

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
VOL. 20 NO. 4

Eau Claire, Wisconsin
WINTER 2007



Deep within a cuddled womb
A seed was planted
nourished
protected
growing

Awaiting the time
when new life would be ushered forth
streaking brilliance with glowing Sun
into a darkened, unexpected world.

In ripened time
The Son, nourished into growth
in Mary's womb
Emerged into a darkened world
Amidst a Glowing Sun
To once again restore Hope
Within a broken world.

The Son illumines the way.
With the Son - Peace is fulfilled.

By Sister Dale Wollum, O.S.B.



Sister Margaret Michaud,
OSB Prioress

TIDINGS

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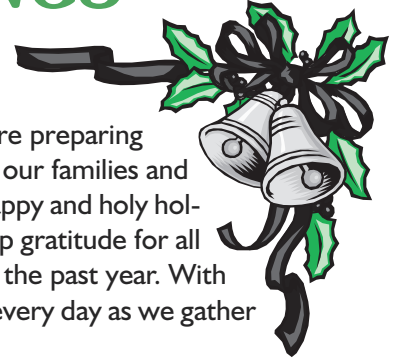
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MONASTIC MUSINGS

— Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB



Each year we bring out *Tidings* just as we are preparing for Christmas. This is our Christmas card to all our families and friends. We send it with our best wishes for a happy and holy holiday season. We hope that it expresses our deep gratitude for all the generous support we have received during the past year. With it we promise to keep all of you in our prayers every day as we gather for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Some of us, because of age and infirmity, have retired from active ministry in schools, hospitals and parishes. Nevertheless, we believe that we still serve the Church and the world through our prayer ministry. As we come together, morning, noon and night, we remember all of you, your loved ones, and your concerns. This is our Christmas gift to you and it is offered with gratitude and affection.

As we move close to the Feast of Christmas we celebrate the Season of Advent. "Advent" means "coming." Historians tell us that originally the term meant the feat itself, but gradually it came to designate the time before Christmas. When the Church speaks of "Advent," Christ's coming, three aspects of His coming are included. Thus Advent is at once a celebration of His first coming, but also His presence now in the midst of the Church, and looking forward to the full and final coming when He will complete the work of redemption. Advent, taken in its fullest sense, includes past, present and future.

We live in the second phase, the time between Christ's first coming into our world as one of us, fully human and fully divine, and His final coming in glory. But He is with us in this between time. At Christmas we rejoice, even now, in the presence of the Lord in our midst. Reflecting on the meaning of Christmas puts us in touch with the central core of our faith, a mystery of love so profound. May this Christmas be a time of great joy for all of us as we remember, celebrate and anticipate the coming of Christ into our lives.

Lay Associates Explore Rule

Prayer, reflection, song and a short story marked the October 14 meeting of the monastery's Lay Associates. Patrick Bennett also was welcomed as a new member. Sisters Dale and Mary Fran Gebhard reported that no significant developments have occurred since the Sisters announced last August that they intend to sell their property.

Members were given copies of "Exploring the Sunday Readings" and responded to a discussion by Sister Michaela Hedican on a Sunday liturgies book, "With Burning Hearts" by Verna A. Holyhead. They also discussed Parts III and IV of the "Rule of Saint Benedict for Beginners" and set their next meeting for November 18.

Sidelight: Helen Marie Blader, a six-year Lay Associate living in Wautoma, WI, received news coverage earlier this fall after receiving the Green Bay Packer's "Community Quarterback Award." A civic leader, religious education teacher and avid Brett Favre fan, Helen Marie manages the community food bank in Waushara County – the state's poorest. A devout Catholic, with a penchant for adventure, she served with the Red Cross in Europe and Asia. Blader later worked with medical teams of the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea.

"I think I was one of the emancipated women of the 1960s," she said, chuckling. Helen Marie is a cousin of Sister Clarita Selz.

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Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB



Sister Mary Jackle

□ **Sister Mary Jackle**, Education Coordinator at Christus Health System in San Antonio, in September served as facilitator for a meeting of the Governor's Special Commission for a College-Ready Texas. She said the meeting, which included university, state and other leaders, is working to develop educational standards to help ensure that Texas high school graduates are prepared for college.

