

THE LISTENING POST

BENEDICTINE SISTERS, ELIZABETH, NJ

"Listen ... with the ear of your Heart"

VOL. 25 NO. 1

SUMMER 2016

County Recognizes Sister Marcia

By Sister Diane Marie Kestler, OSB

Sister Marcia Lammerding received a Certificate of Professional Achievement from the Union County Superintendents' Roundtable 2016 Teacher Recognition Program "for being an outstanding teacher in New Jersey Public Schools and using effective instructional techniques to develop an environment that inspires students, fosters their feeling of self-worth and encourages their love of learning." On May 25, 2016, at a breakfast at Kean University, Sister Marcia was one of two teachers selected this year as a distinguished teacher representing Union County Educational Services Commission where she is a compensatory education/supplemental instructor for Nonpublic School Services.



Sr. Marcia currently serves at St. Mary's High School in Elizabeth and Roselle Catholic High School. She will begin her 12th year at Union County Educational Services Commission in September 2016. When her students heard about the award, they surprised Sister Marcia with colorful congratulatory notes on posters.

Oblates Share Benedictine Life

By Sister Ursula Butler, OSB

A retreat presented by Sister Philomena Fleck, OSB on Sunday, September 13, 2015 began the year for the Oblates of St. Walburga Monastery. Sister Philomena's reflections on service provided food for thought and discussion for the group.

The transferred feast day of St. Benedict on Tuesday April 5, 2016 was an opportunity for Oblates to join in celebration with the Community. Oblates were invited for Vespers and a festive dinner in honor of St. Benedict's day.

Events on Pentecost, May 15, 2016 included a guest speaker at the Oblate meeting and an Oblation ceremony at Vespers. Brother Maximilian Kolbe Buonocore, OSB, monk of the Newark Abbey, was the speaker. His presentation on Work dealt with work as service and included areas of service to which Benedict gives emphasis in the Rule. Brother Maximilian's handouts provided a valuable resource for further review. At a ceremony at Vespers Joan Walsh of St. Joseph Parish, Maplewood, NJ made her Oblation as an Oblate of St. Walburga Monastery. A light supper in the monastery dining room was enjoyed by all.

On Saturday, June 11, 2016 a joint session of Oblates from Newark Abbey, St. Mary's Abbey, and St. Walburga Monastery was hosted by the Newark Abbey. The speaker for the meeting was Fr. John Maria Devaney, OP. Fr. John, commissioned as a Missionary of Mercy during this Year of Mercy, spoke on Mercy and the Rule of St. Benedict. The schedule included Eucharist with the Monastic Community in Newark and concluded with Midday Prayer and lunch. Oblates from St. Walburga who attended all noted that they enjoyed the day.

Benedictine Generations

Each year Mrs. Michele Hopkins, director of Benedictine Preschool, observes the inter-connections between Benedictine Preschool and Benedictine Academy. This year, the preschool claims not only children and grandchildren of BA graduates, but also two preschool teachers who graduated from both Benedictine Academy and Benedictine Preschool.

In the top picture (left to right) are Ms Erin Pernas and Ms Stefanie Eller, graduates of both Benedictine Preschool and also Benedictine Academy, who now teach at Benedictine Preschool. Next are Natalie and her mother, a graduate of Benedictine Academy. Pictured below is Andre whose mother (pictured) and grandmother attended the Academy. Both Natalie and Andre had older siblings at the preschool. Not pictured are James and Evan, current preschool students whose great grandmother attended Benedictine Academy and Lucille whose mother teaches at the Academy.



L-R.: Sister Cynthia Cunningham, Joan Walsh, Oblate, Sister Ursula Butler and Sister Mary Feehan.

From the Desk of the Prioress

Sister Mary Feehan, OSB

Happy Summertime to you! I hope it is a relaxing season for you to find some time to let go of some of your daily cares and just be! Unfortunately there are some things occurring these days that we cannot just ignore. The political campaign for president is one of them.

As I listen to the rhetoric of this presidential race I am being reminded of the words of Pope Francis to the U.S. Congress last September, "You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good for this is the chief aim of all politics."

In response to those words of Pope Francis and in light of the "demeaning rhetoric" and "hyper partisanship" of the current presidential campaign, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)** has offered the opportunity for thousands of Catholic Sisters across the nation to sign a petition which will be sent to the two presidential candidates and their headquarters. We are calling for civility in discourse and decency in political interaction that: "Promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue, and seeks together the way forward." We are asking our politicians to engage in dialogue that reflects the values upon which this nation was formed.

