

# Threshold

Volume 26 ❧ Number 1 ❧ Winter 2026

A Publication of the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica



# FROM THE PRIORESS

## *What the World Needs Now*

A song from 1965 keeps stirring in my heart these days. Written by Hal David with music by Burt Bacharach, the song is *What the World Needs Now*. Here is the refrain:

*What the world needs now is love,  
sweet love  
It's the only thing that there's just too  
little of  
What the world needs now is love,  
sweet love  
No not just for some but for everyone*

The verses emphasize that the world does not lack natural wonders such as mountains, oceans, meadows, sunbeams, and moonbeams — no, what the world needs is love. The chorus stresses the need for love for and from everyone.

As I read the national and local news, with their daily diet of wars, divisions, hatred, negativism, racism, violence, and isolation, it is clear that this song is what we need to be singing and living with all our heart and soul.

During the recent Christmas season we celebrated the mystery of the incarnation, the greatest love story ever told. What a wonderful time for us to reflect on our ability to love and our daily call to put love into action. To help me, I have had mentors who paved the way.

Saint Gregory the Great tells a story of St. Scholastica that speaks of God's love for us and a response of deep love. Scholastica was accustomed to visiting her brother, Benedict, once a year. They met halfway between their monasteries

and spent the whole day in holy conversation and praise of God.

On one occasion, even though they had not finished their conversation, Benedict prepared to leave because it was against the rules of his monastery to stay away overnight. Scholastica begged him to stay, but her brother refused. She then joined her hands on the table, laid her head on them and began to pray. A violent storm arose, making it impossible for him to leave.

Benedict asked, "Sister, what have you done?" Scholastica replied, "I asked you and you would not listen; so, I asked my God and he did listen. So now, if you can, leave me and return to your monastery." Gregory went on to write: "She could do more, as she loved more." It was Scholastica's love that brought about a miracle. It is a challenge for us to do the same, to love and to love more and then to love even more.

Another story that is closer to home is an experience with my brother-in-law. My sister has been married to Jack for twenty years. They were married in December, and on the following Valentine's Day, my sister gave Jack a small 3" x 3" red and white picture frame with hearts, two teddy bears, and the word "kiss" written down the sides of it. In the frame is a smiling picture of my sister.

Every evening, my brother-in-law faithfully takes this picture off a kitchen shelf and places it on their breakfast table so that



"Carol" greets him first thing every morning. As part of his routine, he puts it back on the shelf during the day and pulls it out every evening. Carol responds in turn every morning with a kiss. Jack tells me it is a reminder of how much he loves my sister and how he never wants to take her or her love for granted. I am deeply touched when I witness this daily ritual.

I cannot end wars and world conflicts, but I can do my part in making sure that my life is lived in love. Community life provides many opportunities to forgive, let go of hurts, accept differences, take initiatives to spread love, and become a stronger group of women. I am grateful for our larger community of friends and supporters who love us and help provide for our needs. I am grateful for the challenges of our society to love those who are difficult and often filled with anger and hatred. They can make me a better person. Like St. Scholastica, may all of us love deeply and bring about miracles. Like my brother-in-law, let us create rituals that daily express our love.

*Sister Mary Elizabeth*

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## On the Cover

Sister Mary Agnes Patterson is retiring from her ministry in the Development Office after 20+ years of "friend raising." She will continue to put her hospitality skills to work in the Mount's gift shop and in guest services.

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# Looking Back on Twenty Years of Friend Raising

## *Sr. Mary Agnes Retires as Development Director*

For the Mount's donors and benefactors, Sister Mary Agnes Patterson is a familiar voice on the phone that regularly thanks them for their donations. Now, after 20 and a half years of "friend raising," coordinating the Night of Dreams, and grant writing, she is putting down the phone and retiring as the Mount's development director.

Since she entered the Mount in 1969 after graduating from Bishop LeBlond High School in St. Joseph, Missouri, Sister Mary Agnes has ably filled a variety of roles at the Mount and its ministries. She began in the field of education as a teacher and, later, administrator at Lillis High School, Mount St. Scholastica Academy, Bishop Ward High School, and Donnelly College. Along the way she earned master's degrees in educational administration and counseling at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio.

In 1987, Sister Mary Agnes was elected prioress and served in that role through 1999. She then returned to Donnelly College for five and a half years before being asked to become the Mount's development director in 2005.

During her tenure in the development office, Sr. Mary Agnes expanded the Night of Dreams from a small event to support the Mount Community Center to a vibrant gathering of hundreds of donors for a dinner and auction that supports Dooley Center, Keeler Women's Center, and Sophia Spirituality Center. She also established the Mount Legacy Society in 2007 to recognize benefactors who support the Mount through planned gifts.

"What I've enjoyed most about my time in development," Sister Mary Agnes reflected, "is getting to know our friends and relatives and strengthening connections with our former students.



*Sister Mary Agnes Patterson speaks with a donor of the Mount at the 2025 Night of Dreams fundraiser.*

I've also received a lot of prayer requests over the years, and helping facilitate our prayer ministry has been very important to me."

She went on to say, "I want to thank all the sisters who have worked with me in the development office, especially Sister Mary Margaret Kean, who has been with me all 20+ years, and Sister Barbara Smith, who joined us full time in 2017. I'm also very grateful to our Development Board members for their generosity and enthusiasm — we couldn't have the Night of Dreams without them!"

