

# BENEDICTINE VOICE

*Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas*

Fall 2021



*Season  
of  
Gratitude*



# REFLECTION FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



## *Giving Thanks*

In First Thessalonians 5:18, St. Paul reminds us, "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus".

When we began planning our fall newsletter, we chose a theme of gratitude for indeed we have so much to be thankful for.

Despite the ups and downs encountered in our daily lives, the gift of gratitude should not be overlooked. I have chosen to seek out blessings each day and to give thanks to my God for each one.

As Administrator, I am thankful first and foremost for all the Sisters of my Community who have generously supported me. I said to them, when I was appointed to this position in April, that I was going to need their help and support. They stepped up to the plate time and time again.

I am also thankful for the broader Community of Sisters, which includes our US and Mexico Benedictines. All the prayers and thoughtfulness helped us charter these past months with boldness and grace.

To the many families, friends, benefactors, and co-workers who lifted us up when we most needed it, I can never thank you enough! Through your generosity and unconditional support, you have helped us to "keep on, keeping on". We have been able to continue our journey onward into whatever it is that God has in store for us because of all your support.

I have learned to appreciate a new, profound meaning of the word responsibility. It is not just a word, it is an action that is lived out each day in awesome and sometimes challenging ways.

I am most grateful to my God who has walked with me each and every day. I often felt I could reach out and touch my God as my God touched me.

I am grateful because during all these months I have had it confirmed for me that, "it takes a village" to raise a Community of Sisters. Let's never forget that none of us stand alone.

*"Despite the ups and downs encountered in our daily lives, the gift of gratitude should not be overlooked. I have chosen to seek out blessings each day and to give thanks to my God for each one."*

God bless each of you abundantly for the gift you are to the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne. You are our "village" that lifts us, encourages us, supports us, and journeys with us. Please keep us in prayer as we prepare to elect the next Prioress.

Wishing you and yours a blessed Thanksgiving, a peace-filled Advent, a joyous Christmas, and a happy, healthy New Year!

With my deepest gratitude and continued prayers,

*Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB*

*"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer.  
And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good."*

*Maya Angelou*

## 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.

## Blessings and Gratitude to Bishop Emeritus John W. Yanta - Faithful Friend and Family



*Joining Bishop Yanta at his 90th birthday celebration are (standing l-r) Sandra Kiolbassa, Dennis Mika, Sister Susan Mika, OSB and Barbara Kiolbassa Britton. (photo courtesy of John Wojtasczyk)*

for Virgin Mary) is about 55 miles SE of San Antonio. It is the oldest Polish settlement in the United States. Both Bishop Yanta's family and Sister Susan's family have Polish roots in Panna Maria.

The Benedictine Sisters congratulate Bishop Yanta on these remarkable milestones and his God centered life.

*(photo right - Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB accompanies Father John Yanta as he offers communion to patients at St. Benedict's Hospital and Nursing Home - mid-1960s)*

Sister Susan Mika, OSB was grateful for the opportunity to deliver the benediction at Bishop Emeritus John W. Yanta's 90th Birthday celebration that was held on October 2, 2021 in San Antonio. As she explained in her opening remarks, her family and her Benedictine community have special ties to this renowned man of faith. "Bishop John's father and my grandmother were brother and sister, so I feel like I have known him all my life. My grandmother, Mary Mika, had Bishop John's photo on the mantel of her fireplace, so we always "saw" him when we were at her house, which was across the street from Panna Maria Church. Bishop John was our Benedictine Sisters' chaplain and lived at the St. Benedict's Hospital and Nursing Home on South Alamo Street from 1966 to 1974. These are just a few ways the Mikas and the Benedictines have been woven into his life".

The week had been a busy one for Bishop Yanta. On Monday, September 27th, he participated in a blessing of the

new Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria, a project inspired and envisioned by him.

Panna Maria (Polish



*Sister Frances  
Briseño, OSB*

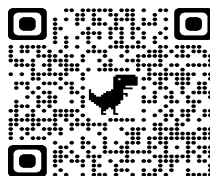
*continues to receive the  
care needed as she recovers  
from her stroke.*

*She and all the  
Sisters are grateful to  
everyone  
for their prayers  
and concern.*

### Monthly E-Newsletter *Reflections From The Hill*

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### Benedictine Voice

is designed for our Benedictine Family, Friends, & Benefactors.

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Printing by: Alamo Mailing,  
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We are grateful to the following donors who gave a gift in support of the Benedictine Sisters and/or their ministries from July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021, our past two Fiscal Years. Every effort has been made to keep our list accurate. If your name was overlooked or misprinted, please accept our apology and contact us at 830.816.8504.

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*"I am touched and humbled by those who have responded to our needs. My heart is filled with gratitude for the support we, as a community, have received. Thank you and God bless you!"*

*Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB*

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unnoticed. I lift you in my  
daily prayers and I thank  
God for you!

Thank you for your faithful  
support and loving kindness.  
May the LORD bless you  
and keep you!

*Sr. Victoria Anne Olivares, OSB*

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# OBLATE NEWS



Sisters Antoinette Van Galen, OSB and Michael Brandt, OSB wish to thank our past Oblate Leