

the Mount

Benedictine Sisters of Erie
Summer 2026



Cornie Kittok

the Mount

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The Mount Magazine

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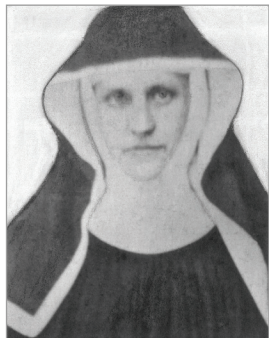
The Benedictine Charism is to seek God in the communal life and to respond in prayer and ministry.

Corporate Commitment: The Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Oblates commit to being a healing presence and a prophetic witness for peace and justice and to climate conscious living. We will decrease harmful patterns of consumerism and work with others to create systemic change needed to meaningfully address the climate crisis.

Thank you to **Printing Concepts, Inc.**, for the printing of this issue of *The Mount* in Erie, PA.

Happy 170th Anniversary! This issue of *The Mount* recognizes the gift of life in community. The women's monastic community that is the Benedictine Sisters of Erie is a particular human community. As you will find in these pages, we are increasingly seeing how the perimeters (and maybe the parameters) of this—or any—human community are actually more porous and flexible than previously thought.

We start with Benedicta Riepp. We are not certain that this photo is Benedicta, but we do know that she was the young woman sent from the Abbey of St. Walburg in Eichstätt, Bavaria, in 1854 to found a Benedictine women's community in St. Marys, Pennsylvania. Two years later she brought sisters to Erie. On the facing page, with Benedicta as the background, are the names of the women who, after Benedicta, continued creating this community.



We live now. We do not live in the past nor can we live in the future. Our ability to remember and to dream sometimes deceives us into believing we actually “live in time.” But we only live now—which is why on the first pages of this magazine you'll find our “now line” of decisions made at a particular moment in time that shaped who we are today. And the decisions that we make today will likewise set the stage for those who come after us.

Benedict's Rule is a guide to building strong, healthy relationships in our communities and with our God. In this issue we honor four jubilarians, women who have grown in this life for seventy-years. We listen in on a conversation with God, and to the poetic back and forth between Thomas Merton and Mary Oliver. An interview explores relationships going back to the 1970s that brought an oblate back to Erie in retirement, and the women in the first cohort of the Benedictine Peacemakers Program give witness to relationships built during a year living at the monastery.



There are many photos in this issue, from long ago as well as recent past. I am grateful to our archivists, Sisters Theresa Zoky and Janet Goetz, for their help in gathering information and photos for these pages.



And there is artwork. Our cover image of St. Benedict is the work of Connie Kittok, a contemporary folk artist from New Orleans. And in “Deaconess Tradition Revisited,” you will find an icon of the deaconess Phoebe written by oblate Marcie Bircher for Benetvision's original release of *The Friendship of Women* by Sister Joan Chittister.

This issue also holds our “Annual Report,” a special acknowledgement of our donors and their generosity. We dedicate pages to our Oblates and St. Benedict Academy Alumnae. And if you are within driving distance, don't miss the back cover where we list our 170th anniversary events, including Mother Ignatia's Ban the Bootleggers Bash. We hope you can join us.

Most of all, though, we are grateful to connect with you through these pages. Right now, right here, we are creating a stronger, more loving, and more faith-filled community.

Linda Romey OSB

These are the women who gave/are giving their lives to making choices now that bring us closer to the fullness of God through commitment to Benedictine life in Erie, Pennsylvania. Each brought different gifts when they came, some more visible than others, but all contributing. Other women, not listed here, entered the monastery and later realized this wasn't their path. They too shaped the community, as has every relationship and experience of the women listed below. We came as strangers and through this Benedictine tradition we become one community that we offer the world.

Scholastica Burkhard — Maura Fliieger — Alexia Lechner — Ruperta Albert — Anselma Schoenhofer — Dominica Riederer — Antonia Hermann — Ottilia Tempel — Edith Schlaudecker — Sebastian Gendilot — Celestine Reichert — Bernarda Alt — Austreberta Schlaudecker — Walburga Schlaudecker — Benedicta Hellriegel — Mechtild Schulz — Placida Anthony — Ildephonsa Pfeffer — Romana Scheloske — Clara O'Leary — Columba Seifert — Pia Anthony — Adelaide Gendilot — Boniface Muehl — Hilda Tobin — Digna Blattmann — Ebba Wuenschel — Theresa Greiner — Josepha Miller — Walburga Greiner — Placida Pilz — Floriana Eimers — Angela Haert — Gabriel Early — Gregoria Early — Wendelina Schwab — Justina Fath — Boniface Hippeli — Hildegard Altstadt — Aloysia Erhart — Barbara Schwab — Apollonia Gammer — Antonia Rodgers — Agnes Mutterer — Agatha Rastatter — Auxilia Waldobler — Rose Link — Maura Wiesten — Gertrude Hackspiel — Clara McNerny — Pia Kuhn — Hildegard Cordon — Cecilia Brosemer — Adelgund Birner — Luitgard Heinz — Philomena Riederer — Magdalena Ehrmann — Bertha Greiner — Martha Reger — Raphael Shaughnessy — Michael Kreger — Baptista Stadler — Euphrosina Bittig — Paula Ehrmann — Evangelist Zilliox — Amanda Spetz — Thecla Wagner — Scholastica Griebel — Hilda Griebel — Prisca Megerle — Petronilla Showalter — Stephanie O'Malley — Callista Laib — Camilla Kelleher — Thecla Wallner — Veronica Wallner — Aloysia Fischer — Bertha Militzky — Genevieve Butterfield — Eustella Weaver — Coletta Stubler — Benigna Wuenschel — Justina Flatz — Adelaide Jeanney — Angela Steinhauser — Beatrice Stubler — Crescentia Leisenheimer — Luitgard Weaver — Henrietta Meisinger — Pauline Wuenschel — Dolorosa Zilliox — Armella Grief — Helena Derrick — Eugenia Rosswog — Floriana Wittmann — Sabina Rapp — Marcella Butterfield — Martina Zagst — Pauline Senger — Agnes Wagner — Caroline Hartle — Angela Muench — Athanasia Hintenach — Pia Hofstetter — Dionysia Meyer — Winifred Kelleher — Coletta Eichelsdoerfer — Victoria Purcell — Margaret Wagner — Rose Senger — Scholastica Schneider — Felicitas Hartleb — Bibiana Meisinger — Seraphine Sutter — Hermenegild Keating — Hildegund Fleckenstein — Pierre Hynes — Leona Weber — Mildred Weber — Zita Smith — Ernestine Hogan — Cyril Birkenmeyer — Catherine Dietzen — Adelaide Bart — Bernarda McDonald — Beatrice Muench — Anselma Wagner — Monica Sigler — Perpetua Heinrich — Augustine Shandel — Vincent Von Jugl — Alphonse Shandel — Clementine Kelleher — Stanislaus Haas — Frances Jeanney — Petronilla Bart — Leocadia Carano — Hilda Moffitt — Bonaventure Kelleher — Placida Will — Bernadette McIntyre — Agnes Koenig — Theresa Muench — Lawrence Lengemann — Ignatia DePuydt — Marcella Meisinger — Antonia Kielas — Gertrude Schmitz — Vincent Graham — Tecla Peplinski — Rita O'Sullivan — Lucy Fey — Dorothy Moffitt — Germaine Miller — Anna Dietrich — Alexia Morrissey — Mercedes Wintroath — Louise Manger — Eugene Reder — Zita Wagner — Remegia Grotzinger — Angela Lysaght — Clara Kelly — Thomasine Martin — Raphael Kerr — DeSales Austin — Alberta Steineck — Bonaventure Martin — Patricia McNally — Honora Shannon — Rosalia Schwartz — Gervase McCarthy — Mary Marcia Monighan — Sylvester Groner — Eileen Connelly — Cornelia O'Brien — Eleanor Kelch — Aurelia Carroll — Marie Claire Brandt — Bernardine Goebel — Evelyn Hynes — Mary Ellen Hynes — Josephine Zimmer — Ruth Morkin — Margaret Harrison — Marie Therese Grugin — Joanne Huether — Anne Marie Nolan — Mary Alice Rettger — Theophane Seigel — Annella Fitzgerald — Nora Glavey — Margaret Therese McDonnell — Genevieve Heinrich — Virginia Hofmann — Rosemary Braeger — Benedict Grotzinger — Mary Regina Flanagan — Dolores Milanese — Helen Kecer — Mary Louise Julian — Alice Schierberl — Marie Therese Baltz — Kathleen Cribbins — Joseph Weithman — Corinne Moske — Mary Margaret Kraus — Mary Michael Zurko — Florian Paulits — Mary Ann Keating — Henrietta Seyboldt — Francis Claire Bunce — Marie Celine Bucholz — Mary David Callahan — Stephanie Campbell — Phyllis Weaver — Elaine Kecer — Nora Curran — Irene Warchol — Estelle Marie Brazier — Joan Marie Tobin — Rita Pruchniewski — Jean Lavin — Jerome Eustace — Kathleen Warner — Bernadette Lorei — Mary Roger McDonnell — Mary Daniel Meahl — Carolyn Reinsel — Mary Helen Maher — Mary Grace Hanes — Barbara Ann Karsznia — Lenore Shaw — Andrea Weidle — Roberta Lavin — Mary Bernard Lander — Lois Marie Bulishak — Mary Therese Eichenlaub — Mary Bernard Niebling — Veronica Byer — Mary William Hoffman — Maureen Tobin — Marie Patrice McGrath — Suzanne Groner — Rita Groner — Anne McGreevy — Mary Philip Kiehlmeier — Mary Leonard Sitek — Mary Cecilia Huyck — Mary Paula Danneker — Mary Richard Schmidt — Marlene Bertke — Miriam Mashank — Catherine Rettger — Patricia McGreevy — Mary Patricia Miller — Dona Obenrader — Mary Louis Eichenlaub — Cecilia Sullivan — Mary Margaret Raub — Lucia Marie Surmik — Mary Hugh McCaffrey — Maris Stella Doran — Bernadette Sullivan — Ellen Niebling — Joan Chittister — Mary Dolores Sheblak — Mary Placida Anheuser — Augusta Hamel — Mary Bernadette Ladner — Veronica Mirage — Claire Marie Surmik — Michelle Wilwohl — Paula Burke — Carol Ann McLaughlin — Joachim Frey — Mary Lawrence Connors — Helen Marie Lee — Dorothy Szczypinski — Norma Jean Kingsley — Rosanne Lindal-Hynes — Janet Staab — Mary Veronica McGarty — Laura Beichner — Mary Benedict Irish — Margaret Mary Nielsen — Justina Gutowski — Rita Zattosky — Mary Therese Egan — Phyllis Schleicher — Mary Regina Wright — Colette Korn — Kathryn Disbrow — Christine Vladimiroff — Mary Bede O'Leary — Irene Spacht — Jean Wolbert — Karen Kosin — Judith Bohn — Audrey Berdis — Mary Lou Kownacki — Mary Ann Luke — Roseann Rice — Audrey Steff — Rose Ann Kolbas — Theresa Zoky — Claire Hudert — Mary Miller — Annette Marshall — Patricia Mowry — Patricia Lupo — Marcia Sigler — Mary Ellen Cummings — Helen Heher — Christine Kosin — Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski — Marian Wehler — Mary Irene Danneker — Miriam Vos — Susan Freitag — Margaret Ann Pilewski — Susan Doubet — Jacinta Conklin — Mary Susan Hallstein — Marla Bleil — Janet Goetz — Dorothy Stoner — Mary Jane Vergotz — Rosanne Loneck — Kathleen Ruzskowski — Mary Louise St. John — Charlotte Anne Zalot — Diane Cook — Diane Rabe — Stephanie Schmidt — Mary Ellen Plumb — Charles Marie Holze — Mary Elizabeth Oettel — Dianne Sabol — Anne Wambach — Cindy Hoover — Ann Hoffman — Margaret Zeller — Judith Trambley — Anne McCarthy — Elizabeth Adams — Therese Glass — Ann Muczynski — Linda Romey — Ann Bannon — Sallie Harrington — Ellen Porter — Katherine Horan — Patricia Ann Witulski — Valerie Luckey — Kathleen McCarthy — Jen Frazer — Jacqueline Sanchez-Small — Colleen Leathley

