

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
VOL.17 NO.4

Eau Claire, Wisconsin
WINTER 2004

IN-Between



My coming was acclaimed in Bethlehem,
Birth carols filled the air,
Angels let the whole world know
I WAS THERE!

You knew me when I was torn and flayed
When blood was pouring forth.
You saw me die upon the cross,
Forgiveness filled my heart.

You knew me, too, when the stone rolled forth
to reveal an empty grave,
I stunned the world by Rising Up.
Alleluias Rang!

But -

Do you know me now in the IN-Betweens?
Can you see me here?
I daily walk and live among you.
My footsteps always near.

Often they lead me into dance
Where homes are full of love
Where trust in me and strengthened hope
Exude peace rooted from above.

Others cannot smile as daily their footsteps tread
Into lives of war - sickness - pain - and death.
To them - life holds no joy.
My arms embrace them all with love.
Can your arms do the same?

A child reached down and plucked a flower
And shyly presented the gift to me.
Eyes spoke words of trust and love
Embodied in misery.

Celebrate with ME - Mourn with ME

through each cycle of life.

Follow my footsteps wherever they may lead.

Skip - Dance - Walk - Love with ME.

"I AM the way."

Sister Dale Wollum, OSB
Graphic Design by Judy Bredeson



Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB
Prioress

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery
1190 Priory Road
P.O. Box 66, Eau Claire, WI 54702
715-834-3176
sisters@saintbede.org

Editor: James A. Schwartz

Contributors:

Writers: Sisters: Hildegarde Geraets,
Judith Kramer, Margaret Michaud,
Dale Wollum

Others: James A. Schwartz, Mary Traynor

Photography: Sisters: Karen Streveler

Others: Linda Dekan, James A. Schwartz

Mailing: Thanks to our **Dedicated**

Volunteers directed by Linda Dekan

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MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB

When we enter a Benedictine monastery, the first thing we learn is the importance of our community prayer. The *Rule* says, "Let nothing be preferred to the work of God." The work of God, the *Opus Dei*, also referred to *The Liturgy of the Hours*, is our primary responsibility and today at our monastery it takes the form of communal prayer three times daily. We begin in the morning, most days at 7 a.m., with Morning Praise. This service includes a hymn, several psalms and canticles, both recited and sung, a Scripture reading, the Lord's Prayer, and intercessory prayers for a variety of intentions. (A few years ago we began the custom of each day selecting one of our faithful donors for special mention at Morning Praise.)

After prayer a number of Sisters hurry off to work at school, Immaculate Conception in Eau Claire or Saint Mary's in Altoona. Others head out for chaplaincy work at Sacred Heart Hospital or Oakwood Villa. The rest of us take up our work in the monastery offices, the works of hospitality to our guests, or in Saint Bede Center. Our morning prayer together gets us off to a good start and helps us dedicate the days to "the greater honor and glory of God."

At 11:45 a.m. those of us at home gather for a brief noon prayer. At 5 p.m. most of our outside workers return home for Evening Praise. The format is similar to that of Morning Praise. At the end of the workday we can praise God's goodness and again offer prayer for ourselves, our community, our world, our nation, and our church.

Three days a week we are fortunate to be able to celebrate Eucharist. We are most grateful to again have a chaplain. We remember sadly the olden days when we could have daily Mass, but the shortage of ordained clergy makes this impossible. It is a loss and we feel it keenly. Therefore, on most days, *The Liturgy of the Hours* is the highlight of the day, since it is the only liturgical function for us.

Each time we gather for community prayer we are conscious of the responsibility we have to pray for the needs of our world. In recent months we have been in anguish about the conflict, turmoil, suffering and violence in the world, in our country and in our church. In June we began a special hour of silent prayer on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8. We've invited others to come and pray with us. We've decided to continue this hour of prayer at least until the end of the year. We usually have a short opening prayer or song, then an hour in which individuals pray silently in their own way. At 8 p.m. we have a closing prayer or song. We again invite all and everyone to join us.

As Benedictines we are dedicated to the ministry of prayer. We strive to do it faithfully, conscious of our duty to pray for all God's people. We remember especially our families, our friends and coworkers, our benefactors and the readers of *Tidings*. Ultimately, we pray for all God's people and offer praise and thanks to God in the name of all.

