

WITNESS

THE BENEDICTINE



VOL. 2 Winter 2019

SACRED HEART MONASTERY AND SACRED HEART BENEDICTINE FOUNDATION

SPREADJESUS
www.spreadjesus.org

As you celebrate the glory of this miraculous season,
may your home be filled with
love, peace, and joy.
May these blessings follow you
throughout the New Year.

www.spreadjesus.org

Our Families and Friends,
You and your prayer intentions
will be included in our Divine
Office Christmas Novena.
Peace, joy, and blessings to you!

*Benedictine Sisters of
Sacred Heart Monastery
Dickinson, North Dakota*

MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Our gift to you is our prayers!



FROM THE DESK OF SR. PAULA!

He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."
(Matthew 17:20)

Climate change is a big deal these days. It makes no difference if you believe it or not, it is being talked about more. In 1997 we were able to erect two wind turbines for our little part in saving the environment but also to benefit us as consumers. We were in a position of not being able to cut our high electrical cost by any other means.

For about 15 years prior to 1997 we had a sister, Sr. Bernadette Bodine, who was very much into renewals. She was a chemist by education. She was supported in her environment concerns by the Dakota Resource Council.



In 1996 we located two used wind turbines in Livingston, Montana that we purchased. We decided to see if wind energy was viable. We were supported by many in this effort because at that time all that was said was "it won't work." The Department of Commerce for the State of North Dakota supported our venture with a grant. The only condition for the grant was to release to the general public whether wind energy works or didn't work and provide data for either way it turned out. This was a risky venture but one we felt called to accept.

As I reflect on the installation of the turbines, it was like pushing a very soft rope uphill but we made it. This was new to everyone and some of the parties we had to work with were against the idea of wind turbines.

After our wind turbines became functional we had numerous inquiries from North Dakota private industries, schools and Churches. Many hours were spent in educational events for interested people.

Fast forward twenty-two years. Early on we were listed as a "pioneer" in wind energy on the ND Department of Commerce web site. Now our State has changed significantly. From our little mustard seed project, a giant industry has grown in the State. ND has more than 3,000 MW of wind energy now and more is on the way.

Back to Richardton and our two turbines. We can no longer benefit from their production of electricity since we have moved to Dickinson. The turbines themselves are well beyond their life so they need to come down. The beauty is that their usefulness coincided with our move to Dickinson. So in the spring we will be dismantling them in a way that any parts that can be recycled will be saved. The steel will be recycled and the blades themselves may go to a new home.

As I mentioned earlier, in the past twenty years wind energy is now a given. Our utility is now buying wind generated electricity from wind farms so we are still using it but in an indirect way.

The mustard seed sprouted, grew, and produced a great industry in North Dakota. May it continue to benefit all of us and our "common home" as we continue into the future.

FROM THE DESK OF SR. LAURA !

Each Thanksgiving families and friends gather to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal together and be thankful for how they have been blessed again this year. I too am one of these people and I certainly give thanks for the blessing of the past year. It is wonderful how people get together and prepare a Thanksgiving meal for people who have no place else to go or are homebound because of illness. The first Thanksgiving was not an official holiday. It started with the Pilgrims in 1621 with a gathering of families, friends, and the community to celebrate a good harvest. Included in this celebration were Native Americans who taught the Pilgrims how to survive during their first winter. Thanksgiving was not an annual event until later in 1789 when George Washington declared a National Thanksgiving Day. It was Abraham Lincoln who decided that the last Thursday of November should be Thanksgiving. After Lincoln declared Thanksgiving, every President after did too. There were more changes in the date and in 1941 the United States Congress declared the fourth Thursday of November a National Day of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is now the second most celebrated holiday in the United States. Christmas is the first.



Every day our new monastery feels more like home!

The same folks that created our monastery sign crafted a Benedictine cross for us and installed it last week above our main entry. We are thankful for these artisans that can take our ideas and bring them to life!



Sr. Ruth polishing the thurifer used for incense during sacred liturgy



Sr. Patti shares her cooking talents—attacking a squash



The library books got moved with help of students and their supervisor. Sr. Laura is looking over what she might read next

FROM ILA'S DESK!

As we were thinking about our winter issue of the newsletter I asked myself what are you, the friends of the Sisters, wondering about their move. How are they liking it? What is it like living in Dickinson? What do they do there? I asked some of the Sisters to write a short note about their new home and the good things that have happened with the move. I also wanted to add their pictures, especially for those living in Dickinson who don't know the Sisters, so you can put a face to the name. Hopefully you will see them at Mass, or helping in the community, or even out shopping!

On behalf of the Foundation, I want to thank you for your continued support, for your kind words of encouragement to the Sisters and understanding of the changes that have happened this past year.

