The Path of Life

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

From the Prioress

Benedictine Life as a Path of Life

Ongoing Formation

Celebrating Jubilees along the Path of Life

In memoriam

Corporate Commitment and Charism

Awards

Announcements

Accomplishments

Working for Sustainability

Money in the Monastery:

A Path to a New World

(Annual Report)

Taking the Electronic Pathway

SBA Alum

Back Cover

“Theodore”

The Path of Life

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

The path of life or the path to life? Of or to? Ummm isn’t the path of life also a path to life? I have been pondering this for some time and have concluded that either preposition conveys the message that The Mount attempts to capture: how the Benedictine Sisters of Erie follow a path that is life-giving, a path that leads to Life. It is at heart a path of life.

In this issue you will read how Benedictine Monasticism can be, has been, and is a path of life. Embracing some form of Benedictinism can uncover those aspects of being that have not yet found expression in living. It can provide the opportunity to discover the life that wants to live through each one of us in a meaningful way; it can animate the desire for spirituality; it can satisfy the longing for community; it can inspire the care of creation; it can fill the yearning for peace.

Everyone has the right to choose their path of life. It is at once a singular privilege and sacred responsibility – an occasion to imagine possibility, to think creatively, to be guided by vision and goals. It is our hope that The Mount will allow you to explore the path of life through the eyes, experiences and commitment of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. As we reflected on the path of life we came to realize, not only what it can give to us, but what we can give to it. Maybe our path of life has as much to offer you as it does us. As you browse through this magazine, I invite you to take time to contemplate and be grateful for your path of life. Perhaps you will find a story, an idea, a word, or a phrase that guides you and encourages you to make the choices that will give your life a new or different intention and value, passion and purpose.

May you come to know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path that leads to life.

Your ways make known to us, O God; Teach us your paths. Guide us in your truth – Psalm 25: 4-5

Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB

BENEDICTINE CHARISM STATEMENT

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

Reflection on the Path of Life

God, you will show me the path of life and fill me with joy in your presence. —Psalm 16:11

“The path of life” is a rich phrase in our Scriptures and a common metaphor in many spiritual writings. I’d like to share with you a tangible path that gives me great joy and nourishes my spiritual path.

If you ever happen to visit the monastery and decide to explore the grounds, you can cross East Lake Road and enter an extension of our property announced by the sign “Glinodo Center.”

Right around the first curve in the road is a large hill, perfect for winter sledding. Marking an opening in the woods across from the hill is a wood-burned sign that reads “Kraus Path.” Named for longtime Glinodo administrator and former prioress, Sister Mary Margaret Kraus, Kraus Path is the entrance to another world for me.

It winds along Seven-Mile Creek on its way to Lake Erie with protruding shale layers, small waterfalls and deeper ponds. Footprints along the path let us know that the walk-on only fishing signs posted at the entrance are heeded, as many fisher men and women use the path, especially in summer. We almost always meet some of them and hopefully ask, “Catching anything today?”

Soon the path opens to a wide, low area that is one of the best places for environmental education or for quiet reflection. In late summer, when the creek is low, this area makes it tempting to try and cross over without getting too wet. Of course, we’ve seen deer fly from one side of the creek, down through the water, and up onto the other side without hesitation!

The berry bushes become quite thick through the summer and tend to overrun the path if we don’t clip them regularly. These bushes, which run nearly the entire length of the creek, have the most delicious berries we enjoy as we walk. When we take buckets we pick enough to add to our sisters’ morning breakfast or to sprinkle on ice cream.

Next we come to a long metal bridge that takes us over the creek to an undeveloped section of our land. Right past the bridge is a sharp turn in the path. Here we get the longest view of the creek—in two directions. It makes this location the site of magnificent photo opportunities in all four seasons.

The last section of Kraus Path is my favorite—it’s where you’ll find a set of tree identification plaques courtesy of an Eagle Scout project a few years ago and the most wildflowers, including countless jack-in-the-pulpits. It leads to the largest waterfall, one that spans the entire width of the creek, and to the deepest hollow—a sure spot to meet our neighbors fishing.

Emerging from the path, at its end, we pass through evergreen trees that we knew as small saplings, now standing 20 feet tall. The lakefront awaits us with its views of sometimes calm waters, sometimes ocean-like waves, and always sea gulls, ducks, geese, an occasional blue heron and once in awhile, an eagle—all visiting from Presque Isle State Park, which is just five miles away.

Kraus Path is one of the most important paths in my life. It renews me in body, mind and spirit. I experience God, self and others and I am in awe of the created world I find there. I have only joy and gratitude in my heart for its beauty and gifts.

I hope you have a “Kraus Path” in your life—a path “in which you can walk with love and reverence” (Henry David Thoreau). May it be a path that gives you pause, that gives you energy, that gives you peace.

Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters of Erie
Benedictine Life as a Path of Life

By Linda Romey, OSB in conjunction with Marilyn Schauble, OSB and Stephanie Schmidt, OSB

The Benedictine life is about seeking God in community; about living life well with others according to the teachings of the Rule of Benedict. Living in a monastery is one way to do that. But there are other ways in which this 1,500 year-old wisdom tradition can shape the lives of many seekers without the requirement of permanent membership in a monastery.

The Erie Benedictines have long worked to share Benedictine spirituality, to make it accessible to women and men in any walk of life. Those associated with the community share in the core of monastic life: prayer, community and ministry. They are invited to support the community's commitment to reaching out to the marginalized and working for justice and nonviolence, living sustainably and ongoing formation.

Length of commitment may differ, living situations vary, intensity of involvement may fluctuate but the core remains the same: whether one chooses to be a permanent member, an oblate of the Erie Benedictines, a participant in the Benedicta Riepp Program or an online Monasteries of the Heart member, the desire to seek God in community is what draws people to Benedictine spirituality. The particular vision of this monastic community, its many inner-city ministries, vibrant liturgies, hospitality and outreach on behalf of justice and peace is what brings people to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

**Permanent Members**

The face of permanent members of monastic communities has changed over the centuries. In our time many people seeking permanent membership are professional women who long for a life that follows the Gospel of Jesus. They come from varied backgrounds and share the common desire to seek God and change the world.

A woman interested in permanent membership comes to know the community and in the process discerns her vocation. At some point she moves into the monastery to begin living the communal life of prayer and ministry. She participates fully in the life of the community and learns the community history, its vision and values and must decide at every step of the way if she shares those values and wants to continue the formation process.

Perpetual monastic profession comes only after five to six years of fully immersing herself in community life and passing through stages of formation that move the individual deeper into her own soul and also deeper into the heart of the world.

Contact Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, Vocation Director for more information or a conversation about your calling.

**Phone:** 814-899-0614, ext. 2424

**E-mail:** vocations@mtstbenedict.org
The Benedictine way is to seek God in the cenobitic life and to respond in prayer and ministry. (Charism Statement)

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amen.

As Benedictine Sisters of Erie we commit ourselves to be a healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children.

(Corporate Commitment)
Oblates

The one who follows the Oblate path is part of the spiritual transformation of the world.

Oblates are men and women, single or married, who enter into a distinct relationship with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie by participating in community events, formation and ministries as they are able. They live in their own homes and bring Benedictine spirituality first-hand to their families, co-workers, neighbors and friends. They study the Rule and Scripture and pray the Liturgy of the Hours and practice Lectio Divina.

After a year of study and preparation as an initiate, oblates make a formal commitment to live the Benedictine way of life with a particular monastery. Erie Benedictine oblates renew their commitment each year during a ritual in the monastery chapel.

There are 262 Erie Benedictine oblates who live in 30 states and six countries.

See how God’s love shows us the way of life.

Rule of Benedict Prologue: 20

Interested in the Oblate way of life? Contact Oblate Director Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB
Phone: 814-899-0614, ext. 2424
E-mail: oblates@mtstbenedict.org

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.