Sisters Welcome Resident Priest As New Chaplain

Fr. John P. Hogan, resident priest at St. Joseph Parish, Rock Falls, in September accepted the chaplaincy post at Saint Bede. **Fr. Hogan**, 58, succeeds **Fr. Thomas Langer** who died at his St. Joseph Parish residence last August 20. A native of Chicago, Fr. John was ordained in 1973. Early assignments included Notre Dame at Chippewa Falls and Holy Name Parish at Wausau. He then spent ten years as teacher and chaplain at Assumption High School, Wisconsin Rapids, while serving as pastor at two rural parishes. Later Fr. John served 14 years as pastor of that city's St. Lawrence Parish and at St. Philip in Rudolph.

"I'm delighted to be here," said the Sisters' new chaplain, who holds a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's University, Winona, MN, a theology degree from St. Paul (MN) Seminary and a master's degree in Religious Education from Loyola University, Chicago.

"I appreciate the closeness with the Sisters and their spirit of dedication and service."

An avid lover of Scripture and books, Fr. John enjoys well played basketball and swapping stories with others. He also likes photographing Wisconsin's colorful fall scenery and relaxing with a music collection ranging from the spiritual and classical to jazz.



Father John P. Hogan

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Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB



Sister Clarita Selz

□ The Sisters have extended their “Prayer for Peace” initiative through November and December. The Sisters’ prayers for world justice and peace include an invitation for the public to join them in chapel each Wednesday from 7 to 8 p.m. Those unable to join them here for all or portions of the hour are encouraged to reserve the special time to pray at home or elsewhere. For information, call the Sisters at (715) 834-3176.

□ **Lay Associates**, directed by **Sister Clarita Selz**, held their October retreat at the monastery. The Associates, who number 27 women and men, come from the Chippewa Valley and such distant cities as Merrillan and Wautoma. Sister talked about *lectio divina*. Each Associate then meditated on Psalm 139 before the group reconvened to discuss individual reactions to the reading.

□ **Sister Judith Kramer**, who since 1996 has participated in a ministry for Jackson Correctional Institute inmates at Black River Falls, was extensively quoted in the September 23 issue of *The Catholic Times*. “...I still look forward to going,” said Sister Judy, who directs Saint Bede Center and is pastoral minister at St. Luke’s Parish, Boyceville. “Whenever I do,” she added, “I make sure to let the parishioners and the students know that I am taking the Eucharist from the parish to the prison, to let them know they’re part of the ministry.”



Sister Judith Kramer

□ **Sister Margaret Michaud** in September led a retreat for the Sisters of Saint Scholastica, St. Cloud, MN. In October she participated on the board of directors of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID) at New Hermitage of the Camaldolese Benedictine Monks, Big Sur, CA. The MID, which promotes study and dialogue among scholars of the world’s religions, has moved its focus from Monastic Buddhism to discussions of the Islamic faith.

□ **Sister Dale Wollum** on Sunday, October 3, autographed copies of her poetry book, “Glimpses Into Life” after Mass at St. Patrick Parish, Onalaska, where she had served 19 years as a teacher and pastoral assistant. The 100-page book of reflective insights and observations, which features the photos of Sister **Karen Streveler**, is available at the Center’s gift shop.

□ **Sister Connie Ostrander**, who ministers on behalf of the poor for the Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies is active in raising funds and desperately needed items for Jamaicans affected by Hurricane Ivan in late September. With an associate, **Sister Naomi Rosenberger, OSB**, she has moved the diocese’s satellite office from Miami, FL to Louisville, KY to better coordinate “Hurricane Relief” efforts. If you can help, please call the Sisters at (502) 451-0356.



Sister Roslyn Tsai



Sister Michaela Hedican

□ **Sister Michaela Hedican**, in her role as president of the Federation of St. Benedict, during September visited Benedictine Sisters at their monastery in Japan and presided over the election of prioress at St. Benedict Monastery at Taiwan, Republic of China. At Taiwan she renewed a close friendship with **Sister Roslyn Tsai, OSB**, who twice resided at Saint Bede while studying English at a local community college.

“I miss you often and remember the good times when I was with you,” Sister Roslyn recently said in a note to the Sisters. “Your strong faith, deeply spiritual and kind love are a good model for me.”

Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer - Cited as Spiritual Caregiver



Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer

Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer spent 45 years as a teacher, later earned certification as a pastoral caregiver and in 1996 celebrated her Golden Jubilee as a Benedictine. This fall, she marked a new milestone as winner of the Wisconsin Health Care Association's "Spiritual Leader of the Year." Nominated by her colleagues at Oakwood Villa Nursing & Rehabilitation in Altoona, where she has worked

part-time for nearly 10 years, Sister was among seven health care professionals and two facilities awarded "2004 Shining Stars" by the WHCA at ceremonies held September 20 at Wisconsin Dells.

