

Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh

# Benedictines

Monastic Women with Discerning Hearts

PRAYER

Ora et Labora

WORK

Winter 2006  
St. Benedict Monastery  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

## From the Prioress

By: Sister Michelle Farabaugh, OSB



# Ora et Labora

We don't include many Latin phrases in our ordinary conversations these days but there is one which has ongoing meaning for Benedictines. In his Rule St. Benedict gives us the motto which summarizes our life so well - Ora et Labora - Pray and Work. They are, indeed, two bedrocks to the life of the follower of Benedict. But what this means is not always so clear to others. Oftentimes, when talking with a child (or even an adult) we get the comment: "I couldn't be a sister because I don't think I could pray all day?" To tell the truth, most of us would say we couldn't do that either. And that is why St. Benedict's admonition to us is so wise - we pray AND we work - lots of different kinds of work. Manual work - service within the community, and Ministry — works of service such as education, caring for the sick, ministering to the poor. Whatever our work, our labora, our ministry - it is always done in the context of community, and is an effort to use our gifts for the good of others.

Ministry (our Labora) is an essential part of who we are as monastics. It prevents us from becoming totally caught up with taking care of ourselves, and focuses our hands and hearts on the needs of others. However, our Labora would become an exercise of futility if it were not surrounded and embedded in the other part of the equation - Ora or Prayer.

Even though we don't pray ALL day - we do pray consistently and regularly. We pray with the other members of the community, and we pray alone, doing both on a regular and consistent basis. All that we do depends on our developing our relationship, our trust, and our faith in God. We do this in prayer.

Truly - the Ora (Prayer) is equally as important for us as the Labora (Work or Ministry).

Much of this issue will explain and reflect our involvements, both with the Ora and the Labora. The various articles will show how these two elements, both constitutive of our monastic life, come alive for us.

*Sister Michelle Farabaugh, OSB*

Sister Michelle Farabaugh, OSB



BENEDICTINE  
SISTERS  
OF PITTSBURGH

*We are the  
Benedictine Sisters  
of Pittsburgh,  
continuing 1500 years  
of seeking God in  
Community,  
Prayer  
and Ministry.*

BENEDICTINES is a publication of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, PA for families, friends and benefactors of the Community.

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## Mark Your Calendar For:

Estimated Completion of Chapel Renovation  
Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006

Benedictine Center Super Bingo  
April 22, 2006

Sisters' Retreat  
June 26 - July 1, 2006

Jubilee for Sisters Judith Nero and Marie Vigna  
Date To Be Announced

136th Anniversary of the  
Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh  
August 29, 2006

Fall Craft Festival  
September 9, 2006

Reunion Day for Former Members of the  
Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh  
October 7, 2006

## Wish List

Sister Michael Mack and a group of Sisters are endeavoring to transform a portion of our property into a Monastic Meditation Garden. To do this, they are looking for the following donated items:

1. Outdoor fountains
2. Statuary – fitting to a spiritual setting
3. Garden benches
4. Large planters
5. Volunteers – willing to help at planting time

Sisters Audrey and Sue are looking for a donation of a riding lawn mower.

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## Monastic Humor

By: Sister Dolores Conley, OSB

It was a bright summer morning before we all began melting in the heat of the day (remember 90+ in temperatures) when all assembled in chapel for Morning Praise. Even the usual late comers arrived on time – except for one. A fine weather friend flew into chapel just in time to join in the opening hymn of praise. Some “unmortified” eyes followed the flight path of our late “participant”. The guest flew above from one lighting rafter to another (probably tweeting, “where’s my perch”). I noticed a Sister dodging as the lofty being settled on a perch right above her head! Fortunately, there was no plopping sound! As the little one flew from perch to perch in the rhythm of song many quivered nervously until with grins of satisfaction the sparrow found its way out to the great spatial chapel of our Creator!

# Ora et Labora: Prayer is essential to our work

By: Sister Shelly Farabaugh, OSB

In the Prologue of the *Holy Rule* of St. Benedict, he says, “Before you begin a good work pray most earnestly that God will complete it.” How often do we think that God is working in us as we clean the floor or do the dishes to make a lovely environment for our family or friends? It may be easier to think that we are doing God’s work in the church or at religious activities. All of our activities for good are part of God’s movement in the world and that is

In Benedict’s time one of the countercultural elements of his community was that all are equal. No one is overqualified to wash the dishes or the pilgrims’ feet and no one is under qualified to prepare the food or to offer hospitality. All must be willing to serve one another in the lowliest tasks to be a good monastic. And all these tasks must begin with prayer since work without prayer is a lot like a ship without a rudder. Rather than continue with a treatise on the essential nature of prayer in Benedictine life, I will share with you the thoughts and feelings on this subject by several of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, who live this truth in their everyday lives.

Sister Evelyn Dettling is the Subprioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, like a Vice President or second in leadership. She leads a very active life coordinating many aspects of community life and attending to the needs of both the Sisters and employees. Sr. Evelyn describes prayer as the “staff of life” which give us meaning and direction. Prayer is a major influence in our lives as we need to be contemplative women. “We live in a world where often work is just endured for a paycheck.” Prayer makes work sacred and helps to infuse life with respect for people, for things, for all of creation. Sr. Evelyn feels that when we have discipline and commitment to prayer which is the *ora* in our lives, then the *labora* is lighter even in the difficult time. She says, “I need both meaningful work and leisure for prayer in order to experience that the joy of the Lord is my strength.”