Making decisions that matter now for 170 years

Decisions are made now. Whether we spend days or weeks agonizing over a decision or we flip a coin, an actual decision is always made now, in the present moment. While the past brings us to now and the future reaps the unknown benefits (or the harm) of the decisions we make now, we are creatures who live only in the present. So here's our "now line," a handful of pivotal decisions, each made in one of the 90,000,000 minutes the Benedictine Sisters have been in Erie. Who we are today is the result not of any one choice, or single person, or great act, but of decisions that were made in many single moments in time, moments when God inspired and gave courage to our sisters, lighting their way. And so we celebrate these "nows" of the past 170 years that bring us to the present moment in which we find ourselves and from which we make decisions that will impact the now we don't see—may never see—because we're not there. Yet.

Commitment to place

A combination of decisions and providential timing makes it possible for the Benedictine community to be present in Erie, welcoming seekers into Benedictine life in new as well as traditional ways. Although monks from St. Vincent Archabbey served at St. Mary's parish until 2015, there was never a male monastery in Erie—enabling the sisters greater freedom in determining their own lives. The timing of the building of Mount St. Benedict Monastery was also providential—by the late 1960s the architecture was much more open which facilitated welcoming guests into the community for prayer and dinner.

1856 Mother Benedicta Riepp accompanied five sisters from St. Marys, Pennsylvania, to Erie to teach the children of German immigrants. The five sisters established the first community of women religious in Erie, settling next to St. Mary's Church on East 9th Street.

1890 St. Benedict Academy's new building at 345 East 9th Street opened. Sisters lived in a wing between the school and St. Mary's Church.

1906 The sisters went into debt to purchase a 120-acre tract on East Lake Road in Harborcreek Township for \$11,500.



St. Benedict Academy, 1890

Sister Henrietta Seyboldt follows the progress of construction on the new monastery building on East Lake Road



1955 Students moved to a new St. Benedict Academy building on East 10th Street and the East 9th Street building became the motherhouse. The original convent was eventually taken down.

1964 A building fund was begun to raise money for the construction of Mount St. Benedict on East Lake Road. Ground was broken in October 1965 and the first sisters moved there in 1970.

1988 Mount St. Benedict was renamed Mount St. Benedict Monastery, reclaiming the sisters' monastic roots.

1997 After a long struggle the sisters succeeded in getting the title to the plot of land just east of St. Mary's church where the former motherhouse stood. It had been held in trust by St. Vincent Archabbey and Abbot Boniface Wimmer since the time of the community's founding.

Pray always

Prayer and community are the core of Benedictine life which makes our communal prayer, the daily Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office) central to our life. Decisions made at significant "now" moments have shaped our prayer and liturgy which in turn shape us.

Once Vatican II renewal opened the Church to the laity, the sisters responded with great hospitality sharing their Benedictine spirituality in a wide array of spirituality programs and encounters including retreat and prayer experiences and formation opportunities. A continual flow of guests come to the monastery seeking a place of prayer, silence, beauty, and community.

1856 The Vatican denied the sisters permission to pray the entire Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) because they were not cloistered—the reason for which was the Church's own request that they abandon the cloister to teach the children of German immigrants.

1908 After much effort on the part of the sisters, the Vatican lifted its ban on the community praying the Divine Office.



Sisters recite the Divine Office in the original convent chapel in 1960.



1954 The sisters pronounced their vows in English for the first time.

1980 Because God does not have a gender and language matters in shaping how we think and see ourselves, the community began using their new five-week inclusive-language psalter, *That God May Be Glorified*, to pray the Divine Office.

1988 The community began celebrating Final Professions and Jubilees as part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

2000 A "Great Women Committee" was named to research and develop resource packets for use in the celebration of significant women in Benedictine and Church history.



At left, sisters and guests celebrate after the Easter Vigil. Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, who celebrated her 90th birthday in March 2026, wears the long green coat. Above, Sister Rosanne, as a young postulant, is second from left facing the sister who is instructing postulants and novices in chanting the Divine Office.



Benedictine Sisters of Erie: 1856-2026

SBA Alumnae and Oblates

St. Benedict Academy Alumnae and Erie Benedictine Oblates are important members of the Benedictine family. Both communities have deep roots in Erie Benedictine history and significant decisions made at diverse and transformative “now” moments in the past and still today continue to grow our relationships and deepen our mutual commitment to this tradition.

SBA Alumnae

1869

A boarding school for girls was opened on East 9th Street and in 1870 a new section was added to the original convent and became St. Benedict Academy.

1955

A new St. Benedict Academy building opened on East 10th Street. The Class of 1988 was the final graduating class after 120 years of women’s education.

1994

Nearly 150 St. Benedict Alumnae and sisters participated in a choral reunion concert, *Encore '94*. The year-long weekly practices for the performance, a fundraising concert for Benedictine ministries, highlighted the importance of regular gatherings of SBA alumnae after the closing of the school. Social gatherings and reunions continue today. The SBA Alumnae Association also raises funds to support Benedictine ministries and to fund scholarships to help family members of alumnae attend Catholic schools.

Oblates

1956

The Erie Oblates of St. Benedict were organized but remained affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, since oblate promises could only be made to an abbot.

1978

A lay Associates Program began for persons desiring to be more involved in community programs, ministry, and justice issues. The Associates were able to make their commitment in the presence of the prioress. In 1996 a successful merger of the Oblates and Associates was finalized after the rules regarding oblate promises removed the abbot requirement. The name “Oblate” was reclaimed and today there are more than 200 Oblates of Mount St. Benedict Monastery.



Above, a meeting of the SBA Alumnae Association Board circa 1997. Below, the 2023 Board presents a check to Alyssa Kissell for St. Benedict Child Development Center. Carrisa Kepple, Director of the Center, is behind Alyssa. The presentation took place at an SBA Bingo, one of the regular fundraising events hosted by the SBA Alumnae Association.



2020

The community welcomed the first oblate to serve as co-director of the program. The annual Oblate Commitment Ceremony took place virtually due to the COVID pandemic. In 2025, two oblates were named as co-directors.

Left, Associates make their commitment in 1981 in the presence of Sister Joan Chittister, prioress, and the community. Right, Oblate Rose Ann Jesenovic leads the Monastic Procession of Oblates into chapel for the annual Oblate Commitment Ceremony in 2023.



Welcome the guest as Christ. —Rule of Benedict

Hospitality

The door of a Benedictine monastery is open “now” to the guest for a visit, to share a meal, to pray, for an overnight, or a weekend retreat—and sometimes to stay. Mother Benedicta Riepp took in an orphan. Mademoiselle Charpentier, who taught French at St. Benedict’s Academy, lived with the sisters from 1902 until her death in 1953. Potter Brother Thomas Bezanson was artist-in-residence from 1985 until he died in 2007. Vietnamese families, African sisters, people fleeing violence in Central America, sisters from Korea and Vietnam, high school students, homeless women—the list goes on of those who have lived with the Erie Benedictine community.

We share our charism with all who enter from the moment they appear at our door. And they in turn take the Benedictine spirit with them when they leave.

1972

The former motherhouse on East 9th Street became home to Pax Center, a Christian Center for Nonviolence. Pax was an intentional community of sisters and laypersons who engaged in peace education and action for nuclear disarmament and other social issues, offered hospitality to homeless women, and opened the Emmaus Soup Kitchen 1974.

1978

The first foster child was cared for by sisters living in a small group on Holland Street.



Sisters Alice Schierberl, left, and Annette Marshall welcome refugees from Central America to the monastery.



Benedictine Blackout: A Spiritual Solar Eclipse Experience

1987

The community endorsed the Sanctuary Movement and in 1988 the first sanctuary family moved into Casa de Paz, a house on West 4th Street rented for the use of refugees.

1989

The first of three hermitages was built in the woods east of the monastery to offer guests opportunities for solitude and silence.

2001

The Benedicta Riepp Program began, offering a one- to three-year live-in immersion for women seeking to experience the monastic way of life.

2011

The community launched Monasteries of the Heart: a New Movement for a New World, an online virtual monastery that welcomed seekers from anywhere in the world.

2021

After more than a year of having kept the monastery closed to guests during the COVID pandemic, the community celebrated a “Welcome Home” liturgy in June to reopen the monastery to guests to join us for liturgy. Reopening for overnight guests would come later that year.

2024

The community hosted “Benedictine Blackout: A Spiritual Solar Eclipse Experience” the day of the total solar eclipse in April. People came from miles around to experience the eclipse with us at Glinodo Center and enjoy a post-eclipse happy hour gathering.

2025

The Benedictine Peacemakers Program, a year-long cohort based live-in experience for young women, began when three women moved into the monastery. The program offers personal formation, spiritual community, and good work in the Benedictine spiritual and monastic tradition for women in their early twenties to early thirties.



