



## We Praise the Lord for the Faithfulness of Our Sister Jubilarians!



L to R standing: Sister Paula Larson, prioress, 50 years; Sister Brigid McLean, 75 years; Sister Ruth Fox, 60 years; Sister Perpetua Steiner, 75 years. L to R seated: Sister Monica Thome, 75 years; Sister Annella Gardner, 75 years. Sister Paula will celebrate her golden jubilee on July 5 at Vespers in a public ceremony, while the other jubilarians will be honored in a monastic communal celebration on August 9.

Though we are a relatively small community (23 members) we have much to celebrate on August 9. This summer we will celebrate with six jubilarians: Sisters Monica Thome, Perpetua Steiner, Brigid McLean and Annella Gardner will celebrate their 75th anniversary of their monastic profession; Sister Ruth Fox will celebrate her 60th; and Sister Paula Larson, prioress, her 50th jubilee on July 5. The total 410 years of monastic profession is a record year for us for jubilee celebration! Each of these Sisters has brought precious and unique gifts to our community and they have helped form who we are today.

**Sister Monica** was born in “Good Luck township” near Grenora and reared on her parents’ farm. After entering community she was trained and served as a nurse, nursing supervisor and in-service director for most of her years of service, especially at St. Vincent’s Care Center in Bismarck and St. Luke’s Hospital in Crosby, and later as the hospitality and spirituality coordinator at Marillac Manor in Bismarck. Presently Sister Monica is a resident at St. Benedict’s Health Center in Dickinson. She is a gentle woman of keen insight and grace and these characteristics are so apparent in her ever-present smile.

**Sister Perpetua** comes from the Mott area and is still here at the monastery keeping up with everything. She served for many years on our various missions as cook and housekeeper and created countless lovely things with her crochet needle. At ninety-eight years old she is still sharp and going strong, ever-faithful to our Office and Eucharist

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## Our Commitment to Pillar Values

Our May community days’ meetings were especially significant this year because we unanimously decided to pursue two of our pillar values, hospitality and good stewardship of the earth, in a defining way. We have been recognized for living both these values in the past, but we have committed ourselves to advance significantly in both with one action.

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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.

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as well as hours of her own personal prayer. She is our go-to person when we have a question about something in our history and we very seldom hear "I don't know" as an answer—her memory is remarkable! Our dog Molly is one of her major fans because of her evening ritual of getting her treat from Sister Perpetua. She is a mainstay in her birth family, too, as her nieces and nephews see that she gets to family events and outings which she enjoys.

**Sister Brigid** came to us from a farm near Outlook, MT, and became one of our best teachers in grade and high school throughout North Dakota and at our academy in Bogotá, Colombia. Besides teaching, Sister served the community in a variety of capacities: subprioress, formation director, treasurer, etc. Her high energy, ability to organize and toss what needed tossing, and gentle willingness to help out in any way she could helped make her a most-loved community member. When she felt she needed more care with the daily things, she chose to go to St. Vincent's Care Center in Bismarck and frequently expresses her gratitude for the loving care she receives there. She is sorely missed by the home community at the monastery because she was such a faithful member of our lives here, but she comes home for visits when she can. Her family decided that they would have a reunion in Bismarck to celebrate her jubilee with her too.

