



# Sacro Speco

## Sacred Space

THE BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO MAGAZINE + WINTER/SPRING 2025



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**Sacro Speco** is a biannual publication of the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago for oblates, alumnae, and friends of the community.

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Cover photos, clockwise from top left:  
Sr. Mary Susan at Chicago Ave. & Rush St., where the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago were founded; Srs. Judith Zonsius, Belinda Monahan, and Susan Quaintance at Interfaith Action's Walk for Warmth on MLK Jr. Day; oblates at Feast Day Mass; Srs. Benita Coffey and Pat Coughlin singing to Sr. Callista Kaley on her 94th birthday.

# Letter from the Prioress



*Sister Mary Susan Remsgar, OSB  
Prioress*

*D*ear Friends,

On December 24, 2024, Pope Francis initiated the 2025 “Jubilee Year” with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica. A Jubilee Year, also sometimes called a Holy Year, is a time to reflect upon forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in the context of a particular Christian theme. “Pilgrims of Hope” is the theme of this 2025 Jubilee Year. Pope Francis states, “We are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardship of any kind.” We see the suffering in our world today and often feel helpless about what, if anything, we can do. Pope Francis encourages us that every act of kindness brings hope to others, to ourselves, and to our world.

In this issue of *Sacro Speco*, we see evidence of the goodness, mercy, and compassion of those whose words, work, and ministries attest to their hope in God and their commitment to being “signs of hope” to others. While we are all vulnerable at times to discouragement, frustration and anger in the face of systemic injustice and inhumanity, Pope Francis reminds us, “We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence.”

Shortly, we will begin the Season of Lent, which calls us to embark upon a sacred pilgrimage of hope as we journey together to Easter, the source of all our hope. Lent invites us to take time to deepen our relationship with God, to renew and recommit ourselves to live in hope. We, Benedictine Sisters invite you to join us on this Lenten journey of deepening our trust in a loving and faithful God who continually offers us new life in Jesus, the risen, living Christ. The prophet Jeremiah speaks to us of God’s tender care for each of us, “For I know the plans I have made for you, declares the Lord, plans for your welfare not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). As we sisters continue the process of discernment for the sale of our property and future housing needs, we pray for an ever-deepening trust in God who desires only what is good for us.

Thank you for walking with us as “pilgrims of hope.” Thank you for the goodness you bring to us and to all those with whom you share life. Our prayer for each of you is offered in the words of St. Paul, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in God, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

In St. Benedict and St. Scholastica,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Susan Remsgar, OSB". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Mary Susan Remsgar, OSB



# Monastery News

At Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern University in Evanston, **Sr. Belinda Monahan** is the Director of Transformative Learning. In October she coordinated hosting a group of young women from five Chicago area all-girls Catholic high schools at an event sponsored by the Madonna Foundation. The Foundation was created upon the closing of Madonna High School in 2001 and provides financial, spiritual, and academic support to at-risk and underserved young women from the Chicago area. In December she traveled with a group of students to Arizona; you can read about her experience on pp. 10-11.

We hosted our 49th Ward Alderwoman **Maria Hadden**, her wife **Natalia Vera**, and 49th Ward Director **Shenicka Hohenkirk** for lunch at the monastery in November. Over bowls of spaghetti, our conversation ranged from favorite children's books, women's health, water safety, and our property's future.



From left to right - Susan Clark, Communications Coordinator; Prioress Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar; 49th Ward Alderwoman Maria Hadden; Sr. Patti Cielinski; Sr. Susan Quaintance; Shenicka Hohenkirk, 49th Ward Director; Sr. Judith Zonsius; Sr. Belinda Monahan; and Sr. Kathleen Maloney.

In the *National Catholic Reporter* article "US sisters called to be 'healing presence' following divisive election", Prioress **Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar** wrote, "Given we live in a democratic nation that affords us the freedom and right to vote our conscience, may we also exercise that same freedom to speak up and act out of our conscience, to uphold and ensure the dignity of each and every person... Otherwise, we may risk losing not only our democracy but our very selves."

Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated Sunday, November 24th for donors of the Benedictine Sisters, with lunch after Mass. Thank you to all for contributing to the health and strength of our Benedictine community here and in the world. Photo below is Sr. Jane Smith and oblate Georgie Ellis.



Christmas Season festivities included Advent retreats hosted by **Sr. Virginia Jung**; decorating St. Joseph Court; celebrating our staff with holiday breakfast; getting the chapel organ tuned; and hosting friends and family for liturgies, vespers, and Lessons & Carols.



At the staff breakfast, Srs. Rita Nowak and Sue Kilduski shared stories (above), and nurse Jeannie Silas and Sr. Patti Cielinski enjoyed hot chocolate (below).



*“...in memory of her.”*

Mark 14:9



**Sister Margaret Ann Holtz died November 30, 2024** in St. Joseph Court, the St. Scholastica Monastery infirmary. She was a member of the Benedictine community for 74 years.

Born in Spangler, Pennsylvania, on June 5, 1932, Margaret Ann was one of four children of Dennis and Mary Holtz. After graduating from St. Patrick's Elementary School and Spangler High School, Margaret Ann intended to enter the Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scranton, Pennsylvania. However, after a family vacation in Chicago, during which they visited Margaret Ann's paternal aunt, Sister Gertrude Holtz, O.S.B., she changed her mind. Entering the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago in September of 1950, she was given the name Sister Mary Denis.