Joshua 1:9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*"

Notes from the Sisters:



Sister Phoebe (Schwartz)

What I appreciate most of all about our new Monastery is seeing how more relaxed my older Sisters are here since they don't have all the responsibilities of our former HUGE Monastery in Richardton, even though we all loved our home there. I have appreciated the welcome we have received here in Dickinson. For example, the parish of St. Joseph's invited us to their fall dinner and even reserved a table for us and decorated it very nicely. They also included us in the Sunday Prayers of the Faithful and Fr. Keith welcomed us at Mass.



Sister Laura (Hecker)

Living at our Monastery near Richardton, in the country, was wonderful. The Richardton people are warm, caring, and friendly. Living near our friends the Monks at Assumption Abbey was great. God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes life situations call for change. Our Monastery in Dickinson is much smaller. Our retreat center in Richardton closed so we don't have any more overnight guests. We have easier and quicker access to health care and city transportation. We still have our routine prayers, Mass, meals, and recreation together.

There is more time for prayer, reading, and even for doing hobbies which I haven't done for a long time. The people in Dickinson have been warm and welcoming. I have lived most of my life in and around Dickinson so I am back home again enjoying more time with my two sisters, two brothers and extended family who live in or near Dickinson.



Sister Kathleen (Kuntz)

Living in our new monastery is a blessing. It is small but comfortable. As a community we share our meals, pray in our lovely chapel. We do have our personal space where we can read or do our hobbies; for me I make llama wool pouches. You are welcome to come and visit. Have a Blessed Christmas and New Year. Love & Prayers.



Sister Lucille (Heidt)

What I like about Dickinson is that we don't have far to go to the doctor's appointments and that we each have our own place. Our chapel is smaller so we are closer together which makes it easier to pray and sing. It makes me feel more at home and we don't have to climb any stairs. I feel this is all in God's plan for us because our home in Richardton was too large for us. God willing, it will make a good home for someone else.

We have Mass here every Wednesday and we are privileged to have a priest from the Abbey in Richardton to come over to do the service for us. We do go out to Masses on Saturday and Sundays to the local parishes. My door is always open so feel free to come and visit any time. Come with goodies and I'll make the coffee (just joking).



Sister Michael (Emond)

I like living in Dickinson; we are closer to the clinics and hospital for medical care. Our Monastery is smaller and we are able to care for it and the grounds since we are fewer in number and older. Once I get healed from having back surgery and can walk without the walker I hope to do some volunteer work.



Sister Marie (Hunkler)

Through my fifty plus years in community, I have been asked to move countless times. Each move brought with it all kinds of changes and I made the best of each situation, trusting that God knew best! This time, though, my "permanent" home moved to a new site. It has been and is a major transition for me, as I continue to figure out a rhythm for my and our communal living. I love our rightsized Monastery where we now continue to seek God together in community by way of prayer, lectio divina, work, and all God asks of us. God continues to provide new ways for me to use my God-given gifts, such as being among the musicians in a local parish and other settings as the need arises. I am most grateful for the early weekday Masses around town, the Sunday Mass schedules that fit our community schedule, and am especially grateful to the Abbey monks who preside at a Mass for us here in our small chapel usually on Wednesdays; I love worshipping with a community and praying for the whole Church. I am on the lookout for one-time volunteer opportunities such as helping out at the DSU Thanksgiving meal and other such opportunities, along with a regular volunteer opportunity that serves women and children in need. I lived in Dickinson years ago and find it a joy to be reacquainted with people I recognize and also to regularly meet new persons and share in their stories. I continue ministries such as Spiritual Direction and ongoing community assignments such as Oblate Director; both ministries call forth a deepening in my relationship with the Lord. In a nutshell, I continue to strive to be open to God's calling each day and to be of service wherever God sends me, always within the context of community.

Just for the record: a country-girl like me always has to find a way to be in touch with nature daily; I have found some options for walking paths that give me a view of prairie and nature. This renews and refreshes me, to be in touch with all God's creation! And, I plan to resume the art of card making, as I love sending cards to people.



Sister Carol (Axtmann)

2019 was a year of mixed emotions for me. As manager of Subiaco Manor it was difficult to bid farewell to the residents. Yet I rejoiced with each as she found a new home which fit her needs. Obviously it is/was difficult to leave our beautiful Monastery in Richardton which is filled with many happy memories...but life goes on.

For me living in Dickinson with all the Sisters has its blessings. It means staying here rather than going to Richardton weekends to join the Sisters for worship, meals and relaxation. Living under one roof means more togetherness in prayer, work and recreation. It means less time on the road to doctor appointments except when the appointments are in Bismarck. It's easier to shop when I need to purchase an item. I enjoy our togetherness at meal time. We now all eat at one table and it is easier to share with everyone. I am spiritually enriched when the Sisters share the insights they received into the various Sunday sermons. (We don't necessarily all go to the same Sunday Liturgy.)