Post-pandemic Welcome Home Liturgy

Benedictine Sisters of Erie: 1856-2026

Pax...and justice

Pax, peace, the Benedictine motto, was often carved into the stone lintels above the entrances of ancient monasteries throughout Europe. In Erie, the Benedictines themselves simply brought Pax to life. Because they lived immersed in Pax, it was not a stretch for them to take to the streets in a call for peace and justice beginning in the 1970s. And those who didn't feel called to take part in protests, vigils, and civil disobedience prayed with those who did. Pax Center formed in 1972 and became the hub of peace-related activities in the community. Students at SBA were challenged to wrestle with their own consciences. As early as 1959 social justice activist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and Benedictine oblate Dorothy Day (pictured at right in the SBA foyer) was invited to address students and plant seeds of the radical call of the gospel.

Responding to immediate "nows" over the past fifty years, calls for the end of the Vietnam war became calls for the end of many other wars, in Central America, in Eastern Europe, in the Middle East. We have decried the racism, sexism, and militarism that keep the poor, poor and continue to destroy the earth. We stand on the side of immigrants, persecuted peoples, and the planet. Cries for justice seem to grow louder and in Pax, we still respond now.

1978
Rev. Daniel Berrigan, SJ, was the guest homilist at the first public Mass for Peace celebrated at Mount St. Benedict. It was sponsored by the Sisters' Council of Erie and Pax Center.

1979
The Benedictine Sisters of Erie adopted a Corporate Commitment to nuclear disarmament. The Commitment is regularly revised.

1980
As an outgrowth of the peace witness at the Pentagon, Erie sisters were integral to the formation of Benedictines for Peace (BFP), a national peace organization. In 1981 the first meeting of the Erie chapter of BFP was held at Mount St. Benedict.

1981
The first Good Friday Pilgrimage for Peace, a public stations of the cross, took prayer to the streets of the city. Benedictines for Peace has sponsored the Good Friday Pilgrimage every year since.



Sisters greet Dorothy Day in the SBA foyer.

1982
A 102-foot tall wind machine was erected on the hill east of the main house at Glinodo. In 1983 the windmill was moved from Glinodo to the Mount property. Eventually the blades were removed as the winds off the lake were too strong for them.

1987
The Benedictine Sisters voted to declare all their properties Nuclear Free Zones.



Take Back the Site Vigil in 2021



At left, Benedictines for Peace sponsoring the 1981 Good Friday Peace Pilgrimage. Right, mime Sister Cindy Hoover at the 2024 Pilgrimage.

Pax...continued



Members of the Pax Center community engage in a scripture study.

1999
Benedictines for Peace initiated "Take Back the Site," Prayer Vigils at the site of homicides in Erie. There have been 170 vigils to date.

2018
A Fishing Easement along Glinodo's Seven Mile Creek was established with the State of Pennsylvania.



Goatherd Jen Zeitler explains how goats clear invasive species.

2023
The community contracted with a goatherd and her invasive-species eating goats to help save the woods along Seven Mile Creek. In 2024 Goat Fest was created to educate about goatscaping and offer an afternoon of outdoor activities to about 300 guests each year.

2025
For the first time, the Corporate Commitment included Oblates. It read: The Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Oblates commit to being a healing presence and a prophetic witness for peace and justice and to climate-conscious living. We will decrease harmful patterns of consumerism and work with others to create systemic change needed to meaningfully address the climate crisis.

Seek peace and pursue it. —Rule of Benedict

Communication

The community owes a great debt to those sisters who recognized the value of telling their own women's story and sharing it in ever more diverse ways. The community began its first publication in 1965, a decision that opened the world of Benedictine life and spirituality to a growing public. In addition to a community publication and later a website, the community began a printing press and a publishing ministry, very important "now" moments that have shaped the community—and the world—ever since.

1965
The publication, *The Benedictine Sister*, was printed from 1965-1968 to acquaint the lay community with the activities of the sisters.

1972
In 1972 a quarterly newsletter, *The Mount*, replaced *The Benedictine Sister*. It eventually changed to a magazine format. Today there are 12,000 subscribers to the biannual *The Mount* magazine.

1974
Benet Press began operation, serving community and contracted offset printing needs until it closed in 2000.

1987
Recognizing the power of language to shape thinking, the community published *A Reader's Version of the Rule of St. Benedict in Inclusive Language*.

1993
Pax Publications was the name given to a publications ministry for Sister Joan Chittister's writing when *The Monastic Way* monthly newsletter began in 1993 and the first calendar was produced in 1994. Eventually Pax Publications merged into Benetvision and added small books and chapbooks, prayer cards, videos and audiocassettes, and eventually books to the original publications.



Sister Justina Gutowski, longtime manager and printer at Benet Press.



Benedictine Sisters of Erie: 1856-2026

Labora...good work

Benedictine women came from Eichstätt, Bavaria, to educate the children of German immigrants. They also came to pray and to create community, and following the teachings of Benedict, to dedicate themselves now and always to ora et labora, prayer and work.

As the community in Erie grew, sisters were sent out "on mission" where they lived in smaller groups and taught in elementary and high schools throughout the diocese. The number of sisters teaching gradually declined as parishes began closing schools and sisters responded to the call of Vatican II. The community made important decisions "now" in terms of responding to new needs by founding ministries and serving different populations. Individual sisters often found good work outside the community's ministries bringing diversity and new relationships to the community. Other sisters served in ministries necessary for the day-to-day functioning of a monastic community and the upkeep of the monastery.

1856

The sisters began teaching at St. Mary School, the oldest Catholic School in Erie. It closed in 1994 after 138 years.

1869

A boarding school for girls was opened on East 9th Street and in 1870 a new section was added to the original convent and became St. Benedict Academy. In 1890 the sisters built a new Academy building at 345 East 9th Street.

1919

Sisters began to attend college. By 1923 all teaching sisters in the community were certified by the State Board of Education. St. Benedict Academy established a four-year high school.

1930

The sisters opened a summer camp for girls, Camp Glinodo, on the lakeside section of the Harborcreek property. It functioned as a children's summer camp until 2000.

1955

A new building for St. Benedict Academy opened at 330 East 10th Street. SBA closed in 1988 after 119 years.

1965

The St. Benedict Head Start program began. In 1969 St. Benedict Child Development Center began at 345 East 9th Street.

1974

Pax Center began a Soup Kitchen. It eventually became Emmaus Ministries; in 1984 Emmaus purchased a building located at 218 East 11th Street where they continue to feed the hungry.

1979

The East Coast Migrant Head Start Program occupied a portion of the ground floor of Mount St. Benedict. In 1992 the ECMHS Program moved to 345 East 9th Street and joined St. Benedict Child Development Center.

1981

The Department of Housing and Urban Development-sponsored Benetwood Apartments, adjacent to the monastery, was dedicated.

1982

Environmental Studies Programs began at Glinodo Conference Center. Different programs continue to function on the site.

1982

Chapter 57, a Benedictine fine arts shop, officially opened at Mount St. Benedict. The first Women's History Month Art Show in the Chapter 57 Gallery was held in 1995.

1988

The community unveiled plans to repurpose the SBA building shortly after the school closed. The new educational endeavor, Saint Benedict Education Center offered welfare to work programs.

1990

Benetvision: Research and Resources for Contemporary Spirituality was started to support the writing and speaking of Sister Joan Chittister. Pax Publications was the name given to a publications ministry; it folded into Benetvision and began publishing booklets, prayer cards, videos and audios, and books in addition to *The Monastic Way* and annual calendar.

1994

The Inner-city Neighborhood Art House piloted its summer program at St. Benedict Education Center. In 1995 it found a home in the former Goodyear Tire building, 201 East 10th Street.

2000

St. Mary Auditorium was blessed, rededicated and renamed St. Benedict Community Center. It served as a recreational facility for neighborhood children and those in the community with special needs. SBCC closed in 2023.

2009

The Department of Public Welfare asked St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC) to add a Refugee component to its programming.

2011

Benetvision launched the online monastery, Monasteries of the Heart: a New Movement for a New World. To date, more than 30,000 persons have registered as members.



Your way of acting should be different than the world's ways.

—Rule of Benedict



Celebrating 70 years of monastic life



Sister Norma Jean Kingsley

Sister Norma Jean was a member of the St. Benedict Academy Class of 1949. She worked for several years before entering the monastery where she made her final monastic profession on July 16, 1959. Sister Norma Jean taught elementary and secondary school in the Erie Diocese until 1974 when she became an administrator at Camp Glinodo for a few years before returning to teaching.

She eventually moved into pastoral ministry, first at St. Patrick Parish in Erie and then at Ecclesia Center, an outreach of the Diocese of Erie to religious and priests in need of spiritual renewal. After Ecclesia closed, Sister Norma Jean taught at St. Benedict Education Center for five years. In 2004 she returned to pastoral ministry at Heartland Hospice, and then at Lakeland Area Hospice, where she ministered until her retirement in 2015.

In her community, Sister Norma Jean served as secretary to the prioress and as Scholastic Director for sisters in temporary vows.



“Sister Norma Jean, our eldest sister in age, continues to model for us what living a full monastic life looks like. Her rhythm of life is set to community prayer, meals, and events as well as Sunday afternoon drives and enjoying strong connections with family and friends,” said Sister Anne McCarthy.

Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes

A native of Oil City, Pennsylvania, Sister Rosanne entered the Benedictine Sisters two years after high school graduation and made her final profession on July 16, 1959. After many years teaching in Erie Diocesan elementary schools, Sister Rosanne transitioned into ministry with the poor as Director of Social Services at St. Martin Center in 1976. In 1978 she helped begin the East Coast Migrant Head Start Program which eventually became St. Benedict Child Development Center.

Sister Rosanne heard a new call to work with women in need, first as a counselor at Community House for Women and then at Emmaus Ministries where she served as women’s advocate for thirty-five years. While living at the Erie Benedictines’ Pax Center, an intentional community that engaged in peace education, action for nuclear disarmament, other social issues, and offered hospitality to homeless women, Sister Rosanne was a founding mother of Emmaus Soup Kitchen in 1974. Though formally retired, she continues to volunteer at Emmaus, offering welcome and hospitality to guests. She is a constant presence at demonstrations and vigils calling for justice.



“Sister Rosanne has spent her seventy years of monastic life embodying Benedict’s call to ‘listen with the ear of her heart’ and that heartfelt listening has allowed her to respond to her sisters, friends, and especially the poor with love and compassion,” said Sister Valerie Luckey.

Uphold me O God according to your word and do not fail me in my hope. –Psalm 119

Sister Claire Marie Surmik

Sister Claire Marie entered the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania, in 1953. With degrees in English, education, and administration she was an elementary school teacher, a principal in a number of dioceses, and an assistant superintendent of schools in the Diocese of Scranton.

A desire to serve the poor and work for peace and justice brought Sister Claire Marie to Erie and in 1988 she began the transfer process, making her final incorporation as an Erie Benedictine in 1991.

For thirty-three years, until her retirement in 2020, Sister Claire Marie worked at Emmaus Ministries as Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry Coordinator. She also drove the Emmaus truck, picking up donated furniture and other goods that she delivered to the homes of the poor.