For decades Sister taught primary grades at schools throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago, including Queen of All Saints, St. John Nepomucene, St. George, and St. Hilary, where she also served as Assistant Principal. She also taught at Mother of God School in Waukegan, Illinois and in Colorado at St. Mary

## Sister Margaret Ann Holtz

June 5, 1932 - November 30, 2024

(Pueblo) and St. Michael (Cañon City). As was the practice in religious communities at the time, Sister Margaret Ann took college courses while teaching; in 1964 she was awarded a PhB (Bachelor of Philosophy) from DePaul University. In the later 1970's, Sister Margaret Ann moved from teaching into positions of financial responsibility for both schools and community. She served in the Business Office of St. Scholastica Academy, Chicago, eventually becoming Treasurer, a position she also held at St. Scholastica Academy, Cañon City, Colorado. Her ministry also included an appointment as Treasurer of the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago.

In her later years, Sister Margaret Ann coordinated monastery resources and housekeeping staff. In 2014 she moved to St. Joseph Court.

Her sense of humor, playfulness, practicality, and commitment to the common good made her a beloved community member. She will be missed.

Her funeral was Friday, December 6 at St. Scholastica Chapel, with interment at All Saints Cemetery in Des Plaines, Illinois.



# Monastery News

Each New Year's Eve, we bless our clocks and calendars as a community. Below, **Prioress Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar** blessed our "markers of time" and those in attendance with holy water and a prayer: *"May these markers of time make us aware of the miracle of each second of life we experience. May we be ever free from being clock watchers and instead become time lovers."*



The Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica Council gathered in Bristow, Virginia. **Srs. Susan Quaintance** and **Judith Zonsius** participated in this meeting, which represents seventeen monasteries of Benedictine women in fourteen states and Mexico. After this council meeting, they were joined by members of other councils from all the U.S.-based congregations of Benedictine women.



Gathered together at the annual Conference of Benedictine Prioresses were **Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar** and 40 more Benedictine prioresses from the U.S., British Columbia, Australia, Mexico, Canada and the Bahamas. For nearly a week they reflected, connected, prayed, and shared wisdom. Read their joint statement on immigration on pp. 8-9.



St. Scholastica, Pray for Us! We celebrated her Feast Day Mass on February 10th in the chapel and welcomed two new oblates (see p. 12 for photos). **Sr. Susan Quaintance** shared reflections with *Global Sisters Report* on centering women's voices, St. Scholastica, Martha and Mary, and Song of Songs. You can read her article and view the Mass recording on our website - [www.osbchicago.org/post/centering-womens-voices](http://www.osbchicago.org/post/centering-womens-voices)



# Join Us - Upcoming Events



## Solemnity of the Passing of St. Benedict Mass

Friday, March 21, 2025 4:30pm

## Easter Sunday Mass

Sunday, April 20 2025 11:00am

## 2025 Jubilee Celebration

July 2025, date and time TBD

### 75th Jubilee

Sr. Callista Kaley

### 60th Jubilee

Sr. Mary Melady

Sr. Catherine Siracusa

To attend Mass **in-person**, please RSVP to Subprioress Sr. Susan Quaintance at [subprioress@osbchicago.org](mailto:subprioress@osbchicago.org) or 773-764-2413 x231.

To attend **via Zoom**, please email Communications Coordinator, Susan Clark at [sclark@osbchicago.org](mailto:sclark@osbchicago.org).

## 2025 Reunion Weekend - Classes ending in '5 and '0

Saturday, September 20th at 4pm - Reunion Mass in the Chapel

Sunday, September 21st at 11 AM - Reunion Luncheon at Chateau Ritz Niles

To help coordinate your classmates to attend, please contact

Communications Coordinator, Susan Clark at [sclark@osbchicago.org](mailto:sclark@osbchicago.org) or 773-764-2413 x231

# Statement In Support of Immigrants

With harmful language and actions increasing toward immigrant communities in our neighborhood and across the United States, we share our continued support of immigrants.

We are a community of religious women founded by German immigrants in the 1800s, who first arrived in Chicago to provide education for the children of recent immigrants.

The neighborhood of Rogers Park in Chicago – which we have called home for nearly 120 years – has long supported and nourished immigrant families as they settle and find their new community and home in the United States.

Our support is longstanding, as evidenced by our community's 2013 Statement In Support of Immigrants:

*We, the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, stand as a corporate body in support of comprehensive immigration reform, which seeks to restore basic rights to persons who come to the United States to work and/or feed their families.*

*We approve policies which guarantee that the family unit is not destroyed and which defend persons on the move for reasons of persecution and war.*

*We commit ourselves to prayer, to attentiveness to local and national policies and their implementation, and, as we find it possible, to support actions aimed at promoting the dignity and well-being of those seeking the opportunity for productive lives in our nation.*

On February 2, 2025 the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, of which Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar is a member, shared their Statement on Immigration:

*In the spirit of the Gospel and the inspiration of St. Benedict we, as members of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP), representing more than 1,100 sisters, commit ourselves to Christ-like hospitality. Therefore, we call upon our leaders, especially governors, state legislators, members of the United States Congress, and our president to reconsider*



*proposed immigration policies and to work towards solutions that uphold the dignity and rights of all people. We urge them to create pathways to citizenship for immigrants, provide humane treatment for those in detention, and ensure that immigrant families are not torn apart. In addition, we commit ourselves to work with other organizations who are advocating and caring for migrant peoples.*

