And suddenly there was the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest.”

Luke 2:13
Home for the Holidays

Oh, there’s no place like home for the holidays,
‘Cause no matter how far away you roam
When you pine for the sunshine
Of a friendly face
For the holidays, you can’t beat
Home, sweet home.

Oh there’s no place like home
For the holidays, ‘cause no matter
How far away you roam
If you want to be happy in a million ways
For the holidays, you can’t beat
Home, sweet home.

A popular Christmas song; lyrics by Robert Allen, 1954.

Christmas always summons us home. For many it is the home of childhood. But maybe it is the first home of the newlyweds; perhaps it is the brand-new home of children – all grown up – making their homes for the very first time, inviting friends to share the wonder and excitement of the season. For some, it is living in the company of friends or the tranquility of a solitary lifestyle. For others, it might be adjusted living arrangements to accommodate needs in later years. For many, home is wherever they happen to be at Christmas. For still others, home is simply a peaceful thought and a place of comfort and joy in the heart.

In this issue of the Mount, we invite you into our home here at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. Along with all the joys of the holiday season we are also celebrating the renovations to the monastery, made possible by you, our many generous benefactors. Our Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign has been transformed into the wonderful generosity of gift. For this we are truly grateful.

In this Yuletide season of profound hope, charity and love, please know that through your support of our ministries many are having “home” for the holidays in some way that is very special and so very appreciated.

May the peace of the Christ Child grace you, your family and your home – wherever and however – that may be. Please know you are always welcome in our home, here at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
Luke, 2:10-11

BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT

The Benedictine way is to seek God in the cenobitic life and to respond in prayer and ministry.
The Advent weeks of anticipation stirred deeply in our hearts new hope and renewed longing for God's future for our world. As we look at our times we see suffering and poverty, war and hatred, but with the eyes of faith we must be able and willing to imagine new possibilities coming to be. Darkness will not engulf us, but will yield to light; war and violence will give way to peace; and the Earth as we know it will be renewed and restored. Isaiah tells us that we will “turn swords into plowshare” and even in the animal kingdom “the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.” These are our Advent dreams.

We are home for the holidays celebrating the gift of the profound mystery of the Incarnation – Christmas. The revelation is that God has chosen to be among us. It is not a celebration of a past event but one that transforms our present time. It is here in our world that we will encounter God today. It is in this life that we will see the face of God in the people we meet. God has taken the first step in offering us the grace available to all people who can hear and who will embrace the gift offered. We sense a universal good will during Christmas time. Human hearts soften as we greet each other with good wishes. We gather in family and with friends and our interactions are transformed. We are invited to let go of the status quo and to allow God to disrupt our lives, to break through our self-imposed limits and question our long-held assumptions.

On Christmas morning we open our gifts and celebrate with family and in community, but it is also a time of solidarity with those who are less fortunate. Christmas celebrates generosity, first the generosity of God then our generosity with one another. The birth of the baby is the source of joy for the poor and those who are scandalously forced to the fringes of Bethlehem and society. The downtrodden shepherds become the privileged ones to whom the message is announced. God’s gift finds a place among the outcasts and continues to dwell at home there. Christmas is a time when shepherds and kings meet in adoration and where the future of God’s justice dawns.

We need to be reminded that we are a part of the mystery that we celebrate. How can we show our solidarity with the poor, with those for whom the systems in place do not work? What gift can we give all year round that will bring God’s compassion and justice into the lives of those neglected by society? Our gift-giving to be authentic must be in how we relate and interact with others every day of the year. Hospitality to the immigrant, food for the hungry, companionship for the lonely, and reason to hope for those who live in quiet desperation — these are the gifts we can give. This is how Christ will be present in our time and breaking through to a future of peace and justice in this world.

The monastery is beautifully decorated and the Christmas melodies fill the chapel. We remember you, our friends, with deep gratitude for the gift that you are in our lives.

From the Prioress

Christmas celebrates generosity
The holiday season at our home, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, begins December 21st with a tree-trimming (and house-trimming) party. Three weeks of Christmas traditions, old and new, follow, ending January 11 with the liturgical feast of the Baptism of Jesus and the return to Ordinary Time.

