To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose
under the heaven. . . .

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
“Memories light the corners of my mind.”

Do you remember that opening lyric of the theme song for the “The Way We Were,” the 1973 film starring Barbra Streisand and Robert Redford? The lyrics describe memories as scattered pictures, misty and water-colored.

In her final “From the Prioress” column, Sister Christine shares this quote as her time as prioress comes to an end: “There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning.” And so there is a time for every purpose under the heaven. She also, in “Beads of life strung together,” shares memories of her 12 years as prioress, some joyful, some sad.

Our seven Jubilarians certainly have memories, reflecting upon 25 and 50 years of religious life.

The passing of Sister Roseann Rice brought forth many fond memories of her quiet joy and gentle, kind presence.

The Saint Benedict Academy alumnae continue to reminisce and make new memories at their events.

“Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America,” is a traveling exhibit telling how Sisters played a vital role in shaping American life. What memories are to be found there in photographs and artifacts!

Of course, during the holy season of Lent, the Triduum is remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ. As Jesus instructed the apostles at the Last Supper: “Whenever you do this, do this in memory of me.”

As your life and your memories continue to unfold, like the petals on the cover, we hope they are mostly happy for “Happy memories become treasures in the heart. …” - Charlotte Davis Kasl

If we had the chance to do it all again
Tell me, would we?
Could we?
Memories may be beautiful and yet
What’s too painful to remember
We simply choose to forget.
So it’s the laughter
We will remember
Whenever we remember
The way we were.

© Sony Music
“There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning.” These words caught my attention because it is an apt description of my life at this moment, for something is ending and something is beginning. For the past 12 years my monastic journey has been to serve my Benedictine community as prioress. It has been an honor and a privilege to be at the service of the community in the ministry of leadership. On July 11, 2010, the community will bless another member of the community and call her forth as prioress.

Benedict in his Rule tells us that the prioress ‘holds the place of Christ in the monastery....’ (RB 2:2) It is a humbling and awesome responsibility. It is only possible with grace from God and the blessing of community. The prioress is asked to teach by word and more so by example. Benedict exhorts her “Let her strive to be loved rather than feared.” (RB 64:15) The Rule goes on to say that “She must arrange everything that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from.” (RB 64:19) These words of wisdom have been the content of my lectio divina over the years as prioress. Have I done it perfectly? No, at times I failed to live into Benedict’s ideal of a prioress but my community has been generous with forgiveness. Each day has been an opportunity to start over.

“May you live in interesting times.” This quotation is often attributed as an ancient Chinese curse, though its origin is unclear. There is no question that my years as prioress have been in interesting times. Times in which there were enormous challenges confronting the human community and religious life in particular. We continue to live in interesting times which are full of potential and possibilities and challenges and limitations. We must embrace the ambiguity and uncertainty of our times because these are the very places of possibility and potential. In all times and places, the deep spiritual call to those who embrace the following of Jesus is to respond to the future and the present that are mysterious and unsettling with faith, hope and love which are paradoxically, virtues for those willing to live in the tension of not knowing anything for sure.

Ellen Goodman, the retired American journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist for the Boston Globe, writing about “graceful exits” offered this: “It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, a relationship is over—and let it go. It means leaving what’s over without denying its validity or its past importance to our lives. It involves a sense of future, a belief that every exit line is an entry, that we are moving on, rather than out.”

**Something is ending and something is beginning and I welcome the adventure of moving on.**

I sincerely thank you, our friends, benefactors and Oblates for your loyalty and support during these past 12 years. It is with faith, hope and love that I move from being prioress and proudly carry the title community member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

From the Prioress

“**Something is ending and something is beginning**”

Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie
The Triduum: Is This Not A Mystery?

By Sister Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

Simply put, the word *triduum* means three days. The symbolic significance of the number three is rich and has come to represent completeness and balance. Think of the things often grouped in threes: past, present, future; mind, body, spirit; birth, life, death, to mention a few. Circle and cycle are not far from the images that may come to mind when we start to consider happenings in “threes.” We talk about the three blind mice, the three little pigs, the three bears. How many of us don’t wish that every holiday would fall on a Friday or a Monday to afford us that luxurious three-day weekend? And, of course, not to be forgotten is the notion that good or bad things, depending on mindset or attitude, have been said to come in threes.

It should be no surprise, then, that the pinnacle of the Christian liturgical year capitalizes on that number three by celebrating an event that takes place over three days. Yes, I did say “an” event. Essentially the Triduum is one liturgy that occurs within a period of three days. The Triduum needs to be viewed as one happening with several distinct moments. To isolate any one of the days can suggest that one is thought of as more important than the other. Each day is different, true, but difference does not equate to importance or lack thereof. Clearly, the Easter Vigil is the peak of the three days but not in such a way that the essential unity of the Triduum itself is obscured.

Not long ago I came across a phrase that gave me pause: “The Importance of Pre- and Post-.” In reflecting on that concept I began to realize that there is a pre- and a post-for just about everything. Consider the annual Super Bowl game. Admittedly, I am not a die-hard sports fan. However, I am savvy enough to know that although the pre-coverage and post-coverage of the long-anticipated Super Bowl are important, it is the game itself that is the highpoint. Or think about pre-natal and post-natal care. While the before and after care is clearly essential to the health and well-being of a newborn, the actual birth is the pinnacle moment. Such it is in the church’s liturgical year.

