



Benedictine Portrait: Sister Charlotte Lange

Some people are said to wear their heart on their sleeves. Sister Charlotte Lange's heart is reflected in her face. Seventy-seven years of life experiences have given her a look of studied concentration and unflappable determination accented by her piercing blue eyes. But there is nothing cold or stony there; quickly her wide and welcoming smile adds light and warmth that embraces everyone as friend. Sister Charlotte is all about people and relationships.

Born in Richmond, to Anne & Bernard Lange, Charlotte Theresa was the classic "middle child" of five. She describes herself as a challenge to her parents; she was constantly on the move, bubbling over with energy and motion. As a teenager she was athletic and unstoppable. She channeled some of her energy by becoming involved in extracurricular activities. Daily family rosary and Sunday Mass flowed easily into apostolic acts of kindness and compassion that drew others into participation. Whether it was leading the neighbors in a "block rosary" or devotional prayers (one to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and the other to Saint Benedict), delivering garden grown vegetables to the Sisters at the convent on Grove Street, or later taking responsibility for the convent cemetery with her Dad, Sister Charlotte was always at the epicenter of activity.

She laughs when she reflects that she has lived 60 of her 77 years in



the same Richmond neighborhood. The Benedictine promise of stability resonates strongly throughout her history as she is, indeed, part of an era of Americans who have not strayed far from their urban roots. The bonds are strong and the connections last. Sister Charlotte and all of her siblings attended elementary school at Saint

Benedict in Richmond. She would return there in 1972 to serve a 10 year term as principal. All of the Lange girls attended Saint Gertrude High School and again, Sister Charlotte would return to her alma mater in 1982 as its Youth Minister, and in 1985, began her 20 year tenure as the school principal. Retirement is a word foreign to this energetic dynamo. Not one to sit for long or kick back with her feet up while others do the work, after a year sabbatical Sister Charlotte would find her way to St. Mary's/Bon Secour hospital where, in 2006, she became Director of Ministry Outreach. Sister would serve in this role until 2012.

Today Sister Charlotte serves as a board member of BEACON for Adult Literacy, one of the Benedictine Sisters' corporate ministries. Taking her service beyond Board responsibilities, Sister tutors monastery staff members in English on a weekly basis. Sister Charlotte also heads the Benedictine community's efforts for donor appreciation and recognition. She daily contacts by phone or email those who gift the Sisters in any way to extend a personal thank you on behalf of the community. Treasuring these

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

INSIDE:

- + Donor Snapshot
- + Alumni Spotlight

- + Monastery News
- + A Page From Our History

Donor Snapshot: Jane Hamilton and Steve O'Brien

The ministries of the Benedictine Sisters rely greatly on the generosity of our loyal supporters. In this issue of the Bulletin, we introduce Jane Hamilton and Steve O'Brien.

Long-time friends and supporters of the Benedictine Sisters and their ministries, Jane Hamilton and Steve O'Brien exemplify the meaning of "faith in action." Both are deeply committed to service to others and the promotion of social justice, beliefs which find a home in the charisma of Benedictine spirituality.

Married in 2016, Jane and Steve share a strong sense of the interconnectedness of the human family; caring and advocating for others is simply a way of life. "I was raised in a Catholic home where there was always an emphasis on service to the community," said Jane. Steve added, "The Catholic Church has a long tradition of social justice, of upholding the dignity and worth of the human person. I am inspired by how the Benedictine Sisters follow the teachings of the recent Popes on the duty to care for those most in need."

Jane and Steve have come to know the Benedictine Sisters through their association with the Sisters'



ministries and their participation in Sunday liturgy at the monastery. Until moving to Richmond, Steve was a volunteer for the BEACON program. "The ministries of the Benedictine Sisters, the Beacon for Adult Literacy and Transitional Housing BARN are in the best Catholic traditions

of social justice," reflected Steve. "The programs do not just provide people with needed basic assistance, but with the education and skills necessary to become self-sufficient, to enjoy the dignity that comes from having a decent job and being able to provide for their families. They do not just 'give people a fish; they teach them how to fish.'"

Jane became involved with Saint Gertrude High School as a parent. Now, she continues to serve on the Board of Visitors of Saint Gertrude High School. "I am a strong supporter of the values taught at St. Gertrude regarding community service and the importance of making a positive impact on the community where we live and work. I admire the Benedictine Sisters and feel connected to their work."

As Steve noted, Pope Benedict XVI made it clear: "In the words of my venerable predecessor, Pope Gregory the Great, 'When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.'" By supporting the Benedictine Sisters, Jane and Steve participate in our efforts to welcome all as Christ, with respect and appreciation for the dignity of each human person.

Making a Gift in Your Will

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Questions? Contact Kayne Karnbach at 571-428-2503 or kkarnbach@osbva.org.