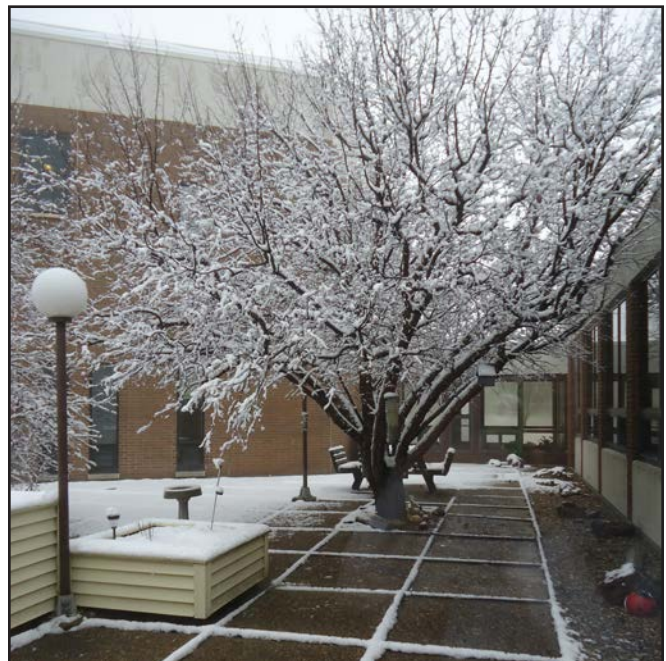
**Sister Annella** is a native of Sanish, a town that was lost with the building of the Garrison Dam. She, too, served as teacher as well as principal and administrator in various Catholic schools. After serving as the community subprioress and principal of our Sacred Heart Academy in Minot, she became a founding member of our mission in Bogotá where she left a part of her heart when she came back to the States. Upon her return she served as assistant administrator at St. Vincent's Care Center before moving home to the monastery for various responsibilities. She made lifelong friends wherever she went. When she needed more care than we could provide, she chose to live at the Richardton Health Center.

**Sister Ruth**, originally from a farm near Stanley, will celebrate her 60th anniversary of monastic profession with those celebrating their 75th. Her career as an excellent teacher ended with her first election as prioress in 1973, an office she held until 1981 when she went to study for a MA in theology. She was reelected in 2005 and served another six years. In her years in community she has spent much of her time in some form of leadership, either as prioress for a total of fourteen years or as the president of our Federation of St. Gertrude for nine years, as formation director for many years or as the director of our Spirituality Center.

Ever the learner, she used the opportunities given her to be enriched in her travels throughout the world, continuing her education in Scripture, monasticism and Women's Studies. As a result she was popular in serving as a retreat director and presenter at various conventions and symposiums as well as a writer. Presently she is formation director and organist here at the monastery.

Last, but not first (she's the prioress), **Sister Paula** will celebrate her golden jubilee of monastic profession on her birthday, July 5. Our community policy is to celebrate our silver and golden jubilees with the public but other jubilee celebrations are within the monastic community. Sister Paula, a native of Scobey, MT, earned a MS in psychiatric nursing and later a MA in Christian Spirituality which prepared her well for her work at St. Luke's Hospital in Crosby, St. Vincent's Nursing Home and Marillac Manor in Bismarck, the Badlands Human Service Center in Dickinson, and the Sacred Heart Benedictine Foundation. One could also say her background prepared her well for serving as our prioress for more than fifteen years and counting! Among her many "gifts of the office" is her intimate understanding of our whole plant and her enjoyment of manual labor—garden, animals, furnace, mechanical . . . the list is virtually endless. That would amount to little, however, if she did not have the interpersonal skills to navigate with the monastic community as a whole and with each individual Sister, as well as her warm ability to deal with the public.

What really causes our joy when it comes to jubilees of monastic profession are the lives of these individual women whose search for God reveal how clearly they have been found by God. These lives, given to the Lord, enrich us and the whole world.



By the end of April Spring still had not made an appearance.

The Colorado College Monastic Pilgrimage this March brought us a marvelous group of students here and to the Abbey for Spring Break. Each year we say, "This is the best group ever!" and it is true every year. L to R back row S. Renée, Zack, Russell, Anna, Bro. Michael; middle, Elizabeth, Merry, Adel, Jade, Nichelle; front, Emily P., Chaplain Kate, and Emily F. Several were back for their second or third year. It gives new meaning to a countercultural Spring Break experience—for them and for us!



### *Pillar Values . . .* (Continued from page 1)

First, let us provide a context. Our phase 1 renovation, completed in 2010, turned our large chapel into two floors with 15 bedrooms upstairs and our chapel, guest lounge, gift shop, meeting and health care rooms downstairs. This entire area is heated and cooled by geothermal, however, the rest of our building is heated but not cooled, except for single portable units in some areas. We completed our phase 2 of renovation in 2011 which included eleven bedrooms in the front wing of the monastery. While they are large and lovely, each with a private bath, they are not air-conditioned except by portable units in season and the heating tends to be uneven.

Ever conscious of energy costs and backup systems, we have monitored our energy resources and uses all along, but circumstances have now led us to deal comprehensively with the rest of the building that was not included in our chapel renovation or decommissioned areas. Let us begin with a brief history.