Grounded in Benedictine values of simplicity, respect, hospitality and reverence for all life, the Oblate walks each day supporting and being supported by others.
Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program

Take a break from your usual routine and walk the path with us for a time.

Throughout history travelers and pilgrims have gone to monasteries to refresh and revitalize. Some stayed but most moved on, returning to lives “in the world,” renewed by Benedictine spirituality and charged with transforming their local communities, working to create a more just and equitable and sustainable world.

No monastery is without guests and Mount Saint Benedict is no exception. Eleven years ago, recognizing the monastic history of offering guests a longer, more structured immersion in Benedictine spirituality, the Benedicta Riepp Monastic Experience Program began. It is named for the first Benedictine woman foundress in the United States and provides women the opportunity to deepen their spirituality and commitment to living the Gospel by sharing fully in community life for 6-12 months.

Women of all faiths who can make a major time commitment are eligible for the Benedicta Riepp Program. With the exception of canonical meetings, a woman in the program joins with the community for prayer, work, formation and other events.

“Seeking a closer relationship with God, I was blessed with the gift of participating in this program. This group of strong, spirit-filled women allowed me to enjoy and contribute to their daily community lives of prayer, ministry and hospitality in the beautiful setting of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.”

—Christine Lundt

The Benedicta Riepp Program is a monumental life changing experience. Living with the sisters gave me the opportunity to grow in self awareness. Participating in the daily communal prayer life, liturgies and retreats deepened my spirituality and awoke within me a passion for peace and justice. I will always be grateful for the time I spent with these dedicated women.

—Jean Bhatti

I was privileged to be in the Benedicta Riepp Program for three years. The program offers a daring invitation... The Benedictine Sisters are intentional and bold in prayer and in labors of love upholding those struggling to live. They are no less faithful in performing the daily chores that sustain a caring life together. Ummmm...Is God in the chapel today or in the cleaning cupboard? Answer: both, and in so many other unexpected places. Embodied by each community member in their own unique way, Benedict’s Rule provides a trellis for the vine to grow, for life to flow.

—Claire Creese

I found daily living at the Monastery uncomplicated and soul-satisfying. When life brought its natural twists and turns, you knew regular scheduled communal prayer time was never far off, and most often would restore balance of mind, body and spirit. It was restful to the heart to live with a large group of women who loved, believed and lived Jesus.

—Judith Coscarelli

Contact Sister Stephanie Schmidt, Director of the Benedicta Riepp Program, to discover how a monastic experience can change your life.

Phone: 814-899-0614, ext. 2511
E-mail: formation@mtstbenedict.org

Pursue your passion! Journey with us for a year.
The Benedicta Riepp Program bears the name of Mother Benedicta Riepp (1825-1862), the founder of Benedictine life for women in the United States. You are invited to pray the prayer that was written in 2002 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of that founding in St. Marys, Pennsylvania. It is timeless in its ability to capture the life and desires of Benedictine women in all ages. May it inspire you as it inspires us!

Prayer for Benedicta Riepp

Amma Benedicta, you ran with the unspeakable delight of love across ocean, through forest and hills Into a sacred clearing named St. Marys From your risk-taking and imagination your daughters embrace the challenge to leap into the unknown and reach for the impossible.

Amma Benedicta, you ran with the unspeakable delight of love from town to city, across an entire continent birthing new communities of Benedict and Scholastica From your burning heart your daughters find the fire to leave comfort, security and certainty and seek God alone.

Amma Benedicta, you ran with the unspeakable delight of love into the lives of suffering children hungry for books and bread From your generous compassion your daughters enter the struggle to center our lives with the poor and destitute.

Amma Benedicta, you ran with the unspeakable delight of love toward your vision of monastic life for Benedictine women From your courage your daughters draw passion to confront injustices in church and society and to stay the course of one's truth, no matter the cost.

— Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

“In a period of great spiritual search, the world needs the kind of ancient spiritual tradition that can energize the present as it has the past. That,” said Sister Anne Wambach, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, “is the Benedictine charism.”

With this in mind the Benedictine Sisters of Erie launched Monasteries of the Heart: A New Movement for a New World after many months of discussion. A volunteer group of 23 sisters inaugurated the outreach. Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, coordinator of the movement, explains, “This is a response to requests that we’ve received to develop a new form of Benedictine spirituality for a new face of society. Monasteries of the Heart welcomes seekers of God everywhere.”

The Benedictine way of life has endured for over 1,500 years because it has adapted to the times. Monasteries of the Heart is one more adaptation of this spirituality. “We believe Benedictine life has something to offer to today’s seekers of community, spirituality, meaningful work, care of creation and peace,” Sister Anne said.

Monasteries of the Heart is not a vowed religious community or a canonical religious order. It is a monastic movement for lay people designed to respond to the great hunger and thirst for spirituality that exists in today’s world.

It is a movement of seekers interested in becoming part of a community of seekers either online or on site with others of their own choosing.

It is a monastery “without walls,” seekers who are devoted to Benedictine values but not necessarily bound by geographic place.
Monasteries of the Heart members have the opportunity to live Benedictine spirituality and values with online communities or in face-to-face groups of family, friends and neighbors or companion churchgoers. They support one another in shaping their spiritual lives around Benedictine values and priorities. To do this, communities gather for prayer, discussion and reflection in families, parishes, neighborhoods, intentional communities, prisons and on the Internet.

This lay monastic movement for those seeking God and a meaningful life was launched in conjunction with Erie Benedictine Joan Chittister’s new book, The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life (BlueBridge). In an article in the May 13 National Catholic Reporter, writer Cheryl Wittenauer sums it up well: “Benedictines throughout the world commit themselves to a way of life enunciated 15 centuries ago in the Rule of Benedict, a guide for monastic living in community. The spirituality that has emanated from the rule provides an ancient template for living an ordinary life extraordinarily well….”

For more information or to become a member, visit www.monasteriesoftheheart.org or call 814-459-9224.

In its first six weeks, 1,200 seekers have become online members of Monasteries of the Heart while on-site groups have begun forming around the country. Resources available on the website include video messages from Sister Joan and a facilitated discussion of the initial formation text, her book The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life. Sister Mary Ellen Plumb facilitates the discussion using a study guide that is accessible to all members on the site.

“The Heart of the Matter” is a blog by Sister Mary Lou Kownacki that gives insight into the human journey through stories, prayers, art, quotes and poems. Sections of the website on prayer, lectio, community and good work provide steady streams of materials for monastic formation in the Benedictine tradition. Dialogue between members in the form of comments and postings brings individual experience to the process.

All members are encouraged to pray “The Prayer of those who dwell in a Monastery of the Heart” daily; it is featured here and is also available on the website. Whether you are called to join or called to consider, pray with us.

Prayer of those who dwell in a Monastery of the Heart

Loving God, You who dwell in our hearts, make for us a cave there in which to hear your voice more distinctly, feel your care more tenderly, understand your will more clearly, and come to know your presence at every moment of our lives with new clarity and new courage, with new faith and new urgency.

++ Enable us to grow in the Benedictine spirit in ways that make us compassionate co-creators of a world in process, creative keepers of the human community, loving listeners to the heartbeat of the world, caring sisters and brothers to its wounded and bringers of peace to a world in distress.

++ Let us sink into your Word, let us nourish it to life, let it lead us beyond the burdens of the day so that we may become the people you desire us to be.

Give us hearts where all may enter in, ears to hear your call, hands to do your will, voices to sing your praise and soul enough to recognize You in everything we do.

This we ask through the intercession of all the faithful monastics who have gone before us and through the grace of the living God. Amen.

—Joan Chittister
Abbot Lot came to Abbot Joseph and said: “Father, according as I am able, I keep my little rule, and my fast, my prayer, meditation and contemplative silence; and according as I am able I strive to cleanse my heart of impure thoughts; now what more should I do?” The elder rose up in reply and stretched out his hands to heaven and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said: “Why not be totally changed into fire?”

