

'Silent Night, Holy Night'

Cloistered nuns live a life of quiet prayer

"As the work of the farmer is the plowshare, and the work of the steersman is the building of the ship, so also my work is the Psalm of the Lord: My craft and my occupation are in his praises."

By MARY GNIEWEK

Behind the doors of the Blessed Sacrament Monastery, set back on 13 rolling acres at Middlebelt and Thirteen Mile in Farmington Hills, 41 cloistered Dominican nuns live much like the original band of nine women in the order founded by St. Dominic in 1206. It is one of 18 autonomous monasteries in the United States and the only one of its kind in Michigan. The purpose of this order of Roman Catholic nuns is to dedicate their lives to prayer—away from the influences and distractions of the outside world.

The sisters live in an enclosed area of silence, meditation and prayer. Contact with the outside world is minimal. In case of illness, doctor visits are allowed. The constitution was changed recently to allow nuns to visit seriously ill parents. A novice may leave during her five years of formal training, but once the final vows are taken she is there for life.

"THE ENCLOSURE IS not to shut away, but to help with our life of prayer," explains Sister Mary Joseph, director of novices.

She is dressed in the traditional ankle length white tunic, white scapular, black veil, and black cincture with a rosary attached. On her ring finger is a plain gold band, symbolizing marriage to God and church.

She speaks from behind a glass window in a small reception area. It is the only place where visitors are allowed to speak with cloistered nuns. A small turnstile in an adjoining room is used to exchange goods, should a visitor want to leave something with the sister or vice versa.

"Our main occupation is prayer. Not for ourselves but for the needs of the whole world. The Scriptures say that Jesus went off into the mountains often for prayer and meditation."

Likewise, the sisters keep a 24-hour vigil in the chapel of their home, rotating shifts hour by hour throughout the night.

Their daily routine varies little. It begins at 5:10 a.m. with prayer and mass before an early breakfast. The day is divided into times for private and group prayer, meal and work periods and two brief recreation breaks.

Silence is maintained in all but the recreation periods.

The monastery provides many local parishes with altar bread and publishes a quarterly paper, Echoes, for friends and benefactors. And the chapel is open to the public every day.

Sister Mary Joseph says that a life devoted to prayer can be frustrating at times, considering some of the social problems of the day.

"But we can't give up. We believe God hears every prayer. Maybe not in the way we expect Him to, but he hears every prayer."

A news strip with the highlights of the days events is tacked on a board for all to see.

"We're aware of what's going on. Maybe not of every local scandal, but that's not important, anyway. The kidnaped Oakland County children were uppermost in our prayers."

"Mother Superior recorded the President's speech last week. And we get letters from friends and relatives."

Sister Mary Joseph said the nuns range in age from 28 to 94. They come from across the United States and Europe.

"WE STAY IN one monastery, but sometimes a sister might be asked to go elsewhere. Generally, we live and die in one monastery. We're like a family with its own spirit."

"We're self-contained, just like a little city. We have a school, library, work area, cafeteria, infirmary and recreation area."

Sister said the favorite recreation is talking, followed by volleyball, ping pong, or walking along the spacious grounds. Though pets aren't allowed, Sister admitted that four dogs live on the grounds.

The monastery was moved to Farmington Hills from Detroit in 1966. The Detroit house was established in 1906. Sister Mary Joseph said novices are recruited via a newspaper ad that runs once a year. Also through referrals of priests or others familiar with the order.

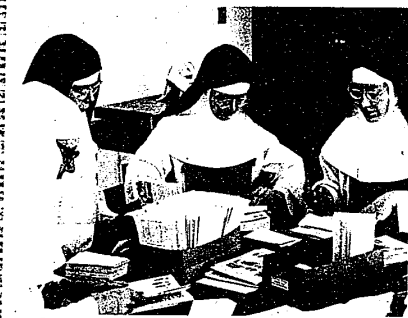
There is generally an aspirancy period within the enclosure of about six weeks. That is followed by a postulancy of eight months. A two-year novitiate follows and then a three-year period of temporary vows. After five years, the novice decides whether to take the final vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

"Our silence is aimed at prayer, so that each sister is free to live with herself with God in her soul," said Sister Mary J.

"Everything in our lives is ordered to union with God, charity and prayer."



Cloistered nuns spend many of their waking hours in prayer and silence. Although the life may seem secluded to many, the sisters say they feel very much in touch with what is happening in the world.



