

*Benedictine Voice*



*Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas*

*Winter 2017 - 2018*

# *Omega*

**Paul's Perspective**

Story page 6

# LETTER FROM THE prioress



## Be of Good Zeal

St. Benedict warned us in his Rule, written in the 6th century, of two different ways of acting, “Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God..., so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life.”(Ch. 72.1)

The bitter zeal of the people who committed random, deadly shootings, this year alone, in Las Vegas, Rancho Tehama, and closer to home in Sutherland Springs, Texas, has shaken the depths of our very souls. I found myself numb during all the reporting of these tragedies.

These acts of violence have brought up questions for me. What is missing in the lives of the people who do these killings, what drives them to take the lives of innocent people they do not even know, and why kill children and babies? What is missing in our society and in our laws that enables a person to take the life of another person in such violent ways? Why are movies and video games created to glorify violence and pollute the minds of those who partake in their evil zeal? And where is the will to act on the issue of gun violence? We hear, “now is not the time.” When will it be the time? What can I/we do?

I am drawn back to what Benedict says, “This, then is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior.” The week following the Sutherland Springs tragedy we heard story after story of the faith of the people affected and of compassionate people reaching out to this community.

Something I heard several times in the news reporting these past weeks was people saying to one another, “Go home and hug the people you love.” It was another way of saying what Benedict said so long ago; show respect, support one another, love your neighbor. What we model at home has many ramifications in society, for good or for evil.

As I review the contents of our newsletter, I am filled with admiration for our sisters who pour themselves out in their ministries which bring about so much good, each in its own unique way. A special thank you to all who support our work through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

I am amazed that this is Omega Retreat Center’s 35th anniversary! I am very grateful that it is here to offer a place, particularly in these uncertain times, for groups to “come away for a little while,” to reflect, to heal, and to share with others who journey with them in life. As they end their stay, may their time here edify good zeal, and help them to go forth to make the world more peaceful and safe.

It is my hope that this Advent offers you time and space for your own reflection, your own deepening on the Mystery that we will celebrate this Christmas, the mystery of God’s eternal love for us and the mystery of Jesus who came to show us the way to live with one another.

May Peace Reign in your Hearts and Homes,

*Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB*

Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB

## Mission Statement

*We, the Boerne Benedictines, are called to seek God in community and to respond in ministry through sharing our spirituality and addressing the needs of the people we serve, especially the poor.*



The Benedictine Sisters wish to thank the following businesses and individuals who responded so generously to our Archival Wish List:

- Accurate Computer Solutions, Rodney and Brandi Sees, donated an Acer Aspire laptop
- CTWP donated a gently used B/W Konica Minolta Bizhub copier
- Bridget Robledo donated a Canon Laser Printer with a scanner and copier
- Ray and Joan Sevonty donated a Lenovo laptop

(l-r) Sisters, Mary Lou Hernandez, OSB and Kathleen Higgins, OSB are making great progress in the archives!

# VISITATION 2017



*(l-r) Sr. Susan Mika, OSB, Sr. Bernice Lindsey, OSB, Our visitors - Sr. Lynn Marie McKenzie, OSB and Sr. Susan Quaintance, OSB, and Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB*

Though autonomous, the Benedictine Sisters are one of twenty Monasteries of Benedictine women that comprise the Federation of St. Scholastica. Elected representatives from various communities serve on the Council of the Federation. One of the ways the Federation serves its members is to conduct a Visitation every six years. As explained on the Federation's website, "Through the visitation of its member monasteries, the Federation of St. Scholastica provides a structure by which a community evaluates the authenticity of its lived experience of the Rule of Benedict and the federation's constitution, Call to Life (CN 8). The visitation of member monasteries is a means of offering support, advice, correction, exchange of ideas and direction. The entire process is meant to foster hope and the development of a clear community-supported direction for the future" ([www.federationofsaintscholastica.org](http://www.federationofsaintscholastica.org)).