Throughout their 1,500-year history, monasteries have always been centers of learning. Benedict, in his prologue to the Rule, says, “We intend to establish a school for God’s service.” Benedict recognized spiritual growth as a dynamic process requiring discipline and commitment and so set special times in the daily schedule for reading and studying. Benedict also believed that this growth in the spiritual life was not just a private exercise: learning must take place together with the community and for the good of the community. Throughout the centuries, this Benedictine way of life has fostered a love of learning, prayer, service and community among those who live it.

Monastic formation is a lifelong process that takes place in the very heart of the community’s life. Each monastery provides opportunities for the growth of its members and oblates through prayer experiences and retreats, education in human development, monastic spirituality, theology, and world issues.

At Mount St. Benedict Monastery four concentrated times for community formation happen each year. Every June sisters and oblates gather for a retreat, an important time to listen together to the Word of God. This intense listening helps members to discern the voice of the Spirit in all life’s events and to respond where there is need.

Once each in the summer, fall, and spring the community comes together for weekends that include time dedicated to ongoing education. Topics rotate through the years balancing interests in theology, monastic values, social issues, spirituality, and human development. Oblates also participate in this learning.

Authentic seeking of God leads us to grow in love for self, others and all creation. As members of a global community we have a responsibility to seek knowledge and explore new ways of making life better for all people. Learning calls us to expand our hearts and impels us to works of justice. Studying issues is not enough—we must be changed by what we learn and put it into action. Ongoing formation reminds us that we are always “on the way” and never finished learning.

“AS WE PROGRESS IN THIS WAY OF LIFE AND IN FAITH, WE SHALL RUN ON THE PATH OF GOD’S COMMANDMENTS, OUR HEARTS OVERFLOWING WITH THE INEXPRESSIBLE DELIGHT OF LOVE...FAITHFULLY OBSERVING HIS TEACHING IN THE MONASTERY UNTIL DEATH.”

— Rule of Benedict  Prologue 49
In a Benedictine community jubilee is important. It is a celebration that commemorates the passage of years in which a sister has lived the vowed life with faithfulness and fidelity. Sisters marking 60 and 70 years of community life will be honored when their Benedictine community gathers for an Evening Prayer at which these jubilarians will renew their vows. A festive dinner will follow and the community will have an opportunity to share memorable moments and stories with their sisters.

Sisters Mary Margaret Kraus, Miriam Mashank, Patricia McGreevy and Marlene Bertke will be celebrated in 2011. All four of these sisters have contributed in many and varied ways to the life and mission of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

70 Sister Mary Margaret Kraus, former prioress, ministry administrator, and elementary school teacher and principal, celebrates 70 years as a Benedictine Sister of Erie. While her primary ministry now is one of prayer and presence at the monastery, Sister Mary Margaret still found time to do Volunteer Prison Ministry in Erie County until recently when illness prevented it. On one of her last visits to the prison, when she was too weak to stand, the inmates to whom she ministered came and knelt before her to receive a blessing. Simply and humbly, in the manner so typical of Sister Mary Margaret, a word of blessing, a quiet prayer, a touch of kindness and a moment of encouragement were offered to each of the women who came forward. This kind of transformative moment is not a rare happening where Sister Mary Margaret is concerned. Her devoted attention to the inner courtyard garden at the monastery has kept its growth just as healthy and beautiful as that of the women in the prison and the sisters of her community. What we learn from Sister Mary Margaret is this: no one is closer to God than when they are reaching out with compassion and care to prisoners and plants, flowers and friends alike.

It is with sadness that we announce the death of Sister Mary Margaret Kraus. As this issue of The Mount was being printed, Sister Mary Margaret died peacefully on May 15, 2011. The next issue will include a special feature to remember her life and legacy.
Sister Miriam Mashank, a Benedictine Sister of Erie for 60 years, has been the executive director of St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC) since 1995. Before beginning that ministry, she was primarily engaged in secondary education and various directorships, both at Mercyhurst College and within the Benedictine community. Sister Miriam served as Director of Development for the Benedictine Sisters and also spent many years on the community’s Monastic Council. Although she is soon to step back from her position at SBEC it is a well known fact that Sister Miriam will not be stepping back from work. She remains committed to making life better for the “invisible poor” of Erie, helping parents, children and immigrants and will continue to do this through a variety of special projects. While Sister Miriam has received many honors in her lifetime she most recently was recognized as one of Erie’s extraordinary women. What we learn from Sister Miriam is captured in her words given for that occasion: “We’ve got to lead with heart. Not just with our heads; we’ve got to have the courage and the empathy to follow our dreams. An extraordinary woman is one who can lead and see leadership as an opportunity to serve, and to make dreams come true.”

Sister Patricia McGreevy has served in a variety of positions throughout her 60 years as a Benedictine Sister of Erie. After teaching on both the elementary and secondary levels of education, she became a canon lawyer and put her scholarship to good use working in diocesan tribunals in Colorado Springs, Erie, Richmond, VA, and Dodge City, KS. Sister Patricia was a member of the Monastic Council for many years and is presently serving the community in the area of Future Planning. One thing is certain: no matter what Sister Patricia does, she does it well. While her efficiency and attention to detail are remarkable, what shines through very clearly is her appreciation for beauty and quality. Sister Patricia is quick to share a good novel and enjoy a good story. Handpicked flowers in her office and her signature welcoming dish of candy don’t go unnoticed either. In her gentle way she is thoughtful and exudes Benedictine mindfulness. What we learn from Sister Patricia is best said in these words of Ivan Panin: “For every beauty there is an eye somewhere to see it. For every truth there is an ear somewhere to hear it. For every love there is a heart somewhere to receive it.”

Sister Marlene Bertke celebrates 60 years of monastic life. During that time she has served in a variety of ministries beginning with teaching at the elementary and secondary levels. As a Benedictine Sister of Erie, she has been a manager and printer for Benet Press, the publications coordinator and Central American contact for Pax Christi USA, and staff member for the Development Office of the Benedictine Sisters. She has been active in Benedictines for Peace and never misses an opportunity to promote truth at any cost. At the present time Sister Marlene serves as associate director of the Alliance for International Monasticism. Her zeal for peace and justice, right order and fairness is unmatched. What we learn from Sister Marlene is best captured by the words of John Wesley: “Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can.”
Rejoice, Give Thanks and Celebrate!

Four Sisters to Join in Public Celebration

Simple, yet profound, are those whose goodness and kindness lead others to God as they themselves seek God through the Benedictine way of life. Jubilee will be the occasion for the community to recognize and honor Golden Jubilarians: Sisters Rose Ann Kolbas, Mary Lou Kownacki, and Audrey Steff, and Silver Jubilarian, Sister Judith Trambley. With simplicity and gentleness, courage and conviction, these women have journeyed with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

On this path of life they have sometimes been in front to lead and other times behind to boost, but always alongside to accompany one another and those who share their commitment to the vowed monastic life.

These sisters marking 25 and 50 years will be honored by the Benedictine community in a public celebration in October. During a festive Evening Prayer they will renew their monastic vows in the presence of community, family and friends, and afterward enjoy a congratulatory reception. This will be a time of great joy and an opportunity for all to reverence their years of service and the many contributions these jubilarians have made to the community and the people of God.

It will be a moment in time to be in solidarity with sisters whose very lives have “preferred nothing to the love of Christ” and whose suscipe will ring out loud and clear when they proclaim yet again: “Uphold me, O God, according to your Word and I shall live. Do not fail me in my hope.”

50 Sister Mary Lou Kownacki

Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, a published author and poet, is the Director of Benetvision Publishing, as well as teacher and writer-in-residence at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House. In addition, she serves on the Monastic Council. During her 50 years as a Benedictine Sister of Erie Sister Mary Lou has been both an elementary and high school teacher in Erie, Sharon, Oil City and Fryburg, the national coordinator of Pax Christi USA, the national coordinator of Benedictines for Peace, the executive director of the Alliance for International Monasticism, the executive director of the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, and Communications and Development Director for the Benedictine community. Sister Mary Lou is a woman of creative vision and sensitive heart who never fails to encourage the community, her family, co-workers and friends to dream big.