Sr. Mary Agnes will continue to put her hospitality skills to work in the Monastery Goods gift shop and in guest services. Although her time on the phone will decrease significantly now that she is no longer development director, she will continue to be a welcoming and prayerful presence for our donors, friends, and family members at the Mount.

# Mount Welcomes New Development Director

When the Mount was searching for a new development director, Chris Jehle immediately stood out — not only because he stands at 6'1"! It was clear that Chris shares the Mount's values of dignity for all, especially the vulnerable; the importance of education; and care for creation.



Chris is skilled in offering hospitality and care to persons in high-poverty neighborhoods through his work in establishing The Hope Center and Elevate Metro KC in Kansas City, Missouri. Thus, he understands the mission of Keeler Women's Center (KWC), which the Mount began to serve people living in the urban core of Kansas City, Kansas. Chris also helped establish a neighborhood-based charter elementary school, so he appreciates the sisters' history as educators and their ongoing educational efforts through KWC and Sophia Spirituality Center. As a lover of nature, Chris resonates with the efforts of the sisters to care for creation.

Chris has been working at the Mount since October 2025 and says, "I'm impressed with the depth of the sisters' commitment to living a sacred way of life through the ordinariness of daily prayer and offering hospitality to guests. I love hearing stories of the small things the sisters do that reflect their values — such as the way Sr. Mary Grosdidier collects water from glasses and pitchers at the end of meals to use in watering plants, for example. I'm trying to connect with as many of the Mount's donors as possible so I can share stories like these with them."

Outside of work, Chris stays busy raising a blended family of six children (ranging in age from 8th-grade twins to a junior in college) with his wife, Melissa. They live in Lenexa, Kansas, and enjoy outdoor activities, such as camping and bicycling.

We are grateful to have found a faith-filled, experienced, and enthusiastic person to be our new development director and assist us in sharing our Benedictine values with the world!

For information about how to support the Mount sisters, please contact Chris at [cjehle@mountosb.org](mailto:cjehle@mountosb.org) or 913-426-5185

## *Leaving a Legacy*

Dear Friends of the Mount,

In my few months on staff here at the Mount, I've collected quite a lengthy list of stories that portray the beautiful ethos of devotional service that permeates the community life here. Each day I learn something new, and I don't expect that to stop any time soon. I think there's an endless amount of these stories!

As I continue to connect with those who support the Mount, I'm hearing your stories as well. Laced throughout these stories is gratitude. I hear your gratitude for how the sisters shaped you as a young person in high school or college, for the sisters' care for the vulnerable and forgotten segments of your community, for the way they cared for your loved one who was dying, and for their prayers for your family and for society as a whole.

I am especially thrilled that many of you have chosen to show your gratitude to the sisters of the Mount by including them in your estate plans. What an amazing way to say thank you! It's also an astute investment, ensuring that the sisters' life of prayer and service will continue to thrive well into the future.

The Mount has received several legacy gifts since I became development director a few months ago, and it's been humbling to learn about the donors' connection to the Mount. It is touching to see someone's generosity still expressed in their estate even after they have entered eternal life. It's also beautiful to see the sisters faithfully offer prayers on the donor's behalf, completing the circle of gratitude.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Jehle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chris Jehle  
Director of Development

# Oh, What a Night!

Donors of Mount St. Scholastica know that the Night of Dreams is the place to be to catch up with the sisters, share a fun evening with family and friends, find unique gifts, and lend support to the ministries of the Mount!

We were pleased to host 492 guests at the 29th annual Night of Dreams on November 9, 2025, at the Loews Kansas City Hotel. The evening included a reception with a silent auction, dinner, videos, a spirited oral auction, and raffle ticket drawings.

After 20 and a half years as Development Director, Sr. Mary Agnes Patterson, who is retiring from this position, was honored with a special video presentation. A video of the life of former prioress Esther Fangman, who died on August 11, 2025, also was featured, along with reflections from the sisters on their life of prayer and their ministries at Dooley Center, Keeler Women's Center, and Sophia Spirituality Center.

Seven was the lucky number this year, as three of six raffle ticket drawing winners were seated at Table 7! Winners of cash prizes included Robert G., Kansas City, Missouri (\$10,000); Ken C., Olathe, Kansas, \$2500; Dennis C., West Des Moines, Iowa, \$1000; Kelly C., West Des Moines, Iowa, \$500; Jacob L., Topeka, Kansas, \$500; and Denise S., Conception Junction, Missouri, \$500.

After expenses, the Night of Dreams generated more than \$556,000 for the sisters' ministries. We are exceedingly grateful for the generosity of our donors, who help share our Benedictine values with others. All our benefactors are in our prayers!