Everything leading up to and away from the Triduum is important. Every liturgy celebrates the paschal mystery but the Triduum is the culmination in which the memory of Christ’s death and Resurrection is kept in such a way so as to draw everyone into its mystery in the here and now. These three holy days are days of mystery and days of life. The Triduum celebrates the paschal mystery: the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Triduum celebrates the Christian’s incorporation into that mystery. A mystery is something that cannot be fully comprehended. However, for the Christian, mystery, and specifically the paschal mystery, is not meant to be something that simply engenders bewilderment. Rather, the paschal mystery, the great mystery of faith, is a sign of the God-life into which Christians are drawn by their very embrace of it.

From Holy Thursday evening through Easter Sunday, the Church celebrates the great mystery of faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Prepared by the days of Lent, Christians celebrate the mystery and wonder of God’s saving work fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
On Holy Thursday the Eucharist is celebrated and the faithful are reminded yet again that the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, are given as food to all who believe. Is this not a mystery? But it is a mystery that is understood as one enters into it, receives the gift and shares it in return. The message of Jesus is clear: “Do this in remembrance of me.” Eucharist is not simply about remembering, calling to mind; it is about re-membering, actively living and sharing the life of Christ over and over again.

Good Friday begins and the reality of Eucharist and community and loving service to one another dims in the shadow of the cross. On a day of fasting and quiet mourning, the Church recalls the death of Jesus by entering the Passion of Christ, embracing the cross with heartfelt reverence, receiving the sacrament of Christ’s love, and gaining strength from a deepened understanding of living and giving one’s life for others. Is this not a mystery? The cross on which Christ died has become the most common symbol of Christian faith. In its story, reason to hope is found. Its mystery is treasured, loved and valued because by the cross the most horrific pain and humiliation were transformed into something beyond imagination: the promise of eternal life.

Holy Saturday leads to the Easter Vigil. On this day of emptiness, of experiencing loss and realizing that life somehow does and must go on, the church prepares for the moment of great light in which Holy Thursday and Good Friday make sense. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ makes real the unique presence of Jesus that Eucharist makes possible; the Resurrection of Jesus Christ makes real what otherwise might be thought to be defeat on a cross. Is this not a mystery? In an array of symbols, rituals, and readings, faith in the mystery that gives meaning to death is celebrated and embraced. Darkness is overpowered by light; dryness is refreshed by living water. Gathered around word, font and table the Christian community proclaims the joy of Christ’s triumph over death. This is the night! Alleluias ring out loud and clear. Mystery is no longer bafflement; mystery is surprise. The paschal mystery gives paschal identity; the paschal mystery gives paschal promise: Christians will not die; Christians will live forever. Christ has shown victory over death!

Live in Christ and life will be yours; live in Christ and your suffering will be transformed; live in Christ and the essence of mystery will be a source of energy for you.

This is the night when vigiling shows the possibility of forever and the promise of tomorrow. Never again does loneliness have to prevail. Christ is risen!

Easter morning dawns; the rising sun shines its light on the entire world. The joy of Resurrection celebrated in the vigil overflows to mark this Sunday as the day of all days. The tomb of Christ, now empty of death, beckons us to spread the message: Christ is risen! Live in Christ and life will be yours; live in Christ and your suffering will be transformed; live in Christ and the essence of mystery will be a source of energy for you.

The three days of Triduum will soon be upon us. Here at Mount Saint Benedict the days will be rich in re-membering and celebrating the fulfillment of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in his Passion, death and Resurrection. Relationship with God, with one another in God, with the entire Christian community and the world will be renewed and strengthened. Faith will be shaped and reflected in ways that transform these relationships anew. A willingness to attend to the power of life in the midst of human suffering will be nurtured. Reawakened and revived we will set out, enflamed by Easter light and encouraged by Easter hope, to love as Jesus did. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love (1 Corinthians 2:9). Is this not a mystery? But as Albert Einstein once said: “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.” For the Christian, that “mysterious” is the paschal mystery, the promise of eternal life. Celebrate the Triduum. Believe that the mystery who is God will meet you where you are but not leave you where you were.” (paraphrase of a quote by Anne Lamott, author). Alleluia!
The life of a Benedictine Sister is centered on seeking God together with a community of women living a common life, guided by the Rule of Saint Benedict and a prioress, participating in the daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, serving others through ministry and hospitality. We strive to be the people Ellen Goodman describes in her quote. She would be in awe of the people who supported the Sisters and our ministries during the very financially challenging year of 2009. In the most difficult financial period that many of us in the United States have experienced in our lifetime, our 3,039 benefactors continued to share their financial resources in small and large ways.

Some contributed to our annual giving program to support our most urgent needs, others to support the Neighborhood Art House, Saint Benedict Child Development Center, Saint Benedict Community Center, St. Benedict Education Center and Benetwood Apartments. Many “took a chance” in our March Madness Draw while others donated to our Community of Life Program. In 2009 we were blessed by the unexpected generosity of our deceased friends who remembered us in their wills. Their gifts totaled nearly half of our development income. Truly these are people who make “one small difference after another.”

During the 2009 fiscal year we faced the same struggles that every family and individual faced—how to live within our means. We simply manage larger amount of money. Our 2009 operating expenses were lower than the previous year due to factors such as: a decrease in health insurance costs, taking advantage of 0% finance programs when purchasing automobiles, curtailing maintenance projects at the monastery during the renovation project, and a decrease in members’ personal expenses. We did see a rise in administrative expenses due to increased travel and in payroll expenses due to staff changes at the monastery.

