



We Celebrate a 100th Birthday and 140 Years of Monastic Profession



Sister Monica celebrates her 100 years.

Vincent's in Bismarck, hospitality at the monastery, spiritual director, etc. It is the "etc." that most clearly describes her through her 70 plus years as a Benedictine. Her many gifts are obvious and she uses them generously in service of everyone she meets. She has a graced presence and a generous smile. In short, she gives of herself every minute of the day to God, her monastic community and guests.

Sister Mary William Stadick, OSB, embraced her religious vocation early in life, making her first profession of vows at 17 (now Canon Law requires one to be at least 18). She was born in Underwood, the youngest child of John and Martha (Manacke) Stadick. She completed her high school at Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston, MN, before earning her teaching credential through Minot State Teacher's College, Mount Marty in Yankton, SD, and graduating from the University of Mary in 1977.

Despite a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis at age 25, she excelled as a teacher for 40 years at SS Peter and Paul's, Fallon; St. Joseph's, Red Lake Falls, MN; St. Nicholas, Garrison; St. Leo's, Minot; and St. Mary's, Malta, MT. Though she was a delightful, patient teacher, her energy waned so she shifted ministries. Intuitively gifted in pastoral care, she served at the Good Samaritan Home in Malta and later at St. Benedict's Health Center in Dickinson. In 1993 she received the "People Who Make a Difference" award from the *Bismarck Tribune*. When she retired to the monastery in 1995, she helped in any way she could, before moving to the Richardton Health Center and later to St. Vincent's.

On June 26 we gathered at St. Vincent's in Bismarck to celebrate Sister Monica Thome's 100th birthday and Sisters Kathleen Kuntz and Mary William Stadick's 70th jubilee of monastic profession. Sisters Monica and Mary William both reside at St. Vincent's so we spent the day down there.

Sister Monica turned 100 on June 5. She had the same birthday and birth year as Sister Annella Gardner who shared the same monastic profession class with her. Sister Perpetua Steiner was also a member of that monastic class of six and she, too, celebrated her 100th birthday before her death in 2015. Sister Monica enjoyed sharing her day with a big party with us and the residents and staff of St. Vincent's in the early afternoon and then we shared a festive evening meal as a community to mark her birthday and the two jubilees.

Sister Kathleen Kuntz, OSB, born the ninth of Eva (Gerhardt) and Frank Kuntz's 14 children near Fallon in 1929, entered Sacred Heart Convent (now Monastery) in 1946. Her early life on the farm rather set her pace for life in a monastic community. She has served as a teacher and principal, monastic formation director, missionary (one of the founders of our mission in Bogotá, Colombia), subprioress, serving in a variety of ways on the Fort Berthold Reservation, director of pastoral care at St.



Sisters Kathleen and Mary William celebrate yet another jubilee together.



Sister Laura Hecker renews her monastic profession before Sister Paula Larson, prioress, her family and monastic community.

Sister Laura Celebrates Golden Jubilee

Sister Laura Hecker, OSB, celebrated the 50th jubilee of her monastic profession at Vespers on July 15. The daughter of the late Mike L. and Veronica (Lantz) Hecker of Dunn County, she was born the third of six children on a farm northwest of Dickinson. She attended her first eight grades in a country school before attending Model High in Dickinson. Prior to her entrance into the monastery, she earned her LPN degree and post-graduate certificate in obstetrics and pediatrics in Pierre, SD. Following her education, she worked as a nurse at St. Joseph Hospital in Dickinson prior to entering Sacred Heart Convent, then located in Minot.

After her initial monastic formation, she remained in the medical field as an accredited record technician at the Richardton Hospital. In 1979 she began her study and work experience in pastoral care, serving first at St. Vincent's in Bismarck and later at St. Joseph Hospital in Dickinson. After earning an MA in pastoral studies at Aquinas Institute in St. Louis, MO, she returned to St. Joseph Hospital as a chaplain and later director of pastoral care. Since 2011, Sister Laura has served as the subprioress for the community.

Her golden jubilee occasioned a joyous gathering of her extended family here at the monastery.

"Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life" RB 72:11

Sister Annella Gardner, OSB

Early on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Sister Annella Gardner, OSB, of Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton, died peacefully at the Richardton Health Center at the age of ninety-nine. She died with the same calm, graciousness with which she lived.

Sister Annella (Eileen Mary known as "Effie") was born June 5, 1918, to Elizabeth (McRae) and Charlie Gardner in Sanish, ND, the fifth of eleven children. She was the last living member of her family, but she was cherished by her monastic community, nieces and nephews, and her many friends. She set the record in the Adopt-a-Nun program at Sacred Heart Monastery with six "adoptions" and countless gifts in her honor to the Sacred Heart Benedictine Foundation.

When she applied to join Sacred Heart Convent, then in Garrison, after her high school graduation, she was told to go directly to St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, MN, where she began her higher education and the beginning of her religious candidacy. She had her postulant formation with others at Sacred Heart Convent in Yankton, SD, and came to Garrison to enter her novitiate in June 22, 1938 with five others in her formation class. All six made perpetual profession and lived the fullness of their lives as Sisters. Her only surviving monastic "classmate" is Sister Monica Thome with whom she also shared the exact same birthday, profession date and subsequent jubilees.



