



I Believe I Shall See the Good Things of the Lord in the Land of the Living



Sister Louise Wirtz on her 75th jubilee of monastic profession.

Sister Louise (Lorraine) Wirtz, who died August 27 at St. Benedict's Health Center in Dickinson, was once aptly described as "a big woman with a big engine and a big heart." She was certainly a big presence in our community and among her family and friends. At her wake service the family/friend stories corresponded so well what we knew of her heart, her humor and her glorious humanity.

Born the fourth of fourteen children in the John and Mary (Bauer) family at her father's homestead in Outlook, MT, she assumed many responsibilities as an older sibling. The family moved to Kenmare when she was seven because her parents wanted their children to have a Catholic education at St. Agnes Academy staffed by the Ursulines. It was there that Sister Louise knew she wanted to be a nun, but she felt called to a smaller community and, most definitely, one that would not ask her to teach. She never had to spend time in a classroom, but she was so capable and adaptable not an ounce of her energy was not in service in some capacity: cook, gardener, laundress and procurator were some of her roles in the monastery.

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The Old Red Trail Is What It Used to Be!

There is a new, award-winning "old" reality in our area! While the original Old Red Trail revealed itself in rocks painted red to serve as signposts for settlers coming to and through our area, the eventual Old Red/Old Ten Trail (Highway 10) was smoother and faster. Roughly parallel, I-94 was even smoother and faster as it merely had exits to the small towns as well as the scenic, recreational, historical and cultural opportunities along the way.

In 2006 interested citizens from rural areas from Mandan to Dickinson decided to try to lure people off the interstate and into the communities, so they worked to get "Old Ten" as the tenth North Dakota Scenic Byway designation in 2008. Sister Phoebe Schwartze has been our representative and Abbot Brian Wangler

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Mission Statement
Benedictine Sisters of Richardton

We are a vibrant community of Catholic Benedictine women who strive to deepen our relationship with God and one another through sharing the spiritual and material gifts God has given to us on this prairie.



Sister Phoebe and Abbot Brian show off the Old Red Trail awards.

She was a natural in her ministry with the elderly and helped open our St. Vincent's Home in Bismarck with boundless capability, energy and humor. In 1941 she led the charge to take an old three-story mansion with a long, somewhat spotty history and turned it into a home for the elderly. Her talent for this work had solid credentials: "We had no money; we had no training—just what we had learned at home and in the convent about caring for old people." It was largely due to Sister Louise's two terms as administrator (1962-67 and 1971-77) that St. Vincent's Home (now Sanford St. Vincent's Care Center) went on the set the bar for excellent care. She was a hands-on, heart-on administrator in that she knew everyone—residents, employees and families—and everything from roof to boilers.

Sister Louise spent 1967-71 here at Sacred Heart Monastery, overseeing the construction and learning how all things worked in the building. Legend has it that she and Sister Loretta Jahner literally camped in the shell of this place, even to the point of cooking a can of beans with a blow torch. She was the monastic procurator in those years and a great steward of our new monastery before returning to Bismarck.

From St. Vincent's she became the administrator of Marillac Manor, an adjacent facility of independent-living apartments for the elderly, named after her patron St. Louise de Marillac, cofounder with St. Vincent de Paul of the Daughters of Charity.

Eventually her "big engine" began to slow down, but her "big heart" kept going strong. Her macular degeneration and failing health precipitated a move home to the monastery in 1994. She could "feel" her way in peeling potatoes and greatly enjoyed the outdoor chores, so she found many ways to contribute to our lives. Sisters Louise and Armella Weisbeck

performed their comic "Catherine and Charlie" routine for us year after year, working the hardest to crack the other up so much that she could not go on. It is our most cherished community skit ever and it never got old.

Sister Louise entered St. Benedict's Health Center in 2003, becoming a member of yet another community whom she loved and who loved her right back. She deeply appreciated the tender care she received there over her last ten years. Sister Louise died there with our Sister Monica Thome holding her hand.

The Old Red Trail . . . (Continued from page 1)

serves as Abbey's. These efforts paid off in grand style this year when the Old Red Old Ten Scenic Byway Committee received the 2013 Tourism Organization of the Year, one of the ND Governor's awards for Travel and Tourism.

The seven-years' efforts of this all-volunteer, grassroots committee has been fruitful. With grants from Stark and Morton counties they set up a website and signage along the way, pointing out the historical and present sites of interest in the communities along this portion of Old Ten. More visitors are showing up in the communities along the way. We have hosted many bicyclists from all over the country who camp on our grounds and share their experiences with us. There is greater inter-community awareness and support as well.

This was all initiated by Robin Reynolds and Ken Johnson of Hebron who saw a need that could be a great opportunity. Volunteers responded, ideas were brought to life, and now beautiful towns and countryside are new discoveries for those who get out of the fast lane. You can find us along the Old Red/ Old Ten Trail.

The Collection Basket

Michelle Maderak arrived here on August 27 from Yoder, WY, with her parents Marion and Catherine Maderak, to enter our community. She was received as a candidate on the following day at Vespers and will move to the second stage, postulancy, in December.