In my office I have a beautiful photo on the wall above my desk with this quote by the Japanese poet Ryokan

> “Oh, that my monk’s robe Were wide enough To gather up all The suffering people In this floating world.”

I have lived my monastic life trying to live into that poem. I believe that at the end of the day all the years of prayer, of work, of community building and relationships will be measured by one standard — how wide is my monk’s robe, how compassionate is my heart? So I pray it every day.

—Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
50 **Sister Audrey Steff**

Sister Audrey Steff has spent 32 of her 50 years in the community ministering in the field of elementary education, both as teacher and administrator in Oil City, Sharon, Clarion, and Erie. She also served as Associate Director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Erie. At present, Sister Audrey is on the staff of Saint Benedict Education Center where she continues to use her teaching skills in adult education. An experienced woodturner, Sister Audrey shares her skill as a gifted artisan in her creation of classic candle holders, extraordinary bowls, and beautiful boxes among other things. Always interested in everyone and everything, Sister Audrey has an animated spirit that spills out of her generous heart with unwavering and deeply rooted joy.

Entrance February 2, 1960
First Vows August 14, 1961
Final Vows August 19, 1966

When I entered the community in 1960, my mother felt badly about me living, as she called it, “a very boring life.” How wrong she was! And to her credit, she later admitted that our life is anything but boring.

As I’ve walked, sometimes stumbled, along this path, I have learned a great deal about life. Probably most important is the power of prayer. I value community prayer because it links every member to each other. We begin each day with morning prayer and I try to take a “nugget,” a word, a sentence, a verse from prayer to recall during the day, a mantra of sorts. During evening prayer we remember our sisters who have died on that date from the very beginning of our community and we also pray for the sister in our community who will next meet our Creator. It is a comforting thought. During these 50 years when I faced difficulties, I would read Isaiah 41: 10 -13 which continues to give me strength, “Do not fear; I am with you. Do not be anxious; I am your God. I will strengthen you and uphold you in justice.”

With the exception of one year, I have worked in education my entire community life. Presently, my ministry is at St. Benedict Education Center where I work with people who are on welfare. Among them are many refugees who have recently come to America, mainly from African and Asian countries. These people have taught me so many things about faith, kindness, gratefulness, generosity, humility and joy—and I thought I was the teacher!

I am grateful to my family, my community, my friends and my students for helping me along the way.

Robert Frost said it so well,

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

—Audrey Steff, OSB

50 **Sister Rose Ann Kolbas**

In Sister Rose Ann Kolbas’ 50 years as a Benedictine Sister, her ministry experiences have been varied. She was an elementary school teacher for a brief time before spending several years teaching at the secondary level in both Erie and Oil City. She also used her secretarial skills and served as a school secretary as well as the community secretary for the Benedictine Sisters.

At present Sister Rose Ann is the Office Manager at Second Harvest Food Bank in Erie. Within the community she is often seen sharing her gift of music by cantoring or playing guitar at liturgy and prayer. In a recent reflection, Sister Rose Ann offered a four-part piece of wisdom she learned in her novitiate 50 years ago and that continues to guide her life: Be yourself. Accept reality. Let go. Live the present moment. Sister Rose Ann’s steady, quiet presence reflects that she has lived into this wisdom and the spark of the divine shines within her.

Entrance February 2, 1960
First Vows August 14, 1961
Final Vows August 19, 1966
As I reflect on my 50 years as a Benedictine Sister of Erie, I am filled with gratitude for the monastic formation I received. The ongoing community rhythm of prayer, Eucharist, 
lactio, community, ministry and work have grounded me in my search for God, and these monastic practices have given me stability and strengthened my bond with community.

Living in a community where all members share the same vision and mindfulness has created an environment where I am enabled and encouraged to become my best self. When I first entered religious life in 1960, I was a very timid individual; but gradually I am growing in confidence and self-expression. I have become aware that each morning is a new day of grace; a new opportunity to begin again to live consciously in God’s presence.

The annual liturgical cycle has immersed me in Scripture where I encounter God in history; and I have been led to transform my childhood image of God as an exacting judge to a more loving friend who addresses me as the beloved. The contemplative dimension of monastic life has especially enriched my soul and continues to shape me into who I am becoming.

The older sisters who model faithfulness, perseverance, generosity, holiness, gentleness, and selflessness have motivated me to desire to follow in their footsteps. They have given me a glimpse of God; community has been my lifeline.

—Rose Ann Kolbas, OSB

25

Sister Judith Trambley

Sister Judith Trambley worked as a computer analyst for more than 15 years before entering the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and continued in that work during her first years as a sister. During the years leading up to this silver jubilee, she was a staff member for Benet Press, the coordinator of the monastery, and a Drug and Alcohol Case Manager for Erie County. Sister Judith, now working in administration at St. Benedict Education Center, also serves as the Director of Lay Personnel for the Benedictine Sisters. She brings constancy and attention, kindness and calm to every aspect of her Benedictine life and is often seen walking outdoors and enjoying nature’s charm in her free time. Sister Judith’s excitement at seeing the deer that frequent the grounds of the monastery is just one window into a soul that is balanced and beautiful, honest and true.

Entrance June 10, 1984
First Vows January 5, 1986
Final Vows August 26, 1989

When I told one of my uncles that I was entering the community, he suggested that “I consider one of those outfits that do more traveling – it might be more interesting.” He’d be surprised to know how much traveling I have done with this Benedictine community – not measured in miles of land traversed but in the breadth and depth of my being.

In my early days in community, I was somewhat chagrined by the passage in the Rule of Benedict that says, “If you notice something good in yourself, give credit to God, not to yourself…” RB 42

On this path of life I learn I need not earn God’s love; but, that I can choose to become more aware of it. And far from my earlier strivings, what gives meaning to my life is not to be perfect, but to live in and share with others the expanse of God’s love.

It is with the psalmist that I rejoice and acknowledge that God has placed a marvelous love in my heart for others. It is the light of Christ in me. This joy keeps me traveling on this path of life.

—Judith Trambley, OSB
In memoriam

In memoriam announces the death of three members of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and offers information about their lives and accomplishments. More importantly, it shares with you, our extended family, one of the special traditions of the Erie Benedictines—a memorial prayer that is individual and distinctive for each sister, written upon her death. These prayers, written with the deep love that comes from sharing life for many years, offer a sacred glimpse into the soul-life of each one of these Benedictine sisters.

In December 2010, the community gathered around Sister Stephanie Campbell and prayed the prayers of the dying as it became clear that her journey in this life would soon lead her to eternity. As she passed quietly from this world to the next, the community sang heartfelt alleluias, ushering her into the fullness of life eternal. After almost 70 years in her chosen path of Benedictine life, Sister Stephanie had reached the place where there would be no more suffering or anxiety, no more weeping and no more tears.

One day shy of a month later, Sister Marie Celine Bucholz passed peacefully into fullness of life, joining Sister Stephanie who was there to welcome her. The tolling of the bell on that Saturday afternoon in January, summoned the community to Sister Marie Celine’s bedside to pray the suscipe, to comfort one another, to celebrate Sister Marie Celine’s reunion with her family, friends and community members who had gone before her in death.

In a community of just over a hundred members, the death of two sisters is felt deeply. Both Sisters Stephanie and Marie Celine had lived long, good lives as monastics and their presence would be missed. But, there was comfort in knowing that they had now joined the community of saints and would be strong advocates on our behalf. At the time of their deaths it was not realized how immediately that support would be called into service.

January 7, 2011 was an extremely cold day with the prediction of lake effect snow showers. There was a bit of sun, just enough to provide some brightness. Shortly before noon, Sister Miriam Vos suffered a massive brain bleed. She was rushed to the hospital and soon thereafter the community received the crushing news that the damage was irreversible. That evening Sister Miriam was brought home to the monastery to be cared for by her sisters. Round the clock vigiling began and continued until January 18, the day on which Sister Miriam became one with God.