For twelve years Sister Claire Marie served as Oblate Co-Director with Sisters Karen Kosin and Lucia Marie Surmik.

Sister Claire Marie was a strong advocate for the poor and for issues of peace, justice, and the climate crisis, participating in rallies and vigils for decades.



“Sister Claire Marie has always generously offered her genuine ‘million-dollar smile’ to everyone she meets; it is a real gift to all of us and it reflects her joyful spirit,” said Sister Lucia Marie Surmik.

Sister Joachim Frey

Sister Joachim, a native of St. Marys, Pennsylvania, entered the Benedictine Sisters of St. Marys at St. Joseph Monastery after high school graduation. She made her final monastic profession on June 29, 1959.

Sister Joachim taught preschool, elementary, and high school in the Diocese of Erie for almost thirty years before transitioning into other ministries including administrative assistant work, pastoral care coordination, and internal ministry at St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys. She served as treasurer for her community and at Elk County Catholic High School.

In January 2014 the monastery closed and Sister Joachim moved to Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie with several of her sisters. She transferred her vows to the Erie Benedictines and was fully incorporated into the Erie community in 2015. In the Erie community, Sister Joachim has taken on a number of responsibilities and continues to offer support services in various monastery offices.



“Sister Joachim takes living Benedict’s rule very seriously,” said Sister Jacinta Conklin. “In her role as treasurer at St. Joseph Monastery, she cared for the resources of the monastery. Now in Erie, she does the same as she assists in our recycling efforts.”

the Fifth Kind of Monk

Nothing exists—or functions—in isolation. As we learn more about both the outer physical universe and inner consciousness, it becomes clearer that they are not separate realities. Granted, those categories help limited humans navigate our complex existence, but when we dig deeply, we intuit Oneness. Oneness, longing for spiritual fulfillment, is built into our human be-ing, which would explain why religious traditions all point to its existence.

I cannot know what any other being is experiencing in their interior no matter how intimately I know them. Likewise, they cannot know what it is like to be experiencing me from inside me (sometimes I don't even know). Nor can I know what it is like for any other creature to be that creature. What is “dog-ness” to a dog or “cat-ness” to a cat?

But we depend on those wiser than we are, past and present, to help us figure out how to live in ways that bring us closer to fulfillment. For those of us who feel drawn to the archetype of the monk, the fulfillment we seek is Oneness.

I follow the wisdom of St. Benedict as it has been interpreted over the past 1,500 years down through my cenobitic monastic community today. However, the shifting demographics in monasteries makes us wonder if there is a disconnect between the content of Benedict's wisdom and the structures through which it is lived and expressed today. The Fifth Kind of Monk is one way of wrestling with that disconnect and playing creatively with living into Oneness through Benedict's core teachings in ways that speak to who we are now.

What does it mean to live in a monastery, either in one place or dispersed? To answer that we must face a basic struggle of human community. We like familiarity, comfort, and convenience. “We've always done it this way” has probably been on most of our lips on more than one occasion. But the thing is, our physical bodies, mental bodies, and emotional bodies are forever changing and growing—until the day we die. Yet we so fear change.

So yes, none of us lives or functions in isolation, which Benedict knew. He also knew that his sixth-century world was fundamentally dysfunctional in many ways, not unlike our world today or most worlds in between. So Benedict “left” the outside world and went to work on his inner world, the only world over which he had real agency. History is replete with such seekers of wisdom, truth, and meaning. It should be noted, however, that women are largely missing from that history because until recently the wisdom and experiences of women weren't considered worth noting or recording.

Others recognized that Benedict was on to something and, eventually, he wrote of his experience and practices so that others might find their way more readily. His Rule continues to guide Benedictines today. But we often fall into the human trap of following the path of least resistance rather than digging in and

by Linda Romey, OSB
artwork by Marcy Hall
instagram.com/marcyhallart

wrestling with core concepts and how they might help us face down our egos today. Facing the less likable parts of our human nature like greed, jealousy, desire for power and control, selfishness, is not easy—and Benedict addresses all of it. He and other wisdom teachers make it very clear that our freedom and the fulfillment of our longing reside in that wrestling.

It's easier to focus on the external over the internal, easier to talk and strategize about what's going on “out there” than it is to share what's going on “in here,” in my heart and soul.

Benedict didn't have the advantage of quantum physics and technology and more complete (though still grossly inadequate) understandings of consciousness and the workings of the universe when he wrote. So I've shifted my thinking on one of his core concepts to help me find more balance in my inner and outer focus in a way that aligns with how I experience God in the world today.

In Chapter 58, The Procedure for Receiving Members, Benedict writes, “The concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and whether they show eagerness for the *Opus Dei* (work of God), for obedience, and for trials.” Our Benedictine charism statement, “The Benedictine way is to seek God in the communal life and to respond in prayer and ministry,” has roots in this chapter.

In my thought process, separation from God is implied in the intention to “seek God.” God is somewhere out there and my work on this earth is to somehow find that distant God. That idea would have fit Benedict's theology and worldview. But it does not fit my theology, my understanding of God and my worldview today. So I now say that I came to the monastery to “learn to see God.” God is not separate; God is one with us and in us. God is the energy, the life, the love that enables me to exist and be me. Without God, there is no me. There is no you, there is no universe. And as I learn to see God ever more fully in the other, in creation, in myself, it changes how I live and relate. And as more of us change how we see and how we live, the world will change. That is why I came to the monastery and that is the gift of the Fifth Kind of Monk.



More about the Fifth Kind of Monk on my Substack. Scan the QR code. —Linda Romey, OSB

DUET

for Nathan Mitchell

Poet's note: *DUET* is a kind of poetic “mashup” – words of mine and Mary Oliver's and Thomas Merton's sliced and diced and pureed into a new creation.

Mary Oliver and Thomas Merton are hard at work inside my head.
The poet and the monk spinning words
of inspiration, insight, instinct
from head and heart
to hand and paper
across decades, across shelves of lovely musty books
from other decades, other centuries,
across curriculum and circumstance to land here in my hands.

Merton, with his seeds of contemplation,
Oliver, with her contemplation of seeds and geese and grass and stars,
both writing about the nothingness and everythingness that is beyond contemplation.

Mary, sometimes quite contrary, invites me to be, to let the soft animal of my body love what it loves.
Merton, my companion of many years, reminds me to breathe God's air.
Work, if you can, under God's sky.
The world – with its wild geese and clear pebbles of rain, with its poetry and church polemics – offers itself to my imagination.
How can you help but grow wise with such teachings as these?

I wonder, like the poet, what it is that I will accomplish today.
Our minds are like crows, Merton knows. They pick up everything
that glitters no matter how uncomfortable our nests get with all that metal in them.
My head is clanking.
In the distance a sparrow is singing over and over her serene and simple song.
On and on and on, the sparrow sings. Who knows maybe the stars sing, too.

I wonder what it is that I will accomplish today.

You do not have to be good, the poet comforts.
You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
How then do I become the word in the Word, the song in the sparrow?

True joy is found in the perfect willing of what we were made to will, the monk reflects.
The poet enters into herself in order to create.
The contemplative enters into God in order to be created.

So keep still and let God do some work.
Consider being such a quiet prayer.

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Guest poet
Kathy Felong
is a writer and
musician. She
holds a master's
in liturgical
studies from the
University of
Notre Dame.



Kathy is currently working on a collection of haiku and essays inspired by more than a dozen years of retreats in the hermitages at Mount St. Benedict Monastery.

From the archives:

Deaconess Tradition Revisited

by Katie Gordon

In 1994, two Erie Benedictines applied for the diaconate. This clipping from *The Mount* magazine (Vol. VII, 1994) tells the story:

In response to an announcement by the Diocese of Erie that it was actively recruiting candidates for the permanent diaconate program, two Benedictine Sisters of Erie requested application forms.

Although the diocese made it clear that only males who are at least 35 years old are eligible, the two sisters, Sister Marie Celine Bucholz and Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, applied because they believe that church tradition supports a female diaconate.

Women played a significant role in the Church community in apostolic times and, specifically, for six centuries the office of deaconess existed in the Western church. St. Paul's letters mention many women leaders, and in the letter to the Romans, Phoebe is referred to as a diakonos, a deaconess. In the Eastern church the office of deaconess expanded it included an ordination ceremony and existed into the 18th century.

Lumen Gentium, a Vatican II document, addressed the diaconate directly and stated that hands are imposed upon deacons "not unto the priesthood but unto a ministry of service," thereby making a clear distinction between these two ministries.

The diocese listed the following as some ministries of a deacon: assisting at mass, preaching homilies, heading up religious education programs, soup kitchens, food pantries and other parish-based ministries. We believe that opening the diaconate to women in the Roman rite, would not be a major break with the traditions of our church, but rather a support of them.

This is the tradition, the excerpt states. It is in the history and even in the job description that women can become deacons.

Icon written by Oblate Marcie Bircher



Sister Marie Celine, who died in 2011, was a lifelong teacher and one of the first women in the community to earn a graduate degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame in 1955, wrote to the Monsignor within days of seeing the announcement of the diocese seeking applicants:

Dear Monsignor Smith,

After reading the article in the Saturday TIMES (Weekender) re: recruits for deacons, I am happy to say that I believe I have the qualifications that you listed. The only one that puzzled me was that you were looking for "single and married men" to serve the Church. Certainly in this day and age you are not excluding women, are you?

I have served the Church for fifty years in various capacities: in fact, as a Benedictine woman, I have dedicated my entire life up to this point in direct service to the Church. As it was mentioned in the article which duties could not be performed by a deacon, I hasten to assure you that I have no desire to "consecrate the Eucharist, conduct a Mass (although I am quite familiar with conducting Communion services from 'start to finish'), or hear confessions." But, I believe I qualify for the other duties. I love the Catholic Church and hope that I may serve the people in this new ministry.

Also, since my community allowed me to study at the

University of Notre Dame where I received a Master's degree in theology, I could actually save you \$\$\$, but I would be happy to attend any education program that you would require.

Resume can be sent upon request.

I look forward with great interest to your reply.

Sincerely,

Sister Marie Celine Bucholz, OSB

Sister Rosanne also sent her letter within the week of announcement, and hers was sent on Emmaus Ministries letterhead, highlighting the direct work with the poor that she was committed to daily (and still is to this day at age 90).

Dear Monsignor Smith,

I am writing to request an application for the Permanent Diaconate Program. Presently I minister within Emmaus Ministries, at its Soup Kitchen and Pantry, as an advocate for women.

For the last nineteen years I have: participated in ministry to the sick and dying, worked with persons diagnosed with AIDS, done prison visiting, worked with people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, counseled and assisted battered and abused women and children, been involved with spiritual direction, and have been a hospital visitor.