On the positive side, our income increased in 2009 due to a number of factors. Overall development gifts increased when we received some one-time, extraordinary, restricted gifts—donations made for a specific purpose. Other income increases were the result of a growth in the investment of the retirement account. More positive news is in the category of investment activity where we realized a gain of $625,556. Although this did not offset our loss in 2008, it did improve our financial position.

Through this annual report we hope you can see that the Benedictine Sisters of Erie maintain sound fiscal practices and use your gifts responsibly. With the help of our supporters we can continue our more than 150 years of community life, prayer and ministry to the people of Erie and beyond. We are blessed to have you as friends.
As we complete our final annual report during the administration of our prioress, Sister Christine, we would like to acknowledge her support and the support of our respective staffs in helping to steward the resources of the community. We feel blessed to have had the opportunity to serve our community as treasurer over the past twelve years and development director over the past ten years. We are blessed to have met many of you in person, by phone or e-mail. In our daily service to our community we hope you see us as people who “struggle to make one small difference after another.”

Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB
Development Director

Diane Cook, OSB
Treasurer

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in your will.

A bequest will ensure that part of your estate will continue to benefit others through the work of the Sisters and be part of your own living legacy. Your attorney can advise you on how to include the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Inc. (our legal title) in your will.

For more information, please contact Sister Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, director of development: srmaryjane@mtstbenedict.org; (814) 899-0614, Ext. 2409 or Jo Clarke, director of annual giving: joclarke@mtstbenedict.org; Ext. 2281.

Development Income

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Benedictine Sisters of Erie

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Operating Expenses

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The Benedictine Sisters of Erie will recognize and celebrate the Jubilees of these Sisters during Evening Praise on Saturday, April 17.

Sister Mary Ann Luke, OSB, shares how these Sisters came to their vocation and the gift they have been to their Benedictine community, families, friends and more.

"Uphold me, O God, according to your word and I shall live, and do not fail me in my hope."

The Sisters sing this third verse of Psalm 119 when they renew their vows.

Psalm 119

I have no love for divided hearts. My love is for your law, O God. You are my shelter, my refuge. I hope in your word.

Leave me, all who do evil. I will keep God’s command.

Uphold me, O God, according to your word, and I shall live, and do not fail me in my hope.

You disown all who turn away from your law; they deceive only themselves. The wicked count as nothing.

I tremble before you, standing in awe of your decrees.
Jean Wolbert, OSB

Sister Jean is the daughter of Kenneth and the late Charlotte Reed Wolbert and the stepdaughter of Clare Somerville Wolbert. She is a native of St. Stephen Parish, Oil City, attended the parish school and is a graduate of St. Joseph High School, Oil City. She entered this community after high school graduation and made her perpetual monastic profession on August 18, 1964.

Her first degree, B.A. in elementary education from Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pa., prepared her for her years of teaching on the elementary and intermediate levels. Sister Jean served at St. Mary’s School, Erie; St. Joseph, Sharon; Immaculate Conception, Clarion; and St. Gregory, North East. At first she was a classroom teacher; later music was added to her schedule.

Like her father, Sister Jean has loved music all her life. She plays a number of instruments — her primary instrument is the flute — and earned a B.S. in music at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. She subsequently earned an M.A. in liturgy/theology from the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind.

Journals and the meetings of organizations such as the National Association of Pastoral Musicians and the Monastic Worship Forum widen and deepen her expertise consistently.

Sister Jean has been a music teacher in several schools: Immaculate Conception, Clarion; St. Michael, Fryburg; Sacred Heart, Erie (for 17 years) and at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. She is presently the community liturgist as she has been in the past. In this role, she is responsible for all liturgical functions at the monastery, that, is for planning, providing an appropriate environment, musicians and music, vestments, furnishings, candles, wine, worship aids, et al.

The liturgist is not only a musician but a scholar who needs organizational skills, a strong memory and patience. Jean uses these qualities all day, every day, dashing around the monastery, working at a dozen tasks at a time — until spring when she heads south briefly — to the beach.

The sum of these tasks and Sister Jean’s abilities are basic to the community’s liturgies.

Uphold me, O God, according to your word and I shall live.

And do not fail me in my hope.

Every Friday I look forward to praying this verse in Psalm 119 at Midday Praise. It reminds me of my profession when we sing it.

In 2008 when I was in Rome for the Benedictine Renewal Program — “Deepening Our Monastic Roots” — we visited Norcia (the home of Benedict and Scholastica). We went to St. Scholastica Church. While we were there we had a short prayer service at which we sang these words of profession. I was so uplifted that I was moved to tears, hardly able to sing.

This verse has rooted me in my monastic life.
Sister Karen (Patricia Ann) Kosin, daughter of Ann Bulishak Kosin and the late Frank Kosin, is a native of St. Hedwig Parish, Erie. She attended the parish elementary school and is a graduate of St. Benedict Academy. She entered this community soon after high school graduation and made her perpetual monastic profession on August 18, 1964.

Sister Karen received a B.A. in elementary education and history from Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pa. and later a M.Ed. in education with specialization in reading from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. She studied human biology at Clarion University of Pennsylvania with a National Science Foundation grant.

Over the years, Sister Karen taught in several parish schools including St. Mary’s School, Erie; St. Stephen School, Oil City; Sacred Heart School, Sharon; St. Gregory School, North East; and Immaculate Conception School, Clarion.

She has served as director of the Oblate program of the Benedictine Sisters and as a member of the Benetwood Apartment board of directors.