□ Six Methodist women pastors in September stayed at Saint Bede Center as part of a project to study the life of St. Hildegard of Bingen, whom one pastor called a "a role model for the Church." **Rebecca Niese**, who leads the United Methodist Church at Rhinelander, WI, said the monastic setting at Saint Bede, its library resources and the Sisters' hospitality proved to be the perfect setting for their research.

"Hildegard was an artist, musician, composer, healer, preacher and administrator," Niese said. She said the pastors' efforts had led to a \$23,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment Foundation that will fund the group's continued studies and a trip to Germany where St. Hildegard established a Benedictine monastery.

□ **Sister Margaret** and other Diocesan School of Biblical Studies instructors from La Crosse and Stevens Point, in early January will lead a DSBS program in the Holy Land for about 40 DSBS graduates. This fall a new class of students entered the multi-year program of biblical students and began studies at Saint Bede Center.

□ This fall the Benedictines participated in a Busy Student Retreat at the Newman Community, which serves UW-Eau Claire and Chippewa Valley Technical College students. **Sisters Mary Frances Gebhard** and **Dale Wollum** met with students. **Sister Judy Kramer** joined students in prayer and reflections, which drew on materials she helped prepare with **Sisters Dale, Ruth Feeny** and **Michaela Hedican**.

□ A typhoon that swept through Taipei, Taiwan in early October did extensive damage to Saint Benedict Monastery, one of 12 members of the Federation of Saint Benedict that includes Saint Bede. Miraculously, none of the Sisters were injured in a storm that took many lives and caused massive destruction to homes, businesses and public facilities such as Taipei's subway system. **Sister Michaela Hedican**, Federation president, said the Saint Benedict community is slowly recovering, making essential repairs to buildings and removing huge wind-felled trees on their property. The monastery is the home to **Sister Rosalyn Tsai**, who made many friends in this area during extended stays at Saint Bede while studying English at a local college. **Sister Austin Chang**, prioress of Saint Benedict, in November wrote to thank Federation members and other friends "who prayed for us during these (traumatic) 26 days. Please understand how much your prayers have strengthened us to continue the task of restoration."



Sister Rosalyn Tsai

□ The seven-piece painting collection of **JoAnn Klink**, with accompanying poems by **Sara**



Artist JoAnn Klink

Bryan, will be on display at Saint Bede Center from January 10 through February, 2008. Klink, a Development Advisory Council member and long-time friend of the Sisters, titled her collection, *Soul Images* -- paintings created over a span of 15 years. JoAnn began painting when she was in her 50's, when expressing the beauty she saw through art became a part of her healing process. She is inspired by nature themes and said "spiritual and mathematical symbols intrigue me."

The series of "art prayer" will be displayed on the first floor of the Center. Together with the healing art of JoAnn Klink the Sisters invite you to view and ponder *Soul Images* and listen to that voice within you which seeks the Divine in the world around us.

Sisters Are Good Stewards Of Monastery's Resources



(Editor's Note: This article was written by Richard Helleloid, Ph.D., CPA, manager of the monastery's Finance Office. He holds a bachelor's degree from Macalester College, St. Paul, and MBA and doctoral degrees from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. He has served on the faculties of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and UW-Eau Claire.)

Richard Helleloid, Ph.D., CPA

The finance office at Saint Bede Monastery helps assure faithful stewardship of the material resources entrusted to the community. This is important to the Sisters, their benefactors, and those who benefit from the Sisters' hospitality and services to the community.

The Gospels share Christ's teachings about stewardship, service and faith; these teachings guide the community. Each of the Sisters has taken a vow of poverty, and strives to live simply and modestly. The finance office supports their lives and ministries in several ways.

First, retreat center income, development income and Sisters' income are all received and accounted for with appropriate procedures to assure accuracy and integrity. Financial statements are reviewed annually by a major regional CPA firm; that firm also performs internal audit procedures throughout the year.