Previous to this period, I spent twenty years as a teacher in the Diocese of Erie.

I seek the diaconate because I know that ordained deaconesses are a longtime part of the history of the Church and I believe that it would validate the ministries I am already performing and have been performing for nearly forty years within the Catholic Church.

Peace,

Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB

The Monsignor's response, also found in the archives, recognized their "sense of futility and frustration, possibly pain and hurt." Though he still underlined that canon law won't allow it and he isn't in a position to change it. He hints at "a more hopeful future," which has been a promise made by men in positions of clerical power in each decade that has passed since these letters were written.

Rather than wait for church documents to live into this "more hopeful future," how might Catholic women and all those marginalized by the institutional church because of their identity recognize they already are living the truth of their wholeness and Christian call? These reflections from the archives remind me that women have always been leaders in the church, serving the people of God rather than answering to the institution. Perhaps that is what Jesus would have done, too.

Pray with us as we recognize and call forth the gifts of women:

A Prayer for Monastic Vocations

Loving God,
we believe that Benedictine monasticism bears fruit for the world.

We are grateful for the witness of the Benedictine sisters among us.

May their faithfulness to the monastic way of life awaken women to the stirrings of the Spirit.

Bless others with the courage to accept the invitation to seek you in community through prayer and ministry.

May these seekers find fulfillment for the longing in their hearts: in communal life well-lived and in loving attention to the needs of your people.

May they be upheld as we are upheld by your constancy and steadfast love.

We ask this with confidence in your goodness and grace, now and evermore.
Amen.



Inclusive language psalter

The Erie Benedictine Liturgy of the Hours, *That God may be Glorified*, is presented in a five-week format that includes psalms and canticles for morning and evening praise. Language for humans and for God in the psalter is inclusive. Available at joanchittister.org or scan QR code.



First Peacemaker cohort completes a year in the monastery

In the last issue of *The Mount* we introduced the three women in the first Benedictine Peacemakers cohort. Even as we say good bye to Erin, Melissa, and Emily, we are preparing to welcome the 2026-27 cohort to the monastery. Such is the process of evolution: fluid, changing, and reinforcing what brings more life. Here we share with you a glimpse into the past year. Michelle Scully coordinates the program and the many networks of individuals and organizations that make it grow. Scan the QR code to learn more and to access the introductory article from last fall.



Melissa and a young guest in the family dining room at Emmaus soup kitchen.

"A highlight of my year at Mount St. Benedict Monastery was learning woodturning from Sister Audrey Steff. I am also glad I got to work for Emmaus Ministries, especially in the family dining room, where unlikely encounters make the way for Christ to be more closely known." —Melissa Pfeifer, Hays, KS



Erin gets a smile out of Sister Colette in the monastery's health care wing.

"Spending a year immersed in community with women is like no other! With the regular routine of monastic life, the support from friends made through my ministry work, and the love and care from all the sisters, I have been given space to explore and learn so much about myself." —Erin Falk, Buffalo, NY

The Benedictine Peacemakers Program is not only about the young women who live monastic life with us for a year. It is also about the communities in which they are immersed—the community of Benedictine sisters and oblates as well as the larger Erie community that the sisters have called home for 170 years.

Peacemakers share in responsibility for the tasks that keep monastic life running smoothly, working along sisters and engaging in different ways. The monastic formation program is designed so that some aspects are exclusively for the women in the program, some include sisters, and others are open to the larger Erie community, including oblates. The Peacemakers take a Benedictine presence into the ministries where they spend three days a week and bring new friends and coworkers back to the monastery, seeding new connections and networks for good.

The program also allows time and space for introspection. In addition to regular prayer with the monastic community, the Peacemakers have time each week for their own prayer and reflection. And, of course, time for fun and socializing is key for building healthy community.

As this issue of *The Mount* goes to press, we are preparing a farewell dinner and blessing for Emily, Erin, and Melissa—and thirty-five of their new friends and coworkers will be joining us at the monastery to bless them and send them on their way.



Emily takes some time for reflection in the woods.

"It's been a year of lovely new experiences and challenges living alongside Benedictine sisters. It lays a solid foundation for continued growth and whatever comes next." —Emily Brandt, Newton, KS

Prayer: a Conversation with God

Shared by Jean Wolbert, OSB

I'm back, God. I am sorry I don't visit with you enough. I've read that I should just sit and talk with you as with a friend. So here goes. This morning the Old Testament reading in *Give Us this Day* was from chapter 11 of the Book of Wisdom. It's one of my favorites. It says, "You overlook our sins for you love all things that you have made and loathe nothing you have made." Whew! I thank you for overlooking my failings.

Those words about how you love us give me great hope. But because I'm human, I look at some people and think, "Really? You love them?" But if me, why not them? What a learning. Pope Saint John XXIII must have been listening to you when he said, "See everything, overlook a great deal, improve a little."

I know I am here just to talk a bit with you and don't want to get into, "Give me, give me," but I could use some help in this area. I must overlook these grey hairs and accept that my body is changing and dying every second. I can't control the constant change. Benedict says, "Keep death daily before your eyes." So I guess I have to overlook the muscle twinges and everything else and look to improving my homeward journey to you....

I was here yesterday, God. And today I am wondering if I am like the Israelites that you brought out of Egypt. Am I trying to reset the past, wishing for what was important—the golden calves—of my younger years? Foolish of me to think that way, knowing you are the God of creativity, movement, and change. I want to stop and change channels. "Listen," Benedict says. So I try to be faithful to my spiritual reading in the hopes you will help it all come together in one great "Aha" moment that reminds me you have been here the whole time knocking at the door.

Then when I think things are going along well with our little chats, I read that in order to hear you I must be silent and forget about sharing, petitioning, and babbling! Ok, I tried this but the chatter in my head won't let me alone. I've read a lot about meditating and having a mantra, but it is very difficult. I want to trust that because you are a God of promise and possibility all will unfold in your time. So with Teilhard de Chardin, I will trust in your slow work. Thank you for listening to me.

Requiescant in Pace

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." — John 8:12

Sister Helen Heher, OSB

Perpetual Monastic Profession September 4, 1971
Died December 23, 2025



Sister Helen Heher was born September 4, 1944, the first of Joan (Fleckenstein) and Herbert Heher's six children. Growing up in Oil City she attended Catholic schools staffed by the Erie Benedictines. After high school graduation in 1962 she entered the community, making her final monastic profession on September 4, 1971.

Sister Helen taught in Catholic grade schools in Fryburg, Erie, and North East. In 1972 she became the activities coordinator and bookkeeper at John XXIII Home in Hermitage and in 1977 returned to Erie and became an administrative assistant at St. Benedict Academy. In 1984 she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Therapeutic Recreation from Villa Maria College.

From 1976 until 1985 Sister Helen was the Director of Glinodo Summer Camp and in 1986 she transitioned to Recreation Program Director at Glinodo Conference Center until 1992, creatively bringing children and adults into closer relationships with spirituality and nature. Sister Helen left Glinodo to serve as Wellness Coordinator for the Benedictine community until she retired in 2020. She offered creative opportunities for holistic well-being, and participated regularly in workshops and seminars on holistic health and self-development. She also served young people who were sentenced to community service by the Harborcreek Juvenile Court. Many of them grew to love her and the creative programs and projects she planned for them to fulfill their service. Sister Helen's artistic arrangements for special events and her creativity in liturgy inspired sisters and guests for decades. Throughout her sixty years in community Sister Helen regularly astounded and awed sisters and guests with her creative way of looking at the world.

Sister Patricia McGreevy, OSB

Perpetual Monastic Profession August 12, 1954
Died December 27, 2025



Sister Patricia McGreevy was born June 23, 1933, to Ina Marie (Russell) and Donald McGreevy in Oil City, Pennsylvania, one of twelve children. She entered the Benedictine Sisters at sixteen, continued her education at St. Benedict Academy, and made her final profession on August 12, 1954. Sister Patricia was a teacher in diocesan schools until 1976.

Sister Patricia held degrees from Erie's Mercyhurst College and the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, where she earned a Licentiate in Canon Law (JCL).

As one of few women who were canon lawyers at the time, Sister Patricia served in the Diocesan Tribunals of the Dioceses of Colorado Springs, Colorado (1981-1984), Erie (1991-1992), and Richmond, Virginia (1992-1995). In 1984 she was appointed Diocesan Chancellor in the newly erected Diocese of Colorado Springs, one of the first women religious to hold the position that had only recently opened to women and the laity. She later was the first woman religious to serve as chancellor in the Diocese of Dodge City, Kansas. Sister Patricia also served as a private canonical consultant to religious communities when canon law issues involving religious orders arose. She was a member of the Canon Law Society of America, the National Conference for Vicars of Religious, and the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators.

In her Benedictine community, Sister Patricia was on the monastic council for twenty-two years, including the years of renewal following Vatican II. She was a Chapter Delegate at the Federation of St. Scholastica renewal chapters. From 1976-1979 she was the first community archivist, putting in place the systems necessary to create a working archive. Sister Patricia also served as a formation director and as Human Development Director for the community.

Requiescant in Pace

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." — John 8:12

Sister Marlene Bertke, OSB

Perpetual Monastic Profession August 24, 1954
Died March 21, 2026



Sister Marlene Bertke was born in Covington, Kentucky, to Raymond and Margaret (Volkering) Bertke. After graduation in 1949 she entered the Benedictine Sisters of Covington, Kentucky, and earned a B.A. followed by an M.A. in mathematics. She taught elementary and high school in Catholic schools in the Covington Diocese until 1974 when she moved to Erie to become part of the Erie Benedictines' Pax Center, a Christian Community for Nonviolence that engaged in peace education and action for nuclear disarmament and other social issues. During this time Sister Marlene decided to become a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, transferring her vows in 1980.

She was a co-founder and leader of Benedictines for Peace (BFP), one of the originators of the Good Friday Peace Pilgrimage in 1980, and helped begin the Take Back the Site vigils in 1999, held at the site of violent deaths to "take back the site" for nonviolence.

Sister Marlene taught at St. Benedict Academy until 1980 then spent ten years as manager of Benet Press followed by four years at Pax Christi USA as publicity coordinator. She was associate director of the US Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism for seventeen years. From 1977-2013 Sister Marlene taught English as a second language in addition to her formal ministry and into her retirement in 2012.

Sister Marlene participated in various international delegations to Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mexico. The *Erie Times-News* named Sister Marlene "Person of the Year 2016" for her work in the peace movement. Marlene's passion was peace and justice; her love was gardening. A ripe tomato eaten right off the vine was one of her greatest delights. Others were camping, card playing, fishing, and time with friends and family.