*As Benedictine sisters, we are inspired by the life and teachings of St. Benedict. In the sixth century, when he lived, travelers and pilgrims were often met with violence on the road and sought refuge in his monasteries. Benedict was inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to receive all who came seeking refuge. He modeled his life on that of Christ who received the poor, the lame, the outcast, and the stranger.*

*St. Benedict quoted Jesus who said, "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)*

*For centuries, men and women have continued to be inspired by St. Benedict's example of Christ-like hospitality and his teaching that all people who present themselves at the*



# Statement In Support of Immigrants

*monastery are to be received as Christ. May we and all people, in our time, do the same.*

We also echo the remarks of Cardinal Blase Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, in his January 2025 statement regarding immigration:

*The Catholic community stands with the people of Chicago in speaking out in defense of the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers... we would oppose any plan that includes a mass deportation of U.S. citizens born of undocumented parents.*

*Government has the responsibility to secure our borders and keep us safe. We support the legitimate efforts of law enforcement to protect the safety and security of our communities... But we also are committed to defending the rights of all people, and protecting their human dignity.*

*...we would also oppose all efforts by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other government agencies to enter places of worship for any enforcement activities.*

*The choice is not simply between strict enforcement and open borders... Pope Francis spoke of the need to balance migration governance with regard for human rights and dignity. "We are quick to forget that we are dealing with people with faces and names." The Holy Father has also been clear that "no one should be repatriated to a country where they could face severe human rights violations or even death." This is not idle speculation. Millions of migrants flee their homelands for safer shores precisely because it is a life or death issue for them and their children.*

*People of faith are called to speak for the rights of others and to remind society of its obligation to care for those in need. If the indiscriminate mass deportation being reported were to be carried out, this would be an affront to the dignity of all people and communities, and deny the legacy of what it means to be an American.*



Sr. Benita Coffey marching in the July 2019 Immigrants' Rights Rally in Chicago.

We, the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, pray for those in positions of power, that they may lead with compassion.

We continue our commitment to our immigrant neighbors. We stand with you and will stand up for you and help preserve your human dignity.

# At the Border in the Tohono O’odham Nation

by Sr. Belinda Monahan

The border between Mexico and the United States runs right through the Tohono O’odham Nation, situated just west of Tucson, Arizona. As a sovereign nation, they insisted on a border wall that allows wildlife through, yet keeps cars out. It is much less imposing than the wall that marks the border to the east and west of the nation. Anyone with a tribal identification card can cross the border at the San Miguel Gate, after contacting Border Patrol, and it is here where the stories of the Tohono O’odham Nation and immigrants crossing from Mexico merged into one.

experienced, this is my attempt to share what was a graced encounter with migrants, the Tohono people, and those who work tirelessly to serve both of these groups.

The Tohono we met described themselves as a people with a foot in both worlds: The modern world – in which they use the internet and are voting citizens of the United States, and the traditional world of the Tohono – in which the customs and traditions of the past are rapidly being forgotten though remain important to the people. I found their stories and music fascinating and moving, and – while slipping into “anthropologist mode” – I was intrigued by the fact that the stories we heard could only be told in winter, and were tied to the land, rather than belonging to the people who occupy the land. I wanted to ask endless more questions about what their daily life is like.

Due to shifting U.S. policies and various constraints on our group, we directly met with very few recent immigrants, so opportunities to hear their stories were very limited. However, we did meet Dora, who in 1980 fled for her life during El Salvador’s Civil War and crossed the border into Arizona without documents. Half of the 26 people with whom she traveled died in the desert. She was rescued by Border Patrol, and our group accompanied her to the location where she was found (*photo of crosses below*). Dora fought to



The border wall on the Tohono O’odham Nation allows wildlife to cross but keeps the cars out. With a tribal ID, the Tohono O’odham are able to cross the border here, after contacting Border Patrol first.

The San Solano Mission on the Tohono O’odham Nation lands was my home base for a week in December, during which I had the privilege to travel to Arizona with nine Northwestern students and fellow campus minister Tim Higgins, to learn about the Tohono O’odham people and the situation at the border.

Many of the people we met asked us to make sure that we shared their stories, so while I cannot possibly recount all of what we saw and



# At the Border in the Tohono O'odham Nation



remain in the United States and founded the nonprofit Salvavision, which provides aid and support to asylum seekers and those who have been deported.

The circumstances in which migrants find themselves are often degrading, designed to make them feel and appear less than human. On this trip, I noticed in a special way the men and women who strive to uplift migrants' humanity. One example is the volunteers of the Ajo Samaritans who accompanied us on our water drop (*photo above*), drove us out into the desert, or loaned us the trucks so that we could do both. Many are retired from jobs in business and have chosen to spend their retirement in this way.

On our trip to Centro de Esperanza – a shelter in Sonoyta, Mexico for migrants awaiting their appointment to travel to the US – founder John observed that this work was selfish on his part, since he received so much joy from doing it. He initially refused to let migrants housed in his shelter work, as he did not want their presence to be in anyway transactional.

In a final story about finding humanity, we spent one morning in a courtroom as close to fifty men and women arrested for being in the United States without documentation were processed through federal court. Most of young men and women appeared to be the same age as the students we accompanied, and their presence in prison jumpsuits and shackles was startling. All had agreed to plead guilty to a misdemeanor charge in exchange for dropping a felony charge and substantial fine. The defense attorneys each defended about ten men and women as the judge asked the same questions of each of them. Although everyone was professional, one of the attorneys stood out for humanizing her clients, standing behind each of them with her hand on their shoulder.