In 1988, Sister Karen joined the staff of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwestern Pennsylvania. She has served in a number of capacities there and is currently the product resource manager. Sister Karen’s concern for the hungry and her careful, meticulous approach to her work serve the food bank well as it depends, first, on strong commitment, then on accuracy in scheduling and distribution of food and material.

These are never in doubt. Sister Karen does her best in all ways without fail.

Each year all the liturgical services of Holy Week are profound spiritual experiences for me. Especially memorable was the first time I participated in the Good Friday seven-mile walk from the (St. Peter) Cathedral in Erie to Mount Saint Benedict. The meditations on the contemporary Stations of the Cross along with the silence and prayers during the walk helped me enter into the Passion of Christ that was especially meaningful.
Sister Miriam is the daughter of the late George and Mary Jane McMullen Pastrick. She attended St. Stephen School and St. Joseph High School, Oil City.

Sister Miriam entered this community after high school graduation and made her perpetual monastic profession on August 18, 1964. She received a B.A. in education from Mercyhurst College and taught at Sacred Heart School and Kennedy Christian High School in Sharon and Mount Calvary School in Erie. Sister Miriam received an M.A. in education from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and later studied at the University of Denver where she earned a doctorate in speech communication. Sister Miriam has taught at Penn State Erie - The Behrend College since 1981, with a short break at St. John’s University, Minn., in the mid 1980’s, after which she returned to Behrend in 1990 where she continues her ministry.

Sister Miriam is a born teacher, as well as an enthusiastic student. The academic world suits her and she is always concerned for the good of her students. They, in turn, find in her a person who genuinely likes them and is interested in their welfare.

Sister Miriam contributes to the life of the college in ways other than teaching. She has assisted the head librarian with acquisitions in her field; developed a communications course for engineering majors; and has assisted campus ministry.

In the monastery, Sister Miriam is an occasional piano accompanist at the Liturgy of the Hours and an inventive liturgy planner.

Although I have experienced several situations which created a profound memory of my Benedictine Sisterhood, let me tell you about one that is still vivid because it occurred only a short year ago. I had intimated to one of my classmates that I would be honored to present the invocation at our fiftieth class reunion. I did not receive any response; so thinking that someone already had the role, I forgot about it. Perhaps about five minutes before the dinner was to begin the chairperson asked me if I still wanted to pray the invocation. I almost declined, but the foolish rushing in syndrome overtook me. Any exact words of the blessing escape me, but the spirit of the prayer is still vibrant in my soul perhaps because without preaching I was graced with the ability to communicate in this prayer the transforming Benedictine values and the Vatican II spirit of the Church.

As I looked tenderly at my classmates and recalled stories of their conflicts with doctrinal demands of the church and issues with their high school pedagogues the prayer became a way of healing past grievances and an intense outpouring of positive spiritual energy to move into the future with compassionate hope. We prayed for gentleness of spirit and mutual forgiveness, we implored for mercy on the poor and suffering, we opened our hearts for our own conversion, and we danced an enthusiastic “Amen.” Something in the prayer that came from a loving energy far beyond my own touched us all because simultaneously with the final Amen the room echoed with a long and vibrant applause.

Amen, so be it, beloved classmates!
Sister Judith (Barbara Ann) Bohn is a child of St. Mary’s Parish in Erie. A daughter of the late John and Margaret Wasmund Bohn, she attended St. Mary’s School and St. Benedict Academy. After graduation, she took the first step into a new life as a Benedictine Sister of Erie. That process was completed when she made her perpetual monastic profession on August 18, 1964.

After earning a B.S. in elementary education at Mercyhurst College, Sister Judith served as an elementary teacher at St. Joseph School; Sharon, St. Michael, Fryburg; St. Stephen, Oil City; and St. Mary’s School, Erie. She was a member of the office staff at several schools: Venango Catholic High School, Oil City; St. Benedict Academy; St. Gregory, North East; and the East Coast Migrant Headstart Program. She has assisted in the health care of the Sisters and as a typist for the former Benet Press. But this jack-of-all-trades Sister outdid herself in the ’80s when she became a foster mother to very young babies who would be adopted when they were old enough and when a family was found for them.

At first, this seemed an odd combination – convent and babies. But before long it was obvious that these were fortunate babies. Sister Judith learned to take care of them from books and teachers at first and then through experience. The experience included howling in the night, crying when startled, shouting when hungry, and, when they became better acquainted – gurgles and greetings – requests for attention from their good friend. These children experienced, at a crucial time in their early development, love and care freely given. All their lives are better for it.

Sister Judith is presently a part of the business office staff at the monastery – the business office is important even in a monastery to pay the bills: groceries, heat, light, insurance, taxes – the usual list. And she still greets everyone who comes by with real joy.

In a conversation with my novice mistress many years ago, she asked me if there was a psalm that had a significant message for me. I responded that yes, I did. And it was Psalm 42 that begins “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.” This psalm has continued to give meaning to my religious life; from what I believed as a young Sister, that God was the only one I could long for and get to know more deeply through prayer and reading. But this idea really never satisfied my longing. As I matured, it was finding God in the people I served – the little ones that I taught, the older people I cared for as a nurse aide, the people I ministered to as a school secretary, the infants I nurtured through the years of my foster care ministry, and the many people I reach now in my present ministry in the business office.
Sister Audrey is the daughter of the late Joseph and Mary Ann Janosik Berdis and a native of Holy Family Parish in Erie where she was baptized. She attended the parish school and St. Benedict Academy.