Benedictines show up in solidarity and for justice



Benedictine sisters, oblates, and staff regularly participate in local vigils and protests in support of immigrants and in calls for justice. Benedictines for Peace, an organizer of many such efforts, "carries the ancient quest for peace into contemporary times. As the peace and justice outreach of the Erie Benedictine community, BFP members advocate for nonviolence, social change, and justice by direct action, prayer, and bearing witness."



Above, BFP coordinator Sister Anne McCarthy shares messaging with a photographer from Spotlight PA. She was interviewed by Spotlight

about local challenges to ICE detentions. Scan left QR code to sign up for the BFP email list, right QR code to read article.





Erie Benedictine Oblates

a monastic presence for today's world

Scan QR Code to learn more.



Oblate Co-Directors: Oblates Susan Jenczka and Darcy Johnson

Oblates in the monastic tradition: It's in the relationships

—an interview with Oblate Deni Howley

Moving through life, we often find ourselves absorbed in growing complexities. But under the daily, what holds us together and gives us direction and purpose? Benedict had an answer: relationships. Relationship with God, with ourselves, with others.

Oblate Deni Howley shares Benedict's insight. She came to Erie in the late 1970s—through a relationship with a friend and fellow student at Allegheny College—to teach at St. Benedict Academy. During the seven years she spent in Erie, she grounded herself in relationships that transcended time and geography as she lived the bulk of her career in other places. Now, as she always knew she would, Deni has returned to Erie in retirement. She shares some of her relationships with us. —Linda Romey, OSB

What started you down the road of this Benedictine “thing”?

I started teaching religion at SBA and I'm like, whoa, they (the Benedictine sisters) are bringing it all together. Super smart, competent women who were teaching young women to be super smart and competent and I thought, this is it: to be here. I eventually moved into the intentional Pax Center community and it was perfect—as a place to live in community and to be part of doing social justice with like-minded people.

What shaped your sense of justice?

I knew from very young that men were prioritized. My first memory of that was when I was eight. We were in Europe, (Deni's dad worked for an international company) and I was in a French class. The teacher was explaining personal pronouns: *il* for a man, *elle* for a woman. And in the

plural, *ils* for every group. And I asked, “What if you have a group of women, and one tiny baby boy? Is it still *ils*?” “Yes.” I knew right then that this was a messed-up situation. So in terms of social justice, it started with that.

And after you returned to the US...

My father came home from work the night Martin Luther King was killed. I remember him coming in from work, and I don't remember anything else, but I remember his face. And I thought, oh, who's Martin Luther King? I mean, I've never seen my father upset like that. But from then on, I read every book King had written, did every school paper on him. I became really grounded in the anti-poverty movement and all those things, and the issue of race—even though I lived in a primarily white community.

What drew you deeper into the Benedictine community?

For my senior thesis, through books and interviews, I researched why current prominent peacemakers like the Berrigans (Dan and Phil Berrigan were priests and peace activists) and the Catholic Worker community chose to “follow a path of discipleship.” Then I ended up



Singing praise in 1981 are (back) Sister Judith Bohn and Deni Howley. Front, Robert Wehrer and Sister Mary Alice Rettger.

living at Pax Center which was a mixed community, men and women, vowed and not vowed. It was about service and social justice in the world.

I became a Benedictine associate so I'd have a reason to show up at the parties! There was no official training at that time. We were all closely connected to the community, and it was just like, okay, we're starting this associate program. It gave us an official connection. Years later when the associates merged with the oblates, I was told that I was now an oblate. The name changed and I continued to show up in Erie at least every Easter. But it was the bonds, the friendship. Sometimes I think that gets overlooked.

This Benedictine community is extremely welcoming, and it is a charism that can't be minimized. And it is why people return. Because they're always welcomed.

So what is Benedictine community today and how do we sustain and grow it?

I do think you need a core of people who hold the place that others come to. At this point, I want to say vowed members, but maybe it's also people who are very strongly committed, who are fully in. And then other folks support that core, and they are supported by the core. It's mutual holding up of each other.

For me the whole point of Benedict's rule is how we're living the Beatitudes. How are we creating justice? How are we bringing the Christ message to the world, making it visible? The Benedictines are known in the city of Erie as being witnesses and women of action.

I'm here because I'm in love with the community. Relationships are key for Benedictines, including oblates, but sometimes I feel like we focus more on

structure than on relationships. We have to always work at the relationships, as Benedict taught, pulling people in.

And something else that excites me is that at the last two October Community weekends oblates and sisters have had



Deni today with her dog, Skylar.

real conversation about how we live our Benedictine lives. I thought, “The sisters finally asked us, invited us into the conversation.” That's growth in relationship.

Change is scary, but when you think about it, the community has already been through immense change and survived, survived well. The sisters can

trust themselves, because they were and are the ones we followed. We were so impressed with the hard work they did and how they loved us. Now we're doing some of the leading. It's scary and we're going to have to trust even when we don't have answers. We just can't stand still because the future will come with or without us.

Oblate Kelly Adamson recognized



Oblate Kelly Adamson has received the Rev. Charles Forsyth Award from the Catholic Campus Ministry Association. The annual CCMA

Awards recognize individuals who have made a profound impact on college campus ministry through their dedication, creativity, and commitment to fostering faith communities nationwide.

Kelly is Director of Faith Formation and Spiritual Accompaniment and leads the Campus Ministry Graduate Assistant Program at the University of Dayton.

Rooted in the Marianist charism and her commitment as a Benedictine oblate, Kelly's ministry reflects deep attentiveness to God's call and a desire to proclaim the Gospel with clarity and conviction.

Kelly's leadership extends nationally through her roles as co-chair of the Higher Education Coalition on Synodality, co-chair of the CCMA Certification Committee, and contributor to the Catholic Education Network Engaging and Resourcing Synodality (CENTERS). She is also a gifted preacher and presenter, and a member of Discerning Deacons.

“Kelly brings much richness to our Benedictine community,” said Sister Dianne Sabol, Benedictine Oblate liaison. “We are proud of Kelly's accomplishments but mostly, we just love her and are grateful she is a part of us.”

**Save the date:
Oblate Enrichment
Hybrid Session
Benedictine Sisters
of Erie Charism and
Corporate Commitment
September 19, 2026**

Oblate Leadership Team

The OLT is a six-member team designed to broaden leadership perspectives through listening and engaging the counsel, assistance, and gifts of the entire oblate community.

It is structured to maintain continuity while also allowing for new members to be brought on board. Three members are elected by the oblate community for staggered three-year terms. Three other members are appointed by the oblate co-directors. They meet quarterly and are instrumental in shaping new opportunities for formation and community engagement.

One of these members is an initiate who will serve a one-year term—because Benedict says that sometimes the Spirit speaks through the young, which in this case refers to young in Benedictine life rather than chronological age.

Thank you to outgoing OLT members

Oblate Kelly Adamson
Oblate Rose Anne Jesenovec
Initiate Ben Fitzgerald-Fye

2026 OLT Members

Initiate Mary Bojan
Oblate Cynthia Legin-Bucell
Oblate Jo Clarke
Oblate Mark Gorman
Oblate Deni Howley
Oblate Becky Spudich

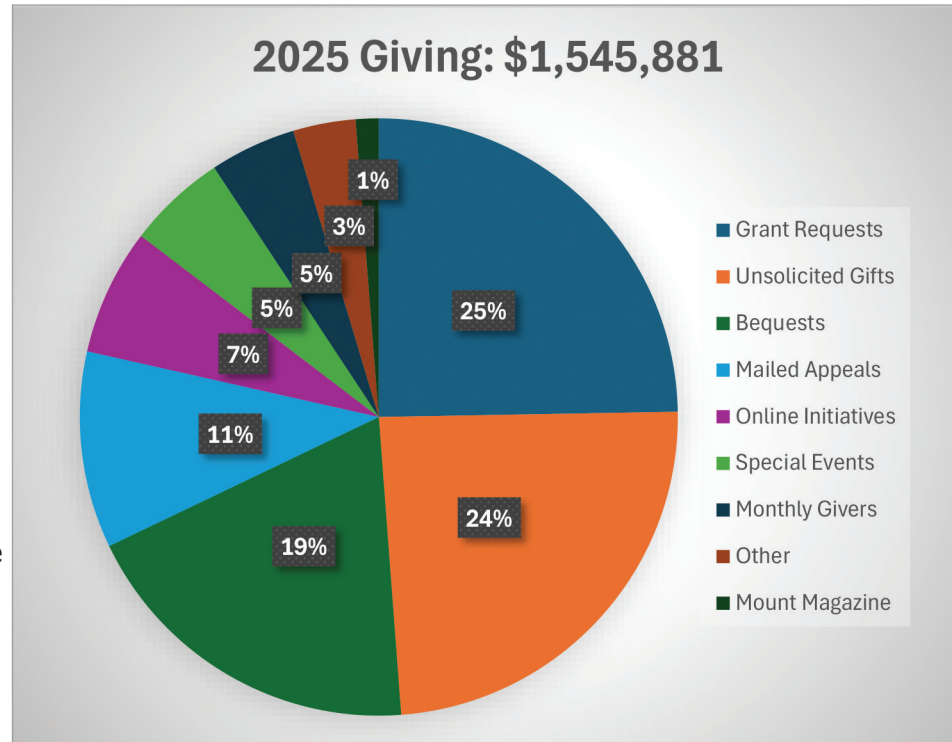
Requiescant in Pace

Carolyn Bain
Salem, VA
Died December 5, 2025
Kathy Petko
Buffalo, NY
Died March 6, 2026

The Gift of Community

Thank you to all who supported us in 2025!

We are thoughtful of the many ways our friends, families and benefactors came together in 2025 to support our Benedictine community. The gifts you gave strengthened our life of work and prayer. Let us share how our donors made an impact last year, how grant-funded projects brought our community together, and how upcoming events provide an opportunity to join us in friendship and joy. Last year, 2,358 donors made 5,246 gifts totaling \$1,545,881. Community doesn't only describe those in close proximity. Our community of donors live in forty-one U.S. states, Washington D.C., and Canada, France, and Great Britain.



Building community with legacy



Susan E. Bayliss Memorial Empowerment Fund

Susan Senger Bayliss, St. Benedict Academy Class of 1958, left a generous bequest to the Benedictine Sisters when she died in 2022. When she prepared her will in 2003, she chose to leave her legacy gift to support the educational efforts of the Benedictine Sisters. Even though SBA closed in 1988, Susan so valued the education she received, and the sisters who created the community that supported young women like herself, that she wanted to help the sisters offer education to others, albeit in different ways. Susan's generous bequest gift has established the Susan E. Bayliss Memorial Empowerment Fund. Her generosity will support educational efforts and programs of the Benedictine Sisters and their various ministries for years to come.