While many parts of this trip were difficult, I felt privileged to be with the Tohono O'dham Nation and to bear witness to the journeys of migrants at the border. I pray that we can each find ways to humanize the most vulnerable in our communities and be the supportive hand on their shoulder.

# Oblate News

In early October 2024, **Sr. Benita** and oblates **Kathlyn Myers** and **Paula Kowalkowski** attended Network's "Nuns on the Bus" event at Old St. Patrick's Church. The Bus carried a group of Sisters and laypeople across the country, with stops to discuss and rally around issues and promote voter turnout. Shared Kathlyn, "The gathering was inspiring and fast-moving, with each speaker addressing issues to consider when deciding on the candidates to vote for, presidential as well as down ballot. They also emphasized the importance of getting out to vote. We broke into small/ tiny groups in which we shared with each other some of the issues that concern us in the platforms of the candidates. In larger groups, we shared our visions for a future Chicago. Before going outside to sign the bus, we each committed to an action to encourage people we know to vote."



During the Feast of St. Scholastica Mass on February 10th, **Jacqueline Rickman** and **Anita Maddali** (above) made their Final Oblation.



Final Oblation led by Prioress Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar, left, with sponsor Kevin Cheers, new oblates Anita Maddali and Jacqueline Rickman, and sponsor Barbara Boland.



Oblates at Feast Day Mass, below mural of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica: Pat Sullivan, Fr. Mike Solazzo, Mary Claire Cadieux, Kathlyn Myers, Jacqueline Rickman, Dan Raven, Kate Zilla, Anita Maddali, Barbara Boland, Nancy Labiak, Georgie Ellis, and Kevin Cheers.

To learn more about our Oblates visit:  
[www.osbchicago.org/oblates](http://www.osbchicago.org/oblates)

To explore the call to this way of life, contact  
Sr. Susan Quaintance, OSB, Subprioress  
[subprioress@osbchicago.org](mailto:subprioress@osbchicago.org)  
773-764-2413 x231

For more spirituality programs, visit:  
[www.osbchicago.org/programs](http://www.osbchicago.org/programs)

Looking for support on your journey?  
Our Sisters offer spiritual direction and counseling.  
For more information:  
[www.osbchicago.org/directionandcounseling](http://www.osbchicago.org/directionandcounseling)

# What is an Oblate?



July 2024 - left to right is outgoing NAABOD leadership: Linda Gilmartin, Secretary; Sr. Antoinette Purcell, Vice President; & Fr. Meinrad Miller, President; with the new team, our oblate Kevin Cheers, President, and Julia O'Neil-King, Vice President.

by Oblate Kevin Cheers

As a Benedictine Oblate, I became part of an international group of everyday people who have promised to live their lives guided by the Rule of St. Benedict. While we are attached to a monastery and meet regularly to pray with and learn from each other, our lives are lived secularly in homes, schools, and offices. Each Oblate group is a bit different, reflecting the character and charism of its local monastery, but we all look to the life lessons found in the Rule for guidance.

There are over 100 oblate groups in North America. Each Oblate group is guided by a leadership team which can include a vowed religious individual as the Oblate Director or by a team of Oblates with the advisory support of a vowed religious individual. In the early 1970s, recognizing the need to develop a community for the leaders of the Oblate groups across the country, The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) was founded. Over the years NAABOD created a forum for Oblate Directors to share information about their programs, learning from each other. Providing for the ongoing spiritual growth of Oblates has been and is a consistent topic. Bi-annual conferences, held at various

monasteries, can be a time to explore ideas and methods as well as sharing moments of prayer and reflection.

As the leadership models for the Oblate programs began to change to involve more non-vowed religious, NAABOD also changed to include non-vowed religious Oblate leaders in the conference experience. Discussions at the conferences expanded to include questions regarding models of leadership, in addition to other topics such as community involvement both inside and outside of the monastery. At one of the recent NAABOD conferences, the advisory team that I am part of here at St. Scholastica was part of a panel, discussing various forms of leadership that Oblate groups might want to adopt.

At the most recent NAABOD conference in July of 2024, I was elected president of the association, the first Oblate to hold the position. My election reflects changes both for NAABOD and for some monastic communities, as Oblates continue to take on more active roles. NAABOD continues to create a community for the leaders of Oblate programs to gather together, sharing and reflecting on the ongoing needs of our communities as we together seek God and support each other in love.

# Alumnae Profiles

St. Scholastica Academy Chicago educated women for 148 years and Cañon City for 111 years. With the schools' closings, the spirit of Sts. Scholastica and Benedict live on in our alumnae, who exemplify the tenets of Benedictine education: **Love of Learning, Importance of Community, Sense of Balance, Stewardship of Gifts, and Respect for the Individual.**

To honor and celebrate our living legacy in the world, we will profile a few alumnae in this and future issues of *Sacro Speco*. To nominate a fellow alumna, please share their name, class, and a brief description of how they live and model the tenets, to Susan Clark, Communications Coordinator, at [sclark@osbchicago.org](mailto:sclark@osbchicago.org) or 773-764-2413 x 232.

