

THE BENEDICTINE *Witness*



VOL. 2 Winter 2024

SACRED HEART MONASTERY AND SACRED HEART BENEDICTINE FOUNDATION



Merry and Blessed Christmas...

We are praying a novena for you as our gift to you now and in the New Year.

We pray that God enters your home and blesses each and every one
of you in ways you never expected.

Another year with Jesus!
I thank Thee, Lord, today
For Thy unfailing presence
Along life's rugged way.

Guide me, O blest Redeemer,
Teach me to do Thy will,
And Thine own perfect purpose
In me each day fulfill.

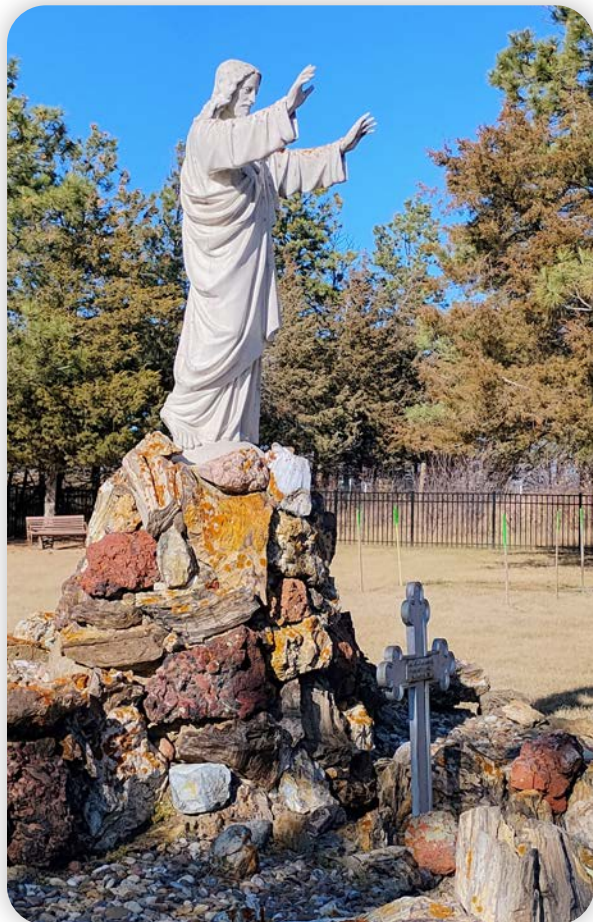
—Avis Christiansen

Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery Statue

Standing in front of the statue of Jesus, (which our community has been considering replacing with a bronze statue of Jesus due to deterioration), it became clear we were not ready to give up on our Sacred Heart statue, which has watched over and comforted our living and deceased Sisters for the past 75 years. Sr. Paula, after further investigation, realized the statue was likely made of granite and could possibly be cleaned and repaired.

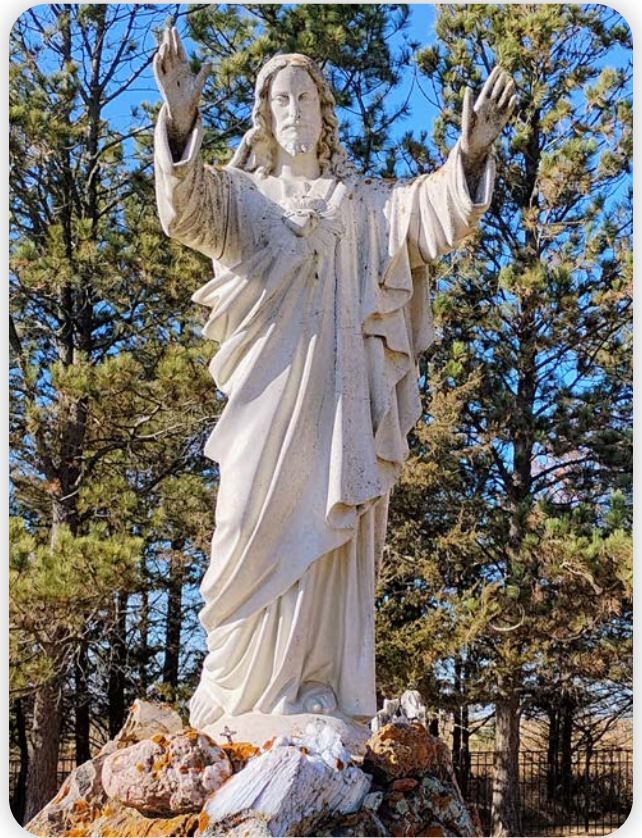
After leaving our Richardton monastery and the grief we experienced with the move, we were not wanting to say another good-bye to something we hold near and dear to our hearts. Some people may question our attachment to an object, but this object has a history and a story.

