



Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

FALL/WINTER 2007

www.annunciationmonastery.org

Sisters Welcome Two Novices

In a celebration on Sept. 8 Madelyn Louttit and Hannah Vanorny entered our 12-month novitiate program.

As novices, Sister Madelyn and Sister Hannah will become more integrated into our community. Under the direction of Novice Director, Sister Agatha Muggli, they study, read and reflect on spirituality and the Rule of St. Benedict. Novices participate in community prayer, common work, physical and creative endeavors, and a particular ministry in service to the community.

Sister Hannah Vanorny
Oakes, ND native, Hannah Vanorny, daughter of Sharon and Tom Vanorny, says she is getting used to being called "Sister" and to the rhythm of her new life in the novitiate. "My parents are extremely supportive of my decision to join the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery," she says.



Novice director Sister Agatha and Sisters Madelyn and Hannah.

Sister Hannah's childhood was not filled with any thoughts of becoming a sister. Having never been involved with sisters, she held the stereotype of them doing nothing but praying all day. That stereotype was broken when she attended a vocation dinner at the Neuman Center in Moorhead, Minn. "There were three sisters there in everyday clothing, and as I heard their vocation stories and witnessed an indescribable joy in them, I experienced a major turning point in my life," says Sister Hannah. That night her

mind was opened to God's call and the possibility of someday becoming a sister.

While exploring religious life, she met Annunciation Monastery's vocation director, Sister Kathleen Atkinson. They emailed each other and met at a Perkins in Fargo, ND. "Although I'd never seen Sister Kathleen, I knew her immediately when I walked in the door," says Sister Hannah. "Sister K was chatting with people and was just so welcoming." That warm hospitality was extended to her by all of

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MESSAGE FROM THE *Prioress*



This past week, the following quote appeared on our monastery bulletin board, “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, “thank you,” that would suffice.” Even though the quote was written long ago, in the 13th century, by a German theologian unknown to many of us, Meister Eckhart, we understand and know the power of gratitude when we experience it and when others share it. Meister Eckhart pointed to the power of a short prayer.

We pray often for you, our friends and family, sometimes in short ways, like a petition during community prayer. We also pray in a longer way, as we do the first Saturday of each month as we celebrate the Eucharist. This edition of *Tidings* offers a brief glimpse into our gratitude.

We are deeply grateful for your response to our recent appeal supporting the education and initial formation of our newest members. With your support, Sister Melissa Cote is a student at Creighton University earning her doctorate in pharmacy. Within a few years, she hopes to return to St. Alexius Medical Center to continue working in its pharmacy department. Sister Melissa says, “I am humbled, knowing that people care enough to make donations to support me and our other sisters in furthering our education. That generosity inspires me to do my best so I can return and serve those who believe in me.”

With your encouragement, Sisters Kathleen Atkinson, Nicole Kunze, and Nancy Miller continue their rewarding work as our vocation team. We continue inviting

women to our home who are searching for a deeper relationship with God and discerning their vocation.

With your contributions our sisters currently in formation – Sister Nancy Gunderson, who is teaching at the University of Mary, and novices Sister Madelyn Louttit, and Sister Hannah Vanorny, are sharing our monastic lifestyle through community, prayer, daily life, study of the Benedictine tradition and the ministries of the sisters.

To you, our family and friends, we extend our sincere gratitude and prayers. Thank you for your prayers, your financial contributions, and your friendship. God has blessed us greatly!

Sister Susan Berger, OSB



Sister Bernadette enjoys her stamp ministry.

Sister Bernadette Gets Our Stamp of Approval

By collecting, trimming and sending cancelled stamps to the Parish of the Resurrection in Nashua, NH, Sister Bernadette Fisher helps women across the globe. The money that is received from the sale of the stamps is sent to a mission in Cameroon, Africa. Sister Bernadette, a retired teacher, is pleased to know the mission educates and cares for African women interested in becoming sisters.

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the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery when she made a visit to the community. "And I continue to feel that hospitality..." she adds.

What does this 27-year-old tell her family and friends about this new stage of her life? She says they've asked all kinds of questions such as, "Can we call and email you?" They've asked if she can continue running outdoors, one of her favorite activities. Her response to most of those questions is "Yes, but in moderation."

