



SUMMER 2009

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Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF

ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

Celebrating SISTER THOMAS WELDER

(Cover story photos courtesy of Jerry Anderson)

April 24 was an exceptionally busy day for Sister Thomas Welder, even for her schedule. The morning held meetings followed by an afternoon tea with first lady Mikey Hoeven and former first ladies Grace Link, Nancy Schafer and Jane Sinner at the Governor's mansion. That evening, Sister Thomas was honored at a gala event attended by dignitaries, community leaders, friends, alumni, students and sisters in her monastic community.

When first approached by the "Friends of Sister Thomas Welder" committee, Sister Thomas, president of the University of Mary for the past 31 years, humbly agreed



The crowd of 1,300 people and presenters sing along in a blessing to Sister Thomas sung by Job Christianson. (Lt to Rt): Bishop Robert Lynne, Harry Pearce, Sheila Schafer, Greg Nelson, Sister Thomas Welder (with Star Blanket presented by the United Tribes), Martin White and Kevin Cramer.

to an event celebrating her achievements and recognizing her upcoming retirement. Her gratitude was accompanied by the condition, "Thank you so much, but please, keep it simple."

Perhaps a gathering of 1,300 people in the Bismarck Civic Center exceeded her idea of simplicity; however, the sentiments expressed were indeed that—simple, sincere, and heartfelt.

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MESSAGE FROM THE

Prioress

Spring is a favorite season of mine. Nature creates a certain amount of excitement as I await the budding of the trees, the greening of the grass and the melody of a multitude of birds. All of this has been absent for so many months. It seems to appear gradually but then, suddenly, there it is – the trees have leaves, the grass needs cutting and the birds are vying for position at the bird feeder!

There are six Hopa Crab trees at the front entrance of our monastery. They were planted about ten years ago and each spring they produce beautiful pink blossoms. This spring the blossoms were exceptionally prolific. The color and fragrance of the blossoms caused me to pause and take in the wonder and awe of God's creative energy every time I walked by them.

A single blossom on a tree such as these would be beautiful and unique but thousands of blossoms make the trees stand out. As I was thinking about this I reflected on the monastic community of Annunciation Monastery. Each

member is a blossom created by our generous God; together we stand out as faithful followers of Jesus. We are here to serve God's people and we are here to further the mission of Jesus through prayer and service.

*We do far more in collaboration
with others than we could
ever do on our own.*

As you read this issue of Tidings you will see some of the blossoms that make up Annunciation Monastery. The stories are wonderful and reflect who we are as a monastic

community. But notice they are stories also of the people we work with and the people we serve. We do far more in collaboration with others than we could ever do on our own. We do what we can, and we strive to do even more because of your support and encouragement. We work together with others to make this world a better place not just for us but for those who come after us.

We Benedictines take a vow of stability, which means we intend to remain here praying for and serving God's people for years to come. We are deeply rooted in the rich soil of the prairie of North Dakota much like the Hopa Crab trees at our front entrance. In both cases, we plant the seed, but it is God who causes the growing to happen and blossoms to appear. We rejoice in this gift of new life and in the gift of each of you. God bless!

Sister Nancy Miller, OSB

Sister Nancy Miller, OSB

Have you visited our website:
www.annunciationmonastery.org?

You can keep up with news on our
"Happenings" page, get recipes
"From our Kitchen," and see
book reviews & reflections.

Coming soon – online donations.



Sister Thomas speaks to the crowd gathered in her honor.

The evening held many loving tributes including the presentation of the colors by Century High School's Spirit of '76 and remarks by Gov. John Hoeven. The crowd was treated to entertainment including well-known artists Clyde Baumann, Job Christianson, Joel Gilbertson and Nancy Lillis. The Bismarck Strolling Strings provided dinner

music. Video tributes by a variety of leaders were presented throughout the evening.

A servant leader in every sense of the word, Sister Thomas will continue to serve where she is needed. As she did during her presidency, she will reside at Annunciation Monastery continuing in her formation as a Benedictine sister.



Prioress Sister Nancy Miller and incoming University of Mary President Father James Patrick Shea, read Pope Benedict's special Papal Blessing to Sister Thomas Welder.

RUNNING WITH THE "LIGHT OF LIFE"

With her trademark infectious enthusiasm, Sister Hannah was all smiles after completing the Fargo Marathon on May 9. Finishing her first half marathon (10k=13 mi.) in an impressive 1:50:58 and placing number 65 out of 544 race participants in her division, she is eager to run another race. "To me, running is symbolic of my own faith journey. Sometimes there are hills and valleys. It can be a challenge, but with God as our goal at the finish line – there is complete exhilaration!"



