

Nun's work keeps locals in stitches

Terry Kolb/CNS

ST. PAUL, Minn. — It's easy to tell that Living Word Sister Louise Bauer is serious about sewing.

Her home, where she runs her business, Louise's Alterations, has rooms lined with sewing machines, bins of thread, cups of pins and several pairs of scissors. There are neatly covered clothes on hangers and bags of yet-to-be-completed projects.

A wall-hanging in one room — "A day hemmed in prayer seldom unravels" — explains her work which she views as a ministry.

"When I'm sewing, I pray for people," she told *The Catholic Spirit*, archdiocesan newspaper of St. Paul and Minneapolis. "I tell customers that." Customers often tell her what is going on in their lives, sometimes indirectly suggesting prayer requests.

"How I meet people and am pleasant to them is part of my ministry," she said. "Also, people either don't know how or don't have the time to sew, so I help them with something

they need. Older people can't see the needle, and sewing would be impossible for them. Also, I try to keep my prices a little lower."

As the name of the business attests, Sister Louise's work primarily involves alterations, but she said she finds great variety in her work. She recently shortened a wedding gown that required her to remove, then replace, seven yards of fabric from the bottom of the dress, by hand. She also has altered scuba diving shoes, dog sweaters, the tarp for a deer stand, and vestments, stoles, albs and altar cloths.

"When you love what you're doing, it really shows. I love sewing," she said.

Sister Louise said she discovered her work can be a ministry, particularly as she began teaching children. She offers summer sewing classes for boys and girls between 7 and 14.

She described the teaching part of



Dave Hrbacek/CNS

Sister Louise Bauer observes Mara Keys, 9, as she completes a sewing lesson at the Living Word sister's St. Paul, Minn., home, where her alterations business is also her ministry.

her ministry as something she really enjoys. "It is a thrill to teach children," she said, because of their eagerness and willingness to learn. She recalled one student who was so enthusiastic he asked, "Mom, can I stay here all day long?"

Sister Louise, who grew up in New Ulm, learned to sew as a child at her mother's knee. She was one of eight children, all of whom learned various home arts, including sewing, canning, gardening and crafts.

"Mom had a treadle machine. She put a child on each knee," she said. The children on the knees bounced

up and down as their mother sewed. Older children sat on the floor and cut sewn fabric into strips so their mother could make rag rugs.

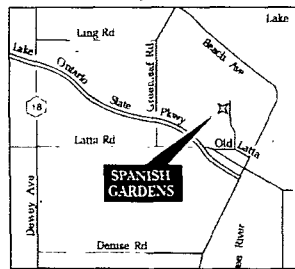
Sister Louise, who has a home economics degree from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, is one of five from her order living in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

She always has enjoyed homemaking, and prior to moving to the Twin Cities she served as a housekeeper — doing the sewing, mending, cooking, shopping and laundry — for Sisters of the Living Word who lived in community in another city.

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