This year was our year for Visitation. During the past several months, we have engaged in a self-study and gathered information to present to the visiting team. Federation President, Sister Lynn Marie McKenzie, OSB from Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, AL, and Federation First Councilor, Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB from St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago, IL were here Nov. 9 - 12 for our Visitation. They reviewed our work over the past six years and met with each Sister and the community as a whole, several staff members, committees, and our Trustees. They compiled a summary of their findings that included commendations as well as recommendations for our community. We wish to thank Sisters Lynn and Susan for their time, expertise, and for their commendations and recommendations. We will use their feedback as we continue to plan and implement strategies for our future sustainability. Special thanks to our Sisters Bernice Lindsey, OSB and Susan Mika, OSB who led the visitation planning process for our community this past year.

## Monasteries of the Federation of St. Scholastica

- Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas
- Emmanuel Monastery, Baltimore, Maryland
- St. Scholastica Monastery, Boerne, Texas
- St. Benedict Monastery, Bristow, Virginia
- St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, Illinois
- Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, Kentucky
- Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, Alabama
- St. Walburga Monastery, Elizabeth, New Jersey
- Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pennsylvania
- St. Lucy Priory, Glendora, California
- Queen of Angels Monastery, Liberty, Missouri
- Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, Illinois
- Monasterio de San Benito, Mexico City, Mexico
- St. Benedict Monastery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- St. Gertrude Monastery, Ridgely, Maryland
- Holy Name Monastery, St. Leo, Florida
- St. Joseph Monastery, St. Marys, Pennsylvania
- Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico
- St. Joseph Monastery, Tulsa, Oklahoma



## **Sale of Former Monastery and Land Under Contract**

The Benedictine Sisters are pleased to announce that St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Boerne is in the process of purchasing their former 14 acre Monastery property. This is a promising partnership for both the Sisters and St. Peter's community. Below is an aerial view (courtesy of Google Earth) of St. Peter's proximity to the property being purchased. The Sisters are thrilled that the church community will be their neighbors on both sides!



## Randi Gilmore - We Wish You Success!



For nearly three and a half years, Randi Gilmore was an integral part of the Office of Mission Advancement where she served as administrative assistant. In addition to her office responsibilities and helping with special events, Randi's love for graphic design was evident in various marketing and communication publications.

In early September, Randi began a new job with Caprice Productions in San Antonio. The Sisters and staff wish her a world of success - she is most deserving!

## WITH GRATITUDE

The Benedictine Sisters are grateful to the following grantors for their recent support of our mission and our ministries:

### **Catholic Life Insurance**

\$1,000 in support of Health & Wholeness Center's Programs

### **Kenedy Memorial Foundation**

\$1,000 in support of 2017 events

### **Myra Stafford Pryor Charitable Trust, Frost Bank Trustee**

\$5,291 for the purchase and installation of the new air conditioning and heating system for the Health & Wholeness Center's pool bathhouse

### **United Way of San Antonio**

\$2,000 in support of Health & Wholeness Center's Programs

## **2017 Annual Giving Update**

"Thank you" to all who have generously responded to our recent appeal. To date, over \$20,000 has been received for capital needs for the Omega Retreat Center. If you have not yet participated in this important campaign, please consider a gift to the Sisters! Donations are still being accepted.

## 2017 SUMMER SWEEPSTAKES WINNERS



Sr. Bernadine Reyes, (right), presents **Grand Prize Winner**, Pat Finke, with gift cards totaling \$1,000.

**\$500 Visa Gift Card** - Children's Inn

**\$250 Visa Gift Card** - Bob Fahy

**\$100 Visa Gift Card** - Lynette Glowka

**\$100 Visa Gift Card** - Rita Jendry

**\$50 Visa Gift Card** - Dorothy Geyloss

**Congratulations** to ALL our winners and special thanks to ALL who participated in the raffle. You helped raise \$6,400 for the Sisters!!