"This year will be one giant learning experience," explains Sister Hannah. "I mean, how often do you get to remove some of the distractions in your life and devote an entire year to seeking God while learning more about your personal strengths, weaknesses and motivations?" Having acquired her master's degree in U.S. History, Sister Hannah is excited about her work in the monastic archives.

When her busy novitiate schedule allows, Sister Hannah enjoys reading biographies and historical books, running, riding bike, cross-stitching and card games. She admits to having a slight obsession with doing jigsaw puzzles, "I've done them all my life!"

Sister Madelyn Louttit

Madelyn (Mady) Louttit, a native of Brooklyn, New York, has a unique story in that she was raised in the Jewish faith, and converted to Catholicism as an adult.

Even from childhood, she was fascinated with Catholic Christianity. "I wanted to be



Sisters Hannah and Madelyn are welcomed by Prioress Sister Susan Berger and community.

a Catholic as long as I can remember." She recalls her first experience of attending Mass as a newly baptized Catholic. "It was such a joyful experience, and one of unexpected hospitality. People went out of their way to help me feel comfortable and at home." As Sister Madelyn returned for Mass Sunday after Sunday, she learned more about parish life and eventually volunteered in several ministries. Her interest and enthusiasm in parish ministry grew. She attended a diocesan-based pastoral formation program and obtained a master's degree in theology. "I thought my call was to parish ministry," she explains.

Then, Sister Madelyn began to attend workshops and retreats and embarked upon what she views, in hindsight, as a time of profound discernment. A behavioral specialist in the field of adult development disabilities and a part-time counselor in group homes, she felt a desire to do something different, but wasn't sure what. She remembers with amazement, the day a question jumped out at her, "Why don't I look into religious life?" She pursued this idea and eventually through vocation websites, was led to Annunciation Monastery.

"I visited several times," she explains, "and I was so comfortable. It seemed to me like it was a fit."

Sister Madelyn left everything in New York (her job, her house, her family and friends, her home state and yes, even her cat) to come to Bismarck to become a Benedictine sister. "Yes, sometimes it's hard," she admits. "I am adjusting not only to monastic culture, but to Midwestern culture at the same time."

As a novice Sister Madelyn appreciates having the time to pray and learn more about who she really is on the inside. She enjoys studying Benedictine history, the Rule of St. Benedict, and expanding her understanding and appreciation of Scripture.

"I'm learning to live a more balanced life. I enjoy long walks and experiencing the natural beauty of the prairie. There are many opportunities for laughter and fun, but I'm also learning to balance time alone with social time. I am hoping to develop a greater capacity for inner freedom that will be reflected in my relationships with God and others."

Oblates Making A Difference



Our oblates are dedicated women and men who desire to live a life according to the Rule of St. Benedict. In the Rule, Benedict outlines a way to live incorporating the values we cherish — respect, hospitality, community, moderation, stewardship — to name just a few. Oblates of Annunciation Monastery associate themselves with our community of Benedictine sisters.

Our Oblates are listening to a call that beckons them to be a part of something larger than themselves. We are happy that call led them to share their lives with us at Annunciation Monastery and we wanted to share some snapshots of their lives with you.

Oblate Arlene Hord – Helping to Serve the Poor



Oblate Arlene Hord is well known for her teaching and involvement with local community theatre groups. Others describe her as energetic, artistic, fun loving and deeply spiritual. Recently Arlene came to a point in her life where she felt it necessary

to re-evaluate her own personal mission. As she reflected, she realized she was working each day just to get up and work the next; without feeling she was making an impact that really mattered. She began to simplify her life by giving away her material possessions. “I just started giving things away I didn’t need. As I pared down over time, it got easier.” She admits the process of downsizing became almost a compulsion, but she could breathe easier as her space cleared.

“I had moved so many times in my life, hauling possessions from place to place that I finally realized my belongings were controlling me,” she summarizes.

Arlene’s call to contribute to a bigger cause led her to Antigua, Guatemala, where she rents an apartment and works for a project called “From Houses to Homes.”