In keeping with Benedictine tradition, community and church rituals commemorated and celebrated the gift that these sisters were to community, family, church and world. The services were rich and memorable, touching yet poignant, comforting and consoling. Without a doubt, these sisters are missed but in the words of St. John Chrysostom: “Those whom we love and lose are no longer where they were before. They are now wherever we are.”

**Sister Stephanie Campbell, OSB**

Sister Stephanie Campbell, OSB, 87, died on Thursday, December 9, 2010, at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania. Born January 5, 1923, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and baptized Margaret Theresa, Sister Stephanie was the daughter of John and Loretta Campbell. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1942, pronounced her perpetual monastic vows in 1946 and celebrated her silver jubilee in 1968. From 1971-81, she was a member of Emmanuel Priory in Severn, Maryland. In 1983 she completed a transfer to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.
Her golden jubilee was celebrated in 1993 and in 2003 she marked the 60th anniversary of her profession.

Sister Stephanie held a B.A. in English and an M.A. in Speech and Drama from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. She began her ministry in education in 1943 as an elementary teacher and continued as a high school teacher and administrator. Sister Stephanie served as an adjunct professor of English at Mercyhurst College (1981-82) and Gannon University (1982-86), both in Erie. Her teaching career was followed by community ministry: Coordinator of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery (1987-89), and supervisor in the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Program at St. Benedict Education Center (1989-90). From 1991-94 Sister Stephanie worked in various levels of administration at John XXIII Home, Hermitage, PA. During this time she became a licensed nursing home administrator. In 1995 Sister Stephanie began the writing of *Vision of Change, Voices of Challenge: The History of Renewal in the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, 1958-1990*, which was published in 2001.

In addition to her parents, Sister Stephanie was preceded in death by her eleven sisters and brothers. She is survived by her Benedictine community, many nieces, nephews and good friends.

**Sister Marie Celine Bucholz, OSB**

Sister Marie Celine Bucholz, OSB, 88, died on Saturday, January 8, 2011, at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA. Born in Oil City, PA and baptized Beatrice Marie, Sister Marie Celine was one of the four daughters of the late John and Elizabeth Bucholz. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on August 18, 1941 and pronounced her perpetual vows on August 21, 1945. Her silver, golden and diamond jubilees were celebrated respectively in 1967, 1992 and 2002.

Sister Marie Celine held a B.A. in Social Studies, English and Mathematics from Villa Maria College, an M.A. in Theology from Notre Dame University, and an M.S. in Mathematics from Youngstown University. She was also the recipient of four NSF (National Science Foundation) Grants for study in mathematics. For five years Sister Marie Celine taught in elementary schools in Sharon, Clarion and Erie, PA before moving to secondary education where she spent 29 years as a teacher in schools including Cathedral Prep, Saint Benedict Academy, Saint Joseph High School (Oil City), Immaculate Conception High School (Clarion), and Kennedy Christian High School (Sharon). From there her ministry in education continued at the college level for 17 years, in teaching and administration at Mercyhurst College and Behrend College. While ministering in education, Sister Marie Celine served on various committees in the Benedictine community, among them the Mount Saint Benedict Community Life Renewal Committee and the Government Study Committee. After completing 45 years in the field of education Sister Marie Celine worked as an administrative assistant at the Erie Community Food bank before becoming an instructor and administrative assistant at St. Benedict Education Center for ten years. Upon her retirement in 1997, she did tutoring and archives work at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery until her health no longer permitted. As an infirmary resident Sister Marie Celine engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery.

Sister Marie Celine is survived by her Benedictine community, her sister, Mary Ann Bucholz Porterfield (Ralph), and several nieces and nephews.
Sister Miriam Vos, OSB

Sister Miriam Vos, OSB, 80, died on January 18, 2011, at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA. Born in Paris, France and baptized Flore Aline, Sister Miriam was the daughter of the late Marius and Aline (Porge) Vos. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Holy Family Priory, Benet Lake, WI on February 10, 1963 and pronounced her perpetual vows on February 6, 1970. In 1986, the Benedictine Sisters of Benet Lake, WI began a merger process with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Sister Miriam celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1989. The merger process was completed on December 29, 1991.

Sister Miriam held a B.A. in Foreign Literature and Languages from the Catholic University of Paris, France, a Superior Certificate in the Spanish Language from the University of Granada, Spain, a Superior Certificate in the Italian Language from the University of Florence, Italy, a B.A. in Philosophy from the College of Saint Benedict, Saint Joseph, MN and an M.A. in Sacred Scriptures from Saint John’s University, Collegeville, MN. During her years at Benet Lake she worked primarily as a Director of Religious Education for children and adults and received the Bishop Arthur O’Neil Award for outstanding work in catechetics on two occasions. After moving to Erie, Sister Miriam was an adjunct professor of theology as well as the Assistant Director of the Pastoral Ministries Program at Gannon University (1988-1992). In the years following, she did data entry for the Electronic Scriptorium, Ltd, and worked in internal ministries at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery as a clerk in the Chapter 57 Gift Shop and an assistant librarian. At the time of her death, Sister Miriam was engaged in the ministry of hospitality as a receptionist. In addition to this, she was actively involved in prison ministry since 2001 and was a Volunteer of the Year Award for outstanding commitment and service to the men of the State Correctional Institution of Albion. Throughout the years Sister Miriam was actively involved in Benedictine life and served as an elected member of three General Chapters of the Federation of St. Scholastica. She was also a member of the Ecumenical Theological Center at Thiel College (1989-92), a member and councilor for Inter-Church Ministries (1992-2005), and a member of the Erie County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (2002-2008).

Sister Miriam is survived by her Benedictine community, brother and sister-in-law, Hubert and Susan Vos, and niece, Wendy Vos from Santa Barbara, CA, and nephew, James Vos and his wife Stephanie and their children Sam and Sophie from New Canaan, CT.

Memorials in honor of Sisters Stephanie Campbell, Marie Celine Bucholz or Miriam Vos, can be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511.
Distinguished Alumni Award
Sister Pat Lupo, OSB was selected by the Alumni Board of Directors of Mercyhurst College to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award for Outstanding service to the Community. Sister Pat has dedicated her life to education and action on behalf of the environment, locally and throughout the entire Great Lakes region. She is currently the education director at Earth Action.

Women Making History: Dynamic Dozen
Women Making History is an annual event sponsored by the Mercy Center for Women. This year, Sister Stephanie Schmidt, OSB was one of the Dynamic Dozen — 12 women recognized for their service, honesty, integrity and values. Sister Stephanie was honored for her leadership and commitment to Benedictine values through ministry to women and children at the House of Healing. In the words of her nominators, the Volunteers of House of Healing: “Sister Stephanie envisions and embodies hope when others often see closed doors. She radiates love, living by God’s call to ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (1 John 4:11). Her strength of character, integrity and generosity have been models for all who have come in contact with her.”

Outstanding Commitment Award
Sister Anne Wambach accepted the Outstanding Commitment Award from Abundant Life Ministries International, in the name of the community. The award acknowledged the commitment and ministry of the Benedictine Sisters to the people of inner-city Erie. The community’s inner-city ministries include St. Benedict Education Center, the Neighborhood Art House, Emmaus Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry and Kids’ Cafe, St. Benedict Community Center, and St. Benedict Child Development Center. The award was presented at the 10th Annual Abundant Life Ministries prayer breakfast. Sisters who attended were touched by the warm welcome and sincere gratitude of the members of the Abundant Life Church of Erie.

