

BENEDICTINE VOICE

Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas

Winter 2019-2020

A Time of Rebirthing



*Blessings to all our families, oblates, friends and benefactors.
May the Love of Christ embrace you in this holy season and
may you become that loving embrace for all you encounter.*

100 Years in Texas

It is with deep gratitude to God that the Benedictine Sisters celebrate 100 years of service in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Our journey began on the Isle of Pines in Cuba. And today we find ourselves in Boerne, Texas. As I reflect on the journey that finally brought us to Boerne, I am amazed at the courage, strength and incredible faith that our early sisters exhibited. Our community has been built on extraordinary women who, even though they faced significant struggles, always took the long view, always listened to the Spirit’s invitation to move forward and discover the new surprises God had in store for them. “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” *Isaiah 43:18-19*

In 1911, Mother Lidwina Weber and three other sisters made their way from St. Marys, Pennsylvania to the Isle of Pines in Cuba. Mother Lidwina made this trip to fulfill a promise she made to God. She had been very sick, and she promised if she would receive a cure, she would give her life to missionary work. Her community was not supportive of this new venture and in their farewell told her that if this new endeavor did not work out, she would not be allowed to return.

Our sisters were in Cuba for only 8 years. A variety of circumstances, plus a hurricane that devastated their school and convent, made it impossible for them to stay. So they traveled to south Texas, believing that God would provide for the next step in their journey. Our ministry of education in the Archdiocese began in Loire and Las Gallinas, Texas.

Mother Lidwina died in 1920. She left the community a message that is as profound now as it was then: “How much and yet how little we have accomplished in this space of time, but after sowing the seed we must wait some time for it to germinate. So, I console myself and await the future.” With that message, I have no doubt that the sisters were renewed in spirit as they moved forward with a newfound hope.

They faced incredible odds in those early years in Texas, but in the mid 20s they were invited to work at St. Vincent Home for the Poor and Aged in San Antonio. With no experience in health care, but with a profound sense of mission and knowing God would provide, they moved the Motherhouse from Las Gallinas to San Antonio.

I began this article with this history, because as I already mentioned, Mother Lidwina’s statement is deeply rooted in our DNA. Our history reflects Mother Lidwina’s words of planting seeds, taking the long view and waiting for those seeds to germinate. Even though we have always been a small group of monastics, God has provided large endeavors for us and we have had the privilege of planting

seeds. Unlike our foundress, we have actually seen the fruition of many of those seeds. Listening to the signs of the time, listening for God’s invitation, we expanded our ministries through the years. (Please refer to the inside page of this newsletter to see the fruit of “the seeds” we planted, that God watered and blessed.)

As a community, we were entrusted with the spirit of our foundress and we have tried to remain faithful. *(continued next page)*

It has been a privilege and a challenge through the past 100 years to remember her passion in the good times and in the challenging times. At the National Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) meeting this year, Pat Murray gave the keynote address and she challenged us by asking: “Have we embraced the vision and values that inspired our founders and foundresses?” I believe we have.

With only three sisters, and a reprimand from her Prioress, Mother Lidwina never looked back. Her focus was always on the God who called her into a “future full of hope”, *Jeremiah 29:11*. We have honored her memory every time we have faced challenging times. In the 90s, when it became impossible for us to sustain some of our ministries because we didn’t have enough sisters, we entrusted our lay co-ministers with those ministries and freed them to become their own 501(c)(3)s and continue our legacy and our spirituality beyond us. Those ministries continue today, stronger and reaching far more people in need than we could have ever imagined.

Although we feel immense gratitude for all the years we have served in this Archdiocese, we find ourselves in very different space today. Most of our sisters are retired and frail. We really don’t have the ability to be involved in many Archdiocesan ministries, but we do continue to administer our sponsored ministries. Presently we have three ministries on our property, one ministry in San Antonio and one ministry in Eagle Pass.

