

# THE BENEDICTINE *Witness*



Winter 2020

SACRED HEART MONASTERY AND SACRED HEART BENEDICTINE FOUNDATION



## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

...from all of us here at Sacred Heart Monastery in Dickinson!

We think of and pray for you many times during the year but this season is a special one, therefore, we offer special prayers.

You and your loved ones will be remembered in an eight-day novena during our Liturgy of the Hours.

**May God bless your New Year!**



Kneeling L to R: Sisters Ruth Fox and Paula Larson, prioress.  
Standing L to R: Sisters Lucille Heidt, Patti Koehler, Phoebe Schwartz, Carol Axtmann, Kathleen Kuntz, Marie Hunkler, Michael Emond, Renée Branigan, and Laura Hecker.





## *Property Sale*

Over the past year, the most frequent question asked of me was “Have you sold your Richardton property, in particular the former motherhouse known as a monastery?” Now I can say “YES.” We moved from the site in August of 2019. At that time we put the property on the market through a wonderful, competent realtor who deals with commercial size property.

The Sisters prayed that God would stir the heart of someone who would put the building to good use, namely for people. The building is in great shape and upgrades were completed through the years. It was time to share the space with another organization that could use the entire facility to benefit others.

One caveat regarding the property is our cemetery. We did not sell it. Our Richardton cemetery will remain our final resting place.

The magical day, the result of prayer, was on November 5, 2020, when the papers were signed and the property was sold. What follows indicates the buyer and purpose. He and his endeavors are in our prayers.

Sister Paula Larson

*The Benedictine Sisters of Richardton have sold their former motherhouse located in Richardton, ND, to Mr. Timothy J. Bohn. He is enthusiastic about using the facility to bring peace and happiness to others. He is a man with a clear vision. He is in the process of forming a non-profit organization that will operate what he calls “Sacred Heart Wellness Center.” The services he anticipates offering are broad and many including, but not limited to, unwed mothers, those suffering from addiction and mental health issues, and follow-up services and residential services. In addition, he has ideas for many other services that include space for funerals and weddings, daycare, massage therapy, yoga and dance classes, etc. He says the sky is the limit. We are simply delighted that the facility will be used to improve the quality of life of all persons. We ask God’s blessing on him and his endeavors.*



## *Celebrating Two Benedictine Lives So Well Lived*

The year 2020 has brought us many blessings as well as significant losses. We have now settled into our new monastery in Dickinson, but we lost two of our dear Sisters. Sister Monica Thome and Sister Mary William Stadick both died this year and together they represented 153 years of monastic life in our community. A monastic community is defined more by its composition of people rather than by the location of its home. In our history, we have supported our monastic community primarily through health care and education. Sister Monica spent most of her life in the former and Sister Mary William in the latter. Both spent their last years in pastoral care to those around them at St. Vincent's in Bismarck. Though they were "there," they were also very much "here" among us as members of our community.



**Sister Monica Thome** died March 2, 2020, as she lived: holy, gentle, calm and with a gleam in her eye. She is now home, welcomed by the Lord she loved and served so faithfully, by her Benedictine and birth families, and by the countless people who received her friendship and care in this life.

Sister Monica (Genevieve) was born on June 5, 1918, in Good Luck Township in Williams County, ND, the fifth of seven children born to Peter and Gertrude (Simon) Thome. She attended a country school before she entered Sacred Heart Convent in Garrison where she completed high school. On June 26, 1938, she and her five Sister classmates were received into the novitiate; all of the six Sisters in her class persevered in monastic life until their deaths. In 1939 she began her nurse's training and graduated as a RN in 1942. Nursing was definitely her way to serve the Lord and his people.