New Executive Director Named for St. Benedict Education Center
Sister Anne Wambach, prioress, appointed Sister Christine Vladimiroff to the position of Executive Director of St. Benedict Education Center (SBEC), effective July 1, 2011. Sister Christine will continue the work of Sister Miriam Mashank, who is stepping back from the Executive Director position as of June 30 but who will remain at SBEC to work on special projects. Says Sister Anne, “Sister Christine brings with her a lifelong dedication to education and commitment to the poor. As a graduate of Saint Benedict’s Academy, she is returning to the building that brought the foundations of education to both herself and hundreds of students during her tenure there as teacher and principal. Sister Christine’s educational background and ability in teaching and administration, along with her years of community leadership, will bring to this position all of the qualities needed to continue the commitment and dedication of Sister Miriam. SBEC is the outstanding center that it is today because of Sister Miriam’s vision, presence and hard work for more than two decades.”

SBEC, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters, has been the primary contractor for Employment and Training Programs for the Department of Public Welfare for 21 years. Located in the community’s former high school, Saint Benedict Academy in downtown Erie, SBEC offers intensive case management, academic remediation, job readiness preparation, job development and job placement assistance for 2,900 people each year, including more than 500 refugees.
Our Neighborhood Poetry Park — A Path of Beauty
By Mary Ellen Plumb, OSB

“We must all work to make the world worthy of its children. We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you.” —Pau Casals

In our neighborhood, where I live and work with three other Erie Benedictines, the children cannot wait for spring to come. With spring comes the invitation of “our park” — the beautiful corner of our neighborhood where they are safe to play together and free to be themselves. It is not a large park — the area is actually two empty lots where narrow houses once stood — but it belongs to them. They stop at the park as they walk to school, watching longingly as the trees and flowers begin to bloom, knowing that the promise of summer and playing long into the evening is not so far away.

There are “benches” in our park — great rock boulders big enough for them to sit and to climb and to hide from one another. One of the boys thinks it is the perfect place to do his homework and that he will learn better here in the park than inside. They stop at the park as they walk to school, watching longingly as the trees and flowers begin to bloom, knowing that the promise of summer and playing long into the evening is not so far away.

There are “benches” in our park — great rock boulders big enough for them to sit and to climb and to hide from one another. One of the boys thinks it is the perfect place to do his homework and that he will learn better here in the park than inside. There is a path that circles the park where children can ride bikes and skateboards or run races or roller skate. There is an actual stage where they perform their own plays and sing songs and deliver the speeches of imaginary presidents and princesses. There are flowers and trees and bushes and, very soon, there will be poetry throughout the park — artistic panels filled with quotes from favorite poems, reminding each child of the beautiful in life and in themselves. By far, the greatest treasure in our park and its deepest beauty are the voices and laughter and excitement of children, coming together and learning to get along and bringing the beauty of this gentle space to refreshing life.

Cars often stop or slow down when they discover this small but beautiful pocket in the middle of our neighborhood — maybe you will by stop someday, too.

*The Poetry Park, located in the 600 block of East 22nd Street, is being made possible by a $15,000 grant from the Erie Community Foundation (ECF).
Remember doing word problems in grade school? “You collected 96 pieces of candy Halloween night. If you ate three pieces each day, how long would the candy last?” Second graders would have no trouble; they all know that eventually the candy would run out. So, let’s make it a bit more complicated. Let’s say that the child’s mother added two pieces of candy to the stash each day. Now how long would it last? Some might say “forever,” but a more mature child would know that the amount being removed was more than the amount being replenished. He/she would know that eventually the candy would run out.

For generations we have cut down trees, destroyed habitats, used fossil fuels, and spewed chemicals into the air and water as if nature’s bounty would last forever. Like an immature child we have just assumed that we could use up and destroy, then move on with little concern for the earth’s equilibrium.

Today the age-old call has moved from stewardship, care for the earth, to sustainability, meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. As part of our Corporate Commitment, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie pledge ourselves to living sustainably both as a community and as individual members. To “listen with the ear of your heart”[Rule of Benedict, Prologue] requires attentiveness to the needs of all including the plight of our planet earth that cries so loudly of her abuse, disfigurement, and peril.

The only way to live sustainably is to take from the land, air and water no more than that which is replaced. For example, sustainable farming requires that nutrients be replaced in the soil as the crops use them to produce food. When that is not done, a wasteland results. When it is done, the same farming area can produce abundantly for many generations.

Several years ago, as part of its Corporate Commitment, the Benedictine Community established a Sustainability Task Force and challenged it to bring accurate and timely information about environmental issues and practices to the community and to foster the development of more sustainable choices. Some of the recommended practices are small and, taken alone, of little consequence. However, by fostering these practices within the various ministries, with oblates and community guests, with families and friends, through writing, speaking and teaching we help these small seeds to take root in our society.

Mindfulness is the key. When our actions are moderated by mindfulness of their consequences, our choices move us closer to true sustainability.

The Sustainability Task Force is currently researching and networking with others to address a new challenge right here in our own back yard. Natural gas is known as the cleanest of the fossil fuels. For quite some time we have known that there is a massive supply of natural gas in what is known as the Marcellus Shale, but it is very hard to extract due to the density of the shale. Recently, a method was developed that would make it cost effective to drill for this gas. Sounds great, no? Problem is, this method, known as hydraulic fracturing or fracking, when used horizontally as is necessary for this particular shale, requires the injection of water containing over 590 chemicals into the well. There have been numerous accidents where water wells have been ruined, the associated air pollution is linked with illness, and “produced water” pollutes the soil and waterways.

Contact the Sustainability Task Force at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 814-899-0614, for further information.
Suggestions in support of living sustainably:

1. Take a mug to work – to reduce the use of paper cups.
2. Purchase only Energy Star appliances; change to compact fluorescent bulbs – to reduce electrical usage which translates to reduction in greenhouse gases emitted by power plants.
3. Remodeling or building? Use natural lighting and air flow; consider heating and cooling with a geothermal system; use GREEN building materials; seek advice from GREEN building experts – to reduce electricity consumption, protect forests, and eliminate toxins from building materials.
4. Arrange for an energy audit – to get specific energy reduction suggestions for your home/office.
5. Purchase GREEN electricity – to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and promote the development of renewable energy sources.
6. Start a carpool program at work – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
7. Eat locally grown foods – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food transport.
8. Participate in Community Supported Agriculture – to obtain locally grown, often organically grown, fruits and vegetables.
9. Purchase post-consumer recycled content paper for home and office – to protect forests which naturally increases oxygen and reduces carbon dioxide in the air.
10. Use reusable bags for shopping – to reduce dependence on oil and reduce emissions during plastic production; to reduce waste.
11. Wash cars, lawn equipment etc. on the grass so that the soiled, sudsy water can be naturally filtered by the soil before it enters the local waterways – to reduce water pollution.
12. Compost kitchen waste – to reduce waste going to landfills and to return nutrients to the soil.

Families: Consider making a pledge to adopt one new GREEN practice each month to add to those you are already doing. This is a perfect place for children to take the lead in finding suggestions through web searches.

Most of all: Become aware of the particular threats to environmental sustainability in your area. Become informed. Take action.
The words of Sir Frances Bacon remind us of the perspective we must have as we minister to our Benedictine Community as Treasurer and Development Director. As we reflect on our financial status at the end of 2010, we acknowledge that our primary responsibility is to serve and be accountable to our sisters, our supporters and the general public. As we raise the funds and manage our community's financial resources, we do so to meet the needs of the sisters and those whom we serve, always keeping in mind our commitment to wisely manage the gifts God has given to us. In turn, you, our donors, live by these same principles, using your money and resources to enable us to continue our 155-year commitment to serve others. If Sir Francis Bacon were alive today, we hope he would recognize us as stewards of money, especially at this time in our world when money oftentimes reigns as master.

During the 2010 fiscal year we continued to experience the effects of the economy, weather events, military actions, uncertainty in the financial market, and the rising costs of transportation, food and utilities. The community worked together to limit spending just like most American families. Each sister tried to reduce personal expenses while each department director identified areas where expenses could be lowered. The department directors evaluated their staffing patterns, reevaluated energy conservation practices, and tried to reduce paper consumption. Since we still adhere to the fiscal policy of only spending what we have for what we really need, we were able to lower our operating expenses by $88,788 or 3% under our 2009 expenses.

