

Sister Katherine Howard

Prioress from 1981–1989



Sister Katherine Howard was born in La Crosse, Wis., on January 24, 1936, the youngest of five children born to Frank and Mary Gilles Howard. She entered Saint Benedict's Convent on December 2, 1956, became a novice on June 18, 1957, made her first profession on July 11, 1958, and her final profession on July 11, 1961. Prior to her election as the 12th prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery in 1981, she served the community as a teacher of Latin and religion at Cathedral High School in St. Cloud, Minn., and as an instructor of Latin and theology at the College of Saint Benedict. From 1969-1974, she served as director of alumnae relations at the College of Saint Benedict, followed by three years as vice-president of academic affairs. After her service in the college, she served as subprioress from 1977–81.

Sister Katherine was elected prioress on April 20, 1981, and re-elected for a second term on April 8, 1985. Within months after her election in 1981, implementation of the Sacred Heart Chapel renovation project began with the installation of a construction fence. She embraced the challenge of the radical renovation of Sacred Heart Chapel and successfully led the community through the transitions of theological and liturgical updating, as well as the changes in community living which this project demanded. By the fall of 1983, the Gathering Place, as the reception area and main chapel entrance, was opened and the altar was put in place for the dedication of the renovated Sacred Heart Chapel on October 24.

Under the leadership of Sister Katherine, the community continued to reach out to its missions abroad. A new convent was built and blessed in Japan, and the community there was granted independence in 1985. Independence was also granted to the community in Taiwan three years later. During the period from 1982-1989, four more sisters were missioned to Recife, Brazil, and a sister was sent to teach at a seminary in Thailand.

Social justice initiatives were also implemented under Sister Katherine's guidance. Saint Benedict's was declared a nuclear free zone in 1984 and offered as a public sanctuary to Central American refugees in 1987. More locally, space was set aside in the St. Joseph Carpenter Shop for the parish food shelf.

A year before the end of Sister Katherine's second term, an addition was built to St. Scholastica Convent, housing Louise Hall, a new chapel and a new main entrance. The blessing of these new spaces took place on February 10, 1988.

When Sister Katherine finished her years as prioress, she spent nine months at Osage Monastery, Sand Springs, Okla., for study and renewal. Since that time, she has served as the executive secretary of the board for Monastic Interreligious Dialogue and as novice

director for the Benedictine community. Currently, she serves as director of centering prayer retreats and is a spiritual director at the Spirituality Center.