## Photos, page 6

*Bottom left, L-R: Carol Poehler, M. J. Poehler, Sister Anne Shepard, Ann Poehler, and Kathy Ostrander.*

*Top right: Sister Bernelda Nanneman gives the drawing tickets a spin.*

*Middle right, L-R: Judy Hemberger and Sandy McEnroe enjoy the reception before dinner.*

*Bottom right: Sister Susan Barber enjoys visiting with her dinner companions.*

## Photos, page 7

*Top left, L-R: Sisters Molly Brockwell, Diana Seago, and Maria Nguyen. Top right; standing, L-R: Rose Tate, Sister Martha Schweiger, Sister Carol Ann Petersen, and Kathy Hintz-Shriwise; seated, L-R: Jackie Bock and Mary Kowalski.*

*Middle right, second photo, L-R: Renee Cottrell, Wes Cottrell, Melissa Jehle, and Chris Jehle.*

*Middle right, third photo, L-R: Gary Geringer and auctioneer Toby Tyler share a laugh.*

*Bottom right: Carol Shomin was among those bidding on silent auction items.*



# Save the Date

for the next Night of Dreams

*October 25, 2026*

Overland Park Convention Center

## *Mount Legacy Society*

The Mount Legacy Society recognizes donors who have remembered the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica as beneficiary of a planned gift. It is a privilege and honor for the sisters to be named as a beneficiary in your gift planning. Thank you for considering such a gift.

For information about making a planned gift, you are invited to contact Chris Jehle, Director of Development, at 913-426-5185 or at [cjehle@mountosb.org](mailto:cjehle@mountosb.org).

The following donors are new to the Mount Legacy Society since our last issue of *Threshold*:

Margaret A. Griffith† • John C. Moore† • Barbara Nagelt  
Marceline (Marcie) Marshall • Rose† and Denise Heiman

# Kathleen Lee Enters the Novitiate

Kathleen Lee took the next step in her monastic journey on August 23, 2025, by entering the novitiate at a simple liturgical ceremony during Evening Prayer. Upon affirming that her desire is to seek God within the community of Mount St. Scholastica, Kathleen was presented with a personal copy of the Rule of St. Benedict, and her canonical novitiate year (a period of one year and one day required by canon law) officially began.

The novitiate is a period of training and preparation that a novice undergoes prior to making monastic profession to discern whether she is called to vowed religious life. It is a time to focus intently on study, prayer, and community life while deepening one's relationship with God and increasing one's self-awareness.

Now that she is halfway through her canonical novitiate year, Kathleen says, "By continuing to travel this way of life with its daily rhythm, I am learning how to set my sail with the One who walks on water. Thankfully, God has given me a loving and wise community to guide me through living the Rule of St. Benedict."



*Novice Kathleen Lee receives a blessing as she enters the novitiate.*

## Sabbath Sunday Presentation Features Choir Chapel Windows

On December 7, 2025, Sister Elizabeth Carrillo gave a Sabbath Sunday presentation about the windows on the north side of the Choir Chapel. She provided information about the symbols included in the windows and the stories they relay about the life of St. Benedict from the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great. Her presentation included several poems by Sister Paula Howard, some singing, and time for quiet reflection.





# Archbishop Shawn McKnight Enjoys Benedictine Hospitality

Shawn McKnight, one of the last archbishops appointed by Pope Francis in April 2025, was warmly welcomed to the Mount on November 16, 2025. After presiding at the 10:30 a.m. Mass in the Choir Chapel, the archbishop greeted sisters and lay guests, ate dinner with the community in the monastery dining room, and addressed the sisters. He spoke about his desire that every parish, every religious community, and every Catholic organization be a center of charity and a sanctuary of mercy.

The community gave the archbishop a number of gifts, including Sister Judith Sutera's inclusive translation of the Rule of St. Benedict with commentary; a copy of *Benedictines* magazine on the theme of synodality; honey from our beehives; jelly made by Sister Marcia Ziska; a miniature sheep crocheted by Sister Eleanor Suther (reflecting the archbishop's role as our shepherd); information about our Laudato Si' platform; and some treats made by Sisters Loretta McGuire and Rosemary Bertels.

After receiving a blessing from the sisters and blessing them in return, the archbishop toured Dooley Center, the monastery, St. Scholastica Chapel, and Sophia Center. He took particular interest in our beehives during a tour of the grounds with Sister Elaine Fischer. When he departed, the Archbishop told Prioress Mary Elizabeth Schweiger, "I loved every minute of my time here."



*Prioress Mary Elizabeth Schweiger and Archbishop Shawn McKnight are tickled by a crocheted lamb given to the archbishop by Sister Eleanor Suther.*



*The sisters bless Archbishop Shawn at the conclusion of their meal together.*

# Scholastica Oblate Deanery Gathers for Annual Retreat

By Oblate Shari Reilly

The Scholastica oblate deanery, which started in Kansas City, Missouri, has been together for 34 years. Over the years we have added to our numbers while keeping active membership between 15 and 20 members. As members scattered across the country, we started to meet regularly by Zoom and became accustomed to seeing one another's beloved faces in little boxes on a screen. This prompted us to prioritize gathering in person, and it is now our custom to travel to the Mount for an annual 3-day retreat.

*We focused our 2025 retreat on the topic, "End of Life: Your Gift to Family and Friends."*

Retreats begin with an evening of catching up. Over wine and festive snacks, we share life stories, pray together, and more recently, remember members who have passed from this life into the next. This practice prompted us to focus our 2025 retreat on the topic, "End of Life: Your Gift to Family and Friends."