The monastery serves as a place of worship, prayer and community for the Sisters as well as for more than 1,000 visitors each year. Here we invite you to visit the “heart” of our home – the chapel – in this story by Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB.

The chapel of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery was originally constructed in 1969. By 2003 it became clear that significant repairs were needed to provide a safe and accessible worship space. For more than three years the community engaged in a process that included discussion and decision-making. A major chapel renovation was undertaken and completed in 2007. The goal of this project was to design a chapel that would better serve the needs of the community and reflect a deepened understanding of liturgical theology and Benedictine monasticism. A sandstone “Blessing” Stone with a slate Benedictine Cross and the word

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The environment is appropriate when it is beautiful, when it is hospitable, and when it clearly invites and needs an assembly of people to complete it.

This space embraces us, enfolds us, draws us closer to each other. It strengthens the monastic heart of this community that welcomes the stranger as Christ.

-Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB
Prioress
PAX, a reminder of the Benedictine charism of peace, is located on the outside northwest corner of the chapel building. It marks the blessing date of April 29, 2007.

The renovated chapel has many new features. In the midst of those features is the familiar. Touches of the original chapel remain: the stained-glass windows; the statues of Mary and Joseph, now together in a special niche; the tabernacle and processional crucifix newly patinated to create an aged bronze finish; the Stations of the Cross positioned on the curved walls. Light, space, shape, proportion and texture support this combination of old and new to create a sacred space that is Benedictine in its truth, simplicity and beauty. This functional, yet flexible space, reflects the centrality of God in Benedictine life. It provides a spacious setting that allows the community to pray together, welcome guests to liturgical celebrations, and celebrate Benedictine and liturgical rituals with grace and dignity.

Main Monastery Entrance

Upon entering the monastery’s main entrance, through a recently enclosed carpeted walkway replete with paddle-operated doors, bench and railing, the first hint of the chapel is experienced in the welcome center. A newly designed receptionist desk, comfortable waiting area and spacious walk-in coat closet are indications that receiving the guest is important to Benedictines.

Special sensor-operated doors mark the entrance into the gathering space and chapel proper. The designed glass from the original chapel doors is encased in wooden frames and, together with significant yet simple metal door pulls, announces passage into sacred space.

Reconciliation Room

A designated Reconciliation Room is a new addition. It greets worshipers as they approach the main gathering space. This room, marked by a specially crafted wood door with significant door pull, stands as a reminder that all are called to be at peace with one another before gathering around the altar. The reconciliation screen is a weaving designed and fabricated by Sister Linda Romey, OSB.
GATHERING SPACE
An enlarged space for ritual gathering reiterates the Benedictine commitment to hospitality. It provides the entrance into the place of liturgical assembly and serves to bring the community together before worship. The openness, as well as the quality materials used to create warmth and welcome, contributes to its visual significance. Kiln-fired glass with a unique surface reminiscent of water creates a wall to divide the Gathering Space from the Welcome Center. The same glass provides the interior wall for the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL
Located next to the Reconciliation Room, directly adjacent to the Gathering Space, the Blessed Sacrament Chapel is a new addition. One enters by a center door. A large wood-framed clear glass pane with significant metal door pull makes a visual statement that this portal marks entry into an important space. This chapel, replete with eight chairs and two wall benches provides a quiet place for personal prayer and private devotion. The stained-glass windows, originally on the inside wall, were relocated to form the outside wall of this addition. The interior wall is made up of five panes of kiln-fired glass. It provides an opaqueness that helps create a sense of sacredness while allowing for some measure of privacy. The tabernacle for the reserved sacrament finds its home in this space. This tabernacle, which has held a place of reverence in the community for many years, has been refinished through patination to create an aged look. It rests on a pedestal reminiscent of the main altar and is connected to the other liturgical centers by its placement on the central axis around which the community gathers.

WATER SCULPTURE
Sculpted from Dakota granite with a flesh-color hue to give the piece a feeling of humanness, a sense of joy and a quality of warmth, the water sculpture is centrally placed in the gathering space. A tower of granite reflecting strength, stability and vigilance feeds into a basin situated in a solid base,
the undulating curves of which mirror the rhythm of life in the natural environment surrounding the monastery. Running water, flowing gently and inviting touch, serves as a reminder of the living waters of Baptism that offer salvation and refreshment to all.