Sister Hannah Vanorny

SISTER HANNAH LOVES HER NEW MINISTRY

"This is a dream come true for me," says Sister Hannah Vanorny, as she describes her ministry as assistant director of Campus Ministry at the University of Mary. "After making my first monastic profession, I hoped to be involved with students who are interested in deepening their faith, and now here I am helping them grow in their faith." In this role, Sister Hannah advises student groups and organizations, assists with liturgies and events, develops programs for students and helps with the web site. She also helps recruit, train and supervise members of the Campus Ministry team.

NEWS...



The sisters treated University of Mary students to gourmet coffee, hot chocolate and donut holes with toppings at “Shake, Rattle and Dough” day during Benedictine Awareness week.

(Lt to Rt:) Sisters Agatha, Rachel, Kathleen, JoAnn, Hannah, Denise, Stephanie and Gerard

MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF VOCATION MINISTRY



Sister Gerard Wald

“I’m used to wearing a lot of hats,” says Sister Gerard Wald, who has begun her new ministry as director of vocations at Annunciation Monastery and continues her role as director of student volunteers at the University of Mary.

She has worn those hats well because she has loved each one of them—working in campus ministry, coordinating many events and working as coordinator of First Year Experience for students who are new to the university. The common factor in all of the above is that Sister Gerard loves to work with young people. She says, “I see their energy, gifts, values and enthusiasm for the future, and it is life-giving.”

As director of vocation ministry, Sister Gerard plans to use the connections she’s made on campus. “I hope to create more opportunities for

students to spend time with our sisters. We want to get to know students, exchange ideas, hear about their interests, pray for them, and introduce them to the blessings of Benedictine monastic life.”

Sister Gerard hopes to collaborate with the Bismarck and Fargo dioceses and welcome both men and women to experience Annunciation Monastery. “We hope they see our home as a place of hospitality and prayer, a place that nurtures their spirituality.” Other opportunities for enrichment at Annunciation Monastery include spiritual direction, private or directed retreats, prayer with the sisters, and a reflective and peaceful environment for contemplation.

Although she’s been informally involved in vocation ministry for many years, Sister Gerard is excited about doing vocation work more intentionally. “It’s a very crucial time in vocation ministry. Research shows that people are seeking God and a place to anchor their lives,” explains Sister Gerard. “If we can help people hear God’s call, the rest will fall into place and God will be their anchor.”

Update ON OUR MINISTRY OF SPONSORSHIP



Sponsorship session at the University of Mary



St. Alexis employees attending a sponsorship education session

Because of your generous response to our sponsorship appeal, our sisters have been able to offer 20 sponsorship forums at St. Alexis Medical Center between December 16, 2008 and March 19, 2009. A record number of 800 staff and employees were in attendance. Sponsorship presenters were Sister Kathleen Atkinson and Sister Susan Lardy.

At the University of Mary, educational forums on sponsorship were presented to approximately 100 corporate faculty members in January. Sisters Kathleen Atkinson, Thomas Welder and Nancy Miller presented. Sister Joanne Graham, who serves as chair of Annunciation Monastery's Sponsorship Group, presented

to approximately 75 support staff in April. "Overall, there is a great relief that we Sisters have declared our commitment to future sponsorship of our institutions. My sense is that the topic has provided renewed energy and interest in sponsorship and new insights have been given to employees regarding its value and goals," says Sister Joanne.

"Sponsorship is a structured relationship through which Annunciation Monastery, in the name of the Catholic Church, directs and influences a health care or higher education ministry that meets a need and furthers the mission of Jesus."

Annunciation Monastery serves as the link that binds our sponsored ministries to a Catholic identity.

Our Ministry of Sponsorship enables us to practice our "hands on" presence, influence and oversight with the leadership, boards and administrative staffs of each of our sponsored institutions: St. Alexis Medical Center, Garrison Memorial Hospital and the University of Mary. Through this ministry we collaborate with our lay colleagues to promote and support education and training in the Catholic, Christian, Benedictine tradition, fostering awareness of these important values today and into the future.

The following are the Sponsorship teaching modules we are sharing. We discuss how each area is important for serving the needs of the people:

- * *Sponsorship*
- * *Theology*
- * *Church*
- * *Role of Laity*
- * *Benedictine legacy*
- * *Scripture*
- * *Spirituality*

Believing in Belize



Sister Nancy helps paint the school a cheerful yellow.



This woman is showing Sister Nancy a custard apple, a fruit common to Belize.



Thank you for your friendship. We ask you to pray for all of the world's missionaries and those who they serve with love and dignity.

Sister Nancy Gunderson joined University of Mary theology students in a rare missionary experience in Belize. Located in the southern portion of the Yucatán Peninsula in Central America and bordering Mexico and Guatemala, Belize boasts dense jungles, markets and the second longest barrier reef, the Cays.

In an effort to spread the message of Jesus, Sister Nancy and the students served in the village of San Estevan, visiting door-to-door, teaching children in the classroom and providing supplies to the orphanage. They stocked a library of children's books and painted the school.

Praying Pelican Missions hosted the mission group. Much pre-trip preparation was required. Each missionary was allowed to take 50 lbs. of supplies to Belize. The missionaries' schedule was packed, with each day beginning promptly at 7 a.m. and ending at 11 p.m. After their eight-day ministry in Belize, missionaries were provided time for debriefing. As Sister Nancy explained, "There is no doubt we have been changed forever by this experience. She enjoyed connecting with the women of Belize and learning about their culture. "I felt humbled to experience their complete trust and openness to us," she remarked.

Why are we sharing this with you? We want you to know of our gratitude and show you how you are also making a difference through your support. Missionary experiences are part of our initial formation program. Our sisters participate in these experiences to serve the broader world and respond to the needs of its people.

SISTERS RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREES



Sister Joanne Graham

Sister Joanne Graham
University of Mary
Bismarck, ND

In tribute to the Benedictine legacy and history in this 50th anniversary year for the University of Mary, a Doctor of Leadership *honoris causa* was awarded to Sister Joanne Graham. An honorary doctorate is the highest

honor bestowed by the University of Mary beyond the granting of earned degrees. Also receiving honorary doctoral degrees were: Sister Nancy Bauer, prioress of St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN, and Abbot John Klasson of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN.

Sister Joanne has served as administrator of St. Alexius Medical Center, prioress of Annunciation Monastery, chancellor/assistant to the Bishop of the Diocese of Bismarck, and vice-chancellor for the Diocese of St. Cloud, MN. Having served on the University of Mary's board of trustees for over 30 years, she chairs the Joint Planning Task Force for Annunciation Monastery and the University of Mary. Sister Joanne has a nursing diploma from St. Elizabeth School of Nursing in Lincoln, NE. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing education and a master's in hospital administration from St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO, as well as a *Juris Canonici Licentiate* (canon law) degree from The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Sister Joanne serves as canon lawyer for the Federation of St. Benedict and is a canonical consultant to monasteries, as well as a certified spiritual director through Annunciation Monastery's Hospitality Center. Sister Joanne chairs Annunciation Monastery's Sponsorship Group and is dedicated to continuing the legacy of the sisters' influence at their sponsored institutions (St. Alexius Medical Center, Garrison Memorial Hospital, the University of Mary) "to deepen and extend the mission of Jesus through the way health care and education are delivered for generations to come."



Sister Thomas Welder

Sister Thomas Welder
College of St. Scholastica
Duluth, MN

Sister Thomas Welder delivered the commencement address at The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN. In recognition of her many years of leadership and service to Benedictine

higher education, an honorary doctorate degree was conferred upon Sister Thomas—the Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

Sister Thomas, a Scholastica graduate, is one of the longest-tenured university presidents in American history, having served in this capacity at the University of Mary for over 31 years. Under her leadership, the school attained university status; tripled in size from 925 students to nearly 3,000; added many new academic programs including the university's first doctorate; expanded its adult learning program online and to 16 locations throughout the state, region and country; and made the move to NCAA Division II athletics. Sister Thomas attended the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, MN, received her bachelor's degree in music from the College of St. Scholastica, and earned a master's degree in music from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. An active participant on many boards and community organizations, she has served as a director of St. Alexius Medical Center, MDU Resources Group, Inc., Bismarck-Mandan Development Association, as a member of the North Dakota Higher Education Roundtable, and on the board of trustees of the Missouri Slope Areawide United Way. She was awarded the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award by Gov. John Hoeven and has received the Greater North Dakotan Award as well as the 2007 Missouri Slope Areawide United Way's Lifetime of Caring Award.