Sister Michael Mack works outside the monastery as the Finance Manager for Ursuline Senior Services, a human services agency in Pittsburgh. Sr. Michael clearly describes that prayer helps “to put everything in perspective.” She discusses how after she leaves Morning Praise with the community in chapel she can use the quiet time in the car on the way to work as a time to pray the rosary or have some quiet communion with God. Sr. Michael has had the experience in her past religious life of putting a job first in her life. “That doesn’t work, prayer needs to hold the primary place, and there needs to be balance.” For Sr. Michael, some of the ways that she relieves job stress and prays beautifully are by tending the gardens on our monastery grounds and by crocheting.



(From left to right foreground) Sisters Michael Mack, Kathleen Mack, Marcia Koluder and Mary Edward Skovran raise their hearts and voices in song at the beginning of Morning Prayer.

usually in ordinary life. Many of us grew up with the practice of a Morning Offering to surrender all our actions of the day to God.

As Benedictines, we have been taught the importance of “Ora et Labora” – prayer and work – at our living core. To begin every day, every meeting, and every activity with prayer is the heart of our lives. St. Benedict is noted for the balance in his teaching; the day was divided into time to pray, time to study, and time to work. The monastic is constantly challenged to grow in her desire to seek God above all.



Sister Roberta Campbell delivers a reflection in honor of the 2005 Jubilarians in the Monastic Chapel



Sister Evelyn Dettling, Subprioress, assists with brunch preparation in the Monastery kitchen.

Sister Kathleen Mack is retired from education, but she still works hard in the community archives, helping in the infirmary, and as a member of the formation living group. Sr. Kathleen identifies prayer as “what got us through the difficult times of life.” When there were challenging assignments or hard times in life, prayer and the support of community helped her to make it. “We always tried to be there for those in need; we carried our prayer to those we taught and to all those who asked for help.” Even now when Sr. Kathleen goes to visit her family, she says she takes time each morning to pray and “my family knows that prayer is important to me.” As part of the formation “lectio” (Spiritual study) group, she enjoys discussing prayer with younger sisters and listening to their viewpoint. For Sr. Kathleen, “Prayer is a great way that God touches us daily.”

Sister Roberta Campbell is the former prioress of the Benedictine Sisters. She is currently an instructor in the School of Education at Carlow University. She describes prayer as the “backbone, the skeletal framework, everything that holds up the possibility of our ministry.” “We need to be contemplative women practicing private prayer as well as our public prayer.” Sr. Roberta told a story of how she would always plan for “when I have time to do this or that” and she came to understand that “I will never have enough time. All I have is **right now** and that is enough.” Sister appreciates that our new chaplain, Fr. William Fay, gives us wonderful inspiration to infuse our day with prayer by his daily homilies. Silences in prayer and in the day are the contemplative time for us to “masticate the Word.” Sr. Roberta is quite clear that all her work flows from her beginning with prayer.

Sister Barbara Helder is the community liturgist and secretary. For her, our community prayer is most like a job, since she accompanies prayer on the organ and piano and plans the hymns, music, and rituals that we pray. Sr. Barbara begins her planning for

daily liturgies by praying through all the readings and allowing their messages to guide her selections of music. Some of her most powerful experiences of God’s presence come in the times when she waits for creativity to surface from deep within her to unfold and develop into music or words or ritual that will enhance our community prayer. She finds God revealed in others in community and is inspired by their little acts of caring for one another. Balance in prayer and work can be an issue for Sr. Barbara.

“The fact that we can pray the same psalms over and over and get new insights is an enlivening thought for me. I also need to remember that we are to pray always for the whole church and not just in church.”

Sr. Christine Makowski is the manager at our former academy building and works with the various groups that use and occupy that space. Her prayer sets the tone for the day. She describes how “snatches of psalms and songs often come to mind during my work and help me to keep peaceful and prayerful alone or with others” with whom she works. The importance of a regular work schedule adds meaning to her life and the feeling that she is contributing to the good of the community. She is reminded that the idle mind is the devil’s workshop, from the Rule of Sr. Benedict. Reading and study to improve her insights and understanding are an important balance in her prayer and work life. Sr. Christine values the significance that her prayer life can offer to others in influence and support.

These sisters beautifully articulate our Benedictine motto “Ora et Labora,” to pray and work. Prayer gives the meaning, the perspective, the framework, and sets the tone for our life together. The phenomenon of strangers being able to live together in love is energized by the prayer life that we practice not only for ourselves but also for all people. From our prayer and community flows the ministry that we offer.



Sister Christine Makowski serves the needs of guests who come to St. Benedict Hall.



Sister Barbara Helder, Community liturgist, accompanies the Monastic Community as they sing the psalms during the Liturgy of the Hours.

# The Heart of Benedictine Monastic Life

By: Sister Evelyn Dettling, OSB

The chapel is the heart of a Benedictine Community. It is in that sacred space, vibrant with divine life, that the community is healed and strengthened, blessed and bonded, and commissioned in obedience for service. The life of the monastic begins, deepens and ends in the chapel, in the oratory, as it is called in the Rule of Benedict.