In their tribute, her Oakwood sponsors describe themselves as "blessed with an angel ...a Benedictine nun (whose) religious affiliations have little bearing on her ministering to people of all faiths. She personally meets with all new residents to learn about their spiritual needs and she arranges for their own clergy to come to Oakwood to visit their parishioners. She prays with all that come to the Ecumenical Chapel, which not only includes Oakwood res-

idents, but also the tenants of the adjacent Oak Gardens Assisted Living. Sister delivers homilies, provides daily prayer and daily rosary."

Sister Mary Jane, a native of Chippewa Falls, also was cited for initiating the facility's semi-annual memorial services for families who have lost loved ones.

"Sister visits all of our residents when they go to the hospital, attends the funerals of residents who have passed, and consoles family members and staff," the citation continued. "She is the most positive and non-judgmental person one could ever meet and never says anything negative. She is on-call 24/7 to minister to those in need. It's not unusual to find Sister at Oakwood at 3 a.m. sitting at the bedside of a dying resident and consoling his/her family members."



Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer visits with Oakwood Villa resident Elfrieda Miller.

Continued On Page 6

Distinctive Gifts Abound - Inside the "Cricket Cage"

Looking for a distinctive Christmas gift for a special person? The Sisters may have just what you're looking for at their specialty shop — the "Cricket Cage" located in Saint Bede Center. This small emporium of spiritual, artistic and literary items is a showcase for photography, writing, design, embroidery and other talents of the Sisters and others.

"We definitely specialize in items made by the Sisters," said **Carleen Tiefenthaler**, who maintains archives and library records here and helps keep the shop running smoothly along with **Mary Traynor**, administrative assistant to the Center director, and **Sister Margaret Michaud**, Prioress. A much re-stocked item, said Tiefenthaler, is the colorful embroidered towels with Christmas and other themes sewn by **Sister Hildegarde Geraets**. "They just fly out of here," she said.

Center guests and visitors also will find a wide range of books — holy, inspirational, humorous, instructive and stories to amuse, delight and teach children on spiritual and other themes. Many of the shop's featured authors are local or regional residents attuned to our area's people, history and culture.

Other appealing items include photography by **Sister Karen Streveler**, who with **Sister Doris Steinfeldt** regularly update their displays of scenic and special occasion cards. Browsers also will delight in the shop's collection of handcrafted rosaries and jewelry. Also eye-catching are wall hangings, figurines and other small gift items. For many years, the "Cricket Cage" boasted the heirloom quality knitted baby blankets of **Sister Pauline Hoffart**, who in late summer moved to the Clairemont.

Open most weekdays, the unattended "Cricket Cage" continues to run on the honor system. Customers select items and pay for them at the Center Office. For more information about the shop's wares and hours, please call the office at (715) 834-8642.



Carleen Tiefenthaler

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Book Notes

— Sister Hildegarde Geraets, OSB

John Shea, storyteller and writer, has recently written a book meant for Christian teachers and preachers entitled **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**. Volume One of a set of four treats the spirituality of the Gospels in Cycle A, to be followed by Cycle B and C, as well as the Gospels of feast days, funerals, and weddings which will complete the set of four volumes. Each gospel is treated in two sections: First, an explanation of the Word, and second, an application of these words to everyday living. Particularly strong is his development of the Advent Gospels. The “business” of the season can leave us empty. We find ourselves lacking in purpose and pleasure.

Value is placed on everything except the Spirit, which in the end, is what sustains us. Shea includes spiritual exercises to help us “stay awake” through our searching for meaning during this hectic season. Some approaches may be rituals of our faith tradition and other home practices, which keep us faithful to the spiritual dimension of our life. Keeping before our eyes the spiritual side of Advent is a precondition to experience what the coming of the Lord means to us. Although your library may be bulging with gospel commentaries, this book will help you make the Word come alive. It is a *must*.

GOSPEL REFLECTION 2005, edited by **Cackie Upchurch**, is a small pocket size book written to introduce the ordinary lay person to a reflection on the Sunday Gospel. Each reflection is one page long, followed by a reflective question of how to apply this to everyday experiences. The reflections are practical and thought provoking, which in turn makes it easy to adapt them to a family discussion. Book size makes it a convenient weekend companion. If your meditation time is limited, yet you want to do some preparation for the Sunday Mass, this book will fill your needs.