SISTERS SHARE SPECIAL DAY WITH “GRANDCHILDREN”

“Hi grandma,” is music to the ears of some of our sisters who are “adopted grandparents” for children at St. Mary’s Grade School. Having ministered in nursing and teaching, the sisters find much fulfillment as grandmas who volunteer their time and love to the children. Sister Kathryn has always had a special place in her heart for children. She says, “I am always anxious to see my adopted

grandkids and hear their stories.” The sisters and children were treated to a special Mass, music by the St. Mary’s Central High School steel drum band, coffee, caramel rolls and bingo. The children offered these thoughts, “My adopted grandma has been with me since kindergarten!” “I like having her, because you always have someone to talk to.” Another proudly showed the rosary and card he received from his adopted grandma.



Sister Kathryn Zimmer



Sister Miriam Schmitt



Sister Eleanor Stockert is also an “adopted grandmother”



Sister Jeanette Hinds



Sister Terence Glum

Sister Melissa Receives Scholarship

Sister Melissa Cote was awarded the “Walter E. Householter Memorial Fund Scholarship” through the pharmacy program at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. The scholarship is “presented to a student with a high degree of professionalism, scholarship and service to the profession of pharmacy.” She was also on the dean’s honor roll for the fall semester of the 2008-2009 academic year.

Sister Melissa has returned to Annunciation Monastery for the summer and resumed her position as pharmacy technician at St. Alexius Medical Center.

Sisters Honored with Heritage Awards

The University of Mary paid tribute to faculty, staff and administrators, past and present, for their example of servant leadership and their dedicated service which helped lay the foundation for America's Leadership University. This special event was held as part of the university's 50th anniversary celebration. Honored were (Pictured at the right):

Four awards were presented posthumously for: Sister Susan Berger (Registrar/Counselor); Sister Jude Braus (Student Development/Social and Behavioral Sciences); Sister Brigid Dunne (Registrar/Admissions); Sister Barbara Ann Gehrki (Humanities).



Sister JoAnn Krebsbach
(Philosophy/Theology)



Sister Susan Lardy
(School of Accelerated and
Distance Education)



Sister Miriam Schmitt
(Business Office)



Sister Thomas Welder
(Music)



Sister Rosanne Zastoupil
(Financial Aid/Human
Resources)



Sister Kathryn Zimmer
(Nursing)

In Loving Memory



Sister Mary Ann Welder, OSB
Born September 8, 1914
Professed September 27, 1970
Died February 22, 2009

Sister Mary Ann was a remarkable woman. With a deep faith in God, lively sense of humor, energetic spirit and wonderful gift of hospitality, she brought joy to many people. She often expressed gratitude for the blessings of her life, especially for her vocations. She was married for 16 years, a widow for 16 years and a Benedictine Sister for 40 years.

Her interests were wide. She was a great baker, the monastery's guest coordinator, sewed Red Riding Hood dolls, volunteered at the Food Pantry and a soup kitchen, played bridge and was a Catholic Daughter for 62 years. An avid sports fan, she especially cheered for the University of Mary Marauders.

This great friend to so many now brings her presence and cheering from within the mystery that is God's eternity and everlasting love.

Sisters Celebrate 60 and 50 Years of Monastic Profession

Sister Rita Miller – 60 Years

Sister Rita Miller will celebrate her 60th anniversary of monastic profession in a celebration with her monastic community the evening of July 11 at Annunciation Monastery.

A native of Hague, ND, Sister Rita (birth name Lorraine) was the fourth youngest of 13 children born to Engelbert and Agatha Miller. Her call to become a sister was nurtured by her family and the Benedictine sisters who taught at Hague. She says of her childhood, “My mother was very religious; we all attended daily Mass and prayed the rosary together as a family.” She recalls evenings of playing games, family dinners and hospitality toward guests.

After graduating from Hague High School in 1947, Sister Rita joined the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and made monastic profession in 1949. From 1952 to 1954, she worked as nursing supervisor at St. Alexis Medical Center. In 1952 she graduated from St. Alexis School of Nursing as a registered nurse. Sister Rita continued her education at Northwestern University, Chicago, IL, and graduated as a registered physical therapist in 1955. Her long ministry in health care began at St. Alexis where she started the Physical Therapy department. She served as director of



Sister Rita Miller

this department from 1956 to 1980.