## SAVE THE DATE!

**2018 Feast of St. Benedict  
Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction**

**March 21st, 2018**

**4 - 7 pm • Benedict Hall**

**For more information  
call: 830.816.8504**

## Leaving a Legacy

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters in your Legacy Planning. There are many ways that you can make a difference in the lives of the Sisters as well as the thousands who benefit from their programs and ministries.

Our legal title is Benedictine Sisters (Congregation of Benedictine Sisters), and we are a 501(c)3 charitable organization.

For more info, contact your estate planner, attorney, or Sr. Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Treasurer at 830.816.8504.



## Congratulations Faithful Servant

### *A Reflection on Omega's 35 Years of Benedictine Spirituality and Hospitality*

By Sr. Michael Brandt, OSB  
Executive Director, Benedictine Ministries

His name is Paul. In the evenings he sometimes relaxes on a bench outside the Omega Retreat Center office. I once asked him if he would like to move to a quieter location with a better view, just down the hill in the St. Francis outdoor chapel. Paul said no. He liked the peace where he was, and the view was just fine.

This isn't an unusual reaction from those who have frequented the grounds of the Omega Retreat Center these past thirty-five years. The peace and the view are just fine, but there's so much more to Omega, which has been referred to over the years as "Holy Ground." Those of us who work here claim it is simply our task to "create/hold this space so that those who come can see and act upon the movement of the Spirit" (anonymous).

When asked for his impression of Omega and its significance as a retreat center, Andrew Anderson, Omega's previous Program Coordinator and Director from 1989-2012, shared the following:

"Omega provides an environment and presence of Benedictine hospitality, serenity, and prayer that enables individuals to reflect on the Word of God, deepen their prayer life and achieve an epiphany of spirit, all while providing an experience of spiritual renewal and inner healing/growth in loving relationships with God and all people."

(l-r) Faithful staff of Omega - Sr. Mary Rose Goertz, OSB, Mary Lopez, Jenifer Alfaro, Gloria Martinez, Crystal Villanueva, - visitor; Chon Nguyen, Sr. Michael Brandt, OSB, Christy Hanich (Health & Wholeness Center), and Letty Garcia, (missing - Karen Buckelew)

He continued, "Omega is an empowering experience - spiritually, emotionally and physically. Lives are transformed, emotional wounds healed, love experienced, companionships nourished, and faith restored. People experience Christ's touch, and they are never the same.

Through the retreat center's doors pass the disenfranchised and those intact, the broken and the healthy, those alienated and those united, the gifted and the inept. There are Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran and interdenominational guests. Those who come are touched by the staff's commitment to ensuring that: *All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.* (RB: Chapter 53).

**"Hospitality means more than serving a meal, opening a door, or offering a bed. It means opening our hearts to others."**

**Dorothy Day**

The commitment of our staff to receive all guests as Christ, to open their hearts to others, and to care for all that has been entrusted to them, as sacred vessels of the altar, creates an atmosphere of Benedictine presence. That Benedictine presence allows people to be transformed and shaped by the potter - hearts are touched, lives are renewed, one's body pauses and allows the soul to catch up. Meeting these guests with the highest standards of hospitality and the humble spirit of welcoming, the Center is indeed Holy Ground for those who come."

Sound too good to be true? Perhaps, one might think. But they would be wrong. Come visit us. Partake of Omega's hospitality. Share a Friday morning breakfast-welcome with our staff and retreatants. Experience for yourselves. Paul has. And from his perspective, he has seen that Omega is good.

**Congratulations Omega, faithful servant.**

*(Special thanks to Andrew Anderson for sharing his timeless impressions of Omega.)*



## Highlights Through the Years



In 1983, Omega provided facilities for the very first Rainbow Senior Center in Boerne that provided nutritional meals for senior citizens. The Center eventually needed another facility to carry on its mission, and the Sisters stepped forward and allowed use of their gym, an arrangement which lasted for some years.