Our present central hot-water heating system was installed originally and provided heat through forced-air units and pneumatic thermostats. It was never an ideal system because areas of the building would be really hot even when the heat was off. In 1984 we installed a coal furnace because it was a cheap fuel source at that time. However, with a growing understanding of clean fuels, the maintenance of the coal equipment and residue, and the enormous amount of money it would take to upgrade the operation, we have decided to end coal as a fuel source. In 1997 we installed two wind turbines that have been a good

source of clean electricity for us and we are committed to keep those fully functional. In 2010 we upgraded to two high efficiency thermal solution boilers that run on natural gas.

What we need is to maintain a comfortable environment by controlling temperatures and humidity levels year around throughout the entire facility. The renovated chapel area works beautifully, but there are no guest bedrooms in that area and we have an increasing request for guest facilities. We commissioned a system improvements study from Obermiller Nelson (ONE Building Systems Consultants) in Bismarck to get a view of our potential for solving this problem and we found how well God blessed us in our original building back in 1967!

When Ken Schwartz, PE, presented the report to us on May 2, we found that our building originally allowed for a cooling system throughout but it was never installed. Structurally there is little that needs to be done and new technology offers us a total solution for an estimated \$550,000. The proposed hybrid heat pump system will be able to cool or heat any space any time of the year with a change of our air exchange units, compressors, and other equipment, and all this requires no major renovation. We can draw on clean energy sources for a more even and responsive air environment for pennies more than coal.

We heartily made this decision to provide a better environment for our guests and us, as well as enhance our commitment to good stewardship of the earth. This year our annual fundraiser, Celebrate the West at the Elks Lodge in Dickinson, September 27, will dedicate the proceeds to this project. We hope you will join us!



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## The Collection Basket

We congratulate our local Catholic Daughters Court Bishop Wehrle #1919 on their 50th anniversary. We joined in their celebration in the parish Living Rosary and meal on May 4. We are grateful for them and all they do!



Palm Sunday this year turned out to have an additional celebratory element: three of our Sisters came home from their care centers and some mission Sisters came too. It was a beautiful day for travel and so we enjoyed their presence at Mass and Divine Office, through brunch and recreation until mid-afternoon.

Sister Carol Axtmann brought Sister Monica Thome home from St. Benedict's Health Center, Dickinson and Sister Anna Rose Ruhland brought Sisters Brigid McLean and Mary William Stadick from St. Vincent's Care Center in Bismarck, while Jim Beyer was kind enough to take time on his day off to bring Sister Annella Gardner here and back to the Richardton Health Center.



Sister Mary William sparkles in Farkle! (L to R) Sisters Ruth Fox, Carol Axtmann and Kathleen Kuntz react differently to losing.

With six extra Sisters home we had quite the Palm Sunday procession and great visiting. Rummikub and Farkle were the big entertainers for afternoon recreation.



The Easter Vigil with Assumption Abbey and St. Mary's Parish this year could be described as "enhanced." In addition to the usual blessings of the Easter fire and candle and Eucharist, we had a baptism and two adults profess their faith. In gratitude for Fr. Boniface Muggli's preparation with them, the three offered him a new chalice and paten which were blessed and used that night. While we really knew we had been in church for almost three hours, this liturgical highlight of the year was superb.



This building is structurally exceptionally well-built, but various parts give way after years of use. The floor tiles where we do dishes three times a day literally bit the dust. The tile layer promised to be here, so Frank Buresh, our maintenance man, removed the old tiles in preparation. The guy never came. After days of using plastic and paper products, we had to put the dishwasher back in before our weekend group arrived. Early the following Monday we found a tile layer that *did* come and a week later we had floor again. We are finally washing our dishes again instead of tossing them. *Now* we wonder why we wished so much to wash dishes.



Feet have become popular items around here. Sister Laura Hecker has been dealing with painful planter fasciitis while Sister Renée Branigan is slowly healing from her two foot surgeries in 2013. Sister Marie Hunkler went to her local church to get a bulletin one evening and took the stairs while dispensing with the use of a light. Her last step was really the second last step and she fractured her foot. Now Sister Patti Koehler is recovering from corrective surgeries on her right foot.