Why talk about end of life? The Rule of Benedict says, "Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die" (RB 4:47). We chose to talk about the end of life because so many people do not. We shared

information about everything from estate planning, advance directives, and palliative care to how to talk about death. We spoke about five things to say to someone who is dying: "I love you," "thank you," "I forgive you," "please forgive me," and "I'll be okay." We discussed the elements of obituaries and funeral rituals and how to express what is important to us. We reminded ourselves that funerals are for the living, so we should not try to plan every detail of our own funeral but invite our loved ones to include elements that are most important to them. We even discussed the ethics of cremation, traditional burial, and "green burial."

After such a grace-filled discussion, we spent time centering ourselves, allowing love to radiate from our hearts, and grounding ourselves in God's creation. We reflected on the impact of our lives and choices on creation. We remembered Mary Hynes, Louise Leipold, Hilary Lohrman, Dianna Whitaker, and all the deceased members of our deanery. We enjoyed praying with the sisters, visiting in the dining room, and spending time at the graves of the sisters with whom we shared treasured friendships in life and whose memory we honor in death.

We recognized that as we approach our 35th year together, we are closer to the end than to the beginning. However, with members added as recently as a year ago, we look to the future with hope and trust in the providence of God, deeply rooted in the stability of the Mount St. Scholastica community.



L-R: Connie Wilson, Diane Laughlin, Terry Diehl, Nancy Kolhoff, Adele Sink, Sister Therese Elias, Anne McNulty, Dennie Oades, Mary O'Leary, Shari Reilly, and Sharon Laughlin.

# Oblates Enjoy a Day of Renewal

More than 60 oblates and inquirers gathered at the Mount both in person and via Zoom on October 4, 2025, for Oblate Renewal Day. The day began with Morning Prayer in the Choir Chapel. The prioress, Sister Mary Elizabeth Schweiger, invited oblates to renew their oblation, and the sisters gave them a blessing.

The theme of the day was “Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.” In the morning session, Sister Therese Elias and Oblate Mary O’Leary introduced the practice of *lectio divina*. Participants then practiced this contemplative form of prayer in small groups using a nature-related passage written by the Benedictine saint Hildegard of Bingen. During the dinner break, oblates and sisters enjoyed viewing an exhibit of art created by oblates.

Midday Prayer included renewal of oblation for Zoom participants. The afternoon session featured an exploration of the plight of refugees and immigrants in the world today. Oblate Teresa Warnick gave a presentation about different ways to assist immigrants and provided some resources on this topic.

The sisters are grateful for the opportunity to join our oblates in listening to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and engage in advocacy efforts together.



**Are you interested in becoming an oblate of Mount St. Scholastica?**

For information, see our website at <https://www.mountsb.org/walk-with-us/oblates/> or contact Oblate Coordinator Faye Miller at [femiller@mountsb.org](mailto:femiller@mountsb.org)

*Above: Oblates gather in the Choir Chapel for Morning Prayer with the sisters.*

*Top right, L-R: Oblates Claudia McKinsey, Deb Carmody, and Pat Callaghan enjoy each other's company.*

*Bottom right: Oblate candidates Kara Reed (L) and Alyson Weiser (R) check out the used book room at Oblate Renewal Day.*

# Sisters Share Their Benedictine Values with Employees

The Mount relies on many employees to care for our sisters and family members in Dooley Center, maintain our buildings and grounds, and assist with our ministries at Keeler Women's Center and Sophia Center. As a way of inviting our employees to share in our mission of hospitality, prayer, and care of the sick, we have developed a mission effectiveness program to introduce employees to our Benedictine values. The program also provides employees with some skill-building tools.



*Employees participate in a team-building exercise during a mission effectiveness meeting.*

Beginning in April of 2024, Sisters Barbara Conroy, Patricia Gamgort, and Linda Zahner, along with Dooley Center employees DeAnna Low and Brandy Schmelzle, have planned and presented quarterly presentations for employees. Thus far, topics have included awareness and prayer; community; hospitality (presented by Sister Constance Krstolic); stewardship; team building; and solution-focused problem solving (presented by Percy Turner, a speaker affiliated with Wichita State University). Future sessions will include a tour of the monastery and Sophia Spirituality Center and a presentation about our commitment to care for the earth.

Employees who responded to a survey about the program said that they enjoy hearing sisters' stories about their life and ministries and indicated that they would like to learn more about our Keeler Women's Center and Sophia Center ministries.

## IRELAND PILGRIMAGE TOUR

May 13-22, 2026

### Sites included but not limited to:

- Newgrange
- Belfast
- Devenish Island
- Kylemore Abbey
- Cliffs of Moher
- Muckross Manor
- Blarney Castle
- Glendalough
- Clonmacnoise

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**LIMIT: 20 PEOPLE**

### Includes :

- Double Occupancy Hotel
- Daily Breakfast
- Two Dinners
- Entrance Fees
- Transportation in Ireland

Cost \$3500 per person  
airfare not included

# Retreats Take Sister Judith to the Philippines

*By Sister Judith Sutera*

In late September and early October of 2025, I had the privilege and blessing of being able to visit the Philippines. The Manila Priory of Missionary Benedictine Sisters invited me to lead a renewal program for a group of approximately 30 of their sisters at their retreat center in Tagaytay City. Each morning, I gave a teaching on a Benedictine value, and the afternoons were devoted to private reflection or group sharing.