After starting a new outreach physical therapy program and serving as director of the health center at Annunciation Monastery, Sister Rita returned to St. Alexis Medical Center in 1982. She was a surgical nurse for 12 years and later joined St. Alexis Home Health Care as a Hospice chaplain. She says that experience was truly rewarding. “Seeing Christ

in the dying, through their suffering, made me most aware of the suffering of Christ. It was a great growth experience to be a prayer partner, listener and support person. I loved the work of preparing them for their eternal home,” she says.

Today, Sister Rita volunteers as hospitality hostess at St. Alexis Medical Center’s Admitting department. She welcomes patients and families with her warm smile and comforting presence and directs them to their destination in the hospital. Sister Rita enjoys reading, making rosaries, gardening and caring for the birds in her yard at St. Alexis Convent.

“My deep relationship with God through prayer and community life enables me to do my best and let God do the rest,” explains Sister Rita. “These past 60 years have gone by quickly and I will forever be grateful to God for the blessings of my ministries and my monastic community.”

Sister Grace Dahmus – 50 Years

The family and religious community of Sister Grace Dahmus, will celebrate her 50 years of monastic profession during morning Eucharist on July 11, 2009 at the monastery.

“Called to serve, share, witness, console, proclaim, celebrate.” That phrase from her scrapbook describes Sister Grace Dahmus’ 50 years as a Benedictine sister of Annunciation Monastery. Raised on a farm near Regent, ND, Sister Grace (birth name, Mary), was the fourth of eight children born to Rudolph and Catherine Dahmus. Her love of reading started early. She recalls spending countless hours sitting in her favorite tree reading books. “I read every single book in the cupboard of my school and read to my brothers and sisters often.” Her alone time was also spent in thoughtful pondering about God. Having an uncle who was a priest and an aunt who was a Benedictine sister, she entertained thoughts of becoming a sister at the age of seven. “By the time I was in high school, the call became stronger and stronger.”

In 1957, after graduating from high school, Mary entered Annunciation Monastery. She made her monastic profession in 1959.

There was a great need for teachers at that time, so Sister Grace was asked to become a teacher. She graduated from the University of Mary in 1969, and taught in diocesan and parochial schools at St. Mary’s, Bismarck; St. Joseph’s and Trinity Grade School in Dickinson, and St. Joseph’s in Mandan. She attended Mundelein College in Chicago, IL, for religious education training.



Sister Grace Dahmus

For teaching sisters, there was no such thing as summer vacation. Sister Grace taught vacation Bible school in rural towns throughout North Dakota. She taught CCD classes, first communion and confirmation classes. She also taught summer school on the reservations of Fort Totten, Standing Rock and Fort Berthold. She has a great respect for the culture and people of the reservations.

After retiring from teaching, Sister Grace received training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and served as hospital chaplain and in hospice and home health care at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Minot and St. Alexius Medical Center.

Volunteerism has always been important to Sister Grace. She donated time and energy to the University of Mary library, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), in laundry services at St. Vincent’s Care Center, and as a certified nurse aid (CNA) at Annunciation Monastery.

A farm girl at heart, Sister Grace enjoys the outdoors. She had been an avid reader all her life until macular degeneration made it too difficult to read. The gift of “Talking Books” allows her to continue her love of reading and keep connected to the world.

“My life has been richly blessed,” says Sister Grace. “My prayer life and the support of my sisters in community sustains me through the joys and sorrows in life.” Her favorite quote from Scripture is from Jeremiah 29:11, “I know my plans for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Is God's Voice Tugging at Your Heart?

Perhaps you are being called to become a
Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery.

Vocation Live-In Experience For Women



Vocation Ministry Team (Rt. to Lt.): Sisters Nancy Gunderson, Nicole Kunze,
Gerard Wald, Nancy Miller

WHEN:

July 8-12, 2009

WHERE:

Annunciation Monastery
7520 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504

What you can expect:

A prayerful time to reflect on God's plan for your life
Experience our prayer and community life
Get to know our sisters and hear their vocation stories
Enjoy time for recreation with our sisters
A private room in our Hospitality Center
Laughs, good food, fun!

There is no charge; however, preregistration is required. For more information, contact Sister Nicole
or Sister Gerard at: (701)255-1520 or email: vocations@annunciationmonastery.org

If you are interested in making a donation in support of our ministries, please use the enclosed envelope. Thank you.
Please remember us when making or revising your will. Our legal name is: Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, B.M.V.
For more information, contact Jill Ackerman, director of communications and development, (701)355-8907 or: jill@annunciationmonastery.org

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