Sister Audrey became a member of the School Sisters of Saint Francis in Pittsburgh and became a “collector of tools.” Her education has been ongoing. When the need for another tool arose, Audrey earned another degree. The list includes: B.S., education, Carlow College, Pittsburgh; M.S., education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; M.A., administration, University of Dayton, Ohio; M.S., counseling psychology, Gannon University, Erie, Pa.

For many years Sister Audrey served as elementary principal and teacher in the Pittsburgh and Erie dioceses, eventually returning to Erie to become principal of Holy Family School. For Sister Audrey, the changes of direction which finally led back to Erie, also led her to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. After some years of discernment, Sister Audrey transferred her vows from the School Sisters of Saint Francis to the Benedictine Sisters on November 18, 1995.

A change in ministry to become the director of Hope House for Women led to a focus on serving others through social services. She worked as a counselor at Mercy Center for Women and is currently service coordinator at Benetwood Apartments, all in Erie. She helps those who need the help to realize, first, what help they need and, then, how to get it. Assistance is only possible when those who need it are led to the sources of help by the advice of good counselors.

Sister Audrey has attended the meetings and conferences of several Benedictine organizations including the American Benedictine Academy, a scholarly organization. In 2005, she attended the Benedictine Renewal Program in Rome - a month of study and retreat focused on the Rule and life of Saint Benedict - sponsored by the Conference of Benedictine Priresses. Benedictine Sisters from around the world studied and toured landmarks of the early church and of the modern city.

She has returned to the Mount and Benetwood Apartments, moving forward in life with steady faith.

In my ministry with the poor of Erie, I found myself utterly delighted at God’s goodness each time a desperate need of one of our participants was met! This came in the form of a door bell ringing and someone would arrive with exactly what was needed by the resident at Hope House!

As the days turn into months and years, I marvel that God’s love and care for me has always been present in my life. I am elated when I experience a greater awareness of this reality or have an “aha” moment that directs me to the source of that gift.
Sister Mary Ann is a daughter of the late Charles and Geraldine Ish Luke and a native of St. Gregory Parish in North East, Pa.

She attended the local public schools and received a B.S. in chemistry and biology from Villa Maria College, Erie.

Sister Mary Ann taught at St. Benedict Academy, and then entered this Benedictine community for a short time. She is remembered as a serious teacher dedicated to instilling a lifelong love of science and nature in her students. Several members of the Benedictine community proudly remember her as a teacher who cared about her students and challenged them to use their full potential in their educational endeavors as well as in life.

She then worked in several commercial areas for some time and enjoyed travel in these years, especially in western North America, in the mountains and along the coast.

Sister Mary Ann returned to the community in 1984 and made her perpetual monastic profession on August 26, 1989. She was part of the staff of the Pax Christi USA national office when it moved to Erie and part of the staff of the Erie Community Food Bank in its earliest days.

More recently, she has been part of the administrative staff at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. She serves as a writer for the Mount magazine and uses her skill in composing our Sisters’ obituaries. Sister Mary Ann’s ability to capture the essence of a person’s life in a few sentences is truly a gift from God.

Sister Mary Ann is also known as the “Bird Keeper” for her care of our three pineapple conures (small parrots) which reside in the Sunset Room of the monastery.

For her, God is most clearly visible in nature and in the ways all creation interacts, from the incandescent mountains to the sparrows in the back yard at the monastery.

Abbess Fransziska Kloos, OSB, of our motherhouse, St. Walburg Abbey at Eichstätt, Germany, defined stability with uncommon clarity in a summary of the long history of St. Walburg where the Rule of Benedict has been lived since 1035 A.D. In 1633, threatened with expulsion from the monastery by a soldier of the invading Swedish army, one Sister responded, “Then kill me now!” And she and the community survived. In 2035, they will celebrate 1,000 years of fidelity to the Rule of Benedict.
Sister Margaret is a daughter of the late Edward and Eva Clark Zeller, and a native of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish, Rapid City, S.D.

She attended the parish schools and earned a B.A. in French at Mundelein College, Chicago; an M.A. in elementary education, with emphasis in social studies; and a second M.A. in learning disabilities at Clark College, Dubuque, Iowa. For a time, Sister Margaret was a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque.

She taught in Oregon, Illinois and Iowa. In Iowa she was an itinerant teacher, educational strategist and a special education consultant.

“Maggie “came to Erie and entered this community in 1984 and made her perpetual monastic profession on August 26, 1989. She was an early staff member and board member at the Erie Community Food Bank and taught at both St. Benedict and Villa Maria academies. For several years she was a member of the Glenwood Center staff.

Sister Margaret is now the community librarian and often assists with various retreat programs.

She is a knowledgeable librarian and a patient one. She can and will find anything in the library she is asked for; she is patient with those who do not return books promptly. She has selected a range of periodicals to suit most interests: Current social problems and ecology are well-covered as are the current U.S. political and economic situations. Journals of interest to Benedictines, liturgists, those interested in study of the Rule of Saint Benedict, and Scripture are available, as are the journals of several organizations. Particular writers are well-represented, e.g., Michael Casey, OCSO or Terence G. Kardong, OSB.

Even better, the library is a quiet and peaceful place because the librarian is a truly gentle person.

My most intense spiritual experience is the extravagant love of God I experience in and through this Benedictine community.
I am pondering my mother’s instructions from the time I was a little girl: “Look both ways when you cross the street.” I am at a crossroads and I am looking both ways. I am leaving the ministry of serving the community as prioress and I look back and collect the memories. Yet my eyes are intensely looking forward, scanning the horizon of the future. I am anxious and excited to discover what new things God will do in my life.