The chapel is the place where several times each day the community gathers as a living body to perform the most important monastic work, the “Opus Dei,” the Liturgy of the Hours for the praise of God’s glory and to celebrate Eucharist. From the monastic’s incorporation into the community until the final farewell at death, the chapel is that holy place where as individuals and as community we seek, in a very special way, the face of the living God.

Since our chapel was originally intended to be an auditorium, we have, for the past 80 years, been very innovative in adapting it even though it has been a



Sister Claudia Kunzler distributes Holy Communion to Sr. Mary Damian Thaner during the celebration of the Eucharist in the Monastic Chapel.

long, enduring dream to build a new, more appropriate space for worship and prayer. Over the years, as the liturgical and physical needs of the community have changed, our sacred space has also changed. Necessary renovations were made in order to enhance, facilitate, and sustain our liturgical prayer, the heart beat of our life together. Now we are faced with major problems regarding our current chapel. The floor and windows are desperately in need of repair and many aspects of the present chapel deny easy access, uninhibited use, and full inclusion in community prayer to some of our Sisters. Sisters and guests who are in wheel chairs are not able to enter the main body of the chapel because of a very steep ramp at the entrance. They are relegated to a raised platform which is at a distance from the people gathered in the chapel. The heavy doors are almost impossible for a frail person to open. Because the altar and ambo are raised above floor level, some are prevented from serving as lectors or Eucharistic ministers. The antiquated sound, heating and cooling systems do not function adequately. Since the chapel is so important to the fullness of life within the monastic community, it is incumbent on us to create a more hospitable place where all are welcome, a



The Sisters’ Choir sings the responsorial psalm during the Eucharistic Liturgy.



Sr. Eleanor Easley prays the Five Wound Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.



Sisters begin praying Divine Office in the soon to be renovated Marian Chapel.

sacred space easily accessible to all, a place that promotes full participation for everyone. Though at this time in our history, building a new chapel is not feasible, these crucial issues must be addressed.

Beginning in January 2006, our chapel will undergo a major transformation so that it may better serve both the liturgical and physical needs of the community. A wheel chair lift will provide access from the first floor level down into the body of the chapel. A new, longer, more gently sloped ramp on the right side of the chapel will enable those with walkers to enter safely. Automatic, sliding doors will provide a welcoming entrance for everyone. Since the body of the chapel will be one level, more people will be able to read from the ambo and serve as Eucharistic ministers. Increased lighting and a new sound system

will make praying together as a community more possible for those who are sight and hearing impaired. Michael Tarle, the architect with Massaro Construction Company, has designed the new chapel.

The beauty of the chapel will also be enhanced. Artist Nick Parrendo is designing the screen which will separate the Blessed Sacrament Chapel from the main chapel. This screen incorporates the bronze Eucharistic symbols from our original communion rail, depicts new symbols in stained glass, and provides a lovely setting for the sacramental oils. Fresh, light-colored paint, new carpeting, upholstered chairs, and a different seating arrangement will bring renewed life to a space that carries a long tradition and a rich history. This transformation will renew the heart of our home and strengthen the life of our community.



Sisters process into the Monastic Chapel for the beginning of Solemn Vespers.



Sister Alice Rock participates in praying the Divine Office with the Monastic Community.



The Sisters' Chorus enhances the music during the celebration of a Sunday liturgy.

# Sisters Celebrate Diamond and Golden Anniversaries

By Sister Susanne Chenot, OSB

**Sister Catherine Murphy, OSB**  
celebrating her diamond anniversary  
of Monastic profession of vows.



Sister Catherine Murphy, our jubilarian of 60 years, has a twinkle in her eye as she recounts her many years in Benedictine Community.

She was born in Hastings, PA, Cambria County, the daughter of Harry and Lucinda Murphy, and was one of 6 children. Sister Catherine attended St. Bernard and #9 Slope Elementary Schools, and then Hastings High.

She entered the Benedictine Sisters in 1943. Her teaching career, which was spent in grades 1-5, encompassed 12 schools, two of which involved her as principal.

Sister Catherine's memories include the fact that each class of students was special to her. She also remembers the friends that she has because of her teaching years.

Reflecting on her life, Sister Catherine is enjoying life at her Monastery home and takes pleasure sharing her teaching experiences.

Her WISH FOR THE WORLD is "for peace throughout the world".

**Sister Evelyn Dettling, OSB**, Subprioress,  
celebrated the 50th Anniversary of her  
vows as a Benedictine Sister of Pittsburgh.



Our Sister Evelyn, a Golden Jubilarian, was born in Canton, Ohio, the older daughter of Anna and Andrew Dettling. With the birth of her sister Theresa, they became a family of four. Saint Joseph School was the center of Sister Evelyn's childhood days. Then, with all the certainty of her young years, she decided she was meant to become a Benedictine Sister and so traveled to Pittsburgh to join the aspirant class in the 9th grade.

Sister Evelyn entered the convent in 1953 and taught elementary grades for 7 years.

She continued her teaching years in high school ministry and campus ministry at IUP.

In 1979 she helped to initiate the Appalachian Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh in Kentucky, and lived 19 years in the little town of Neon while serving as Staff Person for the Glenmary Commission on Justice. This experience has been followed by 7 years as Community Subprioress at the monastery.

