



Sisters Marjorie Maybee, left, and Dolores Monahan examine driftwood and dried flower arrangements at the institute art exhibit.

The Sisters of St. Joseph at their July Religious Life Institute are using yoga, nature study, and reflection to examine their heritage and look to the future.

— Coordinated by Sister Elizabeth Ann LeValley and Sister Eileen Conheady, the institute consists of a month-long core program looking at the historical, scriptural and contemporary aspects of religious life, and of supplementary mini-sessions on topics relating to religious living.

"We have entered into an experience that looks at a religious heritage. Out of this sharing, and examining our roots, and looking at where we are today, comes our stepping out into the future," Sister Elizabeth Ann said.

The core courses and the mini-sessions are all taught by Sisters of St. Joseph. "Our own sisters have the opportunity to share the gifts they have with the rest of us," explained Sister Elizabeth Ann, through the seminar-type situations.

Sister Mary Katherine Ryan, a modern-dance instructor at St. Agnes High School, is leading a yoga class. She is teaching the traditional Hindu meditation form "to help Sisters pray. This method of yoga can serve Christian prayer," said Sister Mary Katherine, describing the sky-reaching exercises and prostrate rest positions.

"Finding God in Nature" is the title of Sister Maria Kellner's session which uses her hobby of gardening as a source for a "sense experience," along with music, poetry and scripture that is nature-inspired. An exhibit of the sisters' art, photographs, banners, music and poetry accompanies the class, which makes use of both indoor and outdoor settings at the East Avenue Motherhouse.



Back in the classroom, Sisters (l-r) St. Luke Hardy, Rose Angela Noonan and Rosemary Burgio (l-r) listen to a lecture relating scripture to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Area church art and architecture are the pillars of Sister Magdalen LaRow's religious art course. Sister Magdalen, head of the Nazareth College art department, designed the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary Chapel which is one of the sources she uses in the slide lecture tracing the artistic heritage of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Other session highlights include the three-part core program of the Religious Life Institute. Sister Eileen, director of novices, has talked about the founding and history of the order, which has been a part of the Rochester diocese since Bishop McQuaid's invitation in 1868. Displays and an audio-visual lecture showed the first Rochester postulants donning the Sisters of St. Joseph habit.

The scriptural heritage is being investigated by Sister Joan Margaret Kunz, a theology instructor at Nazareth College, while the contemporary aspects of religious life are being taught by Sister Elizabeth Ann, who works with the Sisters of St. Joseph Central Administration promoting "ongoing growth" for the community.

About 75 sisters took part in the institute, which Sister Elizabeth Ann sees as a time of reflection after the wave of change of Vatican II.

"What has happened among religious congregations is that the first wave of renewal after Vatican II is over. We have looked at our lifestyles, at our form of government and we're in a period of reflection now."

Sister Elizabeth Ann noted that the institute is a sign that "our community is alive and well in 1976."



Sister Maria Kellner points out the structure of a flower to Sister Mary Grace Buckley.

Text by Mary Ellen Wisniewski
Photos by Susan McKinney



Participants at the Christian Yoga Prayer Session by Sisters Mary Katherine Ryan, Mary Lynch, Mary Maloy, Clare Ehmann, Melita Burley and Nancy DeRycke.

Arms are outstretched for prayer through yoga exercise by Sisters Mary Katherine Ryan, Elizabeth Lawler, Mary Lynch, Mary Maloy, Clare Ehmann, Melita Burley and Nancy DeRycke. Then they stand and "reach for the sky."