Despite their difficult history of foreign occupation, war, and poverty, the Filipino people are filled with faith and joy. Decades after the fall of the Marcos regime, their government is still plagued with corruption and oppression of the poor. While I was there, another huge congressional scandal was exposed, and the people took courageously to the streets.

The cardinal-archbishop of Manila urged all people of faith to take part, and he led the Mass and rally in the capital while other large demonstrations occurred throughout the islands. For the entire month of October, all Catholic churches in the nation were to replace the intercessions at Mass with a special prayer asking God to protect the nation, forgive any personal cooperation with, or ignoring of, corruption and dishonesty, and give the nation leaders who would be shepherds of the flock rather than “wolves that devour.”

Other highlights of my trip were addressing the 200+ staff members of their primary to university school in Manila, visiting other schools and ministries, feasting on whole roast pig at celebrations, seeing the world’s most perfect volcano in Legazpi City, and leading a renewal day for oblates of the several area Benedictine communities. Because this gathering was the same day (although 13 hours earlier) as the Mount’s Oblate Renewal Day, they recorded an exuberant greeting to be shared with their oblate brothers and sisters in Atchison. Truly, I have learned in so many ways the beauty of our Benedictine family united across the world.



*Sister Judith Sutera visited the sisters in Legazpi, site of the world’s most perfect volcano.*



*Faculty members of other large Benedictine schools in the area invited Sister Judith for tours.*



*Thirty-five sisters who participated in the renewal program bid Sister Judith farewell.*

# Celebrating a Festive Season

The Mount sisters celebrated Advent, Christmas, and the new year with lots of festive gatherings, and our employees, volunteers, and friends joined in the fun!

In anticipation of Advent, sisters gathered in St. Lucy Chapel on Friday evening, November 28, 2025, to practice Advent songs. This joyful occasion concluded with a pie fest, featuring more than 15 pies made by the sisters.

On December 5, 2025, Keeler Women's Center (KWC) held its volunteer Christmas party at the Wyandotte County Historical Museum in Bonner Springs, Kansas. The event was planned by Sisters Bridget Dickason, Maria Nguyen, and Oanh Pham, along with the KWC Advisory Board. Approximately 75 volunteers attended, along with a number of the sisters who provide programs and other assistance at KWC.

The Mount treated employees of the monastery and Dooley Center to a Christmas dinner on December 17, 2025. Sister Molly Brockwell organized the event, and Sisters Alberta Hermann and Loretta McGuire were the main cooks for the meal. Door prizes made by various sisters were distributed, and the sisters blessed the employees at the end of the meal.

On the fifth day of Christmas, monks from the Abbey led a songfest in the Dooley Center living area and brought cookies to share with the sisters.

On New Year's Eve, Sister Jennifer Halling took the sisters on a walk down memory lane with highlights from each month of 2025. After supper, sisters enjoyed a New Year's Eve party in Dooley Center.



*Keeler Women's Center volunteers share holiday cheer at their annual Christmas party.*



*Dooley Center employee Deb Seager was presented with a door prize by Sister Molly Brockwell at the Mount's annual employee Christmas party.*



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# With a Song in Her Heart



*Sister Janelle Maes practices music for the Christmas Eve Mass in St. Scholastica Chapel.*

Music has been a thread in the life of Sister Janelle Maes since she took her first piano lesson at age 10. Her Benedictine teachers at St. Joseph High School — Sisters Noreen Hurter, Malachi Kennedy, and Rosaria Schaeffer — nurtured her talent by giving her organ lessons, and she continued to take lessons from Sister Joachim Holthaus when she entered the Mount immediately after high school in 1956.

Sister Janelle ultimately majored in music, with organ as her instrument, at Mount St. Scholastica College (MSSC). Her skills came in handy as she taught at a number of Kansas Catholic elementary schools and played at parish Masses when needed. Even after studying at Boston College for a master's degree in elementary education and serving eight years in the education department at MSSC, Sister Janelle continued to take organ lessons intermittently; "It was relaxing for me," she says. She got plenty of practice by providing music for the community at feast day Masses and Liturgy of the Hours.

After discerning that she had a gift for counseling, Sister Janelle pursued a master's in counseling psychology at Loyola College in

Chicago. She then studied in Texas for two years to get licensure as a marriage and family therapist and to become a fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. In 1983, she started Samaritan Counseling Center (later renamed All-Faith Counseling Center) in Atchison, where she provided counseling for 24 years.

Throughout these years of service, Sister Janelle remained a faithful organist at the Mount, and playing the organ became her primary ministry in 2007. "I love to look at a piece of organ music and see how it's put together," she says. "I marvel at the beauty of how the composer ever thought of that. It's a wonder, a thrill, to make it come alive." She especially enjoys playing during the Christmas season, at the Holy Saturday Vigil, and on feast days. "You get to do extra stuff, and it's fun to figure out what pieces to play," she says.