She plans to help the independent contractor who has built over 50 cinderblock homes with concrete floors and metal roofs for the poor. When faced with the question, “When will you come home?” Arlene simply says, “That’s open ended... I’ll stay as long as I can.”

Arlene’s goals include becoming fluent in Spanish so she can have more conversations with the mountain and village people. Her role is to locate funding groups to help finance the homes and seek international volunteers who want to help. For more information, Arlene can be reached via email at: askhord@juno.com

Oblate Marie Hoff Speaks on Caring For the Earth

“In the opinion of many people studying this issue, global warming – climate change – is virtually the biggest challenge, including the largest moral challenge, ever to face the human community.”

– Marie Hoff

Marie has studied global warming for over ten years. She wrote an article on the effects of global warming on society and people for an encyclopedia published by the United Nations and the Cambridge University Press. She was invited by the sisters to present on global warming and ways to better steward the Earth. She reviewed how Christian beliefs and the Benedictine ideals of simplicity of life, harmonize with current cries for

more respect and care for creation. “St. Paul teaches us that Christ redeemed all of creation, not just humanity” she said, citing Roman 8: 19-21.

Marie emphasized “if we do not successfully reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) and greenhouse gas emissions, human, animal and plant life on this planet will be severely compromised and changed beyond any recognition or continuity with human historical experience.” Excess CO₂ in the atmosphere is caused by burning coal, oil and natural gas, and deforestation.

The rate of global warming is alarming because plants and animals cannot adapt quickly to such dramatic climate change, she said. Warming speeds up the global water cycle: water evaporates faster, soils dry out more quickly; more water in the atmosphere means more rain or snow overall. As a result, there is more flooding, soil erosion and the other extreme — drought and increased forest and grass fires.

Scientists estimate that melting Arctic ice may cause sea levels to rise 20 to 80 inches over this century, resulting in the loss of coastal land and salt-water intrusion into fresh-water estuaries and the Florida everglades. Habitat, food and ecological balance for many species, will be



severely diminished. About 1/3 of the Florida land-base could be lost, and virtually all coastal cities around the globe are threatened. The quantity and quality of drinking water will be affected, as the world is already experiencing tension over water resources.

Marie said tropical diseases, such as West Nile Virus and Dengue Fever, are moving into temperate climates faster than anticipated. The global food supply may be compromised by changes in climate and rainfall, and threats to beneficial insects such as bees and other pollinators.

Despite the threats to human culture and nature’s beauty and bounty, Marie maintains hope. “We already possess the technology for renewable safe energy; what we need is the public and personal commitment to change.”

“Each of us is like a snowflake—alone, each is weighless and perhaps we feel inconsequential.”

— Marie Hoff

Marie suggested actions the sisters might pursue to adapt their lifestyles, educate others about global warming, and advocate for stronger governmental action.

“Each of us is like a snowflake—alone, each is weightless and perhaps we feel inconsequential,” she said. “But together 6.5 billion snowflakes (people) can be strong enough to change our future to a life lived more in line with God’s mandate to be stewards, not destroyers of the only Earth we have been given.”



AUTUMN

BY SISTER MARY WALKER

Season of God's Splendor

Behold the multi-colored leaves of the Missouri Valley below Annunciation Monastery. Discover God's rich imagination! Take off your shoes for this is "Holy Ground" and learn from Moses, stripped of his familiar sandals, as instructed in the Bible's Book of Genesis. Experience God's wealth. Be at the table of plenty and be fed by God's immense quiet. Know communion with the holiness of CREATION. As Chief Joseph of Seattle, leader from the Nez Pearce Tribe, proclaimed, "The earth and sky belong to the CREATOR. They cannot be bought nor sold. They are sacred and on loan to all of us by our Creator."

Season of Letting Go...Letting God

The magnificent beauty of autumn's creation in all its varied colors, hues and shades, begins to wane. The days and nights have become more chilly. Warmer jackets, even headscarves, are a comfort.