**WORSHIP SPACE**

The main worship space reflects welcome in its desire to be accessible for all. A seating plan by which all can gather around the Word and Eucharist emphasizes the paradigm of community united in praise of God. Upholstered chairs add grace and comfort to the arrangement. The Benedictine community faces one another as they pray the daily hours in monastic choir. This arrangement, along with improved acoustics, enhances the prayer of the community. Chairs equipped with specially designed book racks allow for increased attentiveness to the *opus dei*.

The worship space is defined by curved walls and beams that encompass the area. The walls are clad with ceramic tile to create a feeling of lightness and add to the warmth created by the wood ceiling. The light color of the walls contributes to a visual silence that attunes all to the simplicity that is God. The now level floor is covered with porcelain tile under which in-floor radiant heat has been installed. A new HVAC system allows purified air to flow through the space. The stained-glass windows from the original chapel have been refurbished. Together with a clerestory that has been installed on the roof to supply natural light, a poetry of light has been created to allow an experience of God’s radiant presence. Electrical lighting is furnished by a series of pendant fixtures, along with can lights and spotlights that provide up-and-down lighting and various pre-set lighting schemes. The sound system speakers are housed in the center of the pendant fixtures to provide an even distribution of amplified sound and enhance the overall acoustics of the space.

The liturgical centers of ambo and altar are situated on the central axis of the chapel. Designed to create a sense of openness yet with a magnitude befitting their strength and symbolism, they are made of solid oak in two different shades. Meaningful proportions add to their simplicity. The scale and form of each piece invites all into the mystery inferred and allows their integration into the room in such a way that the space is made whole and complete as a result.

The music area at the west end of the worship space provides ample room for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie to continue their rich tradition of meaningful liturgy and quality music ministry.

The pathway from the worship space to the community dining room has been intentionally remodeled. The inclusion of windows to provide an abundance of light and a view to the garden, along with the continuation of the color scheme and materials used in the chapel proper, convey that this pathway from Table to table is a significant one.
Heritage of Hope Campaign Supporters Renew Our Home

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, home to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie since 1970, is being transformed to accommodate the ever-changing needs of our Sisters and our guests while focusing on simple design, energy efficiency and accessibility. With the completion of the Chapel Renovation in April 2007 our communal prayer and worship space was renewed. As part of our commitment to energy conservation, in August 2008 we began to install triple-pane, energy-efficient windows to replace 624 single-pane windows at the monastery. When the first snow and cold weather arrived in November we could feel the effects of the new windows – warmth without turning up the thermostat. By the end of January 2009 all of the monastery windows will be replaced.

In March 2008 we began the Sisters’ living space renovation with the demolition of the walls and one common bathroom on the second floor of the west wing. (Yes, we are proud to report that we, too, have a “West Wing” at our monastery). This project was our top priority as the Sisters requiring healthcare assistance needed to move into this space so that the current healthcare wing could be renovated next. During the course of this six-month project the area was transformed from approximately 120-square-foot bedrooms with one shared bathroom facility in the middle of the hallway to 12 bedrooms with private, accessible bathrooms of approximately 240 square-feet. Moving day on September 2 was filled with excitement as 12 Sisters, along with the furniture and all of their belongings, left the healthcare area (second floor north) to move into their temporary accommodations in the west wing. The Sister residents and the moving crew which included Sisters and staff shared in the joy of that day. Our Sisters with special healthcare needs were blessed to have renewed, safe and accessible accommodations. And we have the pictures to prove it!
The current phase of the Sisters’ Living Space Renovation, the first and second floor north (front of the monastery), began in June. The Sisters who resided there relocated to either the newly renovated west wing or our guest wing. The second floor is being updated to provide appropriate healthcare for our Sisters. Eleven new, accessible bedrooms and private bathrooms, a new call-bell system, a therapeutic bath tub, updated nurses’ station and a common room are the highlights of this project. The move-in date is planned for late January. The floor plan on the first floor was designed for our more active Sisters. Each bedroom will include a private bathroom and carpeting will be installed in the bedrooms and hallways. We anticipate moving into this area in late December or early January.
As of December 9, 2008

Campaign Goal: $9,000,000

Pledges Received: $8,407,024
Cash Received: $7,335,238
Outstanding Pledges: $1,071,786
Pledges needed to meet our goal: $592,976

93% of Goal

The Sisters could not have renewed our home without the help of the nearly 1,600 supporters of the Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign. We began the campaign in May 2005 with the hope that the monastery renovation project would become a reality. You have renewed our hope and our home. May the blessings of Christmas renew your hearts.