In the mid-late eighty's, the Sisters hosted summer camps for children at Omega. Bessie and Albert Kronkosky, Jr. always provided funding for the campers' lunches. Sr. Bernadine, (photo top left), teaching sign language to campers.

The first ACTS retreat was held at Omega in 1987. ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service) celebrates 30 years this year!

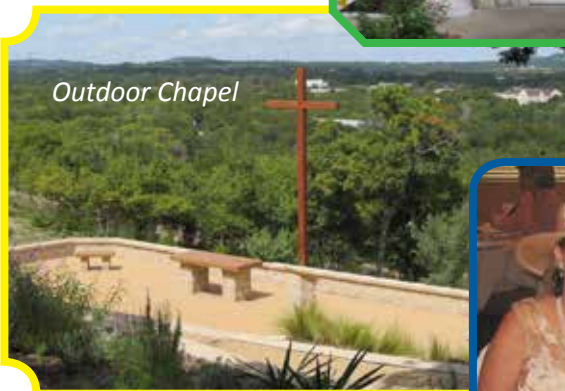
Hilltop Treasures complimented Omega's mission from 1992-2011 by providing a variety of Christian books, materials, and gift items for both retreatants and the general population.

The Outdoor Chapel was completed in 2011 thanks to the generosity of members from St. Francis of Assisi Parish in San Antonio. It provides another space for worship or private reflection

Omega provides space for the annual Health and Wholeness Center's Tea and Sisters' Spaghetti Dinner events, as well as the annual Oblate Retreat.

In addition to providing retreat space for an average of 2,000 guests each year, Omega offers meeting spaces for church and civic groups throughout the week.

Today, Omega remains a sanctuary for people of faith seeking Christ. The center is booked most weekends through 2019.



above - Spaghetti Dinner event

right - Church group at workshop session



# MINISTRIES



*Director of Caridad de Corazón, Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB (2nd from left,) with Benedictine Volunteers and a family in Eagle Pass, TX. (Photo courtesy of Benedictine Volunteers)*

## Boerne Benedictine Sisters Collaborate with Benedictine Volunteers

The Benedictine Sisters of Boerne have teamed up with Benedictine Volunteers, a volunteer organization that was established in 2014 by three Benedictine communities in North and South Dakota. The vision of Benedictine Volunteers is to inspire a spirit of service and discernment by which each volunteer fully realizes the unique call God has placed in her heart, to joyfully animate the world with God's love, compassion, and justice.

"We are excited about this new collaboration with Benedictine Volunteers," said Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB. "Our goal is to broaden service opportunities for women, ages 20-55, who may be discerning God's call in their lives."

Initial volunteer opportunities with the Boerne community will consist of a Texas-Mexico Immersion Program with the Sisters' border ministry, Caridad de Corazón (Charity of the Heart), in Eagle Pass, Texas. Length of service can be from 2 weeks to 2 years. Volunteers will live at the Sisters' mission house and will have opportunities to serve in the areas of building and repairing homes, scholarships distribution, food preparation and distribution, hospitality to service mission groups, liturgy and music, orphanage assistance, photography, prison ministry, soup kitchen assistance and much more.



For more information about the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne or Benedictine Volunteers visit their respective websites at [www.boernebenedictines.org](http://www.boernebenedictines.org) or [www.benedictinevolunteers.com](http://www.benedictinevolunteers.com)

### Oblate Schedule



#### January 7, 2018

Initial Formation - Social Justice  
Presenter: Sr. Susan Mika, OSB  
On-Going Formation - Enneagram  
Presenter: Bonnie Caruso

#### February 4, 2018

Initial Formation - Hospitality  
Presenter: Emily Rodgers, ObOSB  
On-Going Formation - Tools of Good Works  
Presenter: Richard DeMouy, ObOSB

#### March 4, 2018

Initial Formation - Humility  
Presenter: Katherine "Kiki" Duck, ObOSB  
On-Going Formation - Benedictine  
Monasteries in Europe Presenters:  
Jan Davis, ObOSB & Bill Howden, ObOSB