## Jennifer Walter, MD, PhD, MS '94



*St. Scholastica instilled in me the importance of advocating for the most vulnerable in our society. Those of us who were given many privileges and resources had a responsibility to be stewards not only of the earth, but of our fellow humans and to find ways to be of service to them. I also witnessed the commitment and selflessness of the sisters in the community to the work of educating us. While they did not have necessarily have a lot of power in the world, they worked to empower us and to have us believe in ourselves as people and as women. They demonstrated that small acts of resistance that aligned with their values could be a real light in difficult times. I have tried to carry those lessons forward and have the courage to speak up for those who are more vulnerable.*

Jennifer K. Walter, MD, PhD, MS, is Director of the Department of Medical Ethics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and an attending physician with the Justin Michael Ingerman Center for Palliative Care, the hospital's internationally recognized Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT). She is also an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Medical Ethics at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and a secondary faculty member in the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the Perelman School of Medicine.

Dr. Walter's work as a clinician, ethicist, and researcher is focused on improving communication and shared decision-making between healthcare providers and families of children with serious illness. She has worked at the intersection of clinical practice and bioethics emphasizing the physician-patient relationship and family-centered care. Her current research focuses on facilitating and improving communication between the healthcare team and families of children with serious illness. She is developing interventions to better train interprofessional teams in collaboration and communication to improve outcomes for patients and families.

Dr. Walter has written normative ethics pieces about clinical practice challenges as well as conducted a national survey of pediatric ethics consultation work which has provided the most comprehensive understanding of the scope, funding, and accessibility of pediatric ethics consultation services in the United States.

## Brittany Hogan '03



*St. Scholastica is where I truly learned the value of serving others. I don't think I would have become a social worker and educator without experiences like Mr. Donahue's sophomore Theology class, where I first explored global social justice issues. My deep love for studying world religions—and my belief in the importance of helping young people understand different perspectives—was sparked by my senior-year World Theology class with Sister Susan. At St. Scholastica, I gained focus and discovered that my life's purpose would be rooted in serving those who are unable to stand up for themselves.*

Brittany Hogan is an educator, advocate, and leader dedicated to advancing educational equity. With a career rooted in student-centered, culturally responsive practices, she has worked tirelessly to ensure all students have access to barrier-free learning environments.

Beginning her journey in the nonprofit sector in St. Louis, Brittany transitioned into education, ultimately serving as the Director of Educational Equity & Diversity for Rockwood School District—one of the largest districts in St. Louis County. In this role, she developed and implemented the district-wide equity plan and led the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation program, a regional initiative facilitating racial school integration in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Brittany's work placed her at the forefront of national conversations on race, diversity, and inclusion in education, leading to media coverage including TIME Magazine. This fueled her commitment to systemic change, inspiring her to launch BTheGrowth, an organization that partners with schools and institutions to develop equity-driven policies, strengthen curricula, and support educators in fostering inclusive learning environments. Expanding her impact beyond policy, Brittany teamed up with Nic Stone, New York Times bestselling author, to co-found Empathy in Equity, a national initiative using literature as a tool to cultivate empathy and advance equity in education.

Brittany continues to shape the future of public education, having recently completed her term on the St. Louis Public Schools Board of Education, where she was appointed by Mayor Tishaura Jones. She also served as an inaugural manager for the Center for Human Service Leadership at the Delmar Divine, a hub for social innovation dedicated to sustainable community impact.

A proud graduate of Hampton University, Brittany holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and earned a master's in social work from Washington University in St. Louis. Now based in Dallas, she continues her work as a consultant and thought leader, striving to create meaningful change in education.

## St. Scholastica Academy Chicago Reunion Weekend 2025

Celebrating classes ending in '5 and '0

Saturday, September 20th at 4pm - Reunion Mass in the Chapel

Sunday, September 21st at 11 AM - Reunion Luncheon at Chateau Ritz Niles

# In Memoriam

The following notices were received November 1, 2024 – February 9, 2025

## St. Scholastica Academy, Chicago

**Virginia Halas McCaskey** (1939)  
**Marjorie Anne Erickson McDevitt** (1942)  
**Mary Ann Glow Renner-Eschmann** (1947)  
**Louise Furlong Olson** (1950)  
**Marjorie Ellen Coffey Auer** (1952), sister of Sister Benita Coffey, OSB (1949)  
**Mafalda "Muffy" DeNinno Pennington** (1952)  
**Carol Havlik Rodriguez** (1954)  
**Diana Peterson Thal** (1954)  
**Judith Knorst** (1955), sister of Suzanne Knorst Miller (1959)  
**Diane Adler** (1957), sister of Kathleen Adler (1960) and Marilyn Adler Koepp (1965)  
**Patricia M. Campion** (1957)  
**Margaret "Peggy" McMahon Koucky** (1961), sister of deceased Dorothy McMahon Gelderman (1963)  
**Karolyn Brannon Tucker** (1961)  
**Bonnie Burton Vasaloski** (1961), sister of Melissa Burton Marchetta (1968)  
**Robert "Bob" Erlenbaugh**, husband of Madge Hartnett Erlenbaugh (1962)  
**Cheryl Margaret Smith Stanton** (1962), mother of Megan

Stanton-Anderson (1985), and Katherine Stanton (1990), and sister of Pamela Smith Michaud (1966)  
**Virginia Bella Colsant Braasch** (1963)  
**Darlene Durso** (1963), sister of Josephine Meehan (1956)  
**Patricia Marshall Kaiser** (1964)  
**Thomas E. McGivern**, husband of Janet Heiser McGivern (1967), brother of Mollie McGivern Carroll (1964), Jane McGivern Levine (1968), and Kate McGivern Dorn (1973)  
**Phyllis Stroka Cypcar** (1968)  
**John Quinn**, husband of Mary Ellen Davajon (1969)  
**Helen A. Lyon**, mother of Mary Jo (1973), Nancy (1974), Carrie (1976), Ellen (1978), Donna (1979), Laurie (1983), and Lisa (1984)  
**Ron (Edward) Zemla** (\*4/22/2024), husband of Mary Ann Lykins Zemla (1974)  
**Sandra (Sandy) Conrad Kowalski** (1976), sister of Debra Conrad (1977)  
**Vincent A. Ransom, father of Romy Ransom** (1982)  
**Carol Kelly Shields, mother of Tracy Shields-O'Reilly** (1988)

