



**Mother Noëlla Marcellino, O.S.B.  
(Martha A. Marcellino)  
Class of 1969**

After graduating from Archbishop Williams, Mother Noëlla Marcellino entered Sarah Lawrence College only to drop out and later, enter the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Connecticut in 1973.

A Benedictine nun, Mother Noëlla began making Bethlehem cheese from the milk of the Abbey's dairy cows in 1977, according to an ancient technique taught to her by a native of the Auvergne, France. Today, she is considered a world-renowned expert when it comes to food science and artisanal French cheese. Obviously, her path was not a traditional one.

In 1986, she returned to college at the University of Connecticut, earning a bachelor of science degree in animal science in 1991. She received a master's degree in 1994 and received her doctorate in microbiology in 2003. She was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in France in 1994, and earned a subsequent three-year fellowship from the national French laboratory, *Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique*. As part of her research, she traveled through traditional cheese-making regions collecting native strains of cheese-ripening fungi to assess their biochemical and genetic diversity.

Her specialty is the biodiversity of cheese fungi. She believes that industrialized cheese making, using pasteurized milk microbes threatens to wipe out the natural, flavor-producing fungi found in raw milk cheeses. Her research has shown the safety benefits of making raw milk cheeses using the centuries-old French methods.

In 2003, Mother Noëlla was presented the first French Food Spirit Award in Scientific Advancement, given in the French Senate, Paris. The award was given for promoting an understanding of its cheeses and helping to preserve the traditional ways of making them. She was honored at a reception of the International Academy of Gastronomy's Grand Prix de la Science de l'Alimentation in 2005.

Mother Noëlla was the subject of a PBS documentary that aired nationally in 2006 called *The Cheese Nun: Sister Noëlla's Voyage of Discovery*, filmed while she traveled through the French countryside collecting information from cheese making experts. Although she says she is not fond of being called The Cheese Nun, the title has become synonymous with her work.

Currently at the Abbey, Mother Noëlla is a guest mistress in the hospitality department, works in the Liturgy Deanery, teaches Gregorian Chant and continues her work in the dairy. In addition to Mother Noëlla, all six of the Marcellino children attended AWHS including; William Marcellino '60, James Marcellino '61, Mary Marcellino Zouberis '63, Richard Marcellino '66 and John Jocko Marcelino '68 .