In reality this document also calls you and me to live our baptismal call to holiness. We must have the courage of our spiritual convictions to bear witness wherever the political conversations of our day are happening, be it work, school or with family and friends, the essential message of this petition: Whatever you do to the least of your brothers and sisters, you do to Me.

** Access to LCWR's petition: LCWR.org

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Walburga Monastery, Elizabeth, NJ, are monastic women who seek God in community through the Gospel and the Rule of Saint Benedict.

We live our monastic conversion sustained by the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, lectio divina, and presence to one another.

Through active lives balanced by contemplation we witness to Jesus Christ in community, hospitality, and ministry.

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Achievement Recognized at Academy

By Sister Marita Funke, OSB

Benedictine Academy is justly proud of its softball team. The Green Bees finished 16-8 in 2016 and advanced to the Non-Public South B championship finals by out-scoring top seeded schools. Benedictine's team, according to the Union County Local Source news, "led on the mound by senior pitcher Alyssa Vega, more than held its own against LI (Lodi Immaculate) which captured its fourth consecutive Non Public B title" in defeating Benedictine 3-0.



Alyssa Vega's accomplishments, however, reach beyond the pitching mound. She has been awarded the Union County Scholar Athlete Award for Top Scholar Athlete in Union County. She is a member of the National Honor Society and recently received the St. Scholastica award, which is named after St. Benedict's twin sister. It is Benedictine Academy's highest award for outstanding achievement of a graduating senior in academics, service, leadership and character formation in the Christian faith. In addition to her contribution to her school, Alyssa also volunteers in the religious education program at St. Genevieve's parish in Elizabeth. Alyssa will be attending Immaculata College in Pennsylvania where she has a full scholarship.

Alyssa Vega, holding the St. Scholastica award, poses with her family.



Infirmiry Workers Serve with Love

By Sister Marlene Milasus, OSB

More than 1500 years after the Rule of St Benedict was written as a guide for monastic living, Benedictine monasteries still pay careful attention to Benedict's dictum that care of the sick members should be a priority. Saint Walburga Monastery is no exception. In the monastery infirmiry, a dedicated staff of workers helps to make this possible. The Sisters who reside there are given the care needed to keep them as healthy and engaged as possible. This involves both professional nursing services and a loving ministry for the daily details of life.

Sue Popek, LPN, the nurse-manager of the infirmiry, reflects on the lives that the sisters have dedicated to the service of God and His people: "I am deeply blessed and honored to 'give back' and serve them each, as they continue on their own personal journeys."

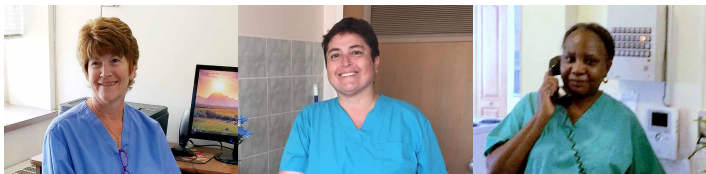
(continued on page 3)

Infirmiry Workers Serve with Love *(continued from page 2)*

Cecilia Betancourt, who has worked in the infirmiry kitchen and dining room since last summer, agrees that her service to the Sisters "has provided me with many intangible rewards, while I am able to make a difference in their lives." Cecilia's very practical labors enable the Sisters' meals to be lovingly and efficiently provided.

Cynthia Drayton, a nurse's aide since 1998 and the longest-standing employee there, recalls that from her very first day of work at St Walburga's, "I felt right at home". Eighteen years later, Cynthia continues to enjoy working as a member of the monastery's extended family.

For all three of these dedicated women, working in the infirmiry is indeed a ministry.



Sue Popek, LPN Cecelia Betancourt Cynthia Drayton

Benedictines "55 & Under" Gather

By Sister Mariette Thérèse Bernier, OSB

On April 21-24, 2016 Sister Mariette Thérèse Bernier joined 80 other Benedictine Sisters at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN for the "55 & Under Gathering." Participants came from member monasteries of the Federation of St. Scholastica, the Federation of St. Gertrude and the Federation of St. Benedict as well as from the Congregation of Perpetual Adoration and the Missionary Benedictines of Norfolk, NE. Professed sisters aged 55 and under gathered for sharing through presentations, discussion and leisure.

The theme of the gathering was "New Wineskins" and focused on how Benedictine Sisters can connect and build relationships with one another through collaboration and the use of technology. Leadership from each of the Federations/Congregations also engaged in a panel in which they offered their insights and wisdom and responded to questions from the participants.