Are you looking for a new interpretation of how early Christians experienced God, especially in the “Acts of the

Apostles?” **John Pilch**, author of the book **VISIONS AND HEALING IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES** tries to give us a scientific explanation of such encounters with God or the angels. Cognitive neuroscientists describe the various levels of consciousness. A Western believer may describe encounters with angels or God as an experience of “hallucination,” whereas someone from the Mediterranean area will describe it as an encounter with God. Altered states of consciousness in science may treat experiences of God with skepticism, whereas in the biblical world, it is believed God’s communication with human beings is normal. If you want to get caught up in the scientific world, read this book. The charm of the Acts will be destroyed and your acceptance of miracles will be challenged, but exposure to this thinking is the payoff. Perhaps this is not an area for scientific explanations!



Sister Hildegarde Geraets

Sister Dianna Ortiz, an Ursuline nun, describes her experiences at the hand of Guatemala’s torturers in the book **THE BLINDFOLD’S EYES**. She treats in detail her journey from being a victim of torture to returning to the United States and readjusting to everyday living. Throughout the book, Sister Dianna never loses sight of the poor in Guatemala. She continues to work today as a human rights activist and advocate for the victims of torture. After reading this book, you will better understand what happens to war prisoners of today, how hard it is to communicate with foreign governments as well as ours, in trying to get names of people in charge of torture. Her stories, which had to be revealed on the witness stand, were often re-written and distorted to protect persons working on the torture squad. Dianna’s story needs to be told to larger audiences, especially when fear tactics are used to mitigate acts of terrorism. Modern day civilization has not moved very far from medieval days when we consider forms of torture used by any government in the treatment of prisoners.

Staff Members at Monastery Pen Stories for ‘Grandma-tica’

Four employees at Saint Bede, all grandmothers, are among 69 authors featured in a new book, “Poetica Grandma-tica 2004,” edited by **Nancy Clark Scobie** and **Judy Bredeson**. The book, released in October and already in its first reprinting of 400 copies, encompasses the wit and wisdom of grandmothers, or memories of their own female elders in stories by writers ages 16 to 100. Ms. Clark Scobie, with five grandchildren, lectures in Communications and Journalism at UW-Eau Claire and is author or co-author of other books sold at Saint Bede Center’s gift shop.

Judy Bredeson, also a contributor to the book and graphic designer at Saint Bede, has eight grandchildren. Other contributors include **Linda Dekan**, assistant director of development, a five-time grandmother; **Evelyn Mulhern**, with six grandchildren, staffs the monastery’s reception area and is a Lay Associate, and **Mary Traynor**, administrative assistant to the director of Saint Bede Center, has two grandchildren and another expected in March.



Contributors: from left
Judy Bredeson, Linda Dekan,
Evelyn Mulhern and
Mary Traynor

Snapshots of the Sisters

(Editor's Note: The 38 Benedictine Sisters of Saint Bede Monastery form a compendium of ministries, multiple assignments and countless good works. In this space, *Tidings* will capsule some highlights and perspectives of Sisters in traditional and other roles that serve others.)



Sister Mary
Frances Gebhard

Sister Mary Frances Gebhard, an Eau Claire native who made her First Profession as a Benedictine Sister in 1952, has melded many assignments into a career of caregiving and concern for others. Beginning as a staff nurse at the Sisters' former St. Benedict Community Hospital in Durand, Sister Mary Fran moved to nursing assignments at hospitals in Eau Claire and Madison.

Later she served as a school counselor at Thorpe Public Schools and served as the monastery's subprioress. Sister then coordinated care for the elderly Benedictines living at the former Regis Convent and Lakeside before providing personal care for residents of St. Colleta's School at Jefferson, WI.

She attributes her Benedictine vocation to a solid Catholic background, one that included aunts in Franciscan, Carmelite and Benedictine communities. A self-described "serious reader," even at a young age, she recalls being fascinated by Thomas Merton's accounts of Trappist Monks and commitments to the religious life.

Throughout her career, now focused on coordinating the Justice and Peace ministry here, Sister Mary Fran has championed causes that benefit society in the widest sense. They range from protecting human rights and the environment to promoting racial justice and world peace. She was among those who protested the Navy's now obsolete Project ELF in Northern Wisconsin and stood with the "Women in Black" in opposing the ongoing war in Iraq.

Today Sister Mary Fran continues to work with diverse social service, diocesan and other groups on justice and peace issues. At the local level she fought for similar causes as a former member of the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors.

With help from her numerous contacts and use of the Internet, telephone, fax and the U.S. Postal Service, Sister Mary Fran tracks issues, identifies affinity groups and communications directly with scores of influential leaders and organizations. Last year, for example, she launched 1,337 e-mails on 1,162 justice and peace issues to the White House, Congress, the media and dozens of other sites.

In crediting **Sister Roma Paulus**, who previously guided the Justice and Peace ministry, Sister has noted that "Growth in spirituality brings an awareness of Christ's peace, and that peace cannot be achieved unless there is justice." More recently, in describing her work for members of the Development Advisory Council, she said, "There's no spiritual health (for the larger society) if we don't take care of the poor."

Sister Mary Jane Cournoyer - Cited as Spiritual Caregiver

Continued From Page 4

Sister Mary Jane, who holds a two-year teaching certificate from the St. Paul Diocesan Teacher's College, earned a bachelor's degree from St. Scholastica College in Duluth, MN and master's degrees in elementary education and religion from Eau Claire State College and St. Mary's College, Winona, MN, respectively.

In addition to her work at Oakwood Villa, Sister frequently assists the elderly Benedictines living at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation. She credits her sibling, Mildred, who cared for their ailing mother, for igniting her interest in serving others slowed by age, illness or infirmities. "As a teacher I also saw what others had done as caregivers," she said. "At Oakwood Villa, I try to respond whenever I can be of assistance to those dying, those needing comfort. We pray and I listen. No matter the faith, everyone knows the *Our Father*. I receive more from our residents than I am able to give them."

Sister, who will celebrate her 80th birthday in February, also is a source of understanding and comfort for families and friends grieving for loved ones. During a typical week she also manages to visit with nearly all of Oakwood Villa's 90-plus residents. They appreciate her good cheer and willingness to join their social events.

Surprised and humbled by her award, Sister expressed her gratitude to her employer's staff and administration, and to the WHCA, for her opportunities to serve others.

"With a smile on her face, this woman accomplishes more in her 20 hours a week than most people do in 40," noted Oakwood Villa's recommendation on her behalf. "We are indeed blessed with an angel, who, more than anyone, deserves a Shining Star of recognition."

Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Appreciating Old Friends and New

Hospitality at Saint Bede Monastery is guided by the *Rule of Saint Benedict* who wrote "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ." Since their founding of a priory in Eau Claire in 1948 to expansions of a new monastery opened in 1964, the Sisters have blended spirituality, service and friend making in ecumenical modes.

Their activities at Saint Bede Center offer many examples. During September and October, the Center hosted a variety of programs for Catholics and those of different faiths. The Center's annual Faith Enrichment Day featured a slate of day and evening spiritual and scholarly programs that attracted more than 100 people. Other Center programs range from individual and group retreats, marriage encounters and biblical studies to workshops and conferences of religious, school and professional groups. In a typical year, some 1,800 Center guests savor Benedictine hospitality, with many visitors becoming close friends of this community.

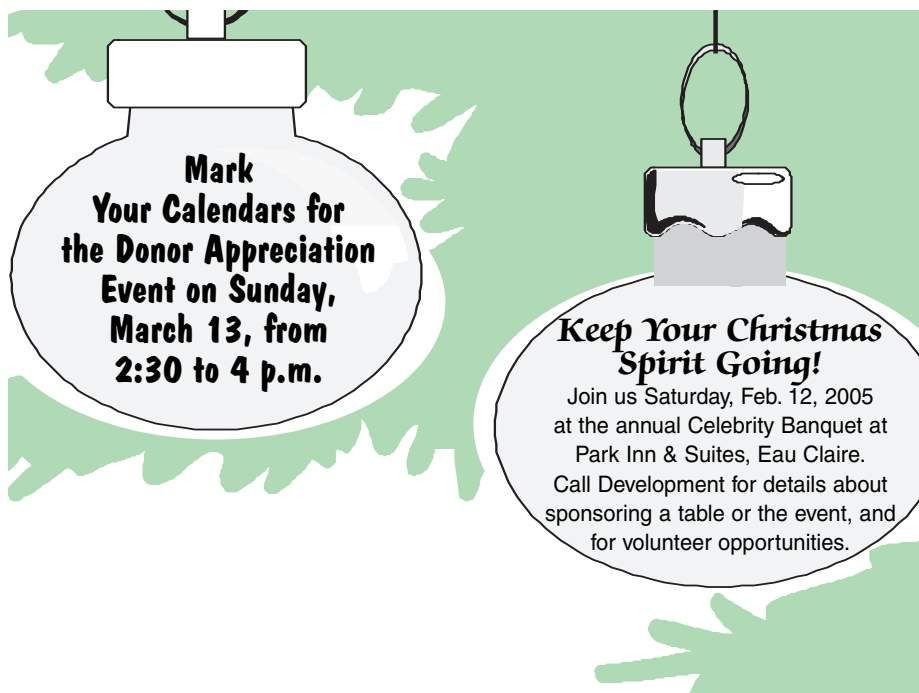
Such associations often result in additional support for the Sisters' ministries, retirement fund and daily operations. During our fiscal year 2003-04, which ended last May 31, these associations, as experienced by our office,