To remember is to gather all the memories of the past 12 years and sit around the fire in a family circle looking at old photos yellowed with age in the albums. The pictures in my mind are vivid and recapture not only the event but the emotion of what happened. There is a poem by Nancy Wood entitled “The Beads of Life.”

The space between events is where
Most of life is lived. Those half-remembered moments
Of joy or sadness, fear or disappointment, are merely
Beads of life strung together
To make one expanding necklace of experience.

My most precious memories of these years involve my Sisters. We celebrated each year of the fidelity of our Sisters in jubilees honoring 25, 50, 60 and 75 years of monastic profession in this community. The sum of these years would reach the thousands of years in the search for God. The jubilees called us to our own faithfulness and witnessed a Gospel way to a world adverse to commitment. I was honored as new women joined us to celebrate their decision to enter into the novitiate to discern their vocation as a Benedictine monastic. I also sat with women who struggled through years of uncertainty and discerned that their journey was to leave community as they sought another way of life. Their decisions brought a sense of loss and grieving for community. Yet, we rejoice that for a time we shared life. Our earnest hope is that they find happiness in their new life.

My greatest spiritual lessons were learned as I accompanied our Sisters in their illnesses. I saw such courage, strength and graced acceptance of God’s invitation into the paschal mystery. It put into perspective all the little things I worried about, that in reality did not matter in eternity. To stand by the deathbed of a Sister with the community members filling the room with song and prayer to help her move into God’s embrace is to believe deeply. We sing “Alleluia” because she is with God. It was her goal in monastic life.
My joyful memories are like some undiscovered gold and full of blessings as I pull them forward. We have the picnic time at our property, Glinodo, on Lake Erie; our community cruise and lunch on the Victorian Princess; all of us getting on a bus to see a Monet exhibition at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y. and then go out to dinner together. I am sure we were a spectacle as people saw us coming and heard our delight. There are the impromptu gatherings to celebrate the little and big things that come into our lives.

There have been the more public events. The 150th Jubilee of the arrival of this Benedictine monastic community to Erie was a yearlong commemoration of the legacy that we received and the blessings that accompanied us in our history. We sang hymns of joy and praise as we affirmed all the relationships that made this possible. The capital campaign, “Heritage of Hope” raised $9 million to renovate our chapel and living space and ensure the energy efficiency of our building and the on-going growth and strength of our ministry. We were overwhelmed with the generosity of people, and it is with a grateful heart that we pray in our renovated chapel and walk the halls of our living space each day and hold our benefactors in prayer with a thank you on our lips.

We recently hosted the St. John’s Bible Exhibit and literally thousands walked through our halls and came to the lectures and brought friends and family to spend time with God’s word and the beauty and truth of something that filled a person with awe. We joined our foremothers, who through the centuries, created in the monastery a space and silence for the guest whose soul hungered for God, the source of beauty and truth.

I was privileged to be a part of the national and international efforts of women religious as they articulated their identity in the church and the gift that each unique charism contributed to bring about God’s reign. Memories are rich in the exchange and sharing that occurred and the solidarity that was forged over the years.

The space between events is why
We go on living. The laughter of a child or
The sigh of wind in a canyon becomes the music
We gather one more bead of life.

Each season of life contains unique memories. I will treasure mine and take them out and savor the faces and words that will come back to me. They are the gift of these years with all of you. I will create the future with new dreams and many more beads of life.
Enthusiasm, anticipation and excitement filled the air in the monastery at the beginning of 2010 as 28 Sisters prepared to move into their newly renovated bedrooms. On Dec. 31st, the final phase of the monastery renovation—the Sisters’ living space first and second floors south—was officially completed. After three years of construction the noise and dust finally settled, the furniture and furnishings were moved in and quiet returned to our home.

January certainly marked new beginnings at the Mount. On the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6, the blessing of the monastery took on special significance as the community processed together to share in the blessing of the newly occupied south wing. The Sisters commented on the beauty, simplicity and spaciousness of the area, especially the Sisters on the second floor who now have a private bath. On the first floor, sinks were added to the bedrooms while the shared bath has been updated.

Sister Rosanne Loneck, OSB, moved into the monastery in 1990. Over the years she experienced the changing needs of the Sisters, especially noting safety concerns with lack of space in the bedrooms. Now everything has improved.
RENOVATION TIMELINE


2007-2008 SISTERS LIVING SPACE RENOVATION—2ND FLOOR WEST.

2008-2009 SISTERS LIVING SPACE RENOVATION—1ST AND 2ND FLOOR NORTH.

2009 SISTERS LIVING SPACE RENOVATION—
1ST AND 2ND FLOOR SOUTH.

“I am overjoyed and energized by my move into a new room,” she said. “It is wonderfully spacious! It provides space for prayer, reading and rest apart from an alcove for study, work and writing. With two windows there is additional light and scenery; larger closet space and the soundproofing provides a more quiet, serene and calming atmosphere.

“It is graced space for me to renew my spirit — mind, body and soul. I am extremely grateful!”

Sister Rosanne shares these reflections and gratitude on behalf of the all the Sisters who are enjoying their “graced space.” Our gratitude extends to our supporters of the Heritage of Hope Capital Campaign. Your sacrifice made the renewal of our monastery possible. May God who gifted you with a generous heart fill you with peace and with love.
The Leadership Conference of Women Religious has mounted a traveling exhibit on the rich history and contributions of Catholic Sisters in the United States. Through photographs, artifacts and documentary material drawn from the archives of many congregations, this exhibit, entitled “Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America,” tells how Sisters played a vital role in shaping American life from before the earliest days of the republic and throughout its history.

