People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
The talents of the design and printing departments of Printing Concepts, Inc., in Erie, have made this issue of The Mount affordable for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. This issue of The Mount is produced by Kathy Linse. The executive editor is Sister Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB.

Please help us to maintain an accurate mailing list and keep our costs down by contacting us with any change in mail or e-mail information. If you prefer not to receive The Mount please let us know. Send correspondence to:

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In the dead of night he suddenly beheld a flood of light shining down from above more brilliant than the sun, and... the whole world was gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light.

The Life and Miracles of Saint Benedict by Pope St. Gregory the Great, trans. by Odo J. Zimmermann, OSB and Benedict R. Avery, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Mn.

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“We must forge a future.”

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BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT
The Benedictine way is to seek God in the cenobitic life and to respond in prayer and ministry.
“Gratitude for the Past, Hope for the Future” was our constant refrain as we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Most of you know us for our special outreach to the poor and marginalized in Erie while others experience us nationally and internationally as defenders of peace wherever there is violence, as defenders of the global environment, or as champions of strong women of faith and courage, both in the Church and in public life. In past years we also ministered to thousands of young women and youth in our classrooms in Erie, Sharon, Oil City, Clarion and Fryburg. Although concentrated in Erie and Northwest Pennsylvania, our graduates are also found throughout the United States.

Now, as we embark on the next 150 years of ministry, we know that we must forge a future as a monastic community worthy of the past that our foremothers achieved. Not knowing what the future will bring, our goal during our jubilee year is to reenergize our community to cross new frontiers and meet unanticipated challenges. To achieve this goal we need your support.

Our first need is to renovate our monastery chapel, infirmary and living spaces. Mount St. Benedict Monastery serves as place of worship, prayer, and community for our members as well as over 1000 visitors a year. Although we continue to attract new permanent members and temporary Sisters attracted to Benedictine Life through the Benedicta Riepp Program, our community of 114 sisters, like our monastery building, is aging. This is our home where we nurture our spirit—the wellspring of our ministry. We need prayer, health care and living space that better serves the needs of our community in the 21st century.

Just as critical is the need for a “Ministry Fund” to assure the continuation of our ministry in its various forms. We believe that our community is called to be an agent of change to reach out effectively through ministry to help meet our world’s pressing needs in the 21st century and beyond. With this in mind, a portion of the funds raised have been dedicated to a “Futures Fund” to provide seed money for new ministry yet to be identified.

This is the first Capital Campaign Fund Drive of the Erie Benedictines since our monastery was constructed in the 1960s. As we celebrated the conclusion of our 150th Jubilee Year this past June, we invited all our supporters to join with us as we move forward with the public phase of the Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign.

Thankfully, we are pleased to report an overwhelming response. Almost half of our $9 million goal has already been pledged through the generosity of our benefactors. We have every confidence that our friends and supporters, both in Erie and throughout the world, will help us meet or exceed our goal.

Thank you for all that you do. Together, let us embrace our time as holy, our past as gift, and our future as blessing.

Christine Vladimiroff, OSB

Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie
A fundamental goal of the Planning Committee for the celebration of the anniversary of our founding was to plan each event, public and private, in such a way that it would be remembered as a joyful event, one that honored the past, celebrated the present, and gave us a glimpse of the community’s future. Each celebration was unique, one not more beautiful than another, but simply a very special moment in time, one to be shared with each other and our guests. We are deeply indebted to all who participated in the planning, prayed for its success of the jubilee year, and were able to join us on occasion.”

Sister Pat McGreevy, OSB, chair of the planning committee

Jubilee Year comes to a close

Sisters processed into the chapel at Mount St. Benedict Monastery on Sunday, June 25, for the liturgy marking the closing of their 150th anniversary Jubilee Year: Gratitude for the Past, Hope for the Future. The celebrant was Abbot Notker Wolf, OSB, abbot primate of the Benedictine Confederation and abbot of Sant Anselmo Monastery, Rome, Italy. Erie Roman Catholic Bishop Donald Trautman and Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, OSB, of St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pa., the oldest Benedictine abbey in the United States, were also present.

Special guests included 90 Benedictine Sisters from around the United States and Mexico, delegates to the Federation of St. Scholastica General Chapter, hosted by the Erie community June 19-25 at Gannon University, and five Benedictine prioresses from Tanzania, Namibia and South Africa.