*"I love to look at a piece of organ music and see how it's put together," she says. "I marvel at the beauty of how the composer ever thought of that. It's a wonder, a thrill, to make it come alive."*

Sister Janelle experienced a setback in 2021 when she fell in the St. Scholastica Chapel choir loft while trying to adjust a mirror and sustained a badly broken femur. She credits "wonderful physical therapy" with helping her get back to the organ, and she now uses a stadium seat with lateral restraints while playing. Losing an inch in one leg is a detriment, but she continues to enjoy providing music for Masses and Liturgy of the Hours.

Sister Janelle has developed quite a repertoire, and the sisters and guests alike look forward to her preludes and postludes at Mass. We are grateful she has kept a song in her heart — and at her fingertips — during her 70 years as a member of the Mount!

# BC Student Activities at the Mount

The Mount sisters are always delighted to welcome Benedictine College (BC) students to our campus. Here are some of the classes and projects that have brought them to the Mount in the 2025-2026 school year:

- Dooley Center hosted 11 BC nursing students for their foundations level clinical rotation from September 30 through November 12, 2025. The students helped sisters with their everyday needs and practiced assessment skills. The students also had time for one-on-one visits with sisters and attended prayers and Mass with them.

- Sister Barbara Conroy, director of pastoral care in Dooley Center, met with 60 students of a General Psychology class on October 14, 2025. The students learned about the history and present ministries of the Mount sisters, the mission of Dooley Center, and the importance of understanding human development across the lifespan, including one's final years when issues of death and dying arise. The students returned to the Mount another day to take a tour of the monastery and meet some of the sisters.

- On October 28 and 30, 2025, 14 students from a Christian Bioethics class visited Dooley Center to explore responses to suffering and end-of-life ethics. Some of the students returned to the Mount another day to visit with sisters.

- The Department of Music at Benedictine College sponsored a Mass in St. Scholastica Chapel in honor of St. Cecilia on November 22, her feast day. Fr. Meinrad Miller was the celebrant. Music was provided by the Benedictine College Liturgical Choir and the Harmonia Florentes choir. A special blessing of musicians took place at the end of Mass.

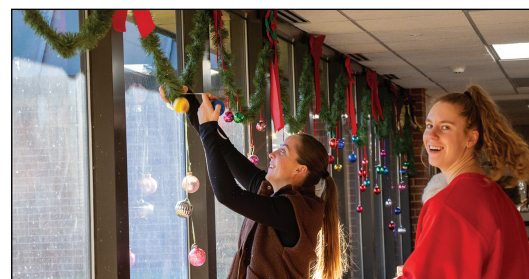
- On November 22, six members of the BC football team who belong to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes came to play cards with sisters who reside in Dooley Center. A number of the sisters are avid football fans and had lots of questions for the players.

- Who better to help the sisters take down Christmas decorations than some of the tallest students on the BC campus, the women's basketball team members? They joined us on January 12, 2026, along with their coach, Chad Folsom, and after "de-decorating," attended Mass and dinner with the sisters.

- A number of BC students participate in the Mount's Partners in Prayer program. Students are matched up with a sisters and come to the monastery for Evening Prayer and supper on a regular basis.



*BC students in a Christian Bioethics class explore responses to suffering and end-of-life ethics with Sister Barbara Conroy.*



*Members of the BC women's basketball team help the sisters take down Christmas decorations.*



*BC students in a General Psychology class learn about the mission of Dooley Center and the importance of understanding human development across the lifespan.*



*BC students enjoy a game of cards with Sisters Bernelda Nanneman (L) and Marilyn Schieber (R).*

# History in the Making: Renovating Our Archive

For many years, the archive area of Mount St. Scholastica has been bursting at the seams. Given that the Mount has a 163-year history, with 76 sisters currently living and 674 who are deceased, it is easy to understand why we needed to expand our archive space. The Mount also houses archival materials for seven other Benedictine monasteries, along with the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica, the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses, and the American Benedictine Formation Conference.

In January through April of 2025, a 6400-square-foot space containing a sewing area and an exercise/game room in the basement of the monastery was cleared out and renovated. Renovations included redoing water and sewer lines and installing new lighting; pulling up linoleum and cleaning the floors; building walls; moving existing shelves and installing additional shelving; painting; and transferring materials from the previous 1500-square-foot archive.



*Archive employee Micah Warren reshelves archival materials in the new archive stacks.*



*L-R: Sisters Rosann Eckart, Chris Kean, and Elaine Fischer and maintenance department employee Dirk Weatherford prepare to move boxes to the new archive stacks.*

We are grateful to all those who worked on this project: Sisters Rosann Eckart, Elaine Fischer, Chris Kean, Loretta McGuire, Helen Muetting, and Barbara Smith, along with members of the maintenance staff and volunteers John and Karin Hosler.

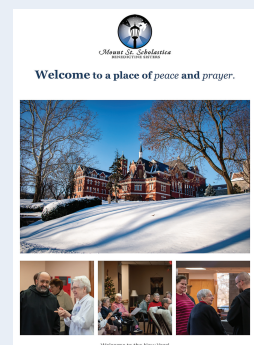
The archive now includes greatly expanded stacks that are handicapped accessible, separate temperature and humidity controls, a sizeable work area for staff, and a new reading and research room for guests that will include built-in cabinets for displays and bookcases with reference materials. Work on this room is still in progress.