After her perpetual profession of monastic vows on June 26, 1942, Sister Monica went to St. Luke's Hospital in Crosby for nursing in all the departments for eighteen years. From 1960-67 she alternated serving at St. Vincent's Nursing Home in Bismarck and St. Luke's. From 1967-74 she was a general nurse at Tioga Community Hospital and 1974-75 in Malta Community Hospital in Malta, MT, living with our Sisters doing other ministries. From 1977-87 she was again at St. Vincent's serving in various training capacities and general duties. Her last year of general duty nursing was 1987-88 in the Hillcrest Care Center in Hettinger. In her last years at St. Vincent's and Marillac Manor she served in a variety of ministries: answering phones, visiting the residents, preparing chapel, doing hospitality, leading a video exercise class, and simply being present to those in need.

She returned to the Monastery in Richardton in 2005 and found this a treat considering she had been out on our various missions since 1939. She helped in any way she could: sending out the birthday cards for the Sacred Heart Benedictine Foundation, baking cookies, helping with dishes.

Sister Monica's final move was in March 2011, when she returned to St. Vincent's, but this time as a resident. On June 5, 2018, she celebrated her 100th birthday with her community, the residents and staff. After her 101st she grew more and more quiet, but she did not lose her smile. She was eager to go home to the Lord she loved on earth unto everlasting life.



**Sister Mary William Stadick, OSB**, died as she lived: with gentleness, joy, and willingness to give all her life to the pursuit of serving God and others. She embraced her religious vocation early in life and was an exemplary Benedictine Sister of Sacred Heart Monastery, Dickinson, for 74 years.

Sister Mary William was born in Underwood in 1931, the youngest child of John and Martha (Manacke) Stadick. She entered her monastic community at the age of 15 and earned her teaching credential to pursue her first career as a grade school teacher for forty years in North Dakota, Minnesota and Montana Catholic Schools. She succeeded in this despite her diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 25.

When she retired from teaching, she served in Pastoral Care 1988 to 1995 at the Good Samaritan Home in Malta, MT, and visiting shut-ins and later at St. Benedict's Health Center in Dickinson. After retiring from Pastoral Care in 1995, she returned to Sacred Heart Monastery in Richardton where she helped with hospitality and secretarial duties. In 1993 she received the "People Who Make a Difference" award from the *Bismarck Tribune*. Anyone who knew Sister Mary William knew that no one deserved this award more than she did.

The last phase of her life began at Richardton Health Center and finally to St. Vincent's a Prospera Community in Bismarck. Even as a resident, she served others by being a prayerful, gentle, grateful companion to staff and residents.

Her monastic community, her family, and her many friends know well the blessing of Sister Mary William's presence on earth. The compassion, gentleness and care for others she lived despite her physical limitations will remind us to strive to imitate her good example.

Sister Mary William's funeral Mass was at Assumption Abbey, Abbot Daniel Maloney as celebrant, and her burial at the Sacred Heart Monastery cemetery in Richardton.

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## *Sister Marie Received Certificate of Spiritual Direction*



"Finally it happened!" What happened? I had so looked forward to returning to Tucson in April to complete the final two weeks of Spiritual Direction training at the Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction on the campus of the Redemptorist Renewal Center at Picture Rocks, Tucson, AZ. As with countless other events, the staff ended up offering the training on Zoom. Twenty-six of us from around the country met virtually October 5-16; on the final day we had a virtual graduation ceremony and each of us received our certificate. I was originally not eager to do this training virtually but decided to make the best of it and I truly enjoyed myself. This second best way of learning was better than no learning.

I am grateful to my community for the opportunity to do spiritual direction ministry. After ministering as a chaplain for around thirty years, I already had many of the deep listening skills needed for this new ministry of spiritual direction (truthfully, I had wanted to do spiritual direction ministry for a number of years but, as it goes in life, I had to wait for the right time). In chaplaincy and now in spiritual direction, I always feel privileged to journey with a person who is desiring to hear God's voice in her/his life and follow God's desire more deeply. Persons of all faiths and no faith are now more than ever seeking out a spiritual director (companion) whose role it is to listen deeply to the person's journey and with the help of the Holy Spirit to help the person deepen her/his relationship with the Holy. Sessions are confidential; each person is unique and brings whatever the person feels prompted to share. In between sessions, I hold each directee in daily prayer and pray that each one will receive what he/she needs.