Sister Evelyn remembers the excitement of each new school year, and her love for the people of Appalachia. She appreciates T. S. Eliot's thought that in the end you come back to the beginning and know it for the very first time. It is a great privilege for her to serve the community and walk with sisters in their various stages of life.

Her WISH LIST FOR THE WORLD includes Sister Evelyn's desire that we could reverence the universe and live in ways that would make our world safe for all living beings. She says: "I pray that we can come to see the face of God in all that is around us and that all seek peace and pursue it every day in every way".



(Left to right) Sisters Evelyn Dettling, Catherine Murphy, Michelle Farabaugh (Prioress), Norma Wiegand and Corinne Moeller pose for a group picture prior to the Jubilee celebration of their golden or diamond anniversary of profession of vows as a Benedictine Sister of Pittsburgh.



**Sister Norma Wiegand, OSB, 50 year Jubilarian, entered the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh in 1953.**



Sister Norma Wiegand, a Jubilarian of 50 years, spent her childhood right up the street from West View Park. She was born in 1936, one of eight children of Cyril and Eleanor Weigand. Grade school days were spent at St. Athanasius and high school at Saint Benedict Academy.

Sister Norma entered our Benedictine Community in 1953. She taught for 48 years, mostly in primary grades. For 8 of these years, she was principal of St. Gertrude School in Vandergrift, PA. Sister Norma was also the Local Superior at two of our mission houses.

Presently, the Meals On Wheels Program located in our former Academy Building is Sister Norma's main responsibility.

Memory flashbacks of her teaching years are of preparing the children for reception of the Sacraments and also preparing adults in the RCIA program. In Community, Sister Norma has wonderful memories of preparing for many Christmas seasons.

Sister Norma's WISH LIST FOR THE WORLD includes the wish that "people would value the lives of others".

**Sister Corinne Moeller, OSB joined Sisters Norma and Evelyn in celebrating their 50th Anniversaries of Monastic profession.**



Sister Corinne Moeller, 50th year Jubilarian, was born in Chicago, the oldest daughter of Rose Klinkner and William Moeller. Besides herself, there came along Hazel (Sister Irene) and a younger sister, Madelyn. Sister Corinne's high school years were divided among Saint Benedict Academy, St. Joseph Academy in Adrian, Michigan, and then back to St. Benedict's, where she entered the community in August of 1953.

Sister Corinne's college degrees were capped off with an MS in Elementary Education and certification in Library Science, which would serve her well in future ministries.

The twenty-four years after First Vows found Sister Corinne teaching elementary grades in the Pittsburgh, Greensburg, and Youngstown, OH, dioceses. In her spare time, she taught crocheting to girls and crafts to boys at St. Pius X School in Brookline.

Sister Corinne was one of the original sisters at the Benedictine Sisters' Kentucky mission in 1979. Her volunteer involvements there stretched into many areas. She was also involved in the opening and operation of the Benedictine Senior Center here in Pittsburgh, beginning in 1985.

The North Hills Food Bank is the present recipient of Sister Corinne's talents. She is the Office Manager of this charitable organization. High on her list of personal interests is delving into her Family Tree.

Sister Corinne's memories include growing up in a hard-working family. She and her sister Hazel put their baby-sitting money together to make monthly payments on a TV. Sacrificing some things, they nevertheless reached their goal. Back in the late 40's this was quite a feat.

Reflecting on her years in community, Sister Corinne's closing remark was: "Would I enter this Benedictine Community all over again? I certainly would! It is a challenge in loving!"

On her WISH LIST FOR THE WORLD includes providing "moral role models for children and morality in the media, and also respect for each person as the beautiful gifts they are".



(Left to right) Sister Michelle Farabaugh, Prioress, assists at the renewal of monastic vows during the Jubilee celebration for Sisters Evelyn Dettling, Norma Wiegand, Corinne Moeller and Catherine Murphy.



## Benedictine Sisters Live By the Work of Their Hands

Sister Susan Merrie English, OSB

The motto "Ora et Labora" or "pray and work" sums up the 1500 year old tradition of Benedictines the world over. For the Pittsburgh Benedictines it means that after beginning the day with Morning Praise at 6:15 AM, the Sisters disperse for their many duties and services. They will gather again at Noon and then again for Vespers at 5 PM. In the Mount and Mission we report on the many ways that the Sisters are called to "live by the work of their hands" as they serve the community and one another.

**Sr. Alice Rock** was nominated for a "Putting People First Recognition" for her work with handicapped people at Mercy Behavioral Health. Sister was also recognized for 10 years of dedicated service there.

**Sr. Benita DeMatteis** moved to Richmond, KY last July to be the principal of St. Mark Elementary School.

**Sr. Bridget Reilly** is the Guidance Counselor at Quigley Catholic High School and has been working with the recruitment team there. As part of this effort, she was interviewed on WMBA and WBVP radio in October. Sister is on the Kairos Retreat team and gave a talk entitled "Obstacles to God's Friendship." Sr. Bridget along with **Sr. Dolores Conley** and **Sr. Judith Nero** attended the Total Catholic Education Conference in Pittsburgh in October.