Northwest Savings Bank Erie Region President James E. Martin presents a check for $7,500 to Sister Diane Rabe, OSB, executive director of the Saint Benedict Child Development Center. The money is in support of the Ministry Fund of the Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign and is part of the Pennsylvania educational improvement tax-credit/pre-kindergarten scholarship program.

Did you know?
You can take advantage of a two-year extension of the IRA Rollover provision. This means if you were born in 1938 or earlier, are 70 ½ or older, own an IRA and would like to contribute to the Capital Campaign, you can do just that. President Bush recently extended this provision to make it retroactive to January 2008 and it will apply to gifts made from that date through December 31, 2009. The act permits individuals to rollover $100,000 from an IRA directly to qualifying charities without having to count the donation as taxable income. A married couple with separate IRAs could each give up to that amount.

If you have any questions on how to support the campaign, please call Sister Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, director of development and campaign director, at (814) 899-0614, Ext. 2409 (e-mail: srmaryjane@mtstbenedict.org) or Jo Clarke at Ext. 2281 (e-mail: joclarke@mtstbenedict.org)
As the shoppers rush home with their treasures

Home for the holidays often means Christmas gifts, hostess gifts, action toys for boys and dolls with curls for little girls. Sister Margaret Ann Pilewski, artist and manager of the gift shop at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, offers some shopping ideas here. You can tuck these away for Christmas 2009 – or anytime! Sister Placida Anheuser, OSB, at left, is in the shop to assist you on weekdays.

Every monastery has several components: Sisters, a chapel, a community and dining room, sleeping quarters, and a gift shop. Our monastery is no different. Chapter 57 is the monastery fine art gift shop located outside the dining room. The title of our shop comes from the rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 57 on the Artists of the Monastery. Benedict tells us that the artists are to practice their craft with humility and offer their goods at a price a little lower than the established rate so that all can enjoy the fruits of the artisans.

We are blessed with many talented Sisters and Oblates. Their art expresses their life journeys for art is the language of the soul. As you enter the gift shop, you may pass through the gallery which gives a hint of the work of the monastery artists. As you meander through the shop you will see photography, wood-turning, poetry, water colors, candles, music, stained-glass, jewelry, pottery and books written by our Sisters and Oblates. Gifts from El Salvador and the children of the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House are waiting on the shelves to be discovered and taken to a suitable home. The wonderful thing about this gift shop is that all purchases enable the continuation of the ministries of the Sisters. So when you purchase a gift for a loved one, you are actually giving twice. We do give thanks and praise for these artistic creations and we offer them so that you may gift others, too. In any season!
Benetwood Apartments is a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie that provides low-income housing to the elderly and physically disabled through the 75 apartments that have been open since September of 1981.

Here, Sister Patricia Hause, OSB, executive director, invites you to visit Benetwood.

Both the facility and the programs at Benetwood are designed to meet the physical, social and psychological needs of the residents.

The intent is to provide numerous opportunities which will enable the residents to have a meaningful living experience.

Activities within the facility and in the spacious outdoor areas surrounding it are developed with the inclusion of families and friends in mind. Benetwood is situated in a lovely rural area surrounded by trees and nature; Mount Saint Benedict Monastery is close by.

Benetwood offers the residents a setting where they can create a home within community and can be assured of optimum security in their later years.

Left to right (back) Margaret Johnson, Evelyn Dobrzynski, Sarah Stewart
Left to right (front) David Nass, Veronica Nass, Inez May
Our residents are Benetwood’s greatest source of public relations. They are quick to respond to anyone who asks about Benetwood and even those who don’t ask. They never hesitate to talk about the wonderful things that make them happy.