Now that most of the walls have been adorned with community pictures and empty shelves are being filled with books, our new Monastery is beginning to take on a homelike atmosphere. As my body heals physically I'm looking forward to the time when I can again do volunteer work at the House of Manna, Food Pantry or some other organization that strives to better the lives of others.

God bless each of you with good health, peace and joy. Together with prayer and good works may we all make 2020 a better year for all peoples.



Sister Patti (Koehler)

I still think of Richardton and all of the good memories from there, but I am looking forward to all the blessings we will receive here in Dickinson and the new opportunities. I am looking forward to the chance of volunteering at the hospital and enjoying Patterson Lake this spring and summer. The people of the different parishes have all been so welcoming and have helped in our transition.



Sister Renée (Branigan)

Like every move we've made in our history, there are things we miss from the old and appreciate in the new. This move is a perfect example for me even though I've only been at our new home for a few weeks. I miss our town folks and country from Richardton, but I know I need the size of our new home. My spinal surgery in October showed me clearly my limitations of energy and mobility. I was at Subiaco for its first 20 years while I taught at DSU, and I am amazed at how many people I remember and enjoy seeing again. I miss our daily liturgy with our monk chaplains, but I also greatly appreciate worshipping in a parish. "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away" was something I grew up with. The more I realize the gifts of our new monastery and its location, the more I thank the Lord for the loving care he has always shown us throughout our long history.

I would like to share with you some of the new experiences we are enjoying in our new monastery in Dickinson. In our apartment building, we each have our own small apartment, but also have common areas such as the dining room, recreation area, and chapel.



Sister Ruth (Fox)

We have access to four Catholic churches in Dickinson (St. Joseph, St. Patrick, St. Wenceslaus, and Queen of Peace). Dickinson State University also provides programs for the public. There are several shopping opportunities with a mall, downtown stores, and movie theater. We have access to clinics and a Catholic hospital. We are also not far from the scenic Badlands and Medora Musical (in summertime). Blessings—come and visit us. We would enjoy giving you a tour.

Giving Hearts Day!

February 13, 2020

Giving Hearts Day? Already? We haven't even celebrated Christmas!

Yes, this is our chance to let you know that we are participating in Giving Hearts Day again in 2020. We have been part of this day since 2014. Each year we look forward to working with our amazing collaborative in the Dickinson area to promote and take part in this event.

2019 was a record-breaking year for this 24-hour fundraising event with more than 440 charities involved across North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. They say it "takes a village," each of these charities helps your village in a unique way. Our 13 member collaborative is as diverse as those across the state; meeting spiritual and health needs, children and adult needs, and mentoring programs.

There were a couple big changes the past two years that are really helpful, especially for us. Now donors have the opportunity to schedule gifts in advance.

- 1) We are able to take checks post-dated. Those may be sent directly to the charity; they will be held in a safe place and processed on February 13, 2020.
- 2) If you want to give online, but will be away from your devices that day, there is an option to schedule your credit card donation ahead of time. That option will be available in January on the Impact Foundation page GivingHeartsDay.org
- 3) Giving Hearts Day gift cards is another way to give. Last year more than 100 employers provided gift cards to their employees, or many provided matching dollar funds as another way to engage their employees in giving.

Impact Foundation offers our Foundation and other members resources: one-on-one trainings, phone call support, webinars and Zoom meetings. We are able to participate in trainings all year long. Donors are also able to make donations at the Impact Foundation link at any time during the year GivingHeartsDay.org. **Our direct page link is <https://app.givingheartsday.org/#/charity/13>.**



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**FROM THE DESK OF
SR. MARIE HUNKLER, OBLATE DIRECTOR!**

We continue to be grateful for our faithful Oblates who are scattered around the state and country. Each Oblate continues to be faithful to living out the Benedictine values in their living situation as it plays out for them.

I do a monthly newsletter that helps them and me to be attentive to the commitments we made, to pay attention to our spiritual practices and usually challenge each of us regarding some angle pastorally. Our community prays for the Oblates and families and we invite the Oblates to also remember each of us in their prayer. Thanks, Oblates, for your reminder to me and to all of us to be faithful to God's calling for us! *"Your way of acting should be different from the world's way, the love of Christ must come before all else."* (Holy Rule of Benedict 4: 21-22)

Merry Christmas
from the Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery
2441 10th Ave W • Dickinson, ND 58601

Online donations: www.sacredheartmonastery.com