**Sr. Catherine Murphy** retired from St. Teresa School last spring. In recognition of her many years of teaching, the parish hosted a special Mass of Thanksgiving followed by

a Reception. Sister is now the librarian for the newly renovated Monastic Library at the motherhouse.

**Sr. Corinne Moeller** completed 50 years as a religious and her third year as office manager at the North Hills Food Bank. She also volunteers with delivering meals for the Perry Reserve Meals on Wheels program and manages the Benedictine Scriptorium data entry services.

**Sr. Dolores Conley** is taking classes at CCAC in Digital Graphic Design and Web Design. She will also be teaching two classes at the North Hills Community Art Center in the spring semester of 2006. Sister submitted a CD of her original work with paper to Edgewater, a company that sells artistic pieces.

**Sr. Donna Wojtyna** began teaching art classes at the Benedictine Center and led a Basket Retreat for St. Pius X last spring and presented a Basket Party in October. Sr. Donna continues to take orders for hand made baskets and displayed her wares at the Senior Expo Mart and Laurel Gardens this past year.

**Sr. Eileen Huckestein** continues to use her library research skills working in the Archives at the monastery and is often asked to help with family genealogy when people want to locate one of their ancestors whom they believe was a nun.

**Sr. Eleanor Easley** had a long awaited vacation when she spent 10 days visiting her sister and her nephew in California. Her nephew is a priest at St. Peter and St. Paul parish in Alta Loma where she stayed.

**Sr. Evelyn Dettling** became secretary to the Tri-Diocesan Sisters' Leadership Conference (TDSLCL) this past year.

**Sr. Georgine Schweers** was invited to give the Benediction at the Senior Companion Luncheon at the Alcoma Golf Club in Penn Hills in June. Sr. Georgine works as the Director of Finances at the Benedictine Senior Center.

**Sr. Jeanne Ubinger** attended the Chaplains' Roundtable at the Bongiorno Conference Center in Carlisle, PA this fall as part of her responsibilities as Chaplain at Manor Care, North Hills and SkyVue Terrace.

**Sr. Jessie Ann McCauley** traveled to Germany for the World Youth Day Pilgrimage in August before she entered the novitiate September 18th. Sr. Jessie Ann is currently studying scripture, theology, Benedictine history, and the Rule of St. Benedict.

**Sr. Judith Nero** completed seven years of vocation ministry in July. She now serves as RCIA coordinator at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Carnegie and as manager of the Catherine Thomas Theatre located in the auditorium of St. Benedict Hall (the Academy).

**Sr. Judith Ann Criner** attended the Benedictine Development Symposium, Schuyler, NE in August and the National Catholic Development Conference, St. Louis, MO in October.

**Sr. Karen Brink** attended the 10th annual Benedictine Renewal Program in Rome, Italy this past summer joining 26 Benedictine Sisters from across the United States, Australia, and Africa. The program featured lectures on scripture, the Rule of Benedict and the history of Rome plus visits to many historical sites and an audience with the Pope. Sr. Karen also visited the abbey of St. Walburga in Eichstadt, Bavaria which is the abbey from which the American Benedictines came when they arrived in the United States over 150 years ago. In October, Sr. Karen served as chairperson for the Middle States evaluation for St. Boniface School, in Kersey, PA.

**Sr. Kathleen Mack** conducted a day of reflection for the Oblates in December entitled "A Time of Waiting." She also presented, along with **Sr. Mary Christine Carlin**, a session for the Spiritual Spa held December 3rd.

**Sr. Mary Christine Carlin** accepted a new position with Healthcare for the Homeless. In her new position, Sister will help deliver health care to homeless persons in various clinics around the city.

**Sr. Michael Mack** accepted a position as Finance Manager for Ursuline Senior Services in July. The agency provides a variety of services to senior citizens of Allegheny County and is based in Shadyside.

**Sr. Michelle Farabaugh**, Prioress, attended many national meetings this past year including the Benedictine Prioresses Meeting at Beech Grove, IN in January; the Development Workshop for Small Communities in Chicago, IL in May; the Pre-Chapter of the Federation of St. Scholastica in Cullman, AL in June; the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in Anaheim, CA in August; the National Catholic Development Conference (NCDC) in St. Louis, MO in October; the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes in Houston, TX in October; and the Region Four LCWR Meeting in Greensburg, PA in October. Sr. Michelle facilitated the Discernment for the Election of Prioress at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD in April and at St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth, MN in June. Sister was named a member of the Federation Committee, "Transfiguring in Hope," which will look at ways to help communities in the Federation make decisions that will enable them to be better prepared to move into the future.

**Sr. Norma Weigand**, who celebrated her Golden Jubilee in July, started a new ministry as Site Manager for the Perry Reserve Meals on Wheels program that uses the kitchen in what was St. Benedict Academy. Sister is always looking for new volunteers to help deliver meals to shut-in people.

**Sr. Raphael Frank** attended the national Biennial Conference of the Association of Oblate Directors at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD this past summer. The theme was Benedictine Oblation: A Way of Life.

**Sr. Roberta Campbell** is active in the Benedictine Federation. She attended the Federation Council Meeting in Atchison, KS in October, completed Visitations at St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago, IL and at St. Joseph Monastery in St. Marys, PA She attended the Pre-Chapter of the Federation of St. Scholastica in Cullman, AL in June along with **Sisters Michelle Farabaugh, Michael Mack, and Susan Fazzini**. Sr. Roberta was appointed to the Bishop's Diocesan Pastoral Council. As part of her ministry as an instructor at Carlow University, she attended the AERA Education Conference in Montreal, Canada this past April.