Our operating income in 2010 was $19,986 less than in 2009, a decrease of less than 1%. In July we had a change of administration and a subsequent change in ministries for some sisters which slightly affected our stipend income. On a positive note, our development gifts increased by 12.6% due in part to an increase in number of donors, and an extraordinary increase in bequests from our departed donors. Much of this is due to the generosity of you, our first time and long standing donors. We are grateful to our deceased supporters for remembering us in their wills in life. Our income from bequests continues to be a major portion of our development income. In the category of investment activity we realized a gain of $804,067, which is an increase over the 2009 gain. Although this did not offset our loss in 2008, it did improve our financial position.

As you review our annual report we hope you can see that the Benedictine Sisters of Erie maintain sound fiscal practices and use your gifts responsibly. In 1980 the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses published a statement on the nature of stewardship in the lives of American Benedictine Sisters entitled Of All Good Gifts. We would like to end this report with a quote from the section entitled: “Monastic Economics”. It’s up to you to judge: do we live up to the ideals expressed in the Rule of Benedict as interpreted by the prioresses and the words of Sir Francis Bacon?

From Of All Good Gifts: “Christian community is the refusal to be dominated by things in order to be open to those with whom we live and to have care for the poor. It is not the lack of possessions itself that shapes the Benedictine
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.

P.S. In our 2009 annual report we acknowledged the end of one administration and anticipated a new administration beginning in July. We continue to minister as Development Director (11th year) and Treasurer (13th consecutive year). Pray for us!

For more information from the development office, please contact Sister Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB: smaryjane@mtstbenedict.org; (814) 899-0614, ext. 2409 or Jo Clarke: joclarke@mtstbenedict.org; ext. 2281.

Development Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Programs</td>
<td>183,843.00</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBA Alumnae</td>
<td>15,068.00</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Gifts</td>
<td>463,093.00</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Gifts</td>
<td>914,340.00</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,576,344.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>58%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benedictine Sisters of Erie Operating Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sisters’ Stipends/Salaries</td>
<td>2,192,402.00</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development/Gifts</td>
<td>1,576,344.00</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>591,952.00</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income before Investment Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,360,698.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Activity</td>
<td>804,067.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income after Investment Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,164,765.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operating Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>338,425.21</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members’ Personal Expenses</td>
<td>932,191.54</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Expenses</td>
<td>833,136.14</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property/Buildings/Transportation</td>
<td>803,295.56</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>225,887.01</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,132,935.46</strong></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

That’s exactly what computer scientists did in the early ‘70s when they sent the first e-mails: they left familiar paths and blazed new trails. And look where those new paths have taken us in the past 40 years!

We’ve ridden the information highway, traversed navigation systems and surfed the World Wide Web. We’ve connected online and sent wired and wireless communications and been spammed coming and going. Cyberspace is the new frontier as we move to the Cloud, forming online communities and experiencing virtual realities.

Google Earth takes us anywhere and we can Skype while tweeting and texting and chatting with anyone and everyone. We express ourselves with Emoticons and Likes and Dislikes as our online communities grow and expand.

Connection, communication and community...we have truly become a global village, often without ever leaving the city in which we live. Science fiction? No, it’s life on planet Earth in the 21st century!

The following are just some of the many ways that the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are navigating the ever-winding trail of electronic communications in all of its many facets.
Sound familiar? Life as we know it is full of hectic schedules filled with appointments, commitments and activities. For busy oblates, alumnae, family, friends and supporters who want to stay connected to the Benedictine Sisters, we can make it easy and effortless to plug into our life with electronic communications. Stay on path with electronic news, announcements, and inspirational messages about Benedictine community life and ministry. For the past 18 months we’ve stayed in regular touch with those of you who have provided us with your e-mail. If you haven’t heard from us, send us your e-mail now (to joclarke@eriebenedictines.org) and we’ll send you an occasional personalized message to keep you connected with our Benedictine community. What we won’t do is inundate you with unnecessary information. You have the opportunity to forward the messages to a friend or opt out of receiving messages at any time.

Individuals who have been receiving our e-mail messages tell us that they enjoy hearing from us and feel a connection to the Benedictine community. Messages include announcements, inspiration, links to picture slide shows and videos of community events. A recent message included a video of the sisters’ choir singing at Liturgy. “How beautiful it was to experience ‘Schola,’ the Benedictine choir,” said a friend who received the email. “It was as if I was right there.”

Sustainability and stewardship are key parts of the Benedictine way of life. The use of modern technology to communicate will help us contribute to solving the environmental crisis that we all face.

Communicating via e-mail and sending materials electronically will save on the cost of printing and postage, allowing us to put more funds to work supporting our sisters in their life of community and ministry. We will also save trees and the use of electricity. All of this will lessen our carbon footprint, which is the measure of the impact our activities have on the environment.

Although we will continue publishing and sending out the Mount Magazine via regular mail, it is also available on our website, ErieBenedictines.org. Currently we do send notification via email when the latest edition is available electronically. If you would like to discontinue receiving the magazine via regular mail, just let us know by e-mail, sbaa@mtstbenedict.org

We are excited by all the possibilities of the “information highway” but we need your help in keeping our records up-to-date. Please let us have your e-mail addresses!

If you have changed your e-mail provider or your address has changed recently, please send your updated information to joclarke@eriebenedictines.org, or call 814-899-0614, ext. 2281. If you are not sure if you’ve ever given us your e-mail, just send it to the above e-mail address.

On-line Giving Every Gift Matters

By Patti Eichen, Development Staff

Any way the gift is given, and in any amount, your gift to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie matters. The electronic path through ErieBenedictines.org takes you to Ways to Give, where you can choose the best option for you. That is what matters most.

One way to give a gift to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie is through electronic on-line giving. You have the choice to designate your gift to the sister’s greatest need or to one of their ministries. Your gift can also be in Honor/Celebration or Remembrance of a special person or an occasion: birthday, anniversary, religious holiday, retirement, personal achievement. A card will be sent to the person, or family of the person, in whose name the gift was given. The amount of the gift is not shared and you, the donor, will receive an acknowledgement.

For a convenient and secure way to give, go to online donation at ErieBenedictines.org. Your gift matters to the sisters and the thousands of children, women, and men of all faiths served by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.
Are you 70 ½ or older?

Do you own an IRA?

Would like to contribute to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie?

If the answer is “Yes!” to all of these questions then please read on!

The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act, signed into law on December 17, 2010, can help you contribute. This tax-saving opportunity permits individuals to rollover up to $100,000 from an IRA directly to qualifying charities, like the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, without having to count the donation as taxable income. This new law is time-limited and applies only to qualified distributions made before January 1, 2012.

If you are interested in making such a gift, please talk directly with your professional financial advisor and then call Jo Clarke, Director of Annual Giving, Benedictine Sisters of Erie, 814-899-0614, ext 2281.

Here’s our promise to you:

Your gift to the sisters will have a lasting impact on the lives of thousands of children, women, and men of all faiths.

You can make a difference...

Please remember the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in your will.

A will can be a wonderful way to make a substantial gift when you might not have the disposable assets to do so at this time. 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. Please consult your attorney for the correct wording to make a bequest to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in your will.

Our legal title is The Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Inc.

Please let us know if you decide to include the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in your will. Contact Mary Jane Vergotz, OSB, Director of Development, by e-mail srmaryjane@mtstbenedict.org or call 814-899-0614, ext. 2409.

Even though technology has transformed us into a global village, it has also created an ever-widening split in society, referred to by some as the digital divide. While researchers cannot pinpoint one clear factor that is causing this gap, the poor both in the United States and developing nations are at a distinct disadvantage. Some might not have personal computers, others might live in rural areas where high-speed Internet and cell phone infrastructure are not available. In cities where broadband is available it is still too expensive for low income families to afford. Clearly equal access to technologies and the information, communication and educational opportunities that come with them play a key role in fighting poverty and inequality.