The exhibit is currently booked at the Smithsonian-International Gallery in Washington, D.C., through April 25. Closer to Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, the exhibit will be at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Beachwood, Ohio (near Cleveland) May 9-August 28.

Visit the Women & Spirit Web site at womenandspirit.org for a wealth of information about the exhibit, including a downloadable brochure, additional schedule and scenes from the opening in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is the association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States. Learn more at lcwr.org
Q: Who would travel to Rome on January 6th at the end of the Christmas season and in the middle of winter?

A: The planning committee for the CIB Symposium to be held at Sant’Anselmo in Rome September 8-15, 2010.

At least once every four years the CIB [International Communion (Gathering) of Benedictine Women] holds a symposium to achieve its purpose of promoting mutual support and exchange of ideas and experience among Benedictine women throughout the world. The 2010 symposium will provide an opportunity to enhance a worldwide network among Benedictine women through liturgy, prayer, ritual and reflection upon the theme: Benedictine Women: Witness of Hope. More than 100 Benedictine women will participate, representing 19 regions throughout all of the continents.

The symposium planning team began its work in 2009. The meeting in Rome provided an opportunity to “meet the people” who are instrumental in helping us arrange for the symposium and see the places where we will be living, meeting and visiting in Rome. The planning committee includes:

**Coordinators:** Sisters Christine Vladimiroff and Mary Jane Vergotz, Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

**Facilitators:** Sisters Jill McCorquodale and Patty Fawkner, Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of Saint Benedict, Australia.

**Liturgists:** Sisters Janine Mettling and Elaine Schroeder, Benedictine Sisters, St. Joseph, Minn.

*We will be reporting about the symposium in the next Mount magazine.*

*Front, from left:* Sisters Christine Vladimiroff, Patty Fawkner, Jill McCorquodale.

*Back:* Sisters Elaine Schroeder, Janine Mettling and Mary Jane Vergotz.
Sister Roseann Rice, OSB

Sister Roseann Rice, OSB, died at her home, Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pa., on February 13, 2010, after a long illness.

A daughter of the late William and Marie Rowder Rice, Sister Roseann was a native of Battle Creek, Michigan. She was baptized Sarah Ann – Sally – at St. Philip Church and attended public schools in Battle Creek. After graduation, she worked for a time as a Michigan Bell telephone operator. At that time, operators still actually made connections, spoke with callers and assisted them in many ways. She enjoyed that aspect of her job especially.

Sister Roseann, having developed an interest in religious life, began to explore various communities. She heard of the Benedictine Sisters at St. Marys, Pa., and visited them. Sister Roseann moved to Northwestern Pennsylvania, became more and more familiar with the community and entered it on December 29, 1959. Sister Roseann made her final profession of Benedictine vows on August 29, 1964.

She devoted the following years to ministry at Kaul Memorial Hospital and at Elk County Christian High School in St. Marys. As she worked, prayed and learned more and more, she began more and more to discern her call to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

Sister Roseann saw a foundational community in St. Marys and, in the Erie community, an opportunity to “continue on in my journey with new ways and new expressions.” She completed her transfer to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on October 29, 1989.

She ministered at Saint Mary’s Home and Saint Benedict Education Center and at Mount Saint Benedict in Erie until she became ill.

Sister Roseann has borne years of illness without complaint, without impatience. She has endured the suffering of these years with the same gentleness and calm, the same grace that she showed us before her illness. We are enriched by her membership in this Benedictine community.

Preceded in death by her parents, Sister Roseann is survived by her Benedictine community and by her good friends Linda, Monica and Harry Wilson of Russell, Pa.

Memorials may be made to Benedictine Sisters of Erie, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511.

This tribute was written by Sister Mary Ann Luke, OSB.
“We’ll always come to thee again, when Alma Mater calls”

SBA 2010 Events:

**Annual Communion Brunch** – Sunday April 11. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery followed by brunch at 11 a.m. at Lawrence Park Golf Course Country Club.

**Spring Night at the Races** – Thursday, May 13 at Presque Isle Downs. Buffet dinner in the Club House.

**Annual Summer Picnic** – Thursday, June 24 at Mount Saint Benedict.

**Summer Reunion** – Classes ’89, ’90 and ’91 – Saturday, July 24 at Mount Saint Benedict.

**Annual Christmas Party** – Tuesday, December 7 at the Ambassador Conference Center.

MAIL CALL!

We need your e-mail address in order to complete class lists for reunion purposes. Please send it, including your first, maiden, last name and class year to Ann Comstock. sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Barbara DeHarde DuShole ’34
Jean Nash Buchanan ’39
Rosemary Pitzer Heintz ’39
Helen Scheffner Kennerknecht ’42
Rita M. Lorenowski Coy ’43
Genevieve Taccone ’44
Kathryn Ennis Zillman ’44
Martha G. “Marcy” Lorei Blackmond ’49
Rosemarie Senger Kirk ’49
Patricia Cleaver Curry ’52
Helen Ropelewski ’55
Barbara Zysk Miller ’56
Carol Neyman Olson ’59
Barbara Sutula Baltes ’58
Mary Ann Callahan Niedzielski ’59
Maxine Kaminski Kaveney ’64
Rebecca Shade Bolmanski ’84