The challenge we face now is not unlike the challenge our sisters faced in the 1920s and we know that God provided for us then and will do so again. And so, with Mother Lidwina’s words in our heart, we continue to garden. The seeds we are planting now are a new kind of seed for this time in our history. We are taking the long view again and know that although we will wait for them to germinate, we, like Mother Lidwina will probably not see the fruit of our labor, but we know that our future is full of hope as it has always been.

This is a time of rebirthing and though it is a difficult time for us, our foundress and the small community that came from Cuba faced much greater odds. They forged ahead with faith, trust, and quite a bit of hutzpah!

May the God who called our ancestors, Sarah, Deborah, Mariam, Ruth, Mary, Elizabeth, Mary Magdalene, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Benedicta Riepp, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Mother Lidwina and so many other strong and vibrant women, continue to call us to the possibilities that await us in the future! We will continue planting seeds.

Sister Frances Briseño, OSB

“Let’s remake the world with words”

by Gregory Orr

Let’s remake the world with words.
Not frivolously, nor
To hide from what we fear,
But with a purpose.
Let’s, as Wordsworth said, remove
“The dust of custom” so things
Shine again, each object arrayed
In its robe of original light.
And then we’ll see the world
As if for the first time,
As once we gazed at the beloved
Who was gazing at us.

(Reprinted with permission)

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Mission Statement

We 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.

REMEMBERING OUR SISTERS

“Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life.”

Rule of St. Benedict Chapter 72: 11-12



Leocadia Weisbecker
January 10, 1930



Leo Marie Goertz
November 28, 1945



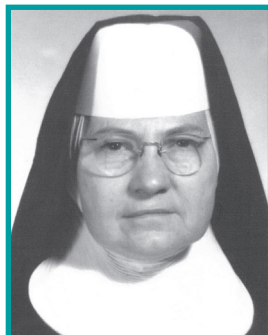
Christina Stanush
April 3, 1961



Joseph Hess
July 27, 1963



Therese Walsh
June 8, 1965



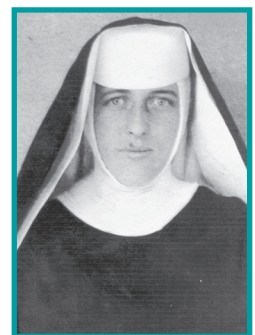
Boniface Bartsch
November 24, 1967



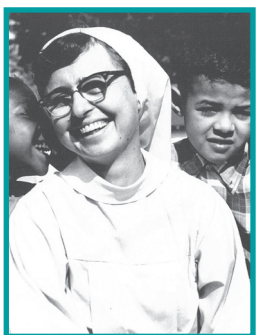
Raphael Walsh
February 2, 1969



Monica Garcia
May 5, 1972



Agnes Ferry
May 29, 1973



Cecelia Jasik
November 16, 1973



Gertrude Walsh
March 3, 1974



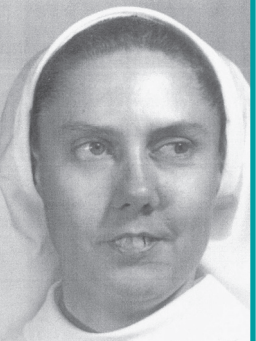
Benedicta Hug
August 27, 1983



Hildegarde Wright
November 19, 1983



Mary Margaret
Menger
June 2, 1984



Imelda Marie
Pawlowski
July 4, 1985

WHO ARE PART OF OUR LEGACY



Lioba Bartsch
March 23, 1991



Theresa McIntyre
November 12, 1994



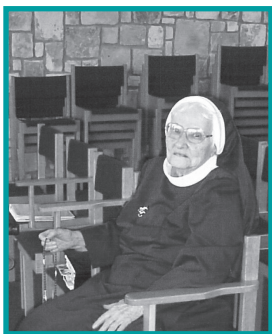
Benitia Herrera
February 6, 1998



Mildred Hug
December 22, 1998



Anne Marie Williams
January 11, 2002



Scholastica Eisenbeck
December 14, 2004



Angela Arencibia
March 22, 2005



Thecla Goertz
December 23, 2011



Lucille Goertz
April 22, 2018



Sister Marceline Mechtilde Goertz, OSB

Perpetual Profession - January 6, 1952

October 18, 1930 - January 11, 2019



Our Sister Mechtilde was born in Rockne, Texas where she grew up in the country, loving and respecting God’s creation. She never lost her rootedness to the land, and she always embraced a simple way of life.

