



Bristow Bulletin

Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

What is it that you seek?



TWO MAKE PROFESSION

When they are to be received, they come before the whole community in the oratory and promise stability, fidelity to the monastic life, and obedience. RB Chapter 58:17

Sister Vicki Ix, O.S.B. and Sister Veronica Joyner, O.S.B. made their first monastic profession as Benedictine Sisters at Saint Benedict Monastery on September 5, 2004. The first profession is part of the formation process and is made for a period of three years. At the end of this time the two sisters will be invited to make their perpetual monastic profession. During the ceremony each sister read and signed her profession formula as the community looked on. Prioress Cecilia Dwyer, O.S.B. in her remarks to Sister Vicki and Sister Veronica said "You are the ones who will plant our seeds for the future. People will watch. They will come upon you working the earth of this monastic garden and they will want to plant their own seeds in the same soil." Sister Vicki begins her new ministry as Vocation Director for the Benedictine Sisters and Sister Veronica continues her ministry as webmaster. She also assists the community treasurer.

Inside this issue:

<i>Prioress Message</i>	2
<i>Our Ministries</i>	3
<i>Profile of a Sister</i>	4
<i>Photo Gallery</i>	5 & 6

THREE ENTER

Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry... but, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door...

RB Chapter 58:1-3.

On September 4, 2004 three women entered the community. Lois Papp of Syracuse, NY, Katherine Frick of Montgomery Village, MD and Deborah Britt of Arlington "knocked on the door" as part of their entrance ceremony at Saint Benedict Monastery. The whole community was waiting for them on the inside of the door and the sisters gathered around as the three new postulants were asked by Prioress Cecilia Dwyer, O.S.B. "What is it that you seek?" This ancient question has been asked through fifteen centuries of monastic rituals. Lois, Katherine and Deborah will be involved in five years of formation before they make their perpetual monastic profession. During this time of formation they will study the Rule of Benedict and its application to modern monastic life as they enter into community, prayer and ministry.





Prioress Message

What is it that you seek?

This question is asked by the prioress in every ceremony along the way as each of our sisters' journeys through her monastic life. It is even asked at jubilee celebrations and rightly so as I think it is a question we must deal with every day. It is a discernment question. Saint Benedict only asks that the newcomer seek God and we remind ourselves of this pursuit constantly. We discern our God in so many ways as we stay the course of our chosen path.

The entrance of three women into our community on a single afternoon is cause for great rejoicing among us. You will see that in the pictures on pages 5 & 6. We are delighted that Lois, Katherine and Deborah have chosen to seek God with us. For our community it is an affirmation of the monastic life that is so precious and right, and for these three women it is a new beginning in some ways and a continuation of that incredible faith journey that brought them knocking at our door. Accommodations are being made all around as we get used to one another. They now have VERY small bedrooms for themselves and their belongings and we all have to shift in our relationships and make room. What a happy task! In the midst of all this there is still that discernment question: "What is it that you seek?" How is God speaking to us through these three new members? What is God saying to us about our life? What insights will we gather, what glimpses of God in these new faces, what words of wisdom will be spoken - through us and to us? God is so good.

We are grateful to all of you who read this newsletter with such enthusiasm and keep us in your prayers and in your hearts. Know that you are in ours as we journey on, day after day, contemplating our gracious and loving God. I hope that in your daily discernment you find God in the new people you meet and befriend, in the members of your family, in your co-workers, in those who seek your wisdom. May you be blessed on your journey as you are blessing to others.

Sister Cecilia Dwyer, OSB

"A SECOND SPRING?"

In the 1950's Pope Pius XII suggested to religious communities of women that they might think of modernizing their religious garb. The pope suggested, for example, that sisters who drove cars should not have their peripheral vision impeded by their headdress. Those of us studying at Catholic universities with women of other religious communities at the time were certain that the pope was referring to members of those OTHER communities. Few of us looked in the mirror and thought that he might be referring to me and my community.

In the 1960's, with the election of Pope John XXIII, the Church experienced the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers asked all religious communities to return to the spirit of their founders. Pope John said that he wanted to open the windows and let some fresh air into the Church. This call for spiritual renewal was taken very seriously by most religious communities. We at Bristow struggled to maintain our monastic character while engaged in active educational ministries. Evaluating ourselves and our lives was both painful and exciting. Painful because change is painful for all of us; but also exciting as we looked at the possibility of doing our ministries in new and untried ways.

These years since Vatican Council II have been difficult years. We have had to deal with loss, change, uncertainty about the future, and a lack of vocations. But with the recent influx of new members, we at Bristow have begun to experience a "second spring." Our hope is that God is blessing the changes we have made. He is certainly blessing us with the friends who join us for Sunday Mass, for retreats and workshops, and who pray for our continued growth and development.

Sister Ernestine Johann, OSB

Heritage Room Artifact

The prayer book, *The Monastic Diurnal*, used by the sisters was altered around the 1950's. It began to be printed in not only Latin but a second column of each page in English which mirrored the Latin text. This was one example of the many changes that Sister Ernestine alludes to in the adjacent article. The prayer book actually changed first before the garb of the sisters.





....From the Office of Vocation Ministry

Do you have a monastic heart? If the answer is yes, you are either a member of this community, an Oblate of Saint Benedict Monastery, or a woman in discernment. Discernment is a fancy word, holy jargon really, for seeking the will of God in our lives. If you're at a liminal place in your life—a crossroads, and wondering how God wants you to spend your life, first, TAKE A DEEP BREATH! Then, go back to the question that changed my life: "Do you have a monastic heart?" Sit with the question, ask God to give you light and patience, and then do what Saint Benedict recommends: *LISTEN*. In the Prologue of *The Rule*, Benedict encourages us to be still and turn our attention to the God who is always waiting to speak love. Listen. And then follow the whisper in your heart and do what four courageous women did recently on the weekend of September 24th - come and see! Our next Monastic Discernment Weekend is February 25th - 27th. But don't wait until February to have a lived experience of monastic community. Call me and we'll start sharing the discernment journey together.

"Do you have a monastic heart?"
Listen ... and be at peace.



Benedictine Pastoral Center Class Schedule

Creative Adventures

Travel within and explore various arts as a means to enhance spirituality

- 11/03/04—Raku—Pottery of a Spiritual Nature
- 11/10/04—Prayer in Movement
- 11/17/04—Soap Making as Art

Time:
7:15—9:15 p.m.

Place:
Benedictine Pastoral Center
9535 Linton Hall Road
Bristow, Virginia 20136
(703) 393-2485 for info.

Cost:
\$15

Tribute to Sister Eileen

Sister Eileen retired from the BEACON program effective September 1, 2004 after almost 12 years of serving in the heart of the BEACON program and as its Director. During the Fall National Volunteer Week, BEACON held its Annual Volunteer & Learner Recognition event with a potluck dinner and awards program. A surprised Sister Eileen received accolades and mementos of affection from her Board of Limited Jurisdiction, learners and tutors. In pure Sister Eileen style, she had more than one story of her own to share.



So with that ever-present impish smile Sister Eileen thanked the crowd who had gathered and reassured them that the programs would continue and said that the success and longevity of BEACON would not have been possible had it not been for the hard work and dedication of those present encircling her. Rest assured Sister Eileen won't be too far away, as she will continue to have oversight responsibilities for the sisters' Oblate Program. A fond farewell to Sister Eileen as she enjoys a bit of her semi-retirement !



The Prioress and the BEACON Board are proud to announce the selection of Mrs. Sonya Jacob as the new Director of BEACON. Sonya is a lifelong resident of Northern Virginia and moved to Prince William County with her husband Jim three years ago. They now have two sons, Christopher and Patrick who born October 10, 2004. Sonya is a graduate of Virginia Tech and has worked at Capital One, a McLean based financial institution, on development opportunities in South Africa, India and Europe. She has worked with the Literacy Volunteers of Fauquier County for six years in program development, fundraising and as a member of their Board of Directors. Sonya is looking forward to every opportunity to work with the Board, staff and volunteers of BEACON as well as the community BEACON serves. Her experience, together with your support and the strong programs Sister Eileen has built, will allow BEACON to continue to grow and flourish. Welcome Sonya!