played a major role in development revenues of \$364,495 from 1,760 gifts, several bequests and a small grant. Some of these funds benefited long deferred air conditioning projects for the Sisters' chapel, residence and community areas, and offices.

Equally touching, many donors penned personal notes on their gift envelopes. The Sisters received family updates, requests for prayers and highlights of cherished memories or tributes to favorite Benedictines that have affected their lives.

Experience here shows that new and long-time friends often become active in this community as volunteers. Some help with caregiving at Clairemont, mailing publications or assisting with events such as the annual Celebrity Banquet. Others participate as Lay Associates, members of the Development Advisory Council or offer informal counsel or expertise to the Sisters. Whatever their gifts, all such friends are one in the prayers and work of this Benedictine community.

We thank you and wish you and loved ones a joyous, blessed Christmas and peaceful, bountiful New Year!
Deo Gratias!



Leave Your Legacy

Consider joining the Heritage Companions of Saint Bede

Membership and recognition are extended to friends planning to remember the Sisters in their wills. Your gift will help perpetuate the Benedictine traditions of prayer, hospitality, service and sharing with others.

Yes - I'd like to learn more about becoming a **Heritage Companion**.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (optional) _____

(Clip and Mail to the Development Office, Saint Bede Monastery, PO Box 66, Eau Claire, WI 54702)

UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

As an ecumenical retreat and conference center, Saint Bede Center offers a variety of religious, spiritual, cultural and educational programs. Listed below are some of the up coming events which might be of interest to you.

- **December 3-4:** Advent Retreat "Adversarial Advents"
— directed by Father Simeon Thole, OSB
from St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN
- **December 18:** Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **December 21:** "Sharing the longest night of the year"
See details in "Bits and Center Pieces"
- **December 23-January 1:** Labyrinth available for
meditative walking
- **February 25-27:** Marriage Encounter Weekend
- **March 18-19:** Lenten Retreat

A book discussion group meets monthly at the Center. Current book: "*Beyond Violence*" by James L. Heft. If interested, please call for date and time.

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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1190 Priory Road - PO Box 66
Eau Claire, WI 54702-0066
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WINTER 2004

BITS AND CENTER PIECES

— Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

"It is so very quiet here!" is the comment we often hear from our guests. One woman even told me that she could actually hear her heart beat in the solitude of this building. Such is the purpose of a retreat center, to provide space so that you can hear your heart beat and, as it beats, it can speak to you. And when your heart speaks to you, what does it say? Does your deepest being have a message for you? To the terribly complicated greeting, "How are you?" can you respond accurately? Only the heart knows when our response to that question is an excuse or an explanation.

The heart of Saint Bede Center is filled with gratitude at this time of year! A grateful heart is a humble heart, for it has received so much from so many. A grateful heart is a powerful force for positive change, for the one who has received wants to give back to the other.

December 21 is the first day of winter, the solstice, the longest night of the year. What do folks do during the long darkness of this night? We at Saint Bede Center are planning a special observance of this night. We will watch and pray, listen and learn from 7 to 9 p.m. (longer if you like). Some of our special guests will include **Warren Petryk** who will lead us in song and prayer, and **Dr.**



Sister Judith Kramer

Kristin Woghan, MD to address the effects of darkness on our health. We will also ponder how Christmas, the Feast of Lights, was placed on December 25, so close to the longest night of the year. We hope to hear some of your stories about darkness and light as we happily pass this long night in the company of friends.

Admission is a smile and a gift of non-perishable food for an area food bank. There will be refreshments and some surprises. All are welcome. Come join us with your grateful heart!