the 25th anniversary of the retreat center, it is fitting to remember the **National Marriage Encounter program**, which started with the beginning of the Center and continues today.

Because of the dedicated work of many volunteers, several couples have had the opportunity of participating in a program which encourages spouses to see each other with renewed love and to discover again the love that makes their marriage firm. The Marriage Encounter program emphasizes personal reflection and communication between husband and wife. Team leaders of the program are people who are committed to married life. They share their own experiences of married life and then suggest techniques or questions which

will help group participants dialogue with their spouses in privacy on their own married life. No group discussions nor group dynamics are involved. Newly married couples, as well as married couples of many years, find the program beneficial. Couples of all faith communities are welcome to join the group and explore the meaning of their marriage.

Faithful lay team leaders as well as religious leaders have volunteered to keep this program alive. Because of them, this program is offered twice a year at Saint Bede Center. Image Groups have been formed, consisting of couples who have made an encounter, to put them in contact with others for purposes of encouragement and inspiration. As stated in the Marriage Encounter bulletin, this program is for those with a:

- Good relationship that it may be better
- Weak relationship that it may be strengthened
- Cold relationship that it will be warmed.

Congratulations to all volunteers for a job well done. God bless your endeavors for years past and for years to come!

For further information about Marriage Encounter, call either Sue or Ken Ripp at 715-832-3296.