Sister Laura Vallimont, OSB, prioress of St. Joseph Monastery, St. Marys, Pa. (left) thanks Erie Benedictine Prioress Sister Christine Vladimiroff for the gift of a candle made by Sister Susan Freitag, OSB, Erie. The candle holder was made by Sister Audrey Steff, OSB, with wood from Bavaria. The St. Marys presence represented the heritage that Mount St. Benedict monastery traces to Eichstätt, Bavaria and its founding community of St. Joseph Monastery.

Sister Jane Smith, OSB, prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago, the second foundation from Mount St. Benedict, with the gifts of a chalice and paten of Brother Thomas Bezanson’s porcelain ceramics.
Notker Wolf, OSB, an accomplished flautist, entertained the guests following dinner. He is accompanied at the piano by Sister Charlotte Zalot, OSB, assisted by Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB.

Guests were greeted by vibrant yellow and white streamers that added a festive air to the occasion as they fluttered in the June breeze.

A brass quintet once again accompanied the Benedictine Sisters schola in their singing of the Jubilee Year hymn “We Are Ready O God” for the processional.

Photos: Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, OSB

Sister Mary Catherine Wenstrup, OSB, prioress of St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, Ky., the first foundation of Mount St. Benedict, holds a chalice and paten. Shown with her is Sister Deborah Harmeling from Covington, an OSB delegate to the General Chapter held during the week before the close of the Jubilee Year.

PrioreSS Sister Christine Vladimiroff and Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pa., precede Bishop Donald Trautman, Diocese of Erie, and Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, OSB, who presided at the eucharistic liturgy which marked the closing of the Jubilee Year.
Our Needs for a New Century

This is our home where we nurture our spirit—the wellspring of our ministry.

We need prayer, health care and living space that better serves the needs of our community in the 21st century.
**Renovation of Monastery Properties**  ($5.5 Million)

While the monastery has been well maintained, major renovations are needed to bring the living facilities into the 21st century for our Sisters and visitors.

- Repair roof and replace windows
- Enlarge monastery residential rooms and install shared bathrooms
- Renovate front entry for accessibility
- Monastery assisted living renovation
  - Air conditioning
  - Call-bell system
  - Wider bedroom doors
- Renovate ministry buildings and Sisters’ residences

**Enhancing Our Worship and Prayer Space**  ($1.5 Million)

Several improvements are needed to provide a gathering space that meets the physical and spiritual needs of the community and our guests.

- Interior renovation of Chapel
  - Level the floor to improve accessibility
  - Upgrade HVAC and electrical systems
  - Reconfigure space in the monastic choir tradition
- Replace Chapel roof and ceiling
- Create a Blessed Sacrament Chapel for contemplative prayer and reflection
- Incorporate a significant water (baptismal) symbol

**Assuring the Future of Our Ministry**  ($2 Million)

- Create a fund to support current and future ministry
- Provide seed money for new ministry development

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The Benedictine way is to seek God in the cenobitic life and to respond in prayer and ministry.

**BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT**
The Benedictines provide the community with a model of action. They have continuously shown that social problems are not intractable and that a resolute community can overcome.

To know how important the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are to this area we need only to imagine what our community would be without them. Clearly we would not know, we would not realize: We have the power to change lives.

Actions speak louder than words, identifies the mission of the Benedictine Sisters. Their actions have aided and assisted so many in our community and have improved the quality of life for all of us.

Their actions have prompted so many in our city and region to join the Benedictine Sisters in making our community a better place to live and to work.

Judy Lynch
Erie County Executive
1982-2002

Joyce Savocchio
Mayor, City of Erie
1990-2002

It is with gratitude that we announce the honorary chairs of our Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign. We believe that women in leadership roles are dedicated to the common good. These two women have led lives of service in the civic community. We as Benedictine women are proud to call them friends.

FROM THE HONORARY CO-CHAIRS

The Benedictine Sisters in the Erie area challenge us to work with them to make Erie a more just society, a community in which all of its residents can prosper and grow. Through their leadership we have improved the lives and futures of inner-city children and youth through recreation, reading, art, music and entrepreneurial experience. The poorest among us are insured the food we need for daily survival and the elderly are provided necessary housing. Our single parents receive care-centered guidance towards a fuller life in the American mainstream.

The Benedictines have shown us that we can be better by doing better. Their work is proof that the community does not, and should not sit quietly, enduring what does not have to be endured. We call on everyone in the community to gratefully acknowledge the clarion role that the Benedictines have in our quest to move Erie towards its full potential and we ask every resident to support wholeheartedly this capital campaign.
Who Are We?

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie are a community of women who have accepted the call to be followers of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica.

We have lived and worked in Erie, Pennsylvania for 150 years.

We promise stability, obedience, and fidelity to the monastic way of life.