Watching the splendid leaves begin to surrender their shining beauty is sobering. Some fall softly, gently and quietly. Others are torn with violent and stormy winds. Fall rain hastens the process. In the tearing away, the Missouri Valley trees lose their colored clothing. Grey branches, empty of the rich colors, present a stark beauty. The multi-colored landscape of autumn is being thinned out. It is autumn's Parable. Take time to behold the starkness

of the emptiness. The grey emptiness carries within the trees a lesson of the stark tree upon which JESUS OUR LORD AND REDEEMER surrendered his life for the sake of our broken and shattered universe.

Season of Time and Eternity

This season lends itself to deeper spiritual reflection. The very beauty of nature invites gratitude and reverence to our Creator.

The abundance of garden produce, especially when shared with those who have less, teaches the call to an expanded heart.

The endless gifts of God's unique creation: abundant pumpkin patches, brilliant orange harvest moons — sacraments in God's sky, and the goodness of others are all sources for spiritual nourishment.



Our "Ministry of Sponsorship" Continuing our Prayerful Presence on the Prairie

A pioneering spirit is how we most often describe the ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. Those sisters who came to Dakota Territory in 1878 would not have held this descriptor as part of their self-image. In their hearts, they were simply doing in ordinary ways what was asked of them, according to the way of St. Benedict, to further the teaching mission of Jesus and establish St. Mary's Academy in Bismarck.

"Our goal is to ensure that our ministries are carried on with people who understand and embody our Benedictine mission, charism and values," says Sister Joanne Graham, OSB, chair of Annunciation Monastery's Sponsorship Group.

Medical Center and Garrison Memorial Hospital.

We sisters are passionately dedicated to sustaining the legacy of our foremothers by pioneering into the future. We call our commitment to our sponsored ministries of higher education and healthcare our Ministry of Sponsorship. We

are finding new and exciting ways to collaborate with lay leaders to join us in deepening our faith, vision and values so it can be shared with others.

In 1885 the Sisters received a request to provide care for the sick and offer a healing presence to those in need. Soon after, our healing ministry was founded and continues to flourish today at St. Alexis

In the coming months, you will hear more about our Ministry of Sponsorship. Please prayerfully consider ways that you and your family may partner with us in furthering the values that we all embrace.

Share in the Legacy of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery

We are blessed by the generosity of our friends and families who share in our mission. Every gift makes a difference to us. Your gift makes a difference to us. Your supportive gift enables us to move forward in vocation ministry, continuing formation and education of our sisters, programs and retreats through our hospitality center, and our ministry of sponsorship.

Our legal name is, Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, B.M.V. We are an IRS approved 501(c)(3) organization and your contribution is tax deductible as defined by law.

- Cash or Check: Please make checks payable to: Annunciation Monastery, 7520 University Dr., Bismarck, ND, 58504). Gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law and promptly acknowledged.
- Wills & Bequests or Gifts in Honor/Memory of a Loved One

- Life Insurance Policies or Individual Retirement Accounts
- Charitable IRA Rollover (available through December 31, 2007 per The Pension Protection Act of 2006): If you are age 70 ½ or older, new legislation now allows you to make cash gifts totaling up to \$100,000 a year from your qualifying IRA to qualified charities without incurring income tax on the withdrawal. The provision is effective for tax years 2006 and 2007 only, so you must act by December 31, 2007 to take full advantage.

NOTE: As with any estate planning decision, consult your legal, financial and tax advisors for advice and information on applicable state and federal laws.

For more information, please contact Jill Ackerman, director of development, at (701)355-8907 <mailto:jill@annunciationmonastery.org>.

As we gather together in prayer three times each day, we give thanks to our God and for you.

Women Ages 18+ Invited to Live-In Experience at Annunciation Monastery

We Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, welcome women, ages 18+, to a 24-hour live-in experience from 1 p.m. Saturday, January 26 to 1 p.m. Sunday, January 27, 2008.

Explore your vocation with the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery by participating in our prayer, meals, and recreation. Renew your spirit and enjoy the peaceful reflective environment. Get to know our sisters, why we feel called to this life, and about our ministries.

There is no charge; however, pre-registration is necessary.

“Come and See” Benedictine hospitality and the way of life of our sisters. For more information, contact Sister Nicole Kunze at (701)255-1520 or e-mail: vocations@annunciationmonastery.org



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