The decision to sell the home they have lived in for 40 or 50 years, downsize, and move into an apartment is often a hard and traumatic one. Once they do move in we often hear comments like “I am so glad I am here,” or “If I would have known how nice it would be I would have done it long ago!”

It doesn’t matter how many activities or amenities are in place, if the people aren’t happy none of it will matter. It is the residents who make Benetwood such a special place. They are welcoming and gracious to new residents who in a very short time will be called “friend” by many. There is a wonderful sense of community that exists among the residents.

The Benedictine hospitality is contagious and without a doubt it exists here. No one remains a stranger. The residents truly care about one another and that certainly makes our job easier.

If someone notices that they haven’t seen someone in a day or two they are at the office door asking us to please check on that person.

The residents have good times with each other. Whether it’s at one of our monthly birthday celebrations, playing cards or the Wii, tureen dinners, hot dog roasts or whatever, we have fun!

These generous and kindhearted people that are as happy to help us as we are to help them have a comfortable, happy home.
Sister Joanne Huether died on Thursday, July 31, 2008 at her home, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pa. She had endured the limitations of age and illness for many years, always as active as possible and always patient in her inabilities.

She was born in Sharon, Pa., a daughter of John and Eva Pfeiffer Huether. She was baptized Martha Lucia at St. Joseph Church in Sharon and attended the parish school.

She entered the novitiate of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on August 27, 1929, receiving the name Joanne. She made her first profession of monastic vows on August 27, 1930 and her final profession of monastic vows on August 21, 1933. Sister Joanne has celebrated her silver, golden and diamond anniversaries of profession. She was the oldest member of our community.

Sister Joanne was a graduate of Saint Benedict Academy, class of 1931, and received the Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from Villa Maria College, Erie. In addition, she studied for several summers at Pius X School of Music, Purchase, N.Y.; at the University of Pittsburgh and at Marygrove College, Monroe, Mich., where her subject was art education.

Sister Joanne was an elementary teacher for many years. She served at St. Joseph School, Oil City; St. Mary’s and Mount Calvary Schools, Erie; St. Joseph and Sacred Heart Schools, Sharon. In summers, she taught religion to children in Oil City, Sharon, West Middlesex, Coalport and at St. Mary’s, Sts. Peter and Paul and Mount Calvary parishes in Erie.

When time and infirmity made teaching impossible, Sister Joanne assisted the librarian at Mount Saint Benedict and began the ministry that she continued until recent weeks. Aware through her own frailty of the value of companionship, she telephoned and wrote to dozens of people who were troubled, ill, suffering losses and in need of the support of her prayers and gentle encouragement.

Although her strength decreased from year to year, her fidelity was exemplary: Blind and wheelchair bound, she nevertheless ministered as was possible and was unfailing in participation in our community’s daily prayer until the day before she died.

As well as her parents, Sister Joanne was preceded in death by four sisters: Josephine, Evelyn, Helen and Ann and three brothers: John, Edward and Robert.

She is survived by her Benedictine community and by her nieces and nephews.

Memorials may be made to Mount St. Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511.

This tribute was written by Sister Mary Ann Luke, OSB.
Sister Ellen Porter, OSB, died at her home, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pennsylvania, on August 22, 2008 after a long illness. She had celebrated her 60th birthday in July.

Ellen, a daughter of the late Alvin and Caryl Selinger Porter, was born in Pasadena, California. She was baptized in All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, and confirmed in St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Monrovia, California.

After high school in Monrovia, Sister Ellen completed an associate degree in nursing at Pasadena Community College, graduating with honors. She received the BA degree from California State University, again with honors, in 1986. She also studied psychology at the Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Ellen’s nursing career began at the Southern Inyo Hospital, Lone Pine, California, where she was part of the emergency services staff from 1971 to 1973. Since the tiny town of Lone Pine lies between Mt. Whitney and Death Valley, Ellen was able to hike and climb in places where the beauty of creation is especially vivid.

She also loved the beauty of the sea, and so she later lived and worked near it as a nurse in Monrovia and Ventura until 1983 when she served in pastoral ministry at St. Andrew’s Parish, St. John’s Regional Medical Center and, again as a nurse, at United Blood Services.