Here is the story from our archives:



The Monastery cemetery at Richardton was greatly enhanced in the summer of 1970 by the construction of the beautiful shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sr. Louise Wirtz, the designer and instigator, with the help of maintenance man, Jim Gallagher, had been collecting beautiful petrified wood and rocks for three years. She garnered them from the Abbey pasture, farms belonging to Sisters' relatives, neighbors' fields, and other unidentified locations. At a location in the center of the cemetery, they lifted and layered these large rocks, weighing from ten to a hundred pounds each into an eight-foot high pedestal for the statue of the Sacred Heart. Bushes, plants and flowers were also procured to enhance the terraced shrine. The statue had originally been a silver jubilee gift procured by Sister Mechtild Katzenberger for the Minot convent in 1949.

With our prayers, we hope to be able to do some restoration work in the near future. Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us and protect us.



*Sister Patti Koehler
celebrating her Silver Jubilee
on September 14, 2024*



Thankful for each Sister

The other day Sr. Kathleen attended a funeral for someone she cared for deeply. Her simple presence at the funeral brought much needed comfort to the family. Her compassionate hugs and words of wisdom emulated God's love and presence the moment she greeted them.

Sister Kathleen, is 95 years young and manages to embrace each day with a positive attitude and a smile. Her enthusiasm and penchant for hard work is an example of how St. Benedict challenged his monks to live. She loves to decorate for feast days and holidays and does a variety of cleaning tasks.

No matter what health issues or challenges our Sisters may face daily, they set them aside and take up the tasks of the day. It is a rare occasion when a Sister misses prayer due to her health or work schedule. With just 10 of us here at the Monastery, this is much appreciated.

Aging does not have to define us, rather we need to define it by listening to what God is calling us to be in our later years. The Sisters at the Monastery model this beautifully.

Sister Lucille is our faithful sacristan and does a great job caring for the chapel. She helps clean, cook, bake (she makes the world's best pies!).

Sister Michael handles the online prayer requests we receive, helps out with cooking and canning when needed and best of all, she bakes our Christmas goodies.

Sister Laura, Sub-Prioress, assists Sister Paula with many behind-the-scenes tasks, along with running errands for Sisters and providing transportation for Sisters as needed. She is also the never-ending supplier of surprise snacks and goodies!



Sister Kathleen

Sister Anna Rose lives in Bismarck and assists with chaplain duties at Marillac Manor and St. Vincent's Care Center.

Sister Marie does Spiritual Direction ministry, is the musician for the Community's liturgies and also is one of the musicians at a local parish, volunteers at the domestic violence shelter, is the Oblate director, manages the archives and coordinates our recycling efforts.

Sister Renee helps with dishes; she helps in the foundation office when needed and enjoys taking care of her cat.

Sister Patti is our part-time cook, in-house artist, who loves to create beautiful environment displays, and can be depended on for decorating the Christmas tree and other decorations.

Sister Phoebe is the Community Liturgy director, is the main cook and grocery shopper, works part-time as a chaplain at the local Benedictine Living Community and does Spiritual Direction ministry.

Sister Paula, as Prioress, balances many roles and manages our day-to-day lives with care.

Sister Janeane and Sr. Dolores reside in care centers. They exemplify God's abundant grace and love with their presence at the facility. The power of their prayer is to be admired despite their daily challenges.

I now work in the Foundation office, drive Sisters to wherever they may need to go and help out where I am needed most. I have to say, I am looking forward to God unveiling what He has in store for me.