With a planned gift you support the Benedictine Sisters in a way that fits with your values and circumstances. Here are ways you can give:

Bequest in Your Will—Name the Benedictine Sisters of Erie as a beneficiary of your estate. This can be a specific dollar amount, a percentage, or the remainder after other obligations are met.

Beneficiary Designation—Add the sisters as a beneficiary on a retirement plan, IRA, life insurance policy, or bank account.

Gift of Appreciated Securities—Gifting appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds can provide tax advantages to you while making a meaningful impact to the life and work of the sisters.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)—If you are age 70½ or older, you can make gifts directly from your IRA to the Benedictine Sisters. These gifts count toward your **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** and can reduce your taxable income.



Every planned gift, large or small, strengthens our Benedictine impact. To learn more, contact: Michelle Basista, CFRE 814-899-0614 x2281 mbasista@eriebenedictines.org

Grants fund community, safety, and hospitality

Elevator repair and upgrade



The sisters completed an elevator upgrade project at the monastery in the fall of 2025. Most every component of the north elevator, with the exception of the elevator car, was replaced — including a new controller, pump, door operator, and associated electric components. Sisters, staff, visitors, and guests shared these comments: “I was the first one to take a ride when the elevator re-opened. It’s wonderful!” exclaimed Sister Therese. “Thank God the elevator is working again,” Sister Val said as she welcomed oblates arriving for the October Community Weekend. Oblates who traveled to Erie filled every guest room and having the elevator to get them and their luggage to the guest wing was important. “The elevator helps us care for our sisters,” Nurse Mary Rita said as she took lunch to our sisters on the second floor Lakeside health unit. “Isn’t it wonderful that the elevator works again! We’re so grateful – thank you!” said Sister Carolyn. Grants from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, an anonymous foundation, and the John M & Gertrude E Petersen Foundation funded the elevator project.

New convection oven

A grant from the Ray and Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust allowed the Benedictine sisters to replace the 30-year-old, unrepairable convection oven in the monastery kitchen with a new Vulcan double-deck convection oven.

A convection oven is a key appliance at the monastery because kitchen staff prepares three meals each day for about sixty sisters, staff, short-term visitors, and long-term guests. And then there are special events and celebrations where 100 or more persons are fed. For Thanksgiving alone our staff prepared eight 25-pound turkeys! What takes two hours in the regular oven takes thirty or forty minutes in the convection oven.

New emergency generator

Grant funds from Erie Insurance and an individual donor allowed the Benedictine sisters to purchase and install a new emergency generator for the St. Benedict Child Development Center. The Center is Erie’s first accredited early childcare facility and offers daycare, Head Start children’s programs, and infant care programs. The Center’s bilingual early childhood education opportunities serve a diverse population of families by nurturing the children in a safe, secure, and friendly educational environment. Replacing the emergency generator keeps emergency lighting available during an unexpected loss of power—keeping the children and staff members safe.

Upcoming opportunities to support our Benedictine community. See back cover for our anniversary fundraiser and other 170th anniversary events.

July 11 – Annual Draw prize winners selected. Winners posted on our website. Sign up to receive our e-newsletter.

Aug 10 – Mary Lou Kownacki Golf Tournament. Join us!

Aug 11 – Erie Gives Day. Give to Benedictine Sisters on Erie Gives Day and increase our matching funds.

Aug 22 – Goat Fest. Free and open to the public, come join us and the goats.

Dec 1 - #iGiveCatholic. Another chance to increase the value of your gift.



SAVE the DATES!

That in all things God may be glorified

National Association of Secretaries of State honors Benedictine Sisters of Erie

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) presented the Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award for political courage to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie for speaking out against false accusations of voter fraud and for promoting civic engagement during the 2024 election.

Sister Linda Romey, Coordinator of Communications and Development, accepted the award on Jan. 29, during the NASS 2026 Winter Conference in Washington, DC. The sisters were nominated by Pennsylvania Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt.

“In keeping with NASS’ own #TrustedInfo initiative, the sisters used their visible platform to urge all Americans to be discerning consumers of social media and to rely on trusted sources of election information,” Secretary Schmidt said. “I nominated them for this award because they are models of positive and constructive civic engagement.”

“Rooted in a long tradition of service to their community, the sisters remind us all that truth and compassion are essential to our democracy,” said NASS President and Mississippi Secretary of State Michael Watson.

The backstory as recounted by Stephanie Reid, Executive Deputy Secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of State: “Two weeks before the 2024 presidential election, when Pennsylvania was in the national spotlight, a social media influencer posted to X that a ballot chaser had gone to the sisters’ monastery, where 53 voters are registered, and found that no one lived there. His post – which included a video showing the names, ages, and alleged political ‘affinity’ of the nuns – was viewed more than 2.5 million times, drew 33,000 likes, and more than 13,000 comments. But the post was wrong. The sisters live in the monastery and have been serving and doing good work in the Erie area since 1856.

“As the post went viral, the sisters were inundated with support from the public. They received calls from more than 25 local, national, and international news organizations. As long-time educators and advocates for social justice, the sisters decided to use the situation as a teachable moment.”

Sister Linda thanked NASS for their work to uphold truth and integrity in these challenging times. She noted that hospitality is a primary Benedictine value, that “all guests are to be received as Christ,” and said that, “we did invite those who accused us of not living in the monastery to come to our home. We would have welcomed them and invited them to join us for prayer and dinner. In other words, we would have treated them as we treat all those who come to the monastery. It’s humanity 101. It’s love your neighbor. It’s work for the common good. It is what this country was built on, and it is what all of you at NASS work every day to uphold.”



Mississippi Secretary of State Michael Watson, current President of NASS for 2025-2026, Stephanie Reid, who serves as the Executive Deputy Secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of State, and Benedictine Sister Linda Romey.



Catholic Sisters Week 2026

Erie Benedictine oblates held a surprise gathering for the sisters at the monastery on March 8, the opening of Catholic Sisters Week. Oblates had created poster boards of messages expressing their gratitude for the sisters: “with great gratitude for who you are and what you do.” After reading the messages aloud, sisters and oblates shared a congratulatory cake. Development Associate Michelle Basista, CFRE, noted the important role this week plays in celebrating the sisters. “All throughout the year, Catholic sisters stand for justice, bring hope to the poor, and pray for peace. During Catholic Sisters Week, it is our chance to shine a light on their good works, and we thank sisters for how much they mean to all of us.”

That in all things God may be glorified

“Pieces of Peace” Art Show opens

The 2026 Women’s Art Show, “Pieces of Peace,” opened March 3. “This is one of the largest art shows we’ve curated, featuring over fifty pieces from forty-eight artists,” said Sister Margaret Pilewski, artist of the monastery and event organizer.

Artists included sisters, oblates, peacemakers, staff, and friends who worked in a wide variety of mediums: painting, photography, sewing, knitting, ceramics, woodturning, cross-stitch, and multimedia. The women in the Benedictine Peacemakers Program, Melissa, Emily, and Erin, assisted Sister Margaret Ann and Oblate Jo Clarke, who operate the Chapter 57 monastery gift shop and maintain the Chapter 57 Gallery, with hanging the show.



Sisters join Afghan Community celebration

Sister Jacqueline Sanchez-Small was asked to offer a few words at the Afghan Community of Erie celebration of Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. “The Benedictine Sisters came as immigrants to Erie 170 years ago,” she said. “Our early sisters knew the struggle of making a home in a foreign land. Today, we continue to support immigrants and welcome them to our city. We’re so grateful to be here tonight to share this meal with all of you.” The Afghan Community had invited friends and neighbors to join them for the celebratory dinner that included traditional dishes prepared by the community. Benedictine Sisters Sisters Jean Wolbert, Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, Valerie Luckey, and Linda Romey joined Jacqueline for the celebration. “We may follow different religions or faiths, but what matters most is that at the end of the day, we stand together, support one another, and show kindness and respect,” members of the Afghan Community told their guests.

Sister Jacqueline is a board member of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, and at her last meeting members discussed reaching out to Islamic communities as a sign of prayerful solidarity at the beginning of Ramadan. At her suggestion the Benedictines offered gift baskets to four local Muslim organizations including the Afghan Community. Sister Rosanne Loneck prepared special gift baskets.



Annual Benetwood dinner at the monastery

Sister Diane Rabe, administrator of the Benedictine community, welcomes thirty-five Benetwood residents, along with several staff and board members, who joined the sisters for dinner at the monastery in early May—the annual gathering to celebrate the special relationship of the two communities. The Benetwood Apartment complex was dedicated in 1981 on property adjacent to the monastery—it is a 74-unit HUD-sponsored complex. Sister Cindy Hoover, Benetwood Office Manager, shared a popular sentiment, “The Benetwood residents thoroughly enjoyed their time with the sisters. They are still talking about the food, but most of all about being with the sisters.”



Sisters Attend Tony Award-Winning *Suffs* Musical and WRAC Reception

A caravan of Erie Benedictines headed to Cleveland on February 15 to see the Tony Award-winning musical *Suffs* and attend a post-performance reception organized by the Woman Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC). The Erie Benedictines are members of WRAC, a new initiative that will house the archives of over seventy-five congregations of women religious in a state-of-the-art facility under construction in Cleveland. It was a fitting pairing as *Suffs* tells the history of the suffragists' rigorous effort to ratify the 19th Amendment and WRAC will make available the history of religious women who played a major role in the shaping of our country with little or no acclaim or recognition.

Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes observed how powerful it was to see what the suffragists endured in order to gain the right to vote for women, pointing out that we "have to remember the past in order to be grateful for it and move on to the future."



Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC)

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur addressed attendees and speaker Sister Susan Durkin, OSU, executive director of WRAC, acknowledged Erie Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, who had joined her sisters for the event, for her tireless work for women in the Church, comparing her to the suffragists whose story is told in *Suffs*. She is kneeling next to Sister Joan in the photo.

Good Friday Peace Pilgrimage

More than 100 silent pilgrims walked and prayed at eight Stations in this year's Good Friday Peace Pilgrimage with racism as their focus. Sister Valerie Luckey, Emily Brandt, with the Benedictine Peacemakers program, and Oblate Cheryl Ann Carter carried the cross between stations and offered liturgical movement. Benedictines for Peace sponsored the pilgrimage.



Preparing for display at Hagen History Center

The Benedictine Sisters will share their 170-year history in Erie in a display at the Hagen History Center this winter. In preparation for the exhibit, Benedictine archivists Sisters Theresa Zoky and Janet Goetz, Oblate Kathleen Pae, and Development Associate Michelle Basista toured the Center and the space that will hold their exhibit. "How do you encapsulate 170 years of history into a single room?" wondered Sister Janet. Helping the sisters answer that question are Steven Mooradian, processing archivist for the Center and Kathleen, who is an archival volunteer for the Hagen History Center. "We're looking forward to this opportunity to share who the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are with our city," said Sister Theresa. Michelle is coordinating the effort with the sisters.