Sister attended Sacred Heart Church and School in Rockne where the Benedictine Sisters taught and influenced her decision to enter religious life. After receiving her bachelor’s as an RN she worked as Director of Nurses and Administrator of St. Benedict Hospital and Nursing Home. In November, 2018, Mechtilde was diagnosed with cancer. She accepted her illness with remarkable grace. She opened her heart and shared her wisdom with us. In peace, she opened herself to the God who placed her here, to the God who kept her here, to the God who called her home. “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad.” Psalm 118:24

Leaving a Legacy

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters in your Legacy Planning. 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.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



Mother Lidwina Weber, OSB



First Sisters in South Texas



St. Scholastica Convent, San Antonio



St. Benedict's Hospital & Nursing Home, San Antonio



Sacred Heart School, Rockne



Main St., Boerne circa 1960s



Aerial view of our Boerne grounds in the 1960s



The Sisters arrive in Boerne, ready to work



St. Albert Hall, Boerne



Corporate Responsibility, San Antonio



Former Monastery, Boerne



Omega Retreat Center, Boerne



Caridad de Corazón Mission House, Eagle Pass



Health & Wholeness Center, Boerne



Our Faithful Oblates



New Monastery Chapel, Boerne

Schools where Benedictine Sisters have taught and/or administered:

St. Luke's - Loire, TX

St. Joseph's - Leming, TX

St. Joseph's - Las Gallinas, TX

Sacred Heart - Rockne, TX

St. Mary's - Cestohowa, TX

St. Joseph's - Cestohowa, TX

St. Peter's - Cestohowa, TX

St. Joseph's - Comal, TX

Sacred Heart - Rockport, TX

Sacred Heart - San Antonio, TX

St. Albert Hall - Boerne, TX

St. Albert Early Learning Center - Boerne, TX

St. Benedict's - San Antonio, TX

Holy Spirit - San Antonio, TX

St. Gregory's - San Antonio, TX

Our Lady of Refuge - Eagle Pass, TX

St. James - San Antonio, TX

St. John the Evangelist - San Antonio, TX

Immaculate Heart of Mary - San Antonio, TX

Providence High School - San Antonio, TX

Central Catholic High School - San Antonio, TX

Colegio Guadalupe - Mexico City, Mexico

Since our arrival in Texas in 1919, we have boldly initiated ministries in the areas of education, healthcare, spirituality and hospitality, peace and justice, and pastoral care. As a result, we have a well-established presence in this region.

Our founding Sisters began outreach work, first in education, and then branched out into the health care field when they took charge of St. Vincent's Home for the Poor and Aged in San Antonio in 1926. The home eventually became St. Benedict's Hospital and Nursing Home and was sold in 1985.

In 1962, our community purchased land and buildings in Boerne, Texas and moved our Motherhouse, St. Scholastica Monastery, to this location. We operated St. Albert Boarding School, St. Albert High School, and St. Albert Grade School (successively) on our grounds from 1963-1982. We then operated St. Albert Early Learning Center from 1982-2002 and a Head Start program from 1992-2007. We had a presence in Catholic schools, serving as teachers and administrators, until 2015.

Our Benedictine Resource Center (1985-1998) initiated the following successful programs that eventually became self-sustaining and separate 501(c)(3)s:

- P.E.A.C.E. Initiative - Putting an End to Abuse through Community Efforts, San Antonio (est. 1985, spun-off in 1999).
- C.P.P.P. - Center for Public Policy Priorities, Austin (est. 1990, spun-off 2003).
- Children's Inn, a home for medically fragile children, was located on the Monastery grounds in Boerne. (est. 1991, spun-off in 1996, closed in 2019)
- J.O.V.E.N. - Juvenile Outreach Vocational Educational Network, helping youth succeed, San Antonio (est. 1992, spun-off in 1997).