The Sisters have a deep desire to be closer to God and to be witnesses of His love by praying for all those who ask for their prayers through phone calls, in person, online or snail mail.

Sister Jill West



From A's desk

The end of the year brings a close to many things and we don't want to have it end without thanking you, the friends and family of the Sisters, for your support throughout the year! For your thoughts, prayers and donations.

Some of you may have noticed that we did not send out Anniversary raffle tickets this year. We want you to know that the Sisters still celebrated their 108th Anniversary as an independent community by going out to eat. They remember all of the other Sisters who came before them, those at Elbowoods, at Garrison, at Minot, at Richardton and now settling here in Dickinson. What a legacy of faithful women! Faithful women who pray for you daily and also who prayed for your loved ones by remembering them not only on All Souls' day, but for the entire month of November.

Throughout their lives, as one door closed another one opened. Looking ahead to the New Year, let us all open the 2025 door with faith, hope and love for all that is to come.

BAKING SPIRITS

Bright

It seems every year time moves faster and faster. We Sisters are beginning preparation for the Christmas season. Sisters Kathleen, Michael, and Jill are busy making goodies that will be put in containers and saved for the glorious season. Can we save them for Christmas or will a little elf get into the cans?!!!



Sister Jill West's Retirement

I retired from my job at Sanford Health on October 2, 2024 after working there for 21 years as a social worker. The last 13 years were my most rewarding as I accepted a position working with our hospice program. I found that my work was less a job and more of a ministry as I assisted in helping patients and families cope with some of the darkest moments in their lives. It was humbling to listen to stories of their journey with their diagnosis and eventual decision to pursue comfort measures at end of life.

In my ministry with hospice, I gained understanding and insight into what my patients and families were coping with during the dying process. Many of my family, friends and hospice families would question my sanity in taking on a job that they perceived as one full of sadness and grief. For me, choosing to walk with someone who is dying is a sacred and holy time. No matter if they had a personal, close relationship with God or if they had no religious beliefs, I was blessed with seeing God's love and grace working in each of them during the dying process.

During the moments when the dying loved one is unresponsive and lingering in the "in between", many caregivers/families find themselves struggling with fatigue and questioning why their loved one is still hanging on. Some believe it has to do with resolving something in their lives, others believe it is because they are physically strong and the body is not ready. Lisa, one of our hospice nurses would often remind the families that their loved one is having to say good-bye to all of the family, while they have one person to say good-bye to. When my families feel helpless and questioning what their role is during this time, I would gently remind them their only job is to love them to heaven.

To have the privilege to witness the courage and strength my patients faced daily reminded me of St. Benedict's words to "keep death daily before your eyes" as a reminder that God is the ultimate master of our lives even if His presence is not always evident.

I'm so grateful God called me to a ministry that truly reminded me I am not promised a tomorrow so I need to embrace today with love, acceptance and compassion.

I am now helping out in the Foundation office where I am blessed with gratitude for all the gifts we receive from others. Our prayer board is filled with those who need our prayers and I am blessed with the opportunity to continue this ministry with our Sisters.

May God's blessing be with all of you as you meet each day with strength and courage.

Benedictine Sisters of Richardton

2441 10th Ave W
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US POSTAGE
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UNITED PRINTING



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Volume 2 - Winter 2024

Published twice a year

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Becoming light!

As I pray about this Advent, the hymn *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell keeps coming to mind.

**“Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.”**



I love Advent. I love the anticipation as we grow closer to Christmas day. There is a sense of hope, of joy and a desire to transform myself once again into a vessel that can receive the Christ child and share that miracle with the world. To be Christ’s light to the world. As you go to church this season, listen to the readings. Look up Farrell’s song lyrics. They encourage us to prepare the way for the Lord. They encourage us to feel the joy as we wait, to rejoice: “Then, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6) We are to humble ourselves like the small clan of Bethlehem-Ephrathah and be ready to do God’s will. “May you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones.” (1Thes 3:12-14) We should want to be that changed person so we can wait with Mary and Joseph for the coming of the child and be light for the world!

By Sister Phoebe Schwartze