If there is anyone who is interested in more information, please feel free to contact me at our Monastery. I will be happy to visit with you. Please pray for me and for all who are involved in spiritual direction ministry throughout the world. Yes, "I will lead you into the wilderness and speak to your heart" (Hosea 2:14). Sister Marie Hunkler.

**Online donations: [www.sacredheartmonastery.com](http://www.sacredheartmonastery.com)**





February 11, 2021

The link to Giving Hearts Day is: <https://www.givingheartsday.org>  
The link to our page is: <https://app.givingheartsday.org/#/charity/13>

## Foundation News

Thank you, thank you! I read that the concept of thanks is mentioned 102 times in the Old Testament. We would like to thank you at least that many times but it would take up my entire article! Thank you for your continued support of the Sisters and of all that we do as a Foundation.

Your gifts support them in many ways, two of which are in their retirement needs and continued support of our two spiritual directors. An upcoming project that will be partially funded by the Foundation is a permanent fence around the cemetery at Richardton. Our Giving Hearts Day offerings will go to that.



Giving Hearts Day! It seems like I am either thanking you for being so generous, or asking you to support Giving Hearts Day once again. Giving Hearts Day started in 2008; our Foundation joined in 2014. It is a simple but unique fundraiser. During the month of January and up through the Thursday before Valentine's Day you will see lots of advertising, lots of big red hearts, and lots of non-profits across North Dakota promoting February 11, 2021, as a day of giving. The good news in these days of quarantining and COVID-19 is that it has always been an online event.

In closing, I would like to share 1 Thessalonians 5:18: *"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* It says *in all circumstances*; that is quite a challenge this year with all that has been set at our feet. Our prayer is that your family can find thanks in your circumstances. The Sisters know that many of your loved ones have passed away, that you or your family have been ill; but they rejoice in the good news of a marriage, or a baby, or a job change! The Sisters have prayed for you specifically if you have let them know. They pray for you our donors daily

Ila Perhus, Foundation Assistant Director.

## DONOR LEVELS



**FRIENDS:** Donations up to \$999.99

**BELL TOWER:** Donations \$1,000.00 and higher

**LEADER:** Donations \$5,000.00 and higher

**BENEFACTOR:** Donations \$10,000 and higher

**BENEDICTINE SPONSOR:** Donations \$25,000.00 and higher

**PRIORESS:** Donations \$50,000.00 and higher

*(Lifetime accumulated gift total)*

**Benedictine Sisters of Richardton**

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## *Advent Reflection*

The Advent season is probably my favorite liturgical season. Other liturgical seasons are sacred and beautiful as well, but Advent is special to me for everything from the readings to the songs to the sense of hope and expectation. We know in Advent we are waiting for something special and we hope for it to come. Our Church does this season exceptionally well, especially as regards the readings. We are reminded to stay awake and be watchful. There is the beautiful image of the lion lying down with the lamb. There are all the beautiful Old Testament images that we associate with Jesus that we hear in the O Antiphons: Root of Jesse, Key of David, Radiant Dawn, King of All Nations and Keystone of the Church, Wisdom, and Emmanuel. In the last week of Advent we hear all the miracle birth stories that foreshadow the birth we are waiting for. So much is packed into four short weeks but it all leads to expectation and hope to prepare us for the joy of Christmas.



I know that this year in particular, I need to have a sense of expectation. I *need* to hope. There has been so much loss this year. Loss of loved ones and loss of the ability to attend them in their final moments. Loss of visits and hugs. Loss of jobs and homes for many of our fellow citizens. The reminders, again, that we live in a world where too many of our sisters and brothers are not treated justly. So let this Advent season be a time of expectation and hope as we await the joy of that special birth, the coming of our Savior.

Blessings to you on your Advent and know that you are in my prayers.

Peace, Sister Phoebe