Currently, these important ministries still advocate on behalf of the poor, youth, and others in need.

In 1998, Benedictine Ministries Corporation (BMC) was formed and oversaw our Boerne ministries until the corporation was dissolved in April, 2019. Ministries currently under the Benedictine Sisters include: The Omega Retreat Center (est. 1982), the Health and Wholeness Center (est. 1990), the Sisters' Attic Thrift Store (est. 2009), Caridad de Corazón, a U.S./Mexico border ministry in Eagle Pass, Texas (est. 2000), and a Corporate Responsibility Program based in San Antonio, Texas (est. 1982). Other ministries we are called to include parish ministry, jail ministry, contemplative outreach, and spirituality.

In 2014, because of our financial forecast, we decided to "right-size" and sell a portion of our land and build a new monastery closer to our Boerne ministries' side of the "Hill". The new St. Scholastica Monastery was completed in 2016. It serves as a monastic model to the greater community, reflecting Benedictine values of prayer, community, hospitality, spirituality and work.

We find our strength in our community and in the work that we do. Throughout our history we have been guided by the Rule of St. Benedict. "Ora et labora" (pray and work) remain the constant elements in our lives. We thank our dedicated oblates (lay men and women associates who live the ideals and values of the Benedictine way of life), our committed staff, our faithful volunteers, and our loyal donors for sharing this journey with us. Together, we continue to build a legacy by serving the spiritual, educational, health and justice needs of thousands each year.

HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL



Mass for
Healing and Peace
Throughout the World
Sunday
March 1, 2020 • 11 AM
(The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
will be offered.)
Omega Outdoor Chapel
316 W. Highland Dr. • Boerne
For more information call
830.816.8504

Mass for Healing and Peace

Oblate Sunday, November 3rd, was a beautiful fall day in Boerne. It was also the day the Benedictine Sisters hosted their 2nd Mass for Healing and Peace at the Omega Retreat Center Outdoor Chapel. More than 100 people attended. Special thanks to Presider, Monsignor James Henke, St. Francis of Assisi parishioners who provided the music, Oblates, and all who came.

A basket, holding the names of those to be remembered on All Souls Day and throughout the month of November, was placed at the altar. It was then returned to our Monastery Chapel for the remainder of the month.



Sisters' Attic Celebrates 10 Years!

The Sisters' Attic Thrift Store, one of our Boerne ministries, is celebrating 10 years serving the community! Started as a vision by Dorothy Bockholt in October 2009, Christy Hanich now oversees The Sisters' Attic operations. "I feel that we are representing the hands and feet of Jesus, and we can't be that by just selling things to people," Christy said "It feels important to not just be a thrift store. If people need something, if we can help, we will help."

The Sisters' Attic has grown into a ministry of its own over the years. The store has stayed true to its original purpose and has also expanded its reach of service and generosity through collaborations with local non-profits. The Sisters' Attic has worked with the following organizations to serve the needs of the community -- Christian Job Corps of Kendall County, Taking It to the Streets, Boerne, Transition House in San Antonio, YoungLives, and The Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The store also assists local disabled veterans and homeless individuals. One recent afternoon, a man came into The Sisters' Attic who was looking for a place to bring his donations of men's clothing and household items. He said, "I just want to find a place where I know the things I donate will be in good hands." Angie Lozano, head cashier (pictured left) assured him his things would be, and as he walked out the door she quietly said, with her ebullient spirit and signature smile, "The Lord always provides."



HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL

Sisters Host Tour of Monastery, Ministries, and Grounds for Boerne Library's Magical History Tour Group

The Benedictine Sisters hosted a tour for the Patrick Health Public Library's *Magical History Tour Group* on October 17th. The group has many participants, mostly retirees, who travel around the area and visit historic locations each month to learn about the region's history. On this particular beautiful autumn day, 13 members of the group came to learn more about the Benedictines.

Library volunteers, Bryden Moon, Mary Taylor, and Regina Adams were on hand to greet the group as they arrived. Sister Frances Briseño, Prioress, gave a presentation of the history of the Benedictine Sisters with a focus on the Sisters' arrival in Boerne to the present. One of the participants commented that they had no idea such a relatively small number of Sisters had such a large reach in their work.



The group was given a guided tour of the Monastery's public spaces including the Chapel, Heritage Room, and offices. They then proceeded to the Health and Wholeness Center (HWC) where Sister Bernadine Reyes, Director of Ministries, and Marilyn Pruske, a HWC volunteer, gave overviews of the Omega Retreat Center and the HWC respectively. The group visited the retreat center, the outdoor chapel, and Holy Angels Cemetery. Members of the group were gracious as they learned new things and shared their fascinating insights and knowledge of the history of the area, particularly the former Kronkosky Estate, that was purchased by the Sisters in 1962. The Sisters are grateful to all who came on the tour. It was a most enjoyable time for all!



Photos: **top right** - Sister Frances Briseño welcomes the history group before her presentation; **above center** - Sister Bernadine Reyes (front row left) and Marilyn Pruske (back row left) with group at the Health and Wholeness Center; **left** - Bryden Moon (center) shares his insights about the Sisters' property while the group visits the Holy Angels Cemetery.

Honoring Our History

Sisters Frances Briseño and Bernadine Reyes attended a "Giving Thanks" Dinner in Bakerstown, PA on Sunday, November 17th hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh, who are celebrating the 150th Anniversary of their founding, (they relocated to Bakerstown in 2013.) This event was an opportunity to bring guests from their former and current ministries together as well as their "daughter" houses, which includes the Boerne Benedictines, and their "granddaughter" houses. During the event, Sister Bernadine shared the Boerne Sisters' connection to the Pittsburgh community. The Boerne Benedictines were "birthed" from this community when Mother Lidwina Weber courageously answered God's call to leave Pittsburgh in 1911 to serve on the Isle of Pines in Cuba.



Photo: Benedictine Sisters gather at the Giving Thanks Dinner (L-R) Frances Briseño, Prioress - Benedictine Sisters of Boerne; Karen Brink, Prioress - Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh; Evelyn Dettling - Pittsburgh community (dressed as the Pittsburgh community's founding Prioress Adelgunda Feldman); Roberta Bailey, Prioress - Benedictine Sisters of Florida; Bernadine Reyes - Boerne community; Tonette Sperando, Prioress - Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, Alabama and Sherrie Brainard - Cullman community.

A Joyful Twenty Year Journey



(L-R) Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB congratulates Nora Schmidt, ObOSB on her 20th work anniversary.

Nora Schmidt, ObOSB, describes her 20 years with the Benedictines as a “Joyful Journey”. She joined the Sisters on October 4, 1999 and has served, with a cheerful heart, in various positions. She began as a receptionist and then assisted Sister Thecla Goertz, OSB, in the finance office under the Treasurer, Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB. Nora eventually became Sister Sylvia’s administrative assistant. In addition to this role, she efficiently handles payroll and accounts payable. “Nora can handle just about every detail in our office” said Sister Sylvia. “We work extremely well together and I have complete trust and faith in her. She is always seeking ways to help others - a true Benedictine!”

Nora and her husband, Richard, became Oblates in 2001. Nora’s faithful walk with the Sisters included her role as Oblate Team member and records keeper for many years.

When asked what she has enjoyed the most about her time with the Sisters, Nora responded, “I have enjoyed getting to know each Sister over the years, and I have a close friendship with several of them. We journeyed through many ups and downs together over the past 20 years. We have been there for each other. The Sisters have allowed me to bring out talents I never realized I had until working with them.”