Second, expenditures are incurred and paid with frugality, modesty and value in mind. Sister Margaret Michaud, Prioress, and Sister Hildegard Geraets, the

monastery's former Treasurer who died last March, have been particularly conscientious in monitoring expenditures. Considerable attention is given to expenses in the areas of health care, property maintenance and employee compensation.

Third, investment policies have been carefully developed and investment managers carefully selected. Most investments relate to the Sisters' Retirement Fund. The monastery's guidelines state, "In selecting investments, equal consideration is to be given to three objectives: capital preservation, income, growth...The target allocation for investment funds is 40 percent in equities (stock funds) and 60 percent in fixed income assets..." Most of the investments are with three different investment firms. Each of the firms works significantly with other religious communities. Saint Bede Monastery has had positive relationships with these three firms for several years; the relationships are constantly reviewed and evaluated.

Fourth, considerable attention has been given to the Sisters' future financial needs. The financial condition of the monastery is much better than that of many religious communities. Thanks to generous benefactors and productive investments, the Sisters' Retirement Fund is about 60 percent funded, according to the National Religious Retirement Office. However, due to the aging of the community, challenging long-term issues must be addressed. Staffing, logistical and economic considerations have led the Sisters to decide to sell their property and relocate in the reasonable near future. The finance office will continue to support the Sisters' ministries of hospitality and community service as Saint Bede Monastery proceeds with appropriate changes.

Alumna of Saint Bede Academy Heads Citizen Action of Wisconsin

Dr. Linda Honold, a 1973 alumna of the Sisters' former Saint Bede Academy, in July was named Executive Director for Citizen Action of Wisconsin (CAW) and its Citizen Action of Wisconsin Education Fund. She previously served four years as chair of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

Her appointment cheered **Sister Mary Jo Donaldson**, a principal and Honold mentor at the academy, which closed in 1978. Sister termed Linda "one of my academy award winners." Now residing at Clairemont, Sister recalled that Honold was "highly self-motivated and always available to me for things that needed to be done."

Honold holds a doctorate in Human and Organization Development and master's degrees in both organizational development and industrial relations. She has authored two books in her field and now heads an organization focused on building awareness, coalition groups and strategies on behalf of state-wide issues such as affordable health care and education.

"Citizen Action of Wisconsin has a long record of making a difference in the lives of people in our state and of being a catalyst of social change," she said.

Honold said the Milwaukee-based organization, with a \$2.7 million annual budget, has a staff of 18, some 30 canvassers and field offices in Madison, Eau Claire and Green Bay.



Dr. Linda Honold

Book Talk

— Dr. Ronald Warloski



Jesus of Nazareth (Doubleday, 2007) Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) is a formidable book. Using the historical method, scripture analysis and rigorous logics, the book challenges the reader in part because of the language peculiar to those academic disciplines and the nature of its judgments and insights. The book will certainly increase the reader's knowl-



edge of Jesus and Scripture. It also will change your perception and understanding of both. It did so for me.

Joseph Ratzinger was a professor at the University of Regensburg and chair of Dogma from 1969-76. He then was appointed Archbishop of Munich /Freising and began the career that led to his election as Bene-

Dr. Ronald Warloski

dict XVI. That short synopsis helps to explain his book. It is Benedict the scholar who has penned, as he put it, "My Personal Search for the Face of the Lord." The scholar with his brilliant, learned mind takes the readers by the hand and leads them through the evidence from scripture, history and the collective memory of the Church. The path is a closely argued, eminently logical explanation of how those sources point to an understanding of the meaning of Christ.

Understanding who or what Christ was and is, and what that means is fundamental to those who call themselves Christian. It was the importance of those topics that kept me going when often I wanted to stop. For some of this work is dense and hard to understand by a non-expert, particularly when Benedict discusses other writers on the topics. But then some insight and/or analysis would strike me and I kept going. My perception of Christ, the Church and my part of God's being – all these have changed. Because of this book, I understand the role of Judaism played in the life of Jesus. I have a newfound appreciation of the collective memory of the Church. Other insights are of such depth of complexity that I need to live with them for a while before I can find words for them.