*\* denotes that death was prior to November 1, but we received notice of their death in the last several months.*

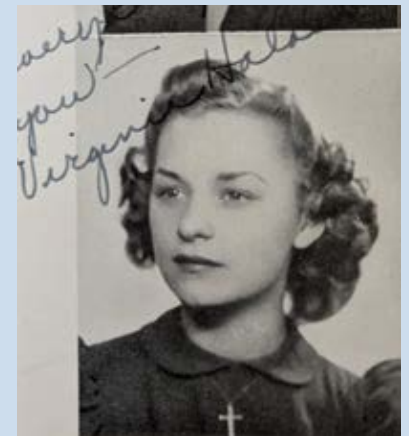
## Virginia Halas McCaskey, Class of 1939

Class of 1939 alumna **Virginia Halas McCaskey** died February 6, 2025 at the age of 102. Mrs. McCaskey was owner of the Chicago Bears since her father and team founder, George S. Halas, passed away in 1983. Born January 5, 1923 she attended Chicago public schools until 8th grade when she transferred to St. Hilary in Chicago, and then attended high school at St. Scholastica Academy, graduating with the class of 1939.

Mrs. McCaskey went on to study at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pa., where she met her future husband, Edward W. McCaskey. The two married in 1943, and Mrs. McCaskey lived with his family in Pennsylvania while he was serving in WWII. The couple and their growing family returned to Illinois in 1949. After the sudden passing of her younger brother in 1979 and the passing of her father in 1983, Mrs. McCaskey found herself as the principal owner of the Chicago Bears franchise.

She was a consistent supporter of St. Scholastica Academy and the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, and diligently attended her high school reunions until 2019, when she called the development office to apologize for being unable to make it to her 80th reunion, as she was traveling with the team!

A statement from the Chicago Bears said, "At the core of everything she did was Mrs. McCaskey's faith. A devout Catholic, she always reflected on what God would want her to do in daily life. She focused on encourag[ing] people to be better to one another and once stated she was always working on her faith through good times and bad. Instilling the values of faith and family in every person she met... was the essence of her life's work. Her commitment to the betterment of the Chicagoland community can be seen through the establishment of the Bears Care program in 2005. Since that time, Bears Care has issued grants totaling more than \$31.5 million to 225 agencies to improve the quality of life for people in the Chicagoland community, especially disadvantaged children and their families."



Virginia Halas' 1939 senior class photo with her signature



## Memorials

### In memory of...

**Diane Adler**

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Rabbi Robert Rosen

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Laurie Lyon

Lisa Lyon

Nancy Lyon

Mary Jo Stegeman

Carrie Stutzman

**Jerry Macellaio**

Eileen Moorman

---

*"...I remember you  
constantly  
in my prayers."*

*2 Timothy 1:3*

---

## Prayer Ministry - November 1, 2024 through February 9, 2025

### **Sister Victoria Marconi, OSB**

Steven Vatch, Jr.

### **Michael Marn**

Judith Alexander

### **Mary and Joseph Marren**

Mary Jo Green

### **Mr. and Mrs. Carroll A. Martin**

Patricia Martin

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Deanne and Stephen Riportella

### **Thomas E. McGivern**

Benedictine Sisters of Chicago

Janet McGivern

### **Virginia Halas McCaskey**

Benedictine Sisters of Chicago

### **Joe Mesec**

Geraldine Mesec

### **Vincent Monardo**

Dominic and Margaret Caminiti

### **Elizabeth Monastero**

Joanne Spata

### **Patricia Ann Murph**

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### **Margaret Geimer Murphy**

Ellen Ahern

### **Patricia Nangle**

Eleanor Nangle

### **Mary Nangle Newhouse**

Eleanor Nangle

### **Sister Mary Benet Obear**

Carol Burns

### **Departed family members**

Charlotte O'Donnell

### **Louise Furlong Olson**

Benedictine Sisters of Chicago

### **Mafalda Deninno Pennington**

James Pennington

### **Edmund A. Perse**

Margaret Cullen

### **Mary Gersick Perse**

Margaret Cullen

### **Peter A. Perse, Jr.**

Margaret Cullen

### **John Quinn**

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### **Vincent Ransom**

Benedictine Sisters of Chicago

### **William (Bill) Sacco**

Aleksandra (Ola) Sacco

Benedictine Sisters of Chicago

### **Afonsina and Joseph Saraceno**

Denise and Tony Saraceno

### **The Saraceno Family**

Denise and Tony Saraceno

### **Sister Mildred Scheetz, OSB**

Anne Scheetz

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Catherine Arens

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Diane Markovitz

Mary McGuinness

Kathleen Mottice

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Dale and Caroline Schippers

Kathy Ytuarte on behalf of Missi Currier  
and Matt Thompson and NMOGA

Leonard and Kathy Wass

Sarah Whelan

### **Barb Schmidt**

Kathy Pyle

### **Carol Kelly Shields**

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Linda Zienty

### **All deceased members of the Zonsius family**

Mary and Richard Marcheschi

### **Sister Suzanne Zuercher, OSB**

David Zuercher

### **Carla Goberville Zuchowski**

Allen Ahern

If you have a loved one you would like  
the Sisters to remember in prayer,  
please share their names with us via the  
envelope provided in this newsletter.