**Sr. Shelly Farabaugh** completed her PhD in Psychology and Monastic Theology this past year and began her new role as Vocation Director in August. The new email for the vocation office is [listening@osbpgh.org](mailto:listening@osbpgh.org).

**Sr. Susan Merrie English** was elected to her second year as secretary of the Greater Pittsburgh Coaches Association. Sister is also secretary of PATH (Pennsylvanians Against Human Trafficking), a subcommittee of the Tri-Diocesan Sisters' Leadership Conference. Sr. Susan Merrie was featured as the "Mover and Shaker of the Month in the May edition of the Northern Connection magazine.

**Sr. Susan Fazzini** was named Employee of the Month at SCI-Greene where she works as a counselor. She was an invited speaker for the Presbyterian Women from Washington and Greene Counties and for the North Buffalo Township Presbyterian Church. Her talk was entitled "Heart and Soul/Sole."

**Sr. Susanne Chenot** is Pastoral Associate at St. John the Baptist in Scottdale where she has been offering reflections at daily Mass twice a week. She also works in catechesis with the RCIA program and with children preparing to receive the sacraments. Sister is developing a Ministry of Consolation Program at the parish.

**Sr. Valeria Osterrieder** is a volunteer at the Benedictine Center where she is in charge of bulletin boards and takes daily counts for all activities. She also helps with preparing the newsletter and running copies, and assists with other office jobs as needed.

**Sr. Wilfrid Palladino** retired after 19 years as site coordinator for the Perry-Reserve Meals on Wheels Kitchen last January. She was honored at a luncheon for the volunteers of the program in April.

# May the Angels Bring You Into Paradise. May the Martyrs Welcome You On Your Way...

By: Sister Barbara Helder, OSB

**Sister Genevieve Vincke, OSB**, came to us in 1988 after her Covington, LA community made the difficult decision to disband. In her former Community she had been a dynamic member, serving as educator, administrator, novice director, infirmarian, and kitchen worker. She loved the South, and leaving was painful, but from the beginning she accepted Pittsburgh as her new home and settled in graciously.



She quickly became a welcoming presence, displaying Benedictine hospitality as she greeted guests as receptionist.

Born in Ottoville, OH, January 21, 1911 to Frank and Catherine Glesken Vincke, Sister Genevieve (Mary) was the oldest of 10 children. At the age of 15 she entered St. Scholastica Convent in Louisiana, attracted by their life of Community and Prayer. She professed her final vows March 12, 1932. In September 2005, after 94 years of life, she struggled to breathe and to let go. On September 5 her struggles ended when she peacefully slipped away.

We will remember Sister Genevieve as being gracious and friendly, always ready to welcome someone into her "circle." Many afternoons she could be found spending time with others sharing stories in the lunch room. She was proud of her southern heritage and was always interested in whatever news came from New Orleans. Music and poetry delighted her; she could often be heard quoting poems from memory. Her faith was strong; she lived Benedictine life faithfully.

**Sister Mary Virginia Hromy** spent her life totally dedicated to God. In hard times, her faith gave her strength. She never lost sight of what she was about as a Religious woman.



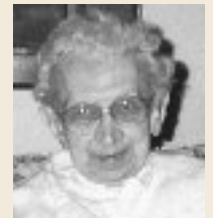
Born in New York City, August 17, 1914, to George and Anna Hromy, Sister Mary Virginia (Lillie Anna) was the oldest of seven children. In 1939, she entered the community of the Daughters of Mary, Health of the Sick. When this community disbanded in 1969, Sister Mary Virginia maintained her fidelity to her vows, serving in a variety of ministries under the direction of bishops in whose dioceses she served. Her spiritual journey eventually took her to Imperial, PA, where she

joined a group of our Benedictine Sisters living monastic life. Finding this lifestyle to be enriching for her, Sister Mary Virginia asked to begin the process of being accepted into the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh as a vowed member. She completed her process of transfer November 1, 1987. For many years she lived her Benedictine vows in Verona, caring for her elderly and infirm mother.

Sister Mary Virginia died peacefully November 11 at Saint Benedict Monastery. She will be remembered as being deeply rooted in her faith, unwavering in her fidelity to her vows and her dedication to God, strong in her commitment to follow God's call wherever it led her. She was soft-spoken, humble, intelligent, prayerful, kind and holy.

## **Sister M. Adele (Anna Amelia) Filak**

slipped away peacefully on Saturday, December 24, 2005 at Saint Benedict Monastery in Pittsburgh, following complications from a serious stroke. She was 89 years old and in the 70th year of her Religious Profession.



Daughter of Joseph and Anna Jaksa Filak, Anna Amelia was born in Pittsburgh on June 24, 1916 and was baptized at St. Mary Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. on July 9, 1916. She was the third of four children. Her brother Frank died before she was born.

Anna entered the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, on August 15, 1933 and was invested as Sister M. Adele the following July. She made her First Profession on July 11, 1935, and her Final Profession on July 11, 1938. She received the Consecration of Virgins on February 24, 1954, and celebrated her Diamond (60) Jubilee in 1995.