This book is not a biography of Christ. It analyzes 10 critical episodes described in the Gospels and other writings. They include the *Baptism of Jesus*; *Temptations of Jesus*; *Gospel of the Kingdom of God*; *Sermon on the Mount*; *Lord's Prayer*; *Message of the Parables*; *Principal Images of John's Gospel*; *Two Milestones of Jesus' Way* (Peter's Confession and the Transfiguration), and *Jesus Declares His Identity*.

Benedict carries the reader into the Scripture that emerged from the hearts and minds of the people of God. Beginning about 20 years after the Crucifixion the followers of Jesus began finally to realize that he had done something unbelievable and incomprehensible. He had shattered all existing religious categories. He had fulfilled the Jewish Torah and extended a new Torah to all humankind. The result was the emergence of Christianity. Finding words for their new understanding led his followers to write the Gospels and letters, all First Century meditations of the understanding of who Christ is and what that means.

Benedict's reflections and conclusions on whom and what Christ is fill the book. In each of the episodes/topics previously listed, the conviction – based on scholarship of the highest quality – is reiterated. Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God: true God. He was also the creator of a new communication and pathway between God and human beings, the new Torah.

By the end of the book, it became obvious why the Pope chose to write it and publish now. He wanted to convince people through scholarship and analysis that Jesus was truly God and man, and that he is the one true way through whom we approach the Triune God. That he is the reason the Church speaks of having the fullness of truth. It is the truth that the secular world has abandoned and often disparages. The Pope is saying "Look, See and Understand." A world not built on God and his law as revealed by Christ is doomed to collapse into such contemporary secular religions as Nazism, Stalinism, Egotism or Hedonism. To become truly human, one must live with the God now known to us through Jesus Christ. All else is folly.

It is a hard set of standards, alien to our contemporary perceptions. So the Pope walks the reader through the book to help the reader, see, hear and understand that a deeper, greater Truth exists, which subsumes all human truths.

(There is an interesting article discussing Benedict's confrontation with the secular west: Russell Shorto, "The Anti-Secularist: Can Pope Benedict XVI Re-Christianize Europe," *The New York Times Magazine* (April 8, 2007)



Liturgies of Praise and Thanksgiving Unite Benedictines in Daily Devotion



Jan Dworschak

At an international conference last July in Yankton, S.D., the program centered on the importance of ritual and listening for God's voice with one's heart in the monastic rhythms of music, scripture and meditation.

Jan Dworschak, now in her third year as liturgy director here, said in aging communities, especially, the daily rhythm of scriptures, prayer and song are outward signs of the Sisters' commitment to God and wel-

coming charism of hospitality.

"Our Sisters are extremely faithful to their daily liturgy and most gracious in inviting others to join them," Dworschak said. "We spend as much time on preparing our liturgies as our numbers and time permit."

At the Yankton conference, subtitled "Monastic Liturgy Forum" and Benedictine Musicians of America," Dworschak and Sister Marjorie Hill heard Raymond Studzinski, OSB; describe aging as a challenge for monastics to become "more hospitable, more humble, more dedicated to ritual, more given to song, and more Eucharistic."

"Father Studzinski, in his address on 'Aging and the Monastic Community,' reminded us of the call to elders and communities to 'make space willingly for, and even welcome, the demanding and often unwanted guest called *aging* who requires us to do things differently and who challenges us to find new ways to serve,'" she said.

In another presentation a speaker recalled a description from a Eudora Welty novel that ritual is "done by heart..." a way of "thinking with the body and of remembering with the skin."

The conference made a strong impression on the Saint Bede attendees, who took to heart the reminders that aging communities have special opportunities to do things differently in their prayers, liturgies and other spiritual activities.

"Hospitality, a core value of Benedictine spirituality, includes vulnerability," Dworschak noted. "Each person seems to recognize that along with hospitality and vulnerability live hope, a hope that humbly acknowledges the human person's immeasurable value to God, to each other, to all others. What if Jesus came disguised as the aged one. Would he find welcome among us?"

Certified last summer by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains in clinical pastoral education, she works

part-time at Eau Claire's Luther Hospital. Despite the time crunch, liturgy meetings with the monastery's Worship Committee is a regular part of her schedule. The committee includes Prioress Margaret Michaud and Sisters Mary Pattison, Helenette Baltus, Dale Wollum and Marjorie Hill. Judy Bredeson, on staff here, designs and distributes the liturgy materials.

"All the Sisters take an active role in the liturgy as leaders of prayer, cantors, organists, lectors, Eucharistic ministers and other roles," said Dworschak who holds university degrees in organ, piano and voice. She currently is giving organ lessons to Sister Marjorie, retired from teaching but serving as religious education director at St. Raymond's Parish near Eau Claire.

"Sister had studied piano and has a solid musical background," she said.

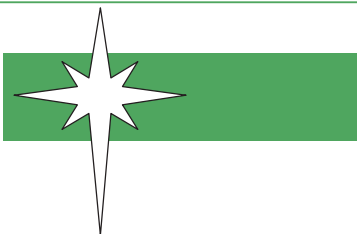
A special joy for Dworschak and others who play the organ here, she added, is the tonal quality of the Rogers organ, a gift of Saint Bede donors that was dedicated to a well-attended audience in December 2000.

A native of Arcadia, WI, Dworschak said her parents and sister are also musical. The Dworschak name, she added, is linked to famed Bohemian composer Antonin Dvorak, who died in 1904.

For Eucharistic celebrations, Dworschak works closely with the Sisters' chaplain, Fr. John Hogan, St. Raymond's pastor and a voice-trained Chicago native whom she described as "a wonderful singer." Sister Barbara Weiland serves as sacristan, preparing the vestments, vessels and communion offerings for his visits.

Preparations for the Benedictines' thrice-daily gatherings of Liturgy of the Hours, scheduled Masses and other spiritual activities are detailed and collegial. The liturgy team and community already have held meetings about liturgies and assignments for Holy Week as well as spring celebrations for the then newly-elected prioress and the jubilees of three Benedictines.

Asked to name a major challenge in accomplishing her liturgical goals, Dworschak quickly responded, "Time! People are pulled in very different directions because of their ministries or other assignments," she explained. "Because there are fewer Benedictines here today, we believe less (elaborate liturgies) is more to keep our program as accessible as possible to the community and guests."



And Heav'n
and
Nature Sing



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Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

Countering Uncertainties with Prayer, Friends

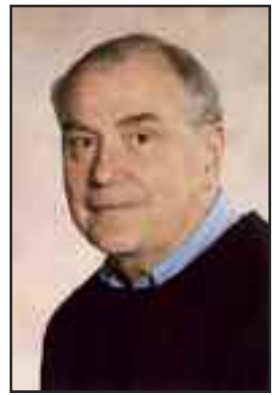
At Saint Bede these days, this is a time of uncertainty for the 34 members of this community. The Sisters decision in August to sell their property and move to a more manageable home stirs emotions among the Benedictines and all those who have enjoyed their spiritual gifts and hospitality. These reactions are akin to the mixed feelings of parents whose children leave for distant points to seek adventure or launch careers.

The Sisters, many of whom were raised in large Catholic families, know that such change marks the natural flow of life. They have been preparing with prayer and planning. For the past seven years they have been studying ways to continue their Benedictine traditions in this area. They intend to remain together in community, ensure the well-being of each Sister and continue reaching out to others as their health and energies permit.

Guidance, they know, will come through prayer, their collegial processes, and the counsel of religious and lay experts. The encouragement and generosity of friends also will play major roles in their future.

Recently, a 1939 alumnus of St. Patrick's school where the Benedictines once taught, e-mailed his thanks to Sister Margaret Michaud for her warm note penned on his donor appreciation letter.

"I thank you for the acknowledgement," wrote Donald A. Hirsch, a retired executive living in Cincinnati. "... But in particular a little hand-written note that read, 'Thanks so much. We will keep you in our prayers every day. God bless you.' I keep the letter out where I see it every day. If I am kind of having a bad day, I re-read the note that the Sisters are keeping me in their prayers. Naturally, as a result of reading this again, I just have to feel better with so many good Sisters praying for me."