Her formation includes four of our inter-community formation courses with Assumption Abbey as well as private classes with Sister Ruth Fox, her director, and Sister Kathleen Kuntz, a member of the formation team. Classes in the AA-SHM are taught by Abbot Brian Wangler, Fathers Terrence Kardong and Anthony Baker, Brother Benet Tvedten and Sister Renée Branigan.



You may have seen this picture of the double rainbow out our front door sometime in the last few months. The full double rainbow appeared on August 10 of this year in the early evening. It was a dreary rainy day and Sister Renée looked up from her book while sitting in the common area upstairs in front of the huge window. First, there were blotchy colors, but it was still raining, the sky rather brown grey. Soon a rainbow



appeared, and then clearly it was a double rainbow gaining in brilliance. When the light became brighter that she ditched her book and donned her shoes to go downstairs for a camera.

The best was yet to come because after alerting others about the sight, the sun came out just as she was ready to head out into the rain to take some pictures. It was only then that we could see that it was a full double rainbow arching to the end of the front wing. It was clearly a great sign of blessing even without the pots of gold.



Molly is a good dog, but sometimes she is more dog than good.

Benedictines are known for their hospitality and that is one quality about us that we want people to feel whenever they come. Molly is pretty good at welcoming the stranger or anyone who shows up at our door. She is a bit more on alert when they show up with another dog.

Several weeks ago we had some guests who had a hunting dog with them and one morning Molly trotted around to the offices to show us her really big and absolutely new rawhide bone. We all wondered who could have given her that on a quiet morning with only us here, but no one knew. She banged at the door with the bone (which she never once put down) and was let outside. At lunch we were talking about it and found that none of us had given it to her. Further inquiry led to the fact that the guests had not closed their bedroom doors. Molly had gone into the guestroom and helped herself to the “working” dog’s reward. Furthermore, she hid it where none of us could find it for weeks and, when asked about it directly, looked away as if she had no idea of “the bone.”

Sister Paula had an apologetic conversation with our guests about what had happened and they were kind enough to find it a great story. Thanks to their gracious understanding we did not lose our five-star rating. As for Molly, she is more dog than thief. After weeks of looking we found where the bone was buried, brought it in and washed it off. The next day she had it in her mouth, banging it against the door to be let out. Guests are now asked to please close their doors—especially if they have dog bones.



It was an honor for us to be a sponsor for the Empty Bowls event in Dickinson again this year. The artistry, apparent in every handmade bowl, was exquisite; artists and students excelled in their creations. A donor purchases one of the unique bowls, empty, of course, as it is for the hungry. Soup is available as well as a slice of bread baked here at the Monastery. This year’s weather was much more cooperative for this event and attendance greatly increased over last year’s. Empty Bowls is a project of The Imagine/Render Group, a non-profit organization dedicated to lasting social change through arts, education and projects that build community. They can (and



should) happen in any community. See their website at www.emptybowls.net.

This benefit is scheduled to coincide with the Badlands Art Association 43rd Annual Art Show in which Sister Patti Koehler both displayed and judged. Children through adults contribute entries and are judged in various categories. This area really supports art and it shows in the quality of the creative pieces.



Throughout November we pray for deceased loved ones whose names have been sent to us. As the lists come in they get copied and sorted into two packets: one for chapel and one for an individual Sister to pray for throughout November. In chapel the names are kept in a special basket in the sanctuary in separate packets of 17-20 and the office leader opens the closing prayer with “We pray our deceased family and friends, especially for the loved ones of. . .” The names of those who



Fran Hauck (right), our cook since 1997, retired on November 1. At our farewell gathering for her she “vested” our new cook, Vaunda Strand, with “the apron,” thus passing on her responsibilities in the kitchen.

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submitted their loved ones' names are read. Even if they arrive late, the names are put in the prayer packet.

Each Sister receives a packet of names and she prays each day for both the deceased as well as those who submitted the names. Some keep their names in chapel to pray before Office or after Mass; others incorporate them in their times of private prayer. In Vespers we all pray and in private we each pray. It is a joy and honor to do this for others.



Many of us were able to attend Thirst 2013, our diocesan Eucharistic Congress, October 25-27. We enjoyed Cardinal Timothy Dolan's keynote address and the Mass—it is inspiring to celebrate Eucharist with several thousand people participating! There were numerous breakout groups with a

the well-attended panel on women's religious vocations. We had a booth for telling people about Sacred Heart Monastery, offering them blessed Benedictine medals while asking them to submit petitions for us to hold in prayer. We held those intentions the following days in a novena to St. Benedict.



One of our favorite days of the month is when the Page Coach, the Dickinson Area Public Library's bookmobile, pulls up to our back door. A chance encounter enabled us to start this marvelous tradition back in 1989. The Library had received a grant to see if area patrons would support a bookmobile and they just happened to have an hour between stops in Richardton and Taylor (only about four miles apart) and we are in between. We issued an ongoing lunch invitation

and, as they say, the rest is history. Even when the scheduled changed a bit, they accommodated us in the shift. Now the Page Coach pulls up a little earlier and we provide fresh coffee and cookies. We are probably good for 35-50 checkouts a stop, considering we go for the books, the movies and the CDs. What a blessing this service has been for us these 24 years!



*Sister Patti Koehler designed
our Christmas card this year.
We hold all of our readers in
prayer in this holy season.
May your Christmas and
New Year be full of blessings!*