Reunions

Back row, from left: Audrey Kuklinski Gallagher, Patty Benecki Straub, Pat Maksimowski Buczynski, Karen Richards Shrum, Marcia Windsor Allshouse, Diane Baniszewski Valahovic

Front: Carol Madras Hilbrich and Bonnie Kinsinger (left to right)

Memories old and new

The SBA Class of 1959 celebrated their 50th reunion the weekend of September 19th and 20th. On Saturday, 56 classmates gathered for dinner at the Erie Yacht Club and on Sunday they gathered to celebrate Mass at the Mount, followed by brunch, also at the Mount. Many traveled from as far away as Florida, Colorado and California. Cameras were flashing, and laughter rang through the room as old memories were recalled and new memories were made. It was clear that as the years go by, old friends become more valuable and important in all of our lives. The Reunion Committee had a great time getting together to plan the weekend and were very pleased with the turnout and the wonderful camaraderie that was felt by all. - Pat Benecki Straub ’59

Visit [ErieBenedictines.org](http://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.
We had a holly jolly Christmas!

The 2009 SBA Christmas Party was held December 1 at the Avalon Hotel. A total of 403 alumnae members attended! Thanks to your generosity, $3,810 was raised from the Basket Raffle for the Saint Benedict Child Development Center and the 50-50 drawing raised $708 to be used for this year’s scholarship fund for Catholic Education. Thank you for your faithful attendance at this yearly event and your extreme generosity.

Thanks to the help of Kathy Kutz ’65, Jo Clarke and Sister Susan Freitag, OSB, many of the classes attending were able to gather for class pictures. Each alumna received a copy of her class picture. We present them here for all who were unable to attend.
Helping Hands
Program Update
Volunteers are needed to:

**Benetwood Apartments**
- Help residents with computer skills (classes or one-on-one); to do arts and crafts with residents or a short-term exercise program (2 or 3 weeks).

  **Sister Pat Hause**
  641 Troupe Road, Harborcreek, PA 16421
  (814) 899-0088
  benetwood@neohio.twcbc.com

**St. Benedict Community Center**
- Cover for staff members (over lunch/for a few hours in afternoon); helping host groups, answering phone, performing opening/closing procedures.

  **Sister Dianne Sabol**
  320 E. 10th St., Erie, PA 16503
  (814) 459-2406
  iluv2kayak@earthlink.net

**St. Benedict Education Center**
- Be a computer lab aide several hours per week; a sewing instructor, also a tutor/mentor for refugee population several hours per week.

  **Sister Miriam Mashank**
  330 E. 10th St., Erie, PA 16503
  (814) 452-4072, Ext. 234
  mmashank@stben.org

**House of Healing**
- Help sort donations; act as a receptionist for phone/door.

  **Sister Stephanie Schmidt**
  146 W. 25th St., Erie, PA 16502
  (814) 480-8738
  director@houseofhealing-erie.org

**Mount Saint Benedict Wellness Program**
- Assist in running the Healing Drum Program.

  **Sister Helen Heher**
  Mount Saint Benedict
  6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511
  (814) 899-0614, Ext. 2403
  wellness@mtstbenedict.org

**Emmaus Ministries**
- Form a team to bake and deliver desserts (30 dozen cookies or 200 pieces of cake, brownies, etc.) one day a month to the Soup Kitchen; form a team to cook and serve at Kids Café (4 to 5 persons)
  1:30 – 4 p.m.

  **Sister Mary Miller**
  Margaret Kloecker
  345 E. 9th St., Erie, PA 16503
  (814) 459-8349
  kloecker@earthlink.net

**The Inner-City Neighborhood Art House**
- Act as a receptionist 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (Feb. – May); read for Hooked on Books Summer Program noon to 12:35 p.m. (June 28 – July 29).

  **Sister Anne Wambach**
  201 E. 10th St., Erie, PA 16503
  (814) 455-5508
  annewosb@yahoo.com

**Lake Erie-Allegheny Earth Force**
- Maintain database; a half day or more to help with general office tasks (mailings, photocopying, collating, restoring program materials after use). Half day or more per week.

  **Sister Annette Marshall**
  **Sister Pat Lupo**
  LEA Earth Force
  301 Peninsula Drive Ste. 5, Erie, PA 16505
  (814) 835-8069
  amarshall@lea.earthforce.org
  plupo@lea.earthforce.org

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News of Note
Rosalie (Czulewicz) Stolinski Siciliano ’59 has published “Stormy Waters,” a book on conquering grief. It has been described as “taking readers from the edge of darkness to the light of hope” and is based on her experience of the unexpected passing of her husband. You can read more about it at stormywatersbook.com. It is available in bookstores everywhere.
It’s keen to be green!

Can you guess what we’re up to now?

You will recall from our 2009 spring issue of the Mount magazine that our friends at Printing Concepts, Inc. provide us with print products that are Sustainable Forest Initiative Certified.

The forest certification standard is based on principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and forests with exceptional conservation value.

In order to continue to be good stewards and keep in touch with you, we are beginning a transition to some paperless communication. Namely, we have begun to send news, announcements and inspirational messages electronically.

Do we have your current e-mail address? We’d love to keep you informed about the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Please help us by sending your e-mail address to joclarker@mtstbenedict.org and you won’t miss a thing!

As always, if you receive duplicate magazines or no longer wish to receive mailings from us, please let us know. The easiest way to update your information is by e-mail. Send updates to Ann Comstock at sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org or call her at (814) 899-0614, Ext. 2573.