Educated at St. Vincent College and Duquesne University, Sister Adele ministered in education from 1935 to 1980, most of those years teaching intermediate and upper elementary grades in Connellsville, Jeannette and schools in Pittsburgh. During her years at St. Wenceslaus, 1951 to 1957, she also served as Principal. In 1980 she retired to do internal service at Saint Benedict Monastery.

Sister Adele will be remembered as being an excellent teacher and loving the students she taught. She had a love of music, a ready smile and a fun-loving nature. She liked being with people and could often be seen with her friend Sister Ludmilla helping in the laundry, taking care of house plants, praying the rosary in chapel and enjoying a cup of coffee in the lunch room.

## World Youth Day 2005

We have come to worship Him (Mt2:2)

By: Sister Jessie Ann McCauley, OSB

I was privileged to make the pilgrimage of a lifetime to Köln, Germany. Along the pilgrimage, I was humbled by the youth and young adults who from around the world came together in song, dance, prayer, and praise to worship Christ. The people of Germany humbled me in their ultimate hospitality, their willingness to guide us, to open their schools, parishes, and even homes to strangers.

We journeyed to various sites, celebrated Mass and Reconciliation in Bayer Stadium, walked the Way of the Cross in the rain, experienced the beauty of Köln, prayed by the relics of the Magi, visited the former site of a Benedictine monastery, spent an unusually cold night in a field, chanted “Benedictus”, and of course saw the new Holy Father.

Touring the Romanesque church and former site of a Benedictine monastery was a personal highlight of World Youth Day 2005. We were blessed to be able to walk the cloister walk, see the chapel and celebrate liturgy where the Sisters celebrated Eucharist in the 12th and 13th centuries. This was such a blessed opportunity to kneel down in prayer where former Benedictine Sisters prayed and to celebrate the Eucharist where the Sisters received Jesus’ precious Body and Blood. I was grateful for the awareness of how important aspects of monastic life have come to me and how I value the day to day activities of religious life, as I valued this opportunity to put down our pilgrimage packs and set aside time for Christ.

Like the Magi, who returned home by means of a different way, I, too, came home changed. This pilgrimage of a lifetime was amazing yet was difficult, as I rediscovered what complete reliance on God truly meant. The greatest lesson to be learned from this experience is one of complete surrender and how God plans every detail, if we allow Him to do so. World Youth Day is a living testimony of world peace, perseverance in faith, and Christ at work in the world.

Hope to see you in Australia-WYD ‘08!



Sr. Jessie Ann (second row kneeling, second from the left) joins other World Youth Day pilgrims for a group photo.



Sister Jessie Ann joined the other pilgrims for a night on Germany soil. All were awaiting the celebration of the Eucharist with the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI.

## In the School of the Lord’s Service

*An ardent and forceful directive:  
Pray and Work - “Ora et Labora”-  
Is given to any disciple of Benedict.*

*The motto stresses the significance  
Of prayer and dedicated service  
In a select arena.*

*His insight into the development  
Of a life centered on God  
Is beyond compare  
In the history of living and praying  
And working in the Lord’s vineyard.*

*It is an awesome privilege  
To seek God with a joy-filled heart,  
To follow in the footsteps of the Word;  
To reach out for the eternal  
In this school of the Lord’s service*

by Sr. Marilyn Fox, OSB

**2005 Benedictine  
70/30 Bonanza Total  
was: \$7,209.00**

The winners were: Dorothy and Ray Szwed

**With our deepest gratitude –**  
Dorothy and Ray, parishioners of  
St. John the Baptist in Scottdale, PA,  
donated their Bonanza winnings toward  
the Monastery Chapel Renovation of  
the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh.

# ARCHIVAL *Echoes*

## Prayer – A Basis of Benedictine Spirituality

By: Sisters Mary Catherine Stana, OSB and Kathleen Mack, OSB

Prayer has been a significant part of our Monastic life starting with the BIBLICAL WORD and through the centuries of Benedictine Spirituality as directed in the Rule given to his followers by St. Benedict himself.

Let us travel to Nursia a suburb of Rome some fifteen hundred years ago. There was a young man “blessed by God both in grace and in name” who though by birth into a wealthy family could have had many possessions, chose to leave all behind to listen to the Word with the ear of his heart.

In the Holy Rule, Benedict devised a plan of community prayer for his followers so that they could pray the entire Psalter (the Book of Psalms) in one week - the WORD became the center of the Opus Dei (the Word of God) for them. His plan touched the lives of the monks throughout the hours of the monastic day.

The first hour – Vigils (Matins) was set in the darkness of mid-night. It was designed to set the tone for the day before the works and cares of the day could clutter mind and heart. In our early days as a Community, Matins anticipated the next day.

The Second Hour of Prayer – Lauds – was so placed that the community could welcome each new day with praise and thanksgiving. Our Morning Prayer greets the dawn and is comparable to that of Lauds. There were several Hours of Prayer scheduled throughout the day like pit stops during the daily work schedule prayed at the work site by the early monks.

The Vespers Hour still is a time of respite and serenity after a busy day. This Prayer Hour invites the



The first chapel of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA

community to come together and welcome the WORD as the guest of its soul at the end of a busy day.