Example of Gift Language

"I, [name], of [city, state, ZIP], give, devise and bequeath to the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia, Inc., located in Bristow, Virginia [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for their unrestricted use and purpose."

Monastery News

Open House

For nearly 150 years, the Benedictine Sisters have been dedicated to the needs of the people of Richmond. On February 26, 2017, our Sisters in Richmond hosted an Open House at our newly renovated convent on Monument Avenue. It was an opportunity for friends old and new to meet the Sisters and learn about the programs that are being offered there. Originally structured as a two-family residence, it now supports the sisters' private convent on one side and a counseling and spiritual center on the other. Sister Kathy Persson offers individual and

family counseling, and Benedictine Oblate Annie McIntee offers spiritual direction for individuals seeking a deeper relationship with God. In addition, the sisters will be offering a variety of programs on prayer, scripture, and spiritual topics.

Sisters Andrea Verchuck and Mary Clark, along with Sister Kathy, are in residence. Sister Andrea coordinates hospitality, and Sister Mary is an administrative assistant at Saint Gertrude High School. Together they extend a warm Benedictine welcome to all to join them for prayer, or to take advantage of the services offered.



New Live-In

The Benedictine Sisters offer the Live-in Program to women who would like to experience monastic life, share in our rich daily rhythm of prayer,



community and work. Michelle Pasko Olivier began the program on February 14, 2017. The program also serves as a time of discernment for life decisions. Michelle comes to us from Mertztown, PA, and is the mother of three and grandmother of three. Her background is in nursing and administration. Michelle, a Lay Cistercian with the Trappists in Gethsemane, KY, has a great appreciation for the Benedictine life. Michelle is volunteering with our BEACON program, and will finish her training in spiritual direction this May. Welcome, Michelle!

Benedictine Bowling

On Friday, February 24, 2017, eight members of the extended Benedictine family supported Leadership Prince William's fundraising event at BowlAmerica lanes in Manassas. The monastery was represented by two teams: Benedictine #1 (Sister Charlotte Lange, Postulant Kay Fitzgerald, Michelle Olivier, and Kayne Karnbach) and Benedictine #2 (Sister Pat Hagarty, Sister Joanna Burley, Sister Shirley Arce, and Mo Shannon-Thornton), and duly photo-documented by Oblate Greg Evans. They competed in fun with teams from local business leaders to raise money for a youth scholarship fund. It was an afternoon of laughter and new relationships that promises to become an annual endeavor. Next year, perhaps a tagline saying "We've got a bowling habit" on team t-shirts?



Alumni Spotlight:

Patrick Casey, Linton Hall School Class of '13

There are so many facets to the Patrick Casey story. In January of this year he was awarded the 2016 National U.S. Youth Soccer TOPSoccer Buddy of the Year Award, having already won both the Virginia State Award and the Region One award for his volunteer work as a TOPSoccer Coach. This community program is one which has been designed to meet the needs of children and young adults with physical and/or intellectual disabilities, geared toward player development rather than competition according to the sponsored blog. So, three awards: state, regional, and national; however, those are the tangible symbols of Patrick's accomplishment. There are gifts beyond these. The description of Patrick as he was nominated included his standpoint as a positive role model, a description that included "patient, caring, and enthusiastic," as well as one of his highest priorities: that of forming a positive relationship with each athlete in the crew of his coaching.



your own pace to get to your level and better your relationships with others and God."

Patrick has been long known around the monastery. He attributes his earliest deportment at Mass to his contact with S. Miki, who rescued him when he got too fidgety. Then he was a "bagger" when S. Joan Ann recruited him for the "Holy Days Holidays" Christmas Sale in the monastery. He enjoyed learning altar serving with the assistance of mentors: his sister, Monica, and Kari Willet. Counting the collection on Sundays after Mass, Christmas decorating with Pete Stenner, rearranging chairs, and singing at Midnight for Christmas, now as part of "the men," are all cherished memories both for him and for the community.

We pray that blessings will continue to follow this noteworthy young man as he relishes the next opportunities before him.

Remarkable too is his 4.1 GPA at Paul VI High School where he is in the top 10 percent of his class. But, in conversation, Patrick enthusiastically discusses how he credits Linton Hall School as foundational in influencing him in academics, especially in reading and writing, in athletics, and in the development of his spirituality. He feels he is involved in his faith because of his roots in school and family. His present involvement includes his offices as Co-President of the Paul VI Ambassadors Club, Co-President of the Paul VI Athletes for Christ and Co-Leader of the Paul VI Saint Joseph's Service Society. His attendance at daily mass before school orients the rest of his day and Patrick avers, "I find a happy peace with this as my foundation. I am more at ease in handling just the ordinary teenage stuff. All this has helped me to grow into myself and made me willing to put myself out there in my faith. I am especially happy at being a part of the change in faith that I see coming."

Patrick is looking forward to attending UVA where he hopes to "...step it up a level and get more involved in spreading my faith which is something that I really love and that I want to share with others. You just need to work at this at

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Sister Charlotte

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

relationships, the sisters bring them all to prayer.

On any given day, Sister Charlotte can also be found at the portress desk, greeting all who come to the monastery and asking, "Would you like to be included on our mailing list and receive our newsletter?" On Sundays, she is the very essence of Benedictine hospitality as she engages those who come to liturgy at the monastery chapel and directs the liturgical ministers.

Recently at the monastery, Sister Charlotte could be seen picking up an imaginary bowling ball, swinging her arm back while traveling down an imaginary lane and then releasing. Grinning, she would stand triumphantly and say, "I think I can do this! It's been a long time since I bowled."

The practice was for the first Benedictine Bowling Team to participate in the Leadership Prince William scholarship fundraising event. Upon arrival at the event, Sister Charlotte was immediately enlisted to sell raffle tickets by a Chamber member who recognized her. Neck adorned with layers of blue tickets that reached the floor she enthusiastically sold tickets to everyone, even the bowling alley management. Then with her usual good humor, Sister Charlotte took to the lanes...and promptly bowled a strike! Everyone laughed and cheered, and by the end of the day Sister Charlotte was high scorer for her team – and had connected with everyone in the building.

"May the cross be my light, may not the devil be my guide, be gone Satan, suggest not to me vain things, the cup you offer me is evil, drink it yourself." This prayer of Saint Benedict has been

one Sister Charlotte has used since high school. "I became a Benedictine because those were the only nuns I knew. I was a prayerful kid but my entry into religious life had nothing to do with prayer. I entered because I knew I wanted to help people and minister to the needs of the church. I wanted to be a compassionate presence to people."

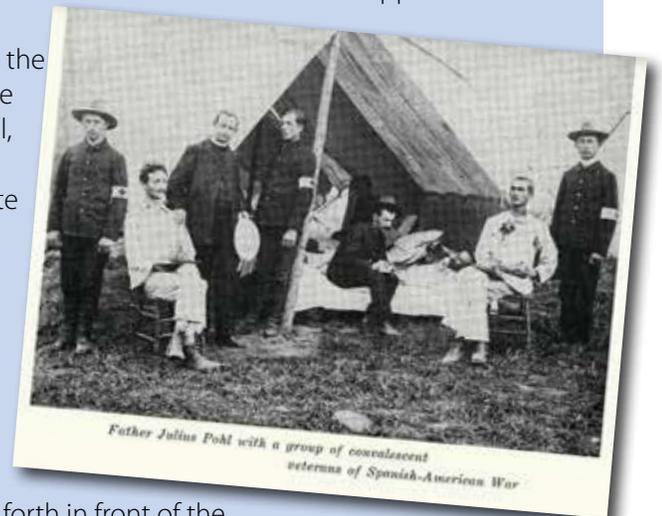
Sister Charlotte wraps Benedictine values into her humble and compelling gift of presence and gratitude. At the core of Benedictine life is community and relationship, and this is where her heart lives. May we who witness and receive the joy, passion, compassion and determination of Sister Charlotte honor her by passing it on.

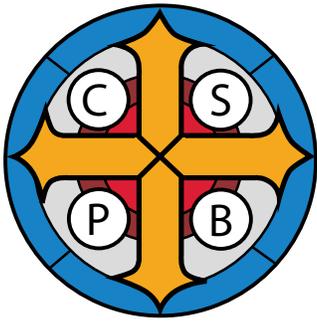
A Page From Our History

In 1898, during the Spanish American War, the Sisters lived through a week of intense excitement. Several thousand soldiers had been ordered from Camp Alger, MD, to Camp Thoroughfare, VA. Enroute to their new destination, they made a halt at Bristow, just two and a half miles from the convent grounds. It was not long before the weary, hungry soldiers had discovered a convent in their vicinity, and they came in crowds looking for something to eat. The Sisters' storeroom was never over-abundantly supplied, but they were only too happy to share with these apparently half-starved soldier boys whatever was on hand. Wholesale quantities of beans were cooked, biscuits were baked and bushels of apples were stewed into apple sauce in an effort to keep pace with the on-coming army. Hot coffee was served with every meal, and the serving continued from early morning until late in the evening.

The officers in charge were filled with gratitude for the kindness of the Sisters, and in return guarded the convent grounds most carefully. At least a dozen soldiers marched back and forth in front of the convent all night long, and several times the army band came out and gave a concert for the Sisters and pupils. When the week came to a close and the camp moved on, the Sisters reviewed the three thousand soldiers as they passed up the road toward Haymarket. At that time there was no bridge across Broad Run and the soldiers had to take off shoes and socks and wade across the stream. The Sisters were their friends by this time, and the boys were cheered at the thought that they had come to bid them God speed.

(from The Fruit of His Works: A History of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Benedict's Convent by Sister Helen Johnston, OSB)





Bristow Bulletin

Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

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