James A. Schwartz
Director of Development

Briefly... □ The 2008 **Celebrity Banquet – Dinner beyond the Hill** is on the horizon. The gala event on Saturday, February 9, again will be held at Eau Claire's Best Western Trail Lodge & Suites. You can sponsor a table for eight for \$300 or the event itself for \$500. We also are seeking donations of items or services for the silent and live auctions. All proceeds go to the Sisters' Retirement Fund. For details about this popular dining and entertainment experience, contact **Linda Dekan** at the Development Office.

□ **Sister Dale Wollum's** latest poetry title, "Seasons Unfolding," now is on sale at Saint Bede Center's gift shop. The perfect gift for Christmas, this 115-page volume is priced at \$20. Her latest volume features a colorful graphics and design motif, and the striking nature photos of **Sister Karen Streveler**. Readers will enjoy Sister Dale's poetic reflections on the beauty of God's gifts in every season.



Mary Ann Bluem
Evelyn Mulhern
and Barbara Zich

Monastery's Receptionists: Always Welcoming

On any given day, the monastery's reception area can be a busy place. Although various Benedictines staff the office on weekends and after hours, the lay staff usually alternates with **Sister Barbara Weiland** during week days.

Beyond answering phones and relaying calls, lay employees and volunteers collect mail and deliver packages to the downtown Post Office. They also distribute mail to the Sisters and various departments, make medical appointment and errand runs, help with Development and other mailings, copy documents and respond to countless other calls for help. **Sister Dale Wollum** coordinates the lay receptionists, three of whom are pictured here.

- **Mary Ann Bluem**, sibling of **Sister Monica Mai**, for years has helped coordinate Development's mailing lists with those of Regis High School. A gracious volunteer, she also helps with Development's mailings.
- **Barb Zich**, staffs the receptionist office on Thursdays and Fridays. Mother of three, she also stays busy in the Diocese of La Crosse as a retreat director and youth religious instructor. She currently is helping with publication of a directory by the Federation of Saint Benedict at its office in Saint Bede Center. Barb also enjoys traveling to visit her children.
- **Evelyn Mulhern**, a Lay Associate since 1989, is always ready to drive Sisters to appointments and make the day's early mail run. "I help wherever I'm needed," she says. Evelyn, the mother of six children, "enjoys spending free time with all of them."

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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!

- **Dec. 15; Jan. 26; Feb. 23, March 29:**
Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **Dec. 7-8: Advent Retreat with Fr. Marty Pable, OSF, Cap**
**"Jesus Embraced Our Imperfect World
Can We Embrace Our Imperfect Church?"**
- **Dec. 20: Winter Solstice Observance**
- **Feb. 22-24: Marriage Encounter Weekend**

[Watch for Lenten program details!](#)



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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WINTER 2007

BITS AND CENTER PIECES

– Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

Center Continues to Welcome Guests

Nimble fingers snipped, sewed and arranged patterns of fabric into delicate or bold quilt patterns, table runners and wall hangings during several weekends at the Center this fall. Sewing has always been an exquisite art form and we have been pleased to welcome hundreds of women to Saint Bede Center for weekend quilting retreats. Some women come with a long agenda and others snuggle in for relaxation and fun. One recent group mixed gambling with sewing as they vied for valuable prizes with fabric bingo. In mid-October some 40 very tired young people from North Dakota bedded down in their sleeping bags on the carpeted floor of our large hall. They had come to fulfill several community service projects and, when their original plans for overnight housing did not work out, we welcomed them here on first floor while a most understanding group of seminary staff and professors continued their

working retreat on the second floor.

In November other talented fingers plucked and strummed harps in a day-long workshop. The celestial effect of 20 harps caused one staff member to ask if the pearly gates had been opened in our midst.

We also hosted a group of a 100 people who came together to share prayer and praise of God for three days. And the week before that, skeins of yarn were made into lovely prayer shawls as another group learned to pray their knitting and to crochet blessings with every stitch.

I relate these facts so that you know that we continue to function and to flourish at Saint Bede Center as we await the future plans for the monastery to unfold. We do not yet have a definite time line for the relocation of our community and so we continue to operate and accept reservations for as far into the future as seems prudent. Many of the people and groups who meet here may indeed be helping to shape our future!