On August 29, 1870, the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh joined the long line of worshipers of the Word. From the beginning, the Opus Dei was preeminent to the Community – case in point – the fire of August 28-29, 1923, found Mother Cyrilla Mitsch, Sister Cecilia Spenger and Sister Theresa Huber praying the Hour of Matins in the house of a neighbor in order to satisfy the obligation of the Community to pray the entire Office daily. Throughout the many years of the Community’s prayer together, we have and still do endeavor to bring to our prayer the best part of ourselves as individuals and as a living, vital communal body...our days revolve around our Prayer.

In the 1960’s, following the Vatican II directives, we began to use the English language for our prayer rather than the Latin which had been used in the earlier years. Our Federation Document, OF TIME MADE HOLY, states very clearly that each member of the Federation should develop prayer forms that meet the needs of the Community. Accordingly, we pray Morning Prayer, Vespers with Vigils as the major Hours of Prayer and Mid-day and Compline prayers as a Minor Hour.

Needless to say, we do indeed have a long and venerable history of listening to and celebrating the Word. We bring ourselves, all those who have asked to be remembered and those we know need our prayers to our Hours of Prayer. We, likewise, welcome all to our prayer who are interested in joining us. It is a wonderful experience to listen to the WORD with the ear of the heart.



Sister Jeanne Ubinger receiving her monastic habit from Bishop Dearden.

# Oblate Perspective of Benedictine Spirituality

By: Oblates, Barbara Weidenhof and Carole Fletcher

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian individuals or families who have associated themselves with a Benedictine community in order to enrich their Christian way of life.

Oblates shape their lives by living the wisdom of Christ as interpreted by St. Benedict. Oblates seek God by striving to become holy in their chosen way of life. By integrating their prayer and work, they manifest Christ's presence in society.

Oblates concern themselves with striving to be what they are, people of God. Their prayer life will flow from this awareness, as will their willingness to offer themselves (that is the meaning of the word oblate) for the service of God and neighbor to the best of their ability.

**Barbara Weidenhof** and **Carole Fletcher**, Oblates of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, were asked to share their thoughts on what the phrase "Ora et Labora" means to them as oblates.

Barbara describes her initial reaction to Benedictine Spirituality: "When I heard the voice in the Prologue of St. Benedict's Rule say, 'Listen my child....', it was as if everything pulled away from me and I stood on the precipice of a life-changing journey. My first step forward led me to my favorite quote from the Rule, 'prefer nothing whatever to Christ.' I loved that! It was the answer to end the distortion in my spirituality. I wanted to reach perfection and knew that I could seek God through the Rule of St. Benedict."

Carole discusses the place of the Rule of Benedict in the lives of Oblates. "We lay Christians cannot become hermits or leave our families for the enclosure of the monastery, but we do have monastic hearts and can desire God alone, the echo of God's own longing for us. We have experienced God's love and light at Mass; we have seen Him in another's eyes; heard Him in a stranger's voice; sought Him in prayer and have been touched by beauty and truth - the Divine Presence, just like St. Benedict did on his life's journey. Then finally an invitation is issued to us by God's grace and we are tutored in the Rule; we decide to pursue the goal of every Christian - transformation in Christ as Oblates of St. Benedict.

Barbara shares: "I see Benedictine Spirituality as a way of life in which Christ releases us from our chains and frees us to bind ourselves to Him. It is through humility and free will that we offer ourselves daily to God through our prayer life and our work. Each vow in Benedictine life encourages us in our journey. Stability unites Oblates with our monastic community where we share prayer, love and commitment to one another in the service of the Lord. It is a source of strength to the Oblate. It gives one a sense of belonging to a family of God and a source of focus for our inner selves."

"Stability helps us to be content, to balance our lives and to remember our commitment to the Benedictine community while we are in the secular world. Obedience calls us to imitate Christ. It is through humility that we abandon ourselves to God. By doing so, we find true freedom in the love of Christ. My world has been opened as my heart has been opened. Each person and situation is now an opportunity to learn from God and to give Him glory. Silence has afforded me the grace to listen, and in doing so, I am better able to discern the path of God instead of my path.

Carole explains her life as an Oblate by stating, "I experience the loving kindness of God as my Father holding His daughter in the palm of His Hand. Many times all this is just shattered; I must begin again with the ongoing process of conversion.

What has made the difference for me is that prayer breaking into my day has given me the insight to understand that God's presence is with me in all else that transpires during my day, if I am attentive with the 'ear of my heart'. The Holy Rule gives me the road map to live a harmonious life of moderation and compassion.

The Holy Rule of St. Benedict which will guide my life as an Oblate is the gift of peace from God to His daughter which I am.

Barbara ends her reflection by saying, "Conversion of Life has led me to an ongoing sanctification of myself. I am more aware of my relationships with family, friends and strangers. My attitude toward materials is less concerning, and each day has become a unique blessing from God. Each moment is a sign of His living and loving Presence. 'Ora et Labore' and 'May God be glorified in all things!'"

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The Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh have spent the past year in preparation for Canonical Visitation that will occur in February, 2006. Part of the process was to review our Mission Statement. After much discussion, the Monastic Community has accepted the following statement:

*We are the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh,  
continuing 1500 years of seeking God in  
Community, Prayer and Ministry.*

# Ora et Labora