A gift to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie will help narrow that divide. Throughout their history the sisters have been educators, believing that access to quality education is one way to improve standards of living. Today the sisters continue to provide access to programs that offer the disadvantaged some of the tools needed to change their life circumstances. Children at the Art House learn graphic design, music, art, and computer skills. At St. Benedict Education Center refugees learn English and many students learn how to operate word processing programs and have access to computers for online job searches and resume preparation. At Benetwood senior citizens who don’t have their own computers can stay in contact with their loved ones via the Internet in the recently remodeled computer lab.
“We’ll always come to thee again, when Alma Mater calls”

Calendar of Events

**June 25**  
Summer Picnic at Glinodo

**September 13**  
SBA Executive Board Meeting

**November 9**  
SBA Executive Board Meeting

**December 6**  
Christmas Party at Ambassador Conference Center

Reunion News…

Classes who are planning reunions next year are eligible to receive a $35 check to help defray mailing costs. Also provided will be an updated class list from our database as well as a set of mailing labels. All we ask is that you provide us with new or updated addresses for the database. It is one of the best ways we have to keep in touch with friends and classmates. Please contact Ann Comstock at: sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org or call 814-899-0614, ext. 2573.

Fifty Year Reunion Events — Class of 1961

**Friday Evening, July 29, 2011**  
Dinner at The Colony Pub and Grille • 2670 West Eighth St.  
6:00 p.m. — Gathering and Greeting • 7:00 p.m. — Dinner  
Cost — $30.00 • Cash bar

**Saturday Morning, July 30, 2011** • 10:00 a.m.  
Tour of St. Benedict Academy • 330 East Tenth St. (Now St. Benedict Education Center)

**Saturday Evening**  
Casual Get Together • Plymouth Tavern and Restaurant • 1109 State St.  
6:00 p.m. - ? • Substantial snacks and hors d’oeuvres  
Cost • $20.00 • Cash bar

**Sunday Morning, July 31, 2011** • Alums and guests are welcome.  
9:30 a.m. • Liturgy at Mount St. Benedict Monastery • 6101 East Lake Rd.  
Gather with the sisters afterwards for coffee and breads baked by the sisters.  
All locations are handicapped accessible.  
Contact Judy Lynch Allison with questions or for more information.  
814-838-4938 • judy@benetvision.org

Forty-five Year Reunion — Class of 1966

The reunion will be held on July 2 from 3 to 7 p.m. at Isabell’s Painted Garden in McKean.  
Contact: Mary Margaret Pfister Joswig (mezjoswig@aol.com or 724-586-0295)

Thirty-five Year Reunion — Class of 1976

Our class has agreed to host our reunion at the Alumni Summer Picnic on June 25  
Contact persons: Cindy Anderson Tabolt (jtabolt@neo.rr.com) and Susan Pacinelli DiVecchio (sdivecchio@erie.pa.us)
E-MAIL CALL!
We are now using the Constant Contact e-mail program to alert Alumnae members of upcoming events as well as timely news items. We need your e-mail address for this. Please send it, including your first, maiden and last names along with class year, to Ann Comstock at sbaalum@mtstbenedict.org.

SBA Christmas Party 2010 – helping to provide new beginnings

The Christmas Party of 2010 was a record-setter. Not only did we see the largest number of reservations (476) but we also raised an outstanding amount ($6,000) for three of the Benedictine Sisters’ ministries: Benetwood Apartments, St. Benedict Community Center and St. Benedict Education Center. Each ministry received a check for $2,000. Benetwood Apartments replaced outside benches for the residents and their visiting families and friends. St. Benedict Education Center used the money for their ever-growing programs for immigrant students and their families. St. Benedict Community Center used their funds to replace sports equipment and make repairs. The following letter of thanks was sent by Sister Dianne Sabol ’70, the Executive Director of St. Benedict Community Center:

“My Dear Friends,

I wish you could have seen the faces of the children. I wish you could have heard the excitement in their voices. You have provided: equipment so I can teach Lacrosse, one dozen new soft balls, jump ropes, mesh storage bags, one dozen each of four different colored vests.

That’s just for starters. You are also helping me to begin renovations on an upstairs bathroom.

You’ll have to come for a visit sometime! Know that you are enabling wonderful things to happen in this area of the city.”

Let us pray...

For our SBA alumnae who passed into eternity—

Ellen J. Sheehan Klofft
Rita Fleker Porath ’45
Lucille Brzezinski Gorka ’50
Theresa Orlowski Crytzer ’52
Elizabeth Brumboy Burgoyne ’54
Barbara Ann Schmitz LaPrice ’54
Carol Carney McIntyre ’54
Rosemarie Tatar Bruno ’55
Bernice Pinczewski Sanko ’57
Alice Dillon ’58
Barbara Rozenek McCall ’59
Rosalie Lipinski Trejchel ’60
Cheryl A. Pitcavage Norcross ’65
Patricia Watson Trocki ’65
Kathryn Ann Roscinski ’72

29
Annual Alumnae Brunch

On April 3, alumnae members gathered at the Lawrence Park Golf Club for the Annual Alumnae Brunch. At the brunch, the winners of 20 $200 scholarships were drawn. Students (K-12) who are relatives of alumnae members and are attending Catholic schools during the 2011-2012 school years were eligible. Since 1991 when this program was begun, over $52,750 in scholarships has been awarded.

The following students won scholarships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jed Bartos</td>
<td>St. Luke’s</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Miller</td>
<td>St. Luke’s</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna Bevan</td>
<td>St. George</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Wisinski</td>
<td>St. George</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia Chaney</td>
<td>Our Lady of Peace</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Friello</td>
<td>Our Lady of Peace</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zosia Mikolajczak</td>
<td>Sacred Heart</td>
<td>East Providence, RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Liebel</td>
<td>Our Lady of Mt. Carmel</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Wiertel</td>
<td>St. Gabriel</td>
<td>Concord Township, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Nuber</td>
<td>Our Lady’s Christian</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen Roark</td>
<td>St. Dominic</td>
<td>Shaker Heights, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa Martin</td>
<td>Mercyhurst Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Bahm</td>
<td>Mercyhurst Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany &amp; Gina Majczyk</td>
<td>Mercyhurst Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Earl</td>
<td>Villa Maria Academy</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Anne Fessler</td>
<td>Villa Maria Academy</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marissa Ferritto</td>
<td>Villa Maria Academy</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin J. Slomski</td>
<td>Cathedral Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Bruno</td>
<td>Cathedral Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Kalivoda</td>
<td>Cathedral Prep</td>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last Chance to Own a Piece of SBA History

The SBA cafeteria dishes are in storage at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. We are interested in having them used, owned and valued by past students who remember their days at the Academy.

The following are available in limited numbers:

- 9½ inch dinner plate
- 6 inch dessert or bread and butter plates
- small saucers

Remember, these dishes are not microwaveable. If interested please contact Sister Rosanne Loneck, OSB at srosanne@mtsbenedict.org or call 817-899-0614 ext 2428.
“Theodore,” the bell located in the library courtyard, was originally situated on top of the 1874 chapel addition of the Motherhouse when it was located on 9th Street. This bell was rung from rope in the rear of the chapel and was in use until the move to East Lake Road. It was the privilege of a novice to ring the chapel bell. She was the only sister who wore a watch so she would be able to go to chapel five minutes early to summon the community to prayer.

When the bell was placed in the library courtyard at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, former prioress Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, noted that bells were always an important part of European society and were always named. There was a fixed “baptism” of a bell. The bell was dressed in white, decorated with flowers, anointed, incensed and given a name. Naming the bell was a reminder that it had value and purpose.

Our bell’s name is “Theodore.” Although we don’t know why or how the name was chosen, we do know that Theodore is a name of Greek origin meaning “Gift of God.” Through the years, “Theodore” proved to be that gift of God which called many to walk on the path or, as Benedict says in the Rule, to “run on the path of God’s commandments, [with] hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (Prologue 49).