Nora’s favorite role is being married to Richard, who she describes as her “best friend”. They recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. When not working at the Monastery, you can find Nora helping Richard with their small family business, or spending time with their two daughters, son-in-law, and 3 grandsons. Nora also enjoys cooking, baking, and feeding birds, especially hummingbirds.

Sisters Welcome New Staff at the Ministries in Boerne

Raquel Martínez (right) began working part-time at the Omega Retreat Center in the spring as assistant to Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB, Director of Ministries. She holds a double major in Psychology and English from Texas State University and a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a concentration in Christian Counseling from Franciscan University of Steubenville, OH. Raquel brings many gifts to her position including experience with retreats, high school and campus ministries, and domestic and foreign mission work. She enjoys meeting the retreatants and doing what she can to facilitate a positive retreat experience for all guests. She says, “I am just here to serve.” Raquel also has a heart for the suffering, evident in her taking communion to the sick and serving food to those less fortunate. In her spare time, she enjoys photography and spending quality time with her family and friends.



Micaela Dominguez (left) began her work as a Kitchen Assistant at the Omega Retreat Center in October. When not working, she enjoys feeding the ducks at the River Road Park in Boerne. Micaela has a Puggle (a pug and beagle mix) named Mojo, who “is the cutest and sweetest boy ever” and who loves to snuggle.

Barbara Coffelt (right) joined us in October as the Donations Coordinator for The Sisters’ Attic Thrift Shop. She was retired and felt it was time to look for some meaningful part-time work. In her free time, Barbara enjoys quilting and sewing. She also volunteers at the Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation in Kendalia, Texas.



Susan Damon Joins The Office of Mission Advancement



Susan Damon was welcomed to the Monastery staff in October as a Development Associate in the Office of Mission Advancement. She brings a vast history of work experiences including roles in administration, management, and leadership. Her skills in the areas of fundraising, special events, and marketing, along with her creativity and enthusiasm, are great assets to the position.

Susan is a certified LVN and a long-time volunteer in both civic and church organizations. She says she is honored to be working for the Sisters. Susan lives in Boerne and enjoys time with her family, art, music, poetry, and peace. She is a published poet and photographer. She describes herself as, “an ongoing student of peace, mindfulness, and presence.”

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
Assistant: Susan Damon

Contributing Photographers:
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Mary Anne Oehler

Printing by:
Alamo Mailing • San Antonio, Texas

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF BOERNE
15TH ANNUAL FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT SPAGHETTI DINNER
All Proceeds Benefit the Sisters!
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020
5:00 - 7:00 PM (NOTE NEW TIME)
Omega Center Dining Room
316 W. Highland Dr. Boerne, TX

Tickets on Sale NOW at the Monastery & MUST be purchased in advance.

ADULT EARLY BIRD
\$15 IF PURCHASED BY 2/15/20
\$20 IF PURCHASED AFTER 2/15/20
CHILDREN 10 AND UNDER: \$5.00

Sponsorships Available
call 830.816.8504 for more information
• SILENT AUCTION • DOOR PRIZES • TAKE OUT AVAILABLE

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly”
1 Thessalonians 1:2

Unexpected Blessings
We are deeply grateful for the unexpected blessings we received from our 2019 All Saints/All Souls mailing and our 2019 Annual Giving Campaign.
Our Annual Giving Campaign is underway and there’s still time to participate. Donations may be made in person, by mail, or online at www.boernebenedictines.org

“Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring.” St. Catherine of Siena

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FIND US ON:



A red silhouette illustration of a nativity scene, showing Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in a stable with palm trees in the background. The text 'Wishing you Peace and Joy' is arched above the scene, and 'Merry Christmas' is arched below it. The entire graphic is framed by a green and red border with holly leaves.

Please Join Us For Our
Christmas Eve Liturgy
December 24th
5 PM
St. Scholastica Monastery
216 W. Highland Dr.
Boerne, Texas
Reception to follow