If you have a research question, you can reach our archivist, Elaine Nadeau, via the contact form on the Mount website: <https://www.mountosb.org/about/archive/>. Visitors to the archive at the Mount are

welcome, but appointments are encouraged. Some of the Mount's collections and exhibits can be viewed at the following website: <https://mountosb.omeka.net/>.

## *Sign Up for Our Monthly e-Newsletter!*

If you'd like to know what's going on at the Mount between issues of *Threshold*, sign up for our short monthly e-newsletter! It includes photos, updates, coming events, and a poem by one of the sisters. You can sign up by scanning the QR code or by sending your email address to Sister Mary Margaret Kean at [mmkean@mountosb.org](mailto:mmkean@mountosb.org).



# Monastery News and Notes

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## *Sisters Welcome Members of Amnesty International*

Nineteen members of Amnesty International from across the United States came to Sophia Spirituality Center for a working retreat from September 3-6, 2025. The focus of the retreat was efforts to end the death penalty in the United States. The retreatants came to Morning and Evening Prayer and shared meals with the sisters, and Sister Susan Barber planned a special Taize-style prayer service for the guests and sisters that was held in St. Scholastica Chapel.

*Members of Amnesty International hold signs in support of ending the death penalty.*



## *Mount Hosts Donnelly College Board*

The sisters hosted nineteen members of the Donnelly College Board on September 10, 2025. The Board members attended Mass and ate dinner with the sisters. After dinner, Sister Mary Elizabeth Schweiger gave a brief history of the Mount community, and the sisters blessed the Board members. They then were given a tour of the monastery by Sister Judith Sutera and went to Sophia Spirituality Center for a meeting and supper.

*Members of the Donnelly College Board learn about the history of the Mount on a tour led by Sister Judith Sutera.*



## *Sisters End the Season of Creation with Prayer*

On October 1, 2025, the Wangari ecology committee conducted a prayer service to mark the end of the Season of Creation. Sisters were invited to bring various items from our garden into the chapel, such as squash, green beans, seed packets, flowers, and tomatoes. The service included a meditation with sounds of birds and animals from around the world. A reception afterward included harvest foods and beverages, including mead (honey wine) made from honey we collected from our beehives.

*Sister Loretta McGuire leads a prayer at a closing service for the 2025 Season of Creation.*



## *Mount Hosts I-CARE Mass*

On October 25, an I-CARE Mass for people with disabilities and their families was celebrated in St. Scholastica Chapel. It was the first time an I-CARE Mass took place in Atchison. The event was coordinated by Kevin Hill, a friend of the Mount, and Father Bill Bruning was the celebrant. Many families with children were present. Some attendees participated by singing in a choir, being lectors, offering petitions, taking up a collection, and carrying gifts in the offertory procession. There was great spirit among those who attended. After Mass, the Knights of Columbus hosted the guests for a meal and bingo at Maur Hill–Mount Academy.



*Musicians enhanced an I-CARE Mass celebrated in St. Scholastica Chapel with their spirited music.*

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## *LCWR Members Gather at the Mount*

Twelve members of the Region 13 Chapter of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) gathered at Sophia Center for a regional meeting from September 27-29, 2025. The sisters came from Leavenworth, Concordia, and Wichita, Kansas; St. Louis, Missouri; and Colorado Springs, Colorado. Sisters Mary Elizabeth Schweiger and Rose Marie Stallbaumer attended from the Mount. As part of the gathering, Sister Elizabeth Carrillo led the group in a day of reflection on the care of creation.



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## *Sisters Celebrate Christ the King with Abbey Monks*

The monks of St. Benedict's Abbey invited the sisters to join them for vespers, a social, and dinner to celebrate the feast of Christ the King on November 23, 2025. After a wonderful meal, the sisters enjoyed a skit by Brothers Maximilian Anderson and Jean-Marie Hogan. The evening ended with a prayer by the abbot, a blessing of the monks by the sisters, and singing of the *Ultima* in Latin, English, and German.



*After praying vespers together on the Feast of Christ the King, the sisters and monks enjoyed a social hour. Foreground, Sister Barbara Smith; right side, L-R, Sisters Linda Herndon and Cecilia Olson and Father Jay Kythe.*

# Thank you to our donors!

*Due to a printing error, the names of some of our donors were inadvertently dropped from the Summer 2025 issue of Threshold. We apologize and express our great appreciation to the donors listed below for their contributions to the Mount.*

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*May the souls of the faithful departed*

✠ **Rest in Peace** ✠

## Sister Mary Lucy Kramer

*November 9, 1933 – January 31, 2026*

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Sister Mary Lucy had friends around the world. She began life in the rural Atchison area known as Good Intent, Kansas, and then attended Lillis High School in Kansas City, Missouri. She was fond of telling that, after graduation, she was one of those telephone operators that are seen in pictures of young women with headsets sitting by a wall of plugs. Returning to Atchison, she entered the monastery in 1953 and spent the next twenty years in typical teaching assignments in Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas.



Her sphere of influence expanded when she became interested in students whose first language was not English. After earning a master's degree in teaching English as a second language (ESL), she embarked on a 30-year ministry at Donnelly College. There she interacted with immigrants, students who planned to return to their countries, and their families from across the globe, supporting them in countless ways as they navigated American culture. She was active in organizations related to her profession and deservedly received the "Pat on the Back" award from Mid-American Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MIDTESOL).