We are women of faith and action, dedicated to following the Benedictine way.

Our Outreach

Prayer & Spirituality  Empowerment of Women
Ministry to the Disadvantaged  World Peace & Disarmament
Stewardship of the Earth
After more than two years of community discussion, process and prayer the first major renovation project at the 36-year-old Mount St. Benedict Monastery has begun in the chapel. When it became apparent in the late 1990s that both the floor and ceiling of the original chapel needed major repair, the community decided to pursue additional renovations to better meet their worship and physical needs. These include leveling the steeply inclined floor, upgrading HVAC and electrical systems and reorienting the space in the monastic choir tradition. Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot, who holds a doctorate in liturgical studies, led the seven-member task force that guided the community through the many educational and design processes around the chapel project.

Sister Linda Romey, OSB, Web Keeper

Chapel Renovation

On Sunday, July 16th, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie bid farewell to the chapel as they knew it and began the last phase of the journey they had embarked on in the fall of 2003.

With nearly three years of planning as its foundation, the Mount Saint Benedict chapel renovation project got underway on July 17th. There was a flurry of activity. After rerouting the main entrance of the monastery to ground floor south, and setting up the Interim Chapel in the former ground floor Garden Room, all attention focused on the area designated for renovation and construction: the front foyer, chapel foyer, chapel proper and connecting hallways.
The first order of business was emptying the chapel. As soon as a hydraulic lift was able to wiggle its way into the space, work began in earnest. While pews were being unbolted and stacked, lights were being taken down and windows taken out. The sound system was dismantled and the piano and organ were squeezed through the doors for use in the interim Chapel.

In less than two weeks time the chapel was cleared of everything but the marble pieces: the altar, ambo and tabernacle pedestal. On Saturday, July 29th, the removal, organized by Tom Maciulewicz of North Coast Packing, was undertaken. The forklift shimmied its way into the chapel and workers from David Clark’s business, Hoffman’s Industrial Company, joined North Coast Packing to carefully extract the marble pieces and crate them for storage. Hoffman’s then moved the pieces to storage generously provided by Bill Witkowski of Port Erie Plastics.
In September, 2005, Hurricane Rita, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, wreaked havoc in the town of Cameron, Louisiana. With the help of Rose Graham, a former worker in the Catholic Charities office for the Diocese of Erie, Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Church in Cameron (Lake Charles Diocese), was named in need. The pews, light fixtures and ceiling fans of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery have been donated to this church whose interior was completely washed out. Although the town’s buildings were destroyed, the church was left standing with only the crucifix intact. Remarkably similar in design to Mount Saint Benedict chapel, it became very clear that Mount Saint Benedict’s chapel furnishings would be at home in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church.

Thanks to Fenton James and the JH Bennett Moving and Storage Company (which offered the Sisters a greatly reduced rate) the pews, lights and ceiling fans were carefully packed and loaded into a large moving van for transport to Louisiana.
And the journey begins...

The Chapel Project Task Force welcomed the start of construction with joy.

August 1 Construction Start Date

August 1st dawned sunny and hot. The construction area was sealed off in the monastery and fenced in outside. Carpeting was immediately peeled away and the ceilings bared. It wasn’t long before the floor was saw-cut and the jack-hammer began its work to break it up in preparation for leveling.

The transformation has begun. All are hopeful that in 10 months time, improvements that include a new roof and ceiling, a flattened floor and a reoriented worship space will become a reality.

Custom-designed liturgical furnishings, the addition of a Blessed Sacrament Chapel and Reconciliation Room, a commissioned water feature and a remodeled welcome center are just a few of the alterations that can be expected.
From the Director

The Class of 1961 will hold their 45th class reunion at the annual Alumnae Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 5, 2006 at the Avalon Hotel. Please call Judy Allison (814) 838-4938 or Heddy Hellmann (814) 454-0695 if you plan to attend. Table reservations will be made for classmates to sit together.

Speaking of reunions, we’d love to help! If you are planning a reunion, please contact me at the Alumnae Office, 814-899-0614, Ext. 2573.

We will provide you with a startup kit, mailing labels and a current class list. Please e-mail any information and photos taken at the event. We will post them on our Web site at ErieBenedictines.org.

— Ann Comstock, ’64
Alumnae Director

Let us pray...