Although many of their hours are spent in prayer, these cloistered Dominican nuns make time for other pursuits. Here, they work on a tabloid newspaper which is distributed to local churches.

Medical aid saves civilian lives

By DELL McCLOY

Remember the words "shock pants"—the garment they describe could conceivably save your life in the future.

Shock pants are a relatively new development in the world of emergency medical treatment for seriously injured people who are suffering from shock and loss of blood.

Developed by United States military medical personnel in the waning days of the Vietnam War, they are finding increased value in treatment of accident victims in civilian life.

They are being used in the area—in extreme injury cases only—by Redford-Farmington Emergency Medical Services personnel.

What are shock pants? It would be extremely difficult for the layman to describe how they function, but Sherman Strickland, co-owner of the Beach Day-based ambulance service, explained that they are nylon-covered air bags

FTC team wins 2 hockey spots

Students at the Farmington Training Center for the Mentally Impaired scored two major victories in a statewide floor hockey tournament at Troy High School last weekend.

The team took first place in Oakland County and second in the state by beating Pontiac State Home 5 to 1 and Woodside (Lapeer State Home) 5 to 3. They lost a final game to Macomb County 7 to 1, edging them out of a first place ranking in the state.

"IT'S ONE OF the biggest thrills they've ever had," said coach and teacher Ed Wolf. "The program is very competitive. The difference between this and the Special Olympics is that here the students compete as a team, not as individuals."

Thirteen students ranging in age from 14 to 20 competed in the day long competition last Saturday. They won silver medals.

A total of 35 teams from the state competed in two separate divisions. Farmington won its honors in division two.

The Farmington Training Center is a residential district for Southfield, Farmington, Novi and Walled Lake. This is the second year it competed in the floor hockey tournament.

which are divided into three sections.

One section is devoted to each leg of a victim and the third section is devoted to the abdominal and stomach areas.

Their purpose is to force blood, through air pressure, from the lower extremities of victims to the upper portion of the body, where it is needed for vital body function organs such as heart, lungs and brain.

Why force blood from the lower body?

"You don't need blood in your legs to stay alive," explained Strickland, adding that he was referring to relatively short periods of time.

Strickland said the new technique is only being used in extreme cases because it could cause serious problems in the lower body areas if utilized over an extended period of time.

"If you have a choice of losing your legs or your life, you would try to save your life," is Strickland's succinct rationalization concerning how decisions on whether to use the pants are reached.

That they do work has been proven time and time again by the Redford-Farmington ambulance unit and other rescue squads which have begun to use the pants.

The beauty of shock pants is that sophisticated compressors or other paraphernalia are not needed to operate them.

They can be carried into all kinds of terrain and pumped by foot pressure in order to force the blood upward and preserve life in accident victims.

Like other advancements, the units are expensive—which probably explains the reluctance of some ambulance services to adopt their use.

According to Strickland, there are three levels of quality in units now available:

•The cheapest units, which sell for around \$200, have one pressure control for all three areas of the pants, which does not provide as much individual area control as might be needed in some cases.

•The middle-grade units have one control for the legs and another for the stomach area and cost about \$300.

•The unit operated by Redford-Farmington contains a separate control for each leg and the lower torso area, insuring that unneeded blood in one area can be transferred to an area which does need it. It cost \$400, said Strickland.

Law helps

car owners

Michigan Motor Vehicle Service and Repair Act gives motorists important rights, according to the Michigan Office of the Attorney General.

If the repair costs more than \$20, the motorists is entitled to a written estimate itemizing the cost, for labor and parts necessary to perform the repairs requested.

If the repair facility refuses to issue an estimate, it must obtain a signed waiver from the motorist authorizing repairs up to a designated dollar amount.

The law provides that without the consumer's permission a repair facility can't exceed the written estimate it originally gave you by 10 per cent or \$10, whichever is less.

The facility can't exceed the written estimate it gave you in the waiver. If a repair shop tries to charge you more than this, you can take back the parts installed without your approval.

The law does allow a repair facility to call and get permission to go over the estimate or amount agreed upon in the waiver. It isn't necessary that you give this approval for additional expenses in writing.

WHEN YOU PICK up your car, you are entitled before paying for the repairs to a repair invoice containing a statement of the repairs you requested and authorized and the repairs needed as determined by the facility.

It must contain the original repair cost estimate as well as the actual cost and it must list in detail each part replaced explaining whether the part put in was new, used, rebuilt or reconditioned and the cost of the part.

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