Benedictines for Peace Oral History

Elaine Nadeau, archivist for the Congregation of St. Scholastica, of which the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are one of seventeen member monasteries, was in Erie to record stories for an oral history of Benedictines for Peace. Erie Benedictine Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, who died in January 2023, was a leader in the founding and early years of BFP. The movement came into being in 1980 following a weeklong peace witness at the Pentagon by Benedictine sisters during their 1,500th-anniversary celebration. Rooted in the monastic commitment to Pax, peace, BFP was created to transition from being merely peaceful to actively working for peace in society. Sisters from Erie have remained strong advocates for peace and justice. Sister Anne McCarthy is the current coordinator of BFP.

While at the monastery, Elaine conducted more than twenty interviews with sisters, oblates, and others to record their memories and stories of Benedictines for Peace. Many had journeyed to the Pentagon in 1980 and were present at the founding. In addition to the individual interviews, a general storytelling session was held at the monastery where about thirty-five persons gathered and shared memories of their experiences. Many had experience of the early days and others had more recent memories of BFP's growth from working against nuclear weapons and war to climate concerns and support of immigrants. One person's memories sparked or complemented those of another.



Sister Mary Ellen Plumb shares memories of the early days of Benedictines for Peace.

"The hope was that people would have fun sharing memories and at the same time get a bigger picture of BFP—and see themselves in it," said Sister Anne. "I think that happened." Scan the QR code to learn more about Benedictines for Peace.



Elaine is also the archivist at Mount St. Scholastica monastery in Atchison, Kansas. Sister Judith Sutera from the Atchison community traveled with Elaine, and many of her long-time friends in Erie were grateful to share some time with her.

Lent Monastery Tour and Vigil Prayer



About twenty guests toured the monastery then joined the community for dinner and the March 7 Lent Vigil where Sister Diane Cook offered reflections on the scripture parable of the woman at the well. The tour, which generally takes place twice a year, once in Advent and once in Lent, takes guests through four significant spaces in the monastery: the chapel, front parlor, the library, and the community/dining room where sisters share about the Benedictine life they have chosen to live. In the chapel, Sister Charlotte Zalot spoke about the sisters' prayer and liturgical life; Sister Mary Ellen Plumb addressed Benedictine hospitality in the front parlor; in the library, tour attendees learned about ministry and care for creation from Sisters Jacqueline Sanchez-Small and Judith Trambley; Sister Ann Hoffman spoke about the Benedictine vow of stability in the community room. Guests had the opportunity to visit Chapter 57, the monastery gift shop, and have an early look at the Women's Art Show that opened the next morning.

*That in all things
God may be glorified*



St. Benedict Academy
Alumnae Association
Newsletter
Summer 2026

"We'll always come to thee again, when alma mater calls."

With Friends We Never Can Forget
**ST. BENEDICT ACADEMY
OPEN HOUSE**
SUNDAY, JULY 26
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Celebrate 170 years of
the Benedictine Sisters
in Erie at our
SBA building on
East 10th Street!



SEE BACK COVER FOR MORE INFORMATION!



The **Class of 1982** gets together multiple times throughout the year. If any classmates from 1982 would like to be added to our contact list please email Sue Chase at skryp63@gmail.com



St. Benedict Academy: a legacy of women's empowerment

Class Reunions—let us know when your class is gathering and we will help you share the invitations! Email Iromey@eriebenedictines.org

Class of 1966 60th Reunion is June 6, 2026, at the Lake View Golf Club in North East. Contact Mary Joswig, mezjoswig@aol.com

Class of 1976 50th Reunion

The Class of 1976 is planning a 50th reunion on Saturday September 19, 2026, at Lake Shore Country Club in Erie. Classmates only for this reunion, Ladies! We'll have cocktails and hors d'oeuvres at 5:30 pm followed by dinner at 6:30 pm. Please email Nancy Szczytkowski Cross, ncross120@gmail.com, or Karen Kuchcinski Sonney, ksonney@roadrunner.com, if you or your group can offer a sponsorship for the hors d'oeuvres.

On Sunday, September 20, we will go to Mount St. Benedict Monastery for liturgy followed by coffee, sweet breads, and conversation with some of the sisters who taught at SBA. Help us spread the word, and please forward updates of emails or addresses. Let's make it the most attended reunion in our history!



SBA Spring Luncheon

The St. Benedict Academy Alumnae Spring Luncheon brought a banquet-room full of alum together to once again spend time with "friends we never can forget." In addition to reconnecting with friends and classmates, nearly fifty creative, generously-filled gift baskets were raffled to raise funds for the SBA Alumnae Association to support the Benedictine Sisters, their inner-city ministries, and provide scholarships for Catholic education for family members of SBA Alumnae.

Thank you to SBA Board members and Board co-chairs Darlene (Harkness) Kerstetter '82 and Valerie (Joint) Purzycki '88 who did a phenomenal job making sure the event was a success.

This year marks 170 years that the Benedictine Sisters have been in Erie and a special SBA event is part of the anniversary lineup. Michelle Basista of the Benedictine Sisters Development Office distributed save the date cards for the special St. Benedict Academy Open House on Sunday, July 26, from 1 – 4 pm in the former Academy building on East 10th Street, currently home to St. Benedict Education Center.

Musical entertainment was provided by a Benedictine Sisters' table and drumstick ensemble directed by Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot that included SBA Class of 1970 alum Dianne Sabol and Sisters Anne Wambach, Colleen Leathley, and Susan Doubet. We won't tell Villa girls that Villa alum, teacher, coach, and principal Sister Susan is an SBA alum wannabe!

When the sisters started drumming to the tune of Locomotion, alum Jane (Fuhrmann) Wagner, '79, started a Conga line that danced around the large ballroom—although the years have flown by, the spirit is as young as ever.



Alumnae enjoyed a photo op at the luncheon.

Alum legacy gift increases impact



Susan Senger Bayliss, '58, seated, approves the stage plans of her classmates. When Susan died in 2022, she left a generous gift that is now the Susan E. Bayliss Memorial Empowerment Fund to support educational efforts of the Benedictine Sisters. See page 24 to learn more about planned gifts and how they can help you continue to seed positive impact in our world.

In Erie? Have fun and and raise funds for the SBA Alumnae Association and Benedictine ministries

Put these dates on your calendar: July 11, September 13, and October 11. Bingos are held at the Polish Falcons, 431 East 3rd Street, Erie. Doors open at noon, bingo starts at 1 p.m. EXCEPT July 11 which is our Christmas in July event to benefit St. Benedict Child Development Center—bring a new toy for a child and receive a free bingo pack with your paid admission; doors open on July 11 at 5 pm and bingo begins at 6 pm. Food and drink are available for purchase at all bingos.

Let us pray for SBA alumnae who have passed into eternity.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Marlene Whitby Bowen '71 | Diane Paris Miller '65 |
| Clara Schwab '47 | Eileen Bundy Schaaf '41 |
| Patricia McGreevy, OSB '52 | Arlene Merski Rick '81 |
| Regina Orlovski Rutkowski '52 | Rita Kaveney Kaveney '63 |
| Rose Paszko Pastewka '46 | Suzanne Riddle Selleny '64 |
| Kathleen Kinem Koscielniak '70 | Helen Zimmerman '54 |
| Maureen Hunter Berarducci '59 | Simone Mish Dietz '58 |
| Rosemary Radziszewski Jorgenson '64 | Carol Witkowski Muse '67 |
| Catherine Winiarczyk Rieger '79 | Allene Schroeck Kraus '49 |
| Linda Wardzinski Cubbon '80 | Diane Gerlach Yeager '68 |
| Therese Schroeck Rhineberger '82 | Ann Marie Wildes '58 |
| Nancy Bardroff Cherry '74 | Marianne Coughlin Hetzel '61 |

Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery
6101 East Lake Road
Erie, PA 16511

<<title>> <<first_name>> <<last_name>> <<suffix>>
<<opt_line>> <<prof_title>>
<<address>>
<<address2>>
<<city>>, <<state>> <<zip>>

Please alert Heather Cloutier, Benedictine Sisters Development Office, of any address changes. Call 814-899-0614, ext. 2573, or email hcloutier@eriebenedictines.org. If you prefer not to receive a print copy of *The Mount*, please let Heather know. Current and past issues of *The Mount* are available on our website at eriebenedictines.org/good-work/mount-magazine.html.

Benedictine Sisters: 170 Years in Erie

In June, 1856, Mother Benedicta Riepp accompanied five Benedictine sisters from St. Marys, Pennsylvania, to Erie to establish a new foundation with the goal of teaching the children of German immigrants. It was the first community of women religious in Erie, and they settled next to St. Mary's Church on East 9th Street. Join us as our community celebrates 170 years in Erie this summer.

Liturgy at Mount St. Benedict Monastery

Sunday, June 14, 9:30 am

Celebrate a special Anniversary Liturgy (Sunday Mass) in the monastery chapel. Following the liturgy, we invite you to the dining room or back patio for coffee and sweet breads.

Open House at the Monastery

on the Feast of St. Benedict

Saturday, July 11, between 2 – 5 pm

Visit significant spaces of the monastery, enjoy refreshments, visit with sisters, and walk the beautiful grounds. Chapter 57, the monastery gift shop, will be open. We will pull the winners of our 2026 Annual Drawing at 4:30 in the dining room—tickets will still be available at the Open House. Stay for our Evening Praise at 5:30 pm in the chapel if you'd like.

St. Benedict Academy Open House

Sunday July 26, between 1 – 4 pm

Bring your family and friends to the former SBA building, 330 East 10th Street and walk the halls again. Celebrate the heritage that grounded SBA students in belief in themselves through education, faith, and community. Enjoy refreshments, sing along with the recording of *Encore '94*, and catch scenes from *Where Hope Is: Stories of Benedictine Influence*.



Mother Ignatia's Ban the Bootleggers Bash

Saturday, June 20, 6 – 9 pm

Mother Ignatia's Ban the Bootleggers Bash is a fundraiser hosted at Glinodo Center, 6270 E Lake Road, across from the monastery.

Our history involves bootleggers and the speakeasy they tried to run on our property—an incident so implausible that we decided to make it the core of the only fundraiser in our mix of anniversary commemorations. A \$40 ticket includes two drink tickets (local beer and wine), hors d'oeuvres prepared by the monastery kitchen staff, and a souvenir logo cup. Musical entertainment will be provided by Tennessee Backporch. Contact Michelle Basista, CFRE, for sponsorship opportunities: 814-899-0614, ext 2281, mbasista@eriebenedictines.org or download a sponsorship form or buy a ticket by scanning the QR code.



Scan the QR code for more information on each of these events.