Sister Mariette Thérèse joined a large group for an evening stroll along the canal walk in Indianapolis. The weekend afforded the time to renew old friendships and to form new ones among Benedictine women from all over the United States and Mexico. Through the use of technology and future gatherings the sisters will continue to connect, collaborate and share so that together they may "run on the path of God's commandments, [their] hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love." (Rule of Benedict Prol. 49)



Benedictine Sisters who attended the "55 and Under" Gathering.



Sisters attending the reception are pictured: (Top, L-R) Sisters Marita Funke, Philomena Fleck, Marlene Milasus, Sharon Simpson. (Bottom L-R) Sisters Dorothy Huggard, Sharon Simpson, Mariette Thérèse Bernier and Ursula Butler

Parish Celebrates 50 Years



St. Joseph Parish, New Paltz, NY, celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the church building. The celebration included a dinner on Friday evening June 3 and a Mass on Saturday evening June 4. The theme for the Celebration was We Remember, We Celebrate, We Believe. The Benedictine Sisters have served in the parish since 1948. Sister Philomena Fleck and Sister Sharon Simpson work in the Catechetical program at the Parish.

Events at the Monastery 2016-2017

Women's Retreats

October 1	<i>Benedictine Alumnae Retreat</i>
October 28-30	<i>Laudato Si</i>
November 25-27	<i>Lord, Teach us to Pray</i>
December 16-18	<i>Gospel Images of Mary</i>
Dec. 31-Jan 1	<i>New Year's Eve</i>
January 27-29	<i>A Weekend with Thomas Merton</i>
February 10-12	<i>Create in Me a New Heart</i>
March 10-12	<i>Living a Balanced Life</i>
April 13-16	<i>Holy Week Retreat</i>
May 26-28	<i>Private Retreat for Individuals</i>
July 7-14	<i>Monastic Live-In</i>

Day Retreats for Men and Women

Most Saturdays of the retreat weekends above are open to men and women 9AM-3:30 PM. Lunch is provided

Vocation Discernment Retreats

September 9-11, January 13-15, April 28-30, August 18-20

Lenten Lectures: March 12 and 26

Oblate Meetings are on Sundays 3:15-5:30 PM.

Dates will be posted on the website.

For more information go to www.catholicforum.com/bensisnj or call 908-353-3028 to request a brochure or ask a question

Did You Know That...

- The community has been inspired by several Benedictine Sisters over the past few months. In April **Sister Magdalena Craig, OSB**, Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL, presented a day of reflection on Community Life. In June **Sister Loretta McGuire, OSB**, Saint Scholastica Monastery, Atchison, KS, preceded the community retreat with a day on Grieving and Loss. The community retreat June 24-28 was led by **Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB**, Immaculate Conception Monastery, Ferdinand, IN. Her theme Expanding Our Hearts in Christ: Being the Presence of Christ not only presented the teachings of St. Benedict, but also witnessed to her years as a Benedictine sister, as prioress of her community and as president of the Federation of St. Gertrude.
- June 5-18 **Sister Philomena Fleck** attended Strengthening Your Inner Life in Challenging Times presented by Dr Robert Wicks, PhD, at Maryknoll, NY.
- **Sister Mariette Thérèse Bernier** facilitated a day of vocation planning with the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers June 30.
- The monastery experienced two unplanned fire drills: one at midday and the other at 3AM. A malfunction was discovered in the alarm system and was promptly fixed the following morning!
- **Sister Mariette Thérèse Bernier** and **Sister Lucy Hernandez** conducted the July Monastic Live-In week with the assistance of postulant **Christina Sorrentino**.

- Benedictine Center has been expanding outreach to parishes. In April catechists from St Francis Xavier Parish, Manhattan and in July parishioners from St Benedict's Parish in the Bronx visited the monastery to reflect on God's Mercy as a Way to Freedom. In July **Sister Marita Funke** presented Laudato Si at Holy Trinity parish in Hackensack, NJ.
- Since the Merton retreat in January, a small group has continued to meet monthly with **Sister Marlene Milasus** to continue their reading and discussion of Merton's writings.
- During the summer **Sister Philomena Fleck** Director of the Religious Education program at St Joseph's parish in New Paltz, NY brought two groups of Confirmation students to visit the monastery. **Sister Mary Feehan** welcomed the groups. **Sister Mariette Thérèse Bernier** and **Sister Marita Funke** assisted with presentations and tours and remarked how delightful it was to have young people who participated with enthusiasm.



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Benedictine Sisters
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