For our sister alumnae who passed into eternity—

Marian Rastatter Haag ’32
Agnes C. Paluch Rohan ’36
Mary Cavanaugh ’40
Dorothy T. Ferrick Yurkiewicz ’48
Peggy Szorek Condry ’49
Nancy Snider Kelly ’49
Judith A. Gutowski Rosenberg ’57
Joan Kupniewski Brown ’60
Kathleen Bules Szewczykowski ’67
Lorraine Zmudzinski Wood ’67
Susan Fletcher Bayliss ’68
Susan Grafius Cassi ’74
Susan Ayers Kedzior ’74

Visit ErieBenedictines.org for event updates and to download sign-up forms, or send your e-mail address to Alumnae Director Ann Comstock at sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org to receive electronic reminders and sign-ups. If you don’t use e-mail, write to Ann at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 6101 E. Lake Rd., Erie, PA, 16511. And whenever you see or hear about SBA alumnae being honored or highlighted for their achievements, let us know. Clip an article, jot it down, or call us, so we can share the news with all our members.

Calendar of Events

Thursday, October 12
SBA Executive Board Meeting
Mount Saint Benedict Monastery

Tuesday, December 5
SBA Annual Christmas Party
Avalon Hotel
Alumnae Brunch

On Sunday, April 23, the annual Alumnae Communion Brunch was held at the Lawrence Park Golf Club. More than 80 women gathered to meet with friends while enjoying a wonderful brunch. At the event, $4,200 in scholarships for students attending Catholic schools for the 2006-2007 school year were awarded. Since 1991 the alumnae association has awarded approximately $34,000 in scholarships.

*This year’s winners were:*

**Katherine Titus**  
Granddaughter of Betty Jo Pruchniewski Marz ’47

**Kaitlyn Kooser**  
Granddaughter of Louise Lechner Kooser ’37

**Emily Smith**  
Granddaughter of Patricia Grugin Smith ’42

**Julie Marie Theiss**  
Daughter of Christina Sellency Theiss ’81

**Katelyn Kaveney**  
Daughter of Lori Dombrowski Kaveney ’80

**Andrew John Huzar**  
Nephew of Donna Huzar Whitford ’61

**Lindsey Friello**  
Grandniece of Marilyn Sanner Schwab ’49

**Rebecca R. Rossi**  
Granddaughter of Audrey Kuklinski Gallagher ’59

**Ethan Taraski**  
Grandson of Judith Ruland Burke ’57

**Julie Malinowski**  
Niece of Camille Malinowski Pakela ’59

**Lindsay Goddard**  
Niece of Janet Bulishak Frazer ’56

**Rebecca, Jayme & Justin Cooper**  
Grandniece & nephews of Gert Respecki Crynock ’41

**Kyle Bowden**  
Nephew of Eileen Bowden Cullen ’66

**Amelia Wisinski**  
Daughter of Diane Wisinski ’72

**Sarah Herrmann**  
Niece of Katherine Herrmann Straneva ’68

**Alexandra Buczynski**  
Granddaughter of Evelyn Ratkowski Buczynski ’55

**Laura Jankowski**  
Cousin of Dolores Jankowski Madura ’55

**Adam Murawski**  
Grandson of Lucille Gorny Murawski ’41

**The Cooper Kids**  
Grandchildren of Janet Respecki Benovic ’57

**Megan Falconer**  
Grandniece of Ruth Falconer Fox ’60

**Calvin & Sean Reed**  
Grandsons of Mary Alice Gorny Wilcynski ’54

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**Do you hear what I hear?**

**November 25, 2005, Warner Theatre, Erie, Pa.:**

Under the direction of Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, 147 SBA alumnae and Benedictine Sisters presented the “Christmas Gift of Peace” concert. It was a memorable event and a once-in-a-lifetime happening.

We are in the process of determining if there is the possibility of forming a new group of singers and are tentatively looking at the summer of 2007 before anything can begin. Eighty former members of the group are interested in singing together again.

Are any other alumnae members interested in joining the group? We would also welcome new members from your family and friends.

If you are interested, please contact Ann Comstock at 814-899-0614, Ext. 2573 or e-mail her at: sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org.

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**1936 was a very good year!**  
**Were you born then?**

If you are 70 ½ or older, own an IRA and would like to contribute to our Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign, the recently passed Pension Protection Act of 2006 can help you do just that. The act permits individuals to roll over $100,000 from an IRA directly to qualifying charities like The Benedictine Sisters of Erie without having to count the donation as taxable income. The provision is limited for tax years 2006 and 2007, so you need to act quickly.

If you are interested in making such a gift, please talk directly with your professional financial advisor and then call Jo Clarke, director of annual giving, at (814) 899-0614, Ext. 2281.  
(e-mail: joclarke@mtstbenedict.org)
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