Sister Annella was a terrific teacher and administrator. She studied for her BA in Biology, with a minor in Mathematics, at St. Catherine College in St. Paul, MN, and Minot State College, before going summers at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul to earn an MA degree in Secondary Education and Administration. Of course, during the school year she taught at St. Leo's in Minot. Her class load included "Science, Mathematics, Aeronautics, English, Typing, etc."

In the early 1960s, while she was "only" the community's subprioress and Sacred Heart Academy's principal and a teacher, the Sisters received an invitation from Bogotá, Colombia, to start a school for girls near the one for boys founded by the monks of Assumption Abbey. Because of the community's long friendship with the monks, it was an opportunity worth pursuing. After the prioress, Sister Anita Soukup, and Sister Annella went for an initial visit, the community was invited to consider the idea. The Sisters responded quite favorably, so in September 1962, four Sisters, with Sister Annella as the coordinator, left to establish Colegio de las Hermanas Benedictines; it later became Colegio Santa Maria, which continues to this day. Very early on in the rocky beginning of this venture, Sister Annella responded with a calm "Fine. From now on I expect anything." That mantra served her well throughout the years!

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Before her departure to Bogotá in 1962, Sister Annella was named to Who's Who in American women, and while still in Bogotá, she received a Gold Medal from the President of Colombia citing her excellence in education. One of her last—and favorite—honors is her featured inclusion of *The Wisdom of the Benedictine Elders: Thirty of America's Oldest Monks and Nuns Share Their Lives' Greatest Lessons*.

In 2010, Sister Annella chose to move to the Richardton Health Center. She always spoke highly and gratefully of her caregivers and she never complained about needing more care than we could provide. Her wise and positive outlook made her a good companion to all, and to her monastic community, a dear Sister. She rests in peace.



Giving Hearts Day 2019

We were one of the first non-profits invited to join in Giving Hearts Day as the Impact Foundation expanded invitations to southwest North Dakota. We are continually blessed by this initial invitation! We rejoice that, in 2018, **28,044 donors raised \$13.1 million** for the participating charities in the 24-hour event.

We have a great collaborative of fellow nonprofits working together for a successful event on Valentine's Day 2019, especially the three entities from Richardton: Assumption Abbey, Camp ReCreation, and us. What is unique in this group is that it was Assumption Abbey and Sacred Heart Monastery that began Camp ReCreation in 1975 to offer a summer camp experience for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When our two Benedictine communities could no longer sustain it, folks from Richardton stepped up to the plate to keep it going.

While the day promotes online giving, that is no longer the only way to give. **GivingHeartsDay.org** will lead you to the participating charities and provide a path for online giving. Another possible way to give is to send a check, **dated February 14** (but arriving before that date), to the participating charities of your choice. While you can always send monetary donations to any group at any time, Giving Hearts Day offers additional rewards by way of challenge matches (for instance, sometimes donors will offer a matching donation when a specific goal is set), special drawings for extra rewards from the Impact Foundation, etc. It is a great day for generating enthusiasm in donors across the board.

Please mark your calendars for this day (February 14, 2019) of giving especially to charities in North Dakota. We hope you are among those say **"#Countme"**! Giving Hearts are healthy, happy hearts.



Sister Renée's Retirement

Way back in 1982 (when she was young and her hair was black), Sister Renée Branigan became the editorial assistant to Fr. Terrence Kardong, the newly named editor of *The American Benedictine Review*. Now, not-so-fast-forward, they are both "retiring" from the ABR at the end of this year. The top two shelves of the bookcase provide another visual: there are 36 years of proofreading, in addition to the billings and subscriptions that were also part of her responsibilities. Small wonder, she now dreams of reading fiction. . . . However, she still has plenty of work on her desk that she is quite willing to do unless her Dickinson State Blue Hawks are playing!



Sister Phoebe's Certification

In May we celebrated Sister Phoebe Schwartz's graduation from "A Journey to Emmaus: Formation Program for Spiritual Directors," a two-year program hosted by the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck. She can now officially hang her shingle as an accredited spiritual director. Blessings to her!

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The Collection Basket

Sisters Paula Larson, prioress, and Renée Branigan presently serve on the Sanford Patient and Family Advisory Committee that meets monthly in Dickinson. Sister Paula represents the perspective of the Sanford Board of Directors, whereas Sister Renée serves from the patient perspective. The intent of the committee is to strengthen the partnership between patients and family members and the health care team.



Sister Marie Hunkler, succeeding Sister Phoebe Schwartze, has become the Sacred Heart Monastery Oblate program director. She communicates with them frequently and keeps us informed on what is going on with them. She writes faithfully of the Monastery news and as well as spiritual input for their ongoing growth as Oblates.



One of our greatest honors we get to live throughout November is praying for the deceased loved ones of those who send in All Souls cards sent out by our Sacred Heart Benedictine Foundation. Each Sister receives about 12-15 cards to pray for in her personal prayer daily and then every night at Vespers the leader asks for prayers for the beloved deceased of about 12-15 of those who sent in cards. In effect, by the end of the month, prayers rise daily by each Sister for a group of names and rise from all of us together once. St. Benedict bids us to "keep death daily before our eyes" (RB 4:47) and that is easy to do in November.

For several years, we have had an open invitation for anyone who wants to join us at Mass for All Souls and breakfast afterward.



*"... they shall call him Emmanuel,"
a name which means
"God is with us."*

(Matthew 1:23)

*Christmas blessings
to each of you from all of us!*