

SAINT BENEDICT'S MONASTERY
104 Chapel Lane
St. Joseph, Minnesota

A Brief History

On July 4, 1857, six women from Saint Joseph Convent, St. Marys, Pa., stepped off a boat on the Mississippi River and climbed the riverbank to the frontier settlement of St. Cloud, Minn. Mother Willibalda Scherbauer, superior, Sisters Evangelista Kremmeter, Gregoria Moser, Gertrude Kapsner, and candidates Prisca Meier and Marianne Wolters had come in response to a call to teach the children of the German settlers and to establish a Benedictine community of women on the Minnesota frontier. The six sisters brought with them a 12-year-old orphan girl named Josephine Lejeal, who had been living with the sisters in Pennsylvania.



FIRST CONVENT AND SCHOOL IN ST. CLOUD

Six years later in 1863, the new community relocated seven miles west of St. Cloud, in the village of Clinton (later renamed St. Joseph), where the community has had an unbroken existence for more than 165 years. For the greater part of its history, Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn., was the largest Benedictine community of women in the world, with a peak membership of 1,278 in 1946.

The Benedictine sisters of Minnesota were pioneers in a variety of ways, establishing elementary and high schools, colleges, and health care institutions, while maintaining their dedication to prayer and living in community. From 1930 until recently, the community has been integrally involved in mission work in several countries outside of the United States.

Between 1857 and 1957, Saint Benedict's Monastery established the College of Saint Benedict, four high schools, 51 grade schools, three hospitals, two schools of nursing, a school of X-ray technology, a school of anesthesia, four missions abroad, and three Native American missions.



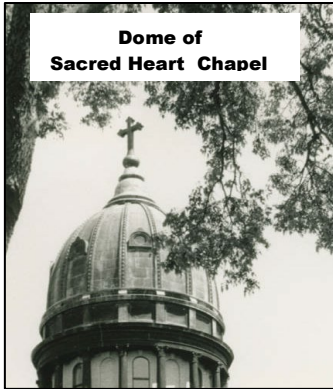
MOTHER WILLIBALDA

During the past 60 years, educational and health care ministries have continued alongside new and more diverse ministries, such as pastoral ministry, spiritual ministries (retreats, spiritual direction, adult faith formation), social justice ministries, research and writing, the arts, and liturgical renewal.

A key development in the history of Saint Benedict's Monastery has been its role in the founding of other independent monasteries of Benedictine women in the United States and abroad. Its earliest foundations were made in Atchison, Kan. (1863), and Duluth, Minn. (1892).

In 1946, when its membership reached its highest peak, Saint Benedict's Monastery, under the leadership of Mother Rosamond Pratschner, petitioned Rome for pontifical status and the authorization to establish a third congregation of Benedictine women in North America. On March 24, 1947, the "Decree of Praise" was given from the Roman Secretariat of the Congregation of Religious which approved the new congregation.

Since 1947, the following independent monasteries have been established by Saint Benedict's Monastery: Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, N.D. (1947); Saint Bede Monastery, Eau Claire, Wis. (1948); Saint Paul's Monastery, St. Paul, Minn. (1948); Saint Placid Priory, Lacey, Wash. (1952); Saint Benedict's Monastery, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan (1985); Saint Benedict Monastery, Tanshui, Taipei, Taiwan (1988); Saint Martin Monastery, Nassau, Bahamas (1994); Mount Benedict Monastery, Ogden, Utah (1994); and Monasterio Santa Escolastica, Humacao, Puerto Rico (2000).



On August 15, 2010, Saint Bede Monastery in Eau Claire merged with Saint Benedict's Monastery, contributing 27 members, and on November 20, 2010, the 7 members of Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Ogden rejoined Saint Benedict's Monastery.

According to current records, more than 2,500 women have entered Saint Benedict's Monastery throughout its history, and more than 1,200 professed members have died. Currently, the community numbers just under 160 perpetually professed members. Oblates living in North America and abroad, numbering more than 400, form the extended Benedictine community of Saint Benedict's Monastery.

Over the years, the Benedictine sisters have made a positive impact on the people of Central Minnesota and beyond. The members of Saint Benedict's Monastery continue today as a monastic community of women who seek God in their daily lives according to the Gospel and the *Rule of Benedict*. Through their ministry of prayer, work and community living, they listen and respond to the needs of the Church and the world. A strategic focus of the community at this time in history is the commitment of themselves and their resources to enrich the spiritual lives of the people to whom and with whom they minister, particularly women. The wisdom resulting from years of living in community, celebrating liturgy, welcoming others in hospitality, stewarding the earth, valuing education, practicing the arts, and healing the sick and suffering is the foundation of the service the members give today at the monastery itself and in other locations of ministry.



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March 2023