Sister Ellen came to Erie in 1995 for a retreat at the monastery. She stayed, to become a Roman Catholic and a member of our community, entering the novitiate on January 1, 2001. She made her initial monastic profession on January 1, 2001 and her perpetual monastic profession on January 22, 2005.

Ellen, a remarkable nurse, cared for sick and elderly Sisters and has been a staff member of the Alliance for International Monasticism. She was a published poet – her mother was also a writer – whose work reflects her search for God and her delight in the beauty of nature.

Preceded in death by her parents, Sister Ellen is survived by this Benedictine community and by her sister Caryn Porter of Hillsboro, Oregon; her niece, Valerie Robbins-Vickers and her grandniece, Grace, of Forest Grove, Oregon.

Memorials may be made to the Benedictine Sisters, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511.

This tribute was written by Sister Mary Ann Luke, OSB.
From the Director

“We'll always come to thee again, when Alma Mater calls”

How often have these words been sung over the years by the graduates of Saint Benedict Academy? Graduations, reunions, parties, picnics and brunches – these special occasions always end with the singing of the school song, with the repetition of that phrase. The Alumnae Association is now asking us to answer that call. Many of our members have told us that they are looking for ways to become involved in enriching the lives of others. Where better to look than to the numerous ministries of the Erie Benedictine Sisters? What a wonderful way to fulfill our Benedictine education by returning to the Sisters and volunteering our time and talents to assist them in their outreach to others.

When the directors of the local ministries run by the Sisters were asked if they wished to participate in our new volunteer program, their answer was a resounding YES! They told us of the many needs they have that could be met by alumnae volunteers. Their needs are varied. Time schedules are flexible and can be adjusted to individuals’ schedules. Some work can even be done in your home. We will be mailing a brochure outlining the ministries and the volunteer opportunities for each in January 2009. Watch the mail. Read the information and please, consider volunteering your time!

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.

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Miriam Kraus Shipley ’30
Sister Joanne Huether, OSB ’31
Adelaide Henry Roland ’35
Eleanor Baniszewski Dudzinski ’41
Mary Joan Gibbons Goodill ’43
Halina M. Radiszewski ’54
Fran Walczak Matusiak ’61
Audrey Marie Lorei Simpson ’61
Beverly Matz Manucci ’62
Ann Wally Miller ’62
Maryann Kurpiewski Stadter ’66
Geraldine Vomero ’87
Margaret “Margie” Malinski Huber
Margaret “Peggy” Arnold Patterson
Kathryn Sanner Smith
Birthday Girl(s)!

The SBA Class of 1966 collectively celebrated their “special” birthday on August 16 with birthday cake and song, a gift exchange and hours of catching up on news of each other over the years.

The grads came from near and far – Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Maryland, Georgia and Florida – for a fun-filled day at a lakeside cottage.

Seated: Chris Froehlich Tatalone, Cindy Orelski Hartman, Georgeann Kuklinski Antalek, Cynthia Patalita, Karen Hogenmiller Krahe, Gloria Thompson Glenn.
Row 2: Barb Gorski Orlemanski, Janice Madura Landers, Lynn Nietupski DiPlacido, Eileen Kraus-Dobratz, Kathleen Spiegel, Kitty Stepfany Bailey, Betty Jean Zimmerman Schessler, Char Kohler Antalek
Row 4: Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Maureen Moore Dodd, Carolyn Scypinski Thompson, Mary Margaret Pfister Joswig, Jan Winschel, Rita Michaels Nystrom, Sue Staszewski Wettiken, Eileen Bowden Cullen.
Missing from photo: Joan Dramble, Cathy Anderson, Carol Zausen Muchard, Kate Gorczycki Arkwright
Oblate Director Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, announces that on Saturday, October 25, men and women joined together to renew their commitment to the Erie Benedictines as Oblates. New Oblates made their initial commitment. The Oblates are men and women from all walks of society, from across the United States, and abroad with one common goal: to seek God through a life based on the Rule of Benedict and through a formal relationship with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

At 5:30 p.m. Vigil Prayer, the Oblates rededicated themselves to supporting the charism and corporate commitment of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. The Sisters blessed and welcomed the Oblates into a relationship of mutual support so that together there is a strong clear voice calling for the transformation of our world.