## *Special Occasions*

**In honor of Antonia Bouillette**  
Donald Sprague  
**In honor of Sister Hilary Halpin, OSB**  
**on her birthday**  
John and Kathy Brady  
**In thanksgiving for**  
**Sister Kathleen Maloney, OSB**  
Margaret Schramm  
**In honor of Patsy Malloy**  
Patricia Sagan  
**In honor of Anne Matz**  
Donald Sprague

**In honor of Sister Mary Melady, OSB**  
Kathleen McDaniel  
**In honor of Carolyn Murphy**  
Anonymous  
**In honor of Dianne Murphy and**  
**Colleen Howard**  
Kathleen Anderson  
**In honor of Sister Judith Murphy, OSB**  
Ellen Castille  
**In thanksgiving for the wonderful**  
**education I received at SSA**  
Arlene Jarzombek Porter

**In honor of Eddie, Tony,**  
**Kenny and John**  
Jeanne Stanton  
**In honor of Patti Cassidy, Francine**  
**Palm, George Olen, Judy Bartels,**  
**Leo Cassidy, Mike Cassidy, Cathy**  
**Ingraffia, Steph Cassidy, Steve Palm,**  
**and Mary Jo Olen**  
Jeanne Stanton  
**In honor of Kathy and Bill Riordan**  
Linda Zienty  
**In honor of Donald J. Trump, President**  
Dolores Deasy

We are very grateful to the  
Bernard Heerey Family Foundation



# Annual Stewardship Report

## Fiscal Year 2023-2024

### List of Donors, Fiscal Year July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

The following foundations, organizations, and individual donors are listed in alphabetical order. Please see page 35 for a listing of donations to Uncle Pete's Ministries.

*A + cross indicates that the donor passed away this year.*

*Every effort has been made to accurately acknowledge our donors' gifts for the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. We apologize for any errors and encourage you to call any inaccuracies or omissions to our attention. Thank you!*

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Helen Brach Foundation  
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Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, July 2023

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in ministry.*

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Ann Marie Kotre  
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David and Editha Krueger  
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Gerry and Gunars Kulans

Richard Kunnert  
Linda and John Kunzer  
Patricia Kwasigroch  
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Ann Lamas  
Mary Lambert  
Myra Schultz Lang  
Rev. Karl Langsdorf  
Angela Lapid and John Rux  
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Helen Leonardo Lasser  
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Catherine Leahy  
Kathleen Leahy  
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Andrea Leko  
Patricia Lenihan-Barbee  
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Jacquelean LeSanche  
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Sharon Moran  
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Maria Moreno  
Patricia Moretti  
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## *Your Gifts Support our Elder Sisters*

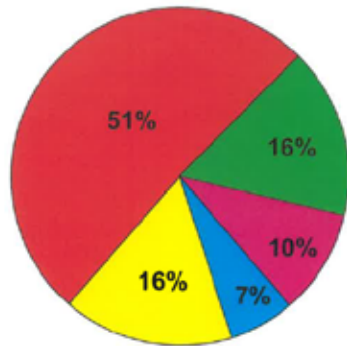
The St. Joseph Court Infirmiry Sisters enjoy their life of dignity together in community because of your generous support.

Thanks to your prayers, donations, and volunteer time, we are not only able to care for our elder Sisters' basic needs, but also provide them with care that enrich their days. We are deeply grateful.

---



## Revenues & Gains – 2024



Category	Amount	Variance 2023
Srs. Comp. & Benefits	\$387,863	↓ \$20,416
General	\$245,277	↓ \$24,878
Srs. SS Benefits	\$157,119	↓ \$12,453
Interest & Dividends	\$403,989	↑ \$118,168
Contributions	\$1,242,114	↑ \$410,744

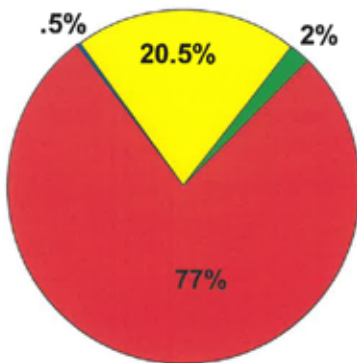
Total Revenues & Gains = \$2,448,522

(Graph does not include gain on the sale of equipment of \$7,900 or property damage insurance reimbursement of \$4,260.)

Jill Newberger  
 Barbara Newe  
 Mimi Newton  
 Patricia Nick  
 Mary Jean Niemi  
 Barbara Nohr  
 Mary Noonan  
 Gwen Nordgren  
 Mary Nowesnick  
 Margaret O'Brien Steinfels and Peter Steinfels  
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 Kathleen Pappas  
 Janet Parrilli  
 Laura Partridge  
 Patricia Patras  
 Gladys Paul  
 Mary Paul

## Expenses and Losses – 2024



Category	Amount	Variance 2023
Members Support	\$2,072,161	↓ \$95,743
Ministry Support	\$12,486	↑ \$1,026
Mgmt & General	\$547,747	↑ \$138,399
Fundraising	\$55,728	↓ \$5,234

Total Expenses = \$2,688,122

Sr. Leocretia Muganda, sTh  
 Kris Mulcahy  
 Valency Muldoon  
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 Dolores Mundt  
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 Michelle Pecotte  
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*Donors, July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024*

