

Witness

THE BENEDICTINE



VOL. 2 Winter 2023

SACRED HEART MONASTERY AND SACRED HEART BENEDICTINE FOUNDATION



Dear Friends of the Monastery,

Another year is ending all too soon. We thank God for all the blessings of this year.

We look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ followed by New Year's Day, the world day of peace. May peace reign in our hearts and in our land.

Our Christmas prayer for you:

*Eternal Savior,
As the Blessed Virgin Mary
Held You in her loving arms,
May I embrace Your love for me
Gratefully within my heart.
As an angel proclaimed Your glory,
Announcing Your holy birth,
May I be filled with rejoicing
That you came to dwell on Earth
Amen.*

(Heart of the Nation: Prayer & Worship Guide; Nov. 19 to Dec. 30, 2023)

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

1 Peter 3:15

Advent: a Season of Hope

What gives you hope? There are many possibilities. Recently I saw a toddler run up to her mother to give her a yellow leaf and the mother smiled and praised the little girl who was very proud of herself. To me this is hopeful, a scene repeated over and over again that speaks of future, that shows love. On my recent vacation, I saw many, many displays of God’s artistry with the changing colors of the trees, a sign of hope for me. One I had witnessed before, and would witness again. I was able to attend a retreat day at my nephew’s parish for confirmands and their sponsors as the candidates prepare for Confirmation in May. It was very hopeful for me to see the 8th graders share their faith and be encouraged by their sponsors as I hope I was encouraging to my nephew who had blessed me by choosing me as his sponsor. God’s love is growing in them! What gives you hope?



We have many, many, many things to feel discouraged and fearful about. There are too many conflicts in our world, too much economic uncertainty, too much gun violence, the list goes on. Yet we are called to be hopeful. It says in Psalm 42, “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

In this season of Advent, we wait in hope for the coming, again, of the Prince of Peace. Let us open our hearts to this hope so we may open our hearts for the little Christ child, our savior, the source of our hope and our joy and our love.

What gives you hope?

May God continue to bless you this Advent and Christmas season and always. Know that you are in my prayers, our prayers.

Peace, Sr. Phoebe Schwartze, OSB

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**

Are you blessed to have loved ones in care centers? Are you able to visit with them? During the pandemic, our care centers were closed to visitors and volunteers and we need them to come back! If you have time, prayerfully consider becoming a volunteer. As we approach Christmas we are reminded that we are to bear Christ to the world. To be his voice, his arms, his feet, his love. How will you show Christ’s love to others? May God bless you!

Sister Jill West elected to the council of the Monastic Congregation!

Every three years the Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude meets to conduct official business. The Monastic Congregation consists of twelve member monasteries and two associate monasteries. We are a member of this Congregation. Actually, we were one of three founding Monasteries in 1937. The Congregation is formed to support the member monasteries and is governed by a president and a council of five members selected across the total Congregation. This year our Sister Jill West was elected to the council of the Congregation.



Sister Jill West

Greetings from Ila in the Foundation Office!

Since I last wrote to you, we have been very busy in the Foundation Office. Every year I think I apologize for inundating you with mail, but how else do we celebrate the Sisters' Anniversary as an independent monastery, All Souls, and Christmas!

Thank you to those who responded to the raffle. The Sisters celebrated October 21st with a special liturgy, a delicious meal and the drawings. They took turns drawing and were excited to see whose name was drawn! I wish everyone could have won!

At the time of this writing, All Souls' month is almost over. Your loved ones were remembered in chapel throughout the month. We made copies of each of the slips that were sent here; these were divided among the Sisters and each Sister prayed individually for their packet of names.

One of the Sisters' main ministry is prayer. You can reach out to them by mail, phone, or on our website; you will see a prayer request tab there. <https://sacredheartmonastery.com/prayers/>

We want to remind you that we **do not participate in Giving Hearts Day**. It is a very good fundraiser and we hope that you find some great charities to support in February.

I would like to wish you all a Christmas filled with gifts of a different kind: the gift of hope, the gift of peace, and the gift of His love in your heart. Jesus "is" the reason for the season!

Ila Perhus, Foundation Director

Online donations: www.sacredheartmonastery.com



The Benedictine Sisters' Cemetery

Our cemetery is at our former monastery location in Richardton. Over three years ago, we began doing some improvements. The major project was to replace over 50 year old potentilla shrubs that surrounded the cemetery with a new fence.

With the pandemic and supply chain issues, we could never get it done. Well, this summer became the miracle summer. Fencing was available as was a contractor to install it. We wondered what it would look like since we never had a fence before. With this article there are before and after pictures. We would say that we are quite satisfied. The fence blends into the surrounding environment.

The last part of the project is getting a sign made. This is in the process. Thank you to all of you who helped with this project.



Eternal rest grant unto her and let perpetual light shine upon her.

Sister Ruth Fox

January 24, 1936 – September 13, 2023

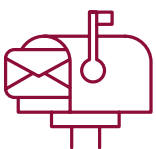
Sister Ruth (Marlene) Fox was born January 24, 1936, at Stanley, ND, the youngest of five children, and enjoyed growing up on their family farm. She and all her siblings attended country school for eight years, then Van Hook Public High School. After two years she transferred to Sacred Heart Academy in Minot. After graduation in 1953, she entered the novitiate of Sacred Heart Convent and made her monastic profession a year later, at age 18.

Sister Ruth's mother and grandmother were both teachers, so, she was probably destined to be a teacher! While she pursued her degrees at St. Benedict's College, St. Joseph, MN, and Creighton University in Omaha, NE, she taught at St. Nicholas School, Garrison, and at Sacred Heart Academy, Minot. In 1965, she was appointed formation director and in 1973 she was elected prioress for two four-year terms and again in 2005 was elected for a six-year term. Sister Ruth took a two-year sabbatical during which she studied scripture and theology in Israel, Rome, and St. John's University in Collegeville, MN.

In 1990, following a couple years as campus minister at Dickinson State University, she was elected president of the Federation of Saint Gertrude and served for nine years in this position; this ministry involved extensive travels, including several trips to Rome. Sister Ruth served in many leadership capacities in her monastery, the Federation, helped initiate the International Commission of Benedictine women (CIB), American Benedictine Academy member and president, Sisters' Council president and other diocesan councils and committees. She conducted retreats, published articles, was among the writers for the monthly devotional Living Faith for many years, and wrote the book Wisdom Leadership. Also, from 2000-05, she was the coordinator for the monastery Spirituality Center.

Sister Ruth was a gifted, warm-hearted woman, loved by so many, and was an inspiration to especially women religious worldwide. She loved music, played the organ, liked to read and write, sew, loved a competitive game of Scrabble, and enjoyed going for walks outdoors.

August 2022, due to needing more care, Sister Ruth became a resident at St. Vincent's Care Center, Bismarck, and died there on September 13, 2023, at the age of 87.



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We Wish you a Merry Christmas!