You can read reflections of seven people called to the Oblate way of life in the summer edition of the Mount magazine. Visit ErieBenedictines.org and see pages 23-25.

Oblate Commitment

Blest by God and this community we enter into a year of commitment with joy and expectation. We are empowered by the love of God to live more deeply the way of the Gospel and the Rule of Benedict. We understand the mutuality of our commitment with this community and we respond with trust and love. This relationship is grounded in hope; hope for the transformation of each other and ultimately the transformation of the world.

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Joy and expectation: Oblates renew and commit

The Oblates of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery are blessing and gift for the community and for the world. More than 200 Oblates, near and far, join us on the life-journey of seeking God. Living their lives following the Way of Benedict makes a difference among their families, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Because of who they are and how they live the world is a better place - one person at a time.

-Sister Marilyn

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During vocation presentations I am usually asked why I became a Sister. My response comes easily: I felt called to religious life; my family supported this call; the Sisters I knew enjoyed one another's company, were expert grade and high school teachers, welcomed everyone to the classroom, and extended themselves to students and parents; they prayed together three times a day and shared their love of the life.

Benedictine values meshed with the values I learned in my youth. Hopefully, today's young people can identify these same values learned in an entirely different milieu and culture. So the questions for me now are: Why would someone today become a Benedictine? Why do I stay a Benedictine?

Benedictines highly value communal prayer. I continue to value Benedictine communal prayer: It calls me to gather with Sisters I have come to know very well and who inspire me to reach out to the one next to me. Prayer encourages me to listen to what God is saying to me and to my community, in work situations, in personal and professional encounters, through prayer and meditative reading and contemplation. It challenges me to reinterpret ancient Psalms so that I may hear the voice of the poor, the unwanted and forgotten, and be joyful and thankful when I leave the chapel. It provides me with a defined time every day to spend praying with my community.

Benedictines highly value community. Today's youth are embedded into community at an early age: team sports, day care and early childhood education settings, religious education programs among children their age, parish-sponsored activities. Families with diverse nationalities gather at these events and encourage each other, offer advice, listen to the children and acknowledge their fears, challenge their interpretations and help broaden their viewpoints. College further enhances communal living with discussion groups, group projects, communal service activities and retreats. A sense of community is strengthened by technological advances that allow one to communicate virtually with anyone at anytime in any place. Because there is so much exposure to multicultural families and knowledge, the sense of community is much broader than the white Catholic experience of my youth.

Why have I maintained my commitment to the Erie Benedictine Sisters? Today I value community living because it is where I grow, learn to love more, have my rough edges knocked off, acknowledge my limitations and faults. My community is composed of people I love and people I have chosen to love; those I am naturally attracted to and those I respect despite differences of opinion because we have talked about these and understand a different perspective. Community is the people I come home to, who love me, listen to me and to whom I listen when the day has been long and hard or joyful and life-giving.

Benedictines highly value service to the local community. Children today are challenged to serve their communities starting in grade school and continuing throughout their education. Service projects and opportunities are numerous and varied; they extend far beyond the borders of school, local community, and national boundaries. I would venture to say that today's young adults have served in more countries than members of any previous generation other than possibly those who served in wars.

Service means so much more to me than teaching in a classroom. It means being professionally prepared, continuing to learn and stay updated so that I can be of genuine service to the patients and nursing students with whom I work. It means making quiet time to deepen the meaning and purpose of the service I offer. It means being attentive to how I can use my talents and gifts for my religious community, how I extend myself to the broader community and ways that I might serve internationally. It means as a community asking hard questions about the service we offer in the local community, do we have the resources to continue, do we see it as ministry or work, is there another need that we should be addressing?

Benedictines have always adapted to cultural changes. Prayer, living as a community and giving service are values that resonate in most human hearts. Whether or not one formally commits to professing and living these values, we each can practice them wherever we find ourselves. Hopefully, with God’s blessing, young people today will continue to live these values strongly into mature adulthood.
You are always welcome in our home, here at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.

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