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James Pennington  
+ Mafalda Pennington  
Kathy Penniston-Smith  
Charles and Ursula Perko  
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Patricia Stoneberg  
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Lauren Streff  
Sally Stricca  
Lauren Strickland

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Carrie Stutzman  
Jorge Suarez  
Catherine O'Meara Sullivan  
Celeste L. Sullivan  
Eileen Sullivan  
Maurice Wieland Sullivan  
Suzanne and Michael Sullivan  
Michael Surdyk  
Steven and Gwenn Suvada  
Catherine Swan  
Sheilya Hackett-Swan and Peter Swan  
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Katrina Swanson  
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Paluch Family Foundation  
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St. Michael Catholic Church  
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### Uncle Pete Ministries

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Lisa and Vincent Parisi  
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Justin Reed  
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Margaret and John Schmoldt  
Kiki Schotanus  
Patricia Senerchia

Amy and Stephen Skoronski  
Anne and Robert Skoronski  
Peter Skoronski  
Joseph and Mary Jayne Smith  
Michael Solazzo  
Maura and Peter Spingola  
Jeanne Stanton  
Margaret Stanton  
Greg Thill  
Lora Todd  
Marian Torre  
Robert Tuttle  
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Mary Lou and John Waechter  
Elizabeth and Kenneth M. Weinberg  
Jane and John Wiedemann  
Thomas Wiedemann and Jacqueline  
Lew  
Ellen and William Wirth  
James Wong  
Melissa Wong  
Yuk Wong  
Mary and Michael Zonsius

---

*Thank you for*  
**partnering with us to**  
**promote Benedictine**  
**spirituality and action**  
**in our church and**  
**world.**

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# Benedictine Legacy Society

The following benefactors remembered the Benedictine Sisters in their wills or trusts for which bequests or gifts were made during the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

JoAnne Festle  
Jean and Louis Glunz  
Robert Pruchnik

Thomas Sharp  
Kathy Terra  
Helen and Donald Wahls

---

These generous friends join fellow Legacy Society members who remain in the Sisters' thoughts and prayers:

Anonymous  
Isabelle Atz  
Ronald Auer  
Mary Bauer  
Judith Beaumont  
John and Margaret Beck  
Sylvia Bezek  
Bertha E. Bishop  
Patricia Ann Born  
John M. Brost Winifred Brost  
Catherine T. Cashman  
Frances Cashman  
Rev. Edward N. Coffey  
Rev. Thomas P. Conley  
Pat and Patty Crowley  
Catherine Cuny  
Marguerite Cuny  
William M. Dejak  
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Wayne J. Fickinger  
Betty Finucane  
Loretta Garrett  
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Andrea Hammann  
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Mary Ann Harrington  
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Lorraine V. Provenzano  
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Patricia Redmond  
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Margaret Mary Reinert  
John Rohar  
Peter Rohar  
Mary Alyce Sasso  
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Mary A. Watson  
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Anne Clare Wrenn  
Rev. Michael Wulsch  
Barbara Wunsch  
Joseph Zorc

---

More than a legal document, your will is a testament to your life's work, your values, and your beliefs.

**The Benedictine Sisters of Chicago would be honored to be remembered as part of your legacy.**

Contact Joanne Spata at 773.764.2413 x233 to learn more.

---

# Other ways to Partner with Us in Mission

## **Pray for the Benedictine Community**

Please keep the Sisters, Oblates, Alumnae, and friends in your prayers. Your prayer support helps sustain us!

## **Become a Monthly Donor**

Automatic monthly donations are an easy way to support the Sisters. To learn more about making donations directly from your checking account or credit card, please contact us.

## **Matching Gifts**

Many employers sponsor matching gift program that match, double, or even triple any charitable contributions that their employees make. Consider asking your Human Resources Department.

## **Donor-Advised Fund DAF**

As a registered 501(c)(3) charity, the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago are legally able and truly grateful to accept your thoughtful donation through your Donor-Advised Fund.

## **IRA Charitable Rollover**

A deeply appreciated donation and a major tax benefit all in one! If you are 70 ½ plus, you can make a transfer directly from your IRA to the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago. This gift will not only save you tax on the donation you transfer, but it also counts toward your required minimum distribution.

## **Appreciated Stock**

Your kindness through the donation of Stock will not only help support the Sisters, but may also lower your Capital Gains Taxes.

## **Memorial Gifts**

Families may choose to name the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago as their preferred recipient for a memorial tribute, instead of flowers. Pre-printed envelopes are available for use at the funeral home.

## **Memorial Card**

At your request, a lovely card can be sent to the bereaved, expressing your sympathy and notifying them that a donation was made in memory of their loved one.

## **Celebration or In Honor of Someone Special**

A thoughtful gift for the person who has everything; a donation in their honor to the Sisters. Or, you may consider stating, "In lieu of gifts, a donation to the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago may be made." An acknowledgment card on your behalf will be sent to the honoree.

## **Legacy Society**

More than just a legal document, your will is a testament to your life's work, your values, and your beliefs. The Benedictine Sisters of Chicago would be honored to be remembered as a part of your legacy.

All donors, deceased loved ones, and honorees will be listed in *Sacro-Speco* and remembered daily in the Sisters' prayers.

*Questions? Contact Joanne Spata, Director of Development, at 773-764-2413, ext. 233*



Benedictine Sisters of Chicago  
St. Scholastica Monastery  
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**Annual Report**  
*Begins on page 20*