#### April 8, 2018

Initial Formation - Tools of God's Work  
Presenter: Phyllis Allen, ObOSB  
On-Going Formation - Social Justice  
Presenter: Sr. Susan Mika, OSB

#### May 25-27, 2018

OBLATE RETREAT & OBLATION  
Omega Retreat Center  
The Journey of Self Discovery  
through the Enneagram  
Presenter: Bonnie Caruso

## Advocates for the Immigrant

In true Benedictine spirit, the Sisters of Boerne have long been advocates for social justice and corporate responsibility. Issues including human rights, human trafficking, energy and environment, health care and health care reform, U.S./Mexico concerns, predatory lending practices and fair pay concerns have remained priorities, especially for Sister Susan Mika, OSB.

Sister Susan and Ruben Lopez, both with the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment (CRI), faithfully attend monthly Interfaith Welcome Coalition immigration meetings in San Antonio. Through strategies and networking, they focus on the plight of undocumented immigrant women and children in South Texas detainment centers. The coalition's member groups provide hands-on support of at-risk immigrant communities, as well as advocacy on legislative agendas. Sr. Susan and Ruben create monthly immigration updates outlining proposed legislation, outcomes of ongoing judicial review at the national and local levels, and article summaries that document what is happening. In the past, Sisters Bernadine Reyes, OSB (Prioress) and Frances Briseño, OSB have offered their presence among immigrant women and children at one of the south Texas detainment centers.



*Interfaith Welcome Coalition members (l-r) Sr. Jo Murray, SHSP, Sr. Susan Mika, OSB, Ruben Lopez, and Elizabeth Vidales from Catholic Charities Refugee Services*

## Border Ministry Receives Help From Benefactors for Student Scholarships

by Sr. Ursula Herrera, OSB

Our US/Mexico border ministry, Caridad de Corazón, has a scholarship fund to help students in Piedras Negras continue their education after grade school. In Mexico, parents have to pay for continuing education into Secundaria (Junior High) and Prepa (High School). It is difficult for parents who work for minimal wages to provide an education for their children.

With an education, these children have a greater chance at a better future. Keeping them in school will also help to prevent them from becoming an easy pick for running or using drugs.

All the students are eager to continue their studies and were especially pleased when we provided them supplies such as back packs, pens, reams of paper, and spiral notebooks.



*Sr. Ursula Hererra, OSB (front, center) with a group of scholarship students who appreciate all the support received for their education*

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If you would like to help a student continue their education, please call  
830.816.8504.

This year we are sponsoring 38 students. Their tuition varies by grade, school or university they attend. Below is a list of usual charges for their studies:

- Secundaria (Junior High) is \$30 a year and if a uniform, shoes, school supplies or computers are needed, we assist with these as we are able.
- Prepa (High School) may vary from \$80.00 to \$150.00 twice a year.
- Universidad (College) tuition may range from \$125.00 a month to \$500.00 depending on interest or major.

Three students graduated this year: one is a nurse, one is a psychology major, and the third is going to be a lawyer. **Thank you to all who make these sponsorships possible!**

# MINISTRIES ON THE HILL

New and returning guests enjoyed the Ninth Annual *Songwriters at the Ridge Event* on Saturday, September 23rd. Singer-songwriters, Allen Shamblin, Renee Coale Willis, Billy Montana, and Austin Cunningham entertained the audience with their legendary songs as well as new ones. Lighthearted stories between performances connected the songwriters with the crowd making it a truly memorable evening. The event was held at the Knights of Columbus' Crown Ridge Banquet Hall in San Antonio. Albert Flores, Chief Meteorologist from News4 San Antonio, returned as this year's Emcee. All proceeds from this "friend-raiser" benefit Benedictine Ministries in Boerne. Thanks to all who attended this year's event, and our sincere appreciation to the following Sponsors and Donors:

## Presenting Sponsor



*Special thanks to Bob Elizondo (standing) and Albert Flores (on stage) for their great efforts with the live auction at this year's event!*

**For more photos, visit  
[benedictineministries.org](http://benedictineministries.org)**

## 2017 Songwriters at the Ridge



*(l-r) Allen Shamblin, Renee Coale Willis, Billy Montana, & Austin Cunningham having a good time on stage.*

## Event Sponsors



## Table Sponsors

Anonymous  
The Benedictine Sisters  
Fratello's Italian Market and Deli  
Frost Bank Boerne  
Gertrude Mika and Family  
Jim and Barbara Britton  
Jim and Beverly Tsakopoulos  
Kenneth and Katherine Gottardy  
Paul and Mary Mac Gittinger  
Will and Anne Brunet

## Friends of the Ministries

Bear Moon Bakery  
First United Methodist - Born Again Emmaus  
Kenedy Memorial Foundation  
Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, New Braunfels  
Sea World Aquatica San Antonio

## Promotional Sponsors

Alamo Mailing  
Boerne Printing  
The Boerne Star  
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Today's Catholic



## "REACHING SENIORS THROUGH ART"

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Health & Wholeness Center*

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**PASTELS & DRAWING**

**WATERCOLORS**

**OIL PAINTING**

**Winter Session Begins in January**

Contact Christy Hanich at the  
Health & Wholeness Center for more info.

**830.816.8470**

*Save the Date*

*The Health &  
Wholeness Center's*

*Springtime Tea*

*May 2, 2018*

*For more information call 830.816.8470*



## MINISTRIES ON THE HILL

### STAFF CHANGES

Letty Garcia returned to Benedictine Ministries in June as a part-time administrative assistant in the Omega office. She is no stranger to the ministries. Letty served as manager of Hilltop Treasures in 1998, and then transitioned to Human Resources where she worked from 1999-2007. The part-time position is perfect for Letty who enjoys spending time with her husband, Richard, and their two grown children and three grandchildren. Welcome back, Letty!



Justin Lopez joined the Omega kitchen staff in October and is happy to be working alongside seasoned culinary experts, Sister Mary Rose Goertz, OSB, and his grandmother, Mary Lopez. He is familiar with the Benedictine community and has known the Sisters since he was a child. Justin worked many years at one of Boerne's

local restaurants, *Hungry Horse*, before coming on-board. He is excited about being a part of the Omega team and blending his set of skills into the Omega dining experience for guests. Welcome, Justin!

Debra Scharein brings many years of business experience to her new role at the Sisters' Attic Thrift Store. Debra joined the staff in October after being retired from the Insurance business since 2011. She wanted to return to work part-time, and when her sister, Angie Lozano, who volunteers at the Monastery and Sisters' Attic, told her about the opening, she decided to apply. Debra's genuine spirit of hospitality makes her a great asset to the ministry. She says she feels right at home. Welcome, Debra!



### **Keep in Touch**

We would like to hear from you! We are continually updating our database. Please send us your updated information if it is incorrect on the mailing label.

## Congregation of Benedictine Sisters

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[www.boernebenedictines.org](http://www.boernebenedictines.org)

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### Ministries in Texas including Boerne, Eagle Pass, & San Antonio

Benedictine Voice is designed  
for our Benedictine Family, Friends,  
and Benefactors. It is published biannually  
by the Benedictine Sisters'  
Office of Mission Advancement.

Editor: Mary Anne Oehler

Contributing Photographers:  
Benedictine Volunteers  
Randi Gilmore  
Sr. Susan Mika, OSB

Printing by:  
Alamo Mailing • San Antonio, Texas

### Sisters' Council

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Prioress

Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB  
Sub-Prioress

Sister Frances Briseño, OSB  
Councilor

Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB  
Councilor

*From Our Home  
to Yours ....  
We Wish You*

*A Merry Christmas and a  
Happy, Healthy  
New Year!*