Also holding a certificate in vocal music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music, Sister Mary Lucy was a gifted soloist and choir member at her Kansas City parish and at the monastery. But the thing of which she was most proud was that she shared a lineage with eight Atchison Benedictines, including Mother Lucy Dooley and Abbot Martin Veth. She, too, became a beloved bud on the family tree.



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and many other offerings at [www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org)



# *In Memoriam: Oblates*



## ***Oblate Louise Ammatelli Liepold***

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Louise Ammatelli Liepold passed peacefully into eternity on July 18, 2025, having recently been diagnosed with ALS. With remarkable courage, she engaged with family and friends up until the last hours of her death.

Louise was born and raised in St. Louis and moved to Kansas City after her marriage to Frank Ammatelli. Together they raised six children. Louise had a deep appreciation of education and encouraged her children to pursue and love learning. When her family was raised, she herself returned to the classroom, earning a degree in English Literature. She loved art and art

history, eventually becoming a docent at the Nelson Art Gallery. In later years, as a widow, Louise met and married Robert Liepold, who preceded her in death.

Louise was a faithful oblate of the Mount for over 25 years. Those who knew her admired her as a woman of boundless curiosity, strength, and grace, whose belief in an all-loving God sustained her through times of sorrow as well as joy. Though she will be missed, we celebrate her legacy of wisdom and the reality that she presently glories in all that her spirit has longed for.

## ***Oblate June McKenny***

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June McKenny died on September 16, 2025, at the age of ninety. June made her oblation in 2001 and was a member of the St. Joseph, Missouri, deanery.

June was born in a one-room log cabin on Empire Prairie in western Gentry County, Missouri, in 1935. She grew up on a dairy farm, graduated from Stanberry High School, and then attended business school in St. Joseph. June married John Joseph “Joe” McKenny in 1957; together they enjoyed a full life and were blessed with five children. June was

happy that all her children attended St. Francis Grade School and Bishop LeBlond High School.

June was proud of her Catholic faith. She was a member of St. Francis Xavier parish in St. Joseph for over 65 years and was active in school and church activities. She was always joyful and had a gift of warm hospitality. Her home always had an open door. In her later years she delighted in the company of her 10 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. June was and always will be a Christian role model.

## ***Oblate Mary Kay Elias***

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Mary Kay Elias, a member of the Atchison oblate deanery since 2011, died on January 18, 2026.

A graduate of Mount St. Scholastica Academy, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Mount St. Scholastica College and was an accomplished classical organist. She taught school for 12 years before earning her master’s degree from the University of Missouri–Kansas City in Public Administration.

For many years, Mary Kay worked as the Manager of Distribution Operations for the United States Postal

Service in Kansas City, Missouri. She married Lee Bohannon in 1986, and together they raised eight children. She enjoyed spending time with her large family, which included three sisters, three brothers, 17 grandchildren, and a host of great grandchildren.

Mary Kay had a lively and compassionate spirit. A member of St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in Kansas City, Missouri, she was a community organizer and philanthropist, an animal lover, and always a good neighbor.

# We remember with gratitude and love

The many friends and loved ones of Sister Esther Fangman were shocked and saddened by the news on August 11, 2025, that she had died unexpectedly after a brief illness.

On April 23, 1945, Sister Esther was born, with her twin brother Lester, into a large rural Nemaha County, Kansas, family. She entered the Mount at 19 and began a typical life as an elementary teacher, but that did not last long.



1



Her deep caring for others led her to work as a dorm director and to further study in psychology. She received a doctorate in counseling from Idaho State University and was a compassionate counselor and trainer of peer counselors for most of the rest of her life.

2



As others began to appreciate her extraordinary talents, Sister Esther became active in the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica and was elected president of the group in 1998.

3



5

After her 12-year term as president of the Monastic Congregation, Sister Esther turned her counseling skills toward aiding refugees and victims of torture and trauma.

Always passionate about the ethical treatment of women, one of the highlights of her term was her courageous address to the Congress of Benedictine Abbots in Rome regarding the sexual abuse of African sisters.



4

When her term as prioress ended, Sister Esther was looking forward to assisting the community with communications and in the guest hospitality department, but this was to be only a brief ministry.



7

This was not to be the end of her contributions to the world. In 2017, she was chosen by her sisters to be the prioress of Mount St. Scholastica.



6

At her death, hundreds travelled to her funeral and tributes poured in from around the world. This condolence note summarizes the thoughts of so many who knew her: "Truly she was among our greats in the U.S. Benedictine world! We are so very grateful for her generous service and wise presence no matter where she was or who she was with."



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## *Congratulations to our 2025 Jubilarians*

**We are grateful for their faithfulness to prayer, community life,  
and the practice of hospitality in our life together as Benedictine sisters!**



*Back row, L-R: Sisters Cecilia Olson (60 years), Elaine Fischer (35 years), Diana Seago (30 years), Constance Krstolic (55 years), and Delores Dolezal (65 years). Front row, L-R: Sisters Barbara Smith (20 years), Sharon Murray (70 years), Carol Ann Petersen (60 years), and Mary Elizabeth Schweiger (60 years). Not pictured: Sister Susan Holmes (60 years).*