



News Release

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Benedictine Sisters celebrate trio of jubilees

CLYDE, Mo.—Spring ushered in a celebration for a trio of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration during a jubilee ceremony on April 4 at Clyde.

Sisters Jean Frances Dolan, OSB and Lioba Hanley, OSB celebrated their golden jubilees of monastic profession and were joined by Sister Jane Heschmeyer, OSB who was honored for her silver anniversary.

While all three were called to religious life with the Benedictine Sisters and dedicated themselves to contemplative prayer and the Eucharist, each took a different path in getting there. With a great-aunt who had become a nun, Sister Lioba was familiar with and interested in religious life but not drawn to her particular community.

“But I knew there was something special about that life,” Sister Lioba said.

As a teenager, she played sports, went to movies and dances and hung out with her friends. She spent her summers at her family’s home at the lake. It was at St. Celestine’s in Elmwood Park, Ill., outside of Chicago that she would meet a young girl named Jean Frances.

They played in the same neighborhood as children. As the years passed, they attended Trinity High School in River Forest, Ill.



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The Clyde community of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration hosted a trio of jubilee celebrations on April 4 for (pictured from left) Sister Jane Heschmeyer, Sister Lioba Hanley and Sister Jean Frances Dolan.

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While different interests meant different classes, they still managed to share an interest in religious life. Drawn to a contemplative and prayerful life, Sister Lioba made plans to enter the Benedictine Sisters before telling her friend of her decision.

“I took Jean Frances to (then-community) Mundelein for a visit,” Sister Lioba said. “As soon as she walked in the door, she nudged me and said, ‘This is it. This is where I want to be.’ The spiritual connection that drew us together as children led us both to the Benedictine Sisters.”

For Sister Jean Frances her interest in religious life began when she was only 4 years old.

“I announced I wanted to be a nun when I grew up because the nuns lived with God,” she laughed. “My mother insisted I would change my mind when I got older, but I never did.”

While in high school, she confided in her chaplain that she was considering a vocation as a contemplative sister. He gave her a brochure about the Benedictine Sisters, but one look at the cover’s photograph of the beautiful chapel and she changed her mind and returned the brochure.

“I was thinking of a more simple order. The sisters’ chapel was too fancy for me,” she laughed. “Then the chaplain asked me, ‘Are you entering for the Lord or for the place?’ I answered, ‘The Lord,’ and he handed the brochure right back to me.”

She left her home near Chicago and along with Sister Lioba entered the Benedictine Sisters in 1955. They each made their first monastic profession on March 13, 1958.

During her years as a Benedictine, Sister Jean Frances spent time at many of the congregation’s monasteries.

“My family jokes – Join the Monastery, See the World,” she said. “I’ve loved the transfers because each was a new adventure. You are changed by every place you go and everyone you meet.”

She currently serves as the congregation’s director of oblates, lay people of any faith drawn to the Benedictine life who adapt monastic practices to their own lives.

“I meet these beautiful people who are sincere in sharing their desire for something deeper in their lives,” Sister Jean Frances said. “To walk with them has been such a gift and one of the biggest joys of my life.”

Sister Lioba has served the congregation in a variety of ways such as a pastoral minister, in the finance department and formation and now works in the low-gluten altar bread department.

“I enjoy making the wafers because I like how much they help people. I unite with them in prayer,” she said.

Unlike Sisters Jean Frances and Lioba, the Lord took a bit longer to call Sister Jane to religious life.

It was on the banks of a river in Germany on a glorious autumn day that Sister Jane felt a call to religious life. A college graduate who was backpacking her way through Europe, she had not thought much about monastic life until that very moment.

“I experienced something that day. There were no words but a strong interior sense that God wanted me to consider religious life,” she said. “It all just came as softly and naturally as an autumn breeze.”

Her parish priest helped her explore options with regards to active or contemplative communities but it was the life led by the Benedictine Sisters that attracted her the most. She entered in 1980 and made her first monastic profession on Aug. 20, 1983. She received degrees in sociology and psychology from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in addition to monastic studies at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minn. She serves as a general councilor for the congregation and was also instrumental in helping develop the sisters’ low-gluten altar bread.

While they traveled a different path, they each found a home, a sacred place, that they discovered by listening to God with their hearts.

“We are a microcosm of society at large,” Sister Jane said. “Among us you’ll find incredible talent, wisdom, knowledge, skill, strength, weakness, health, illness, compassion, joy and sorrow – the scope of human existence. God has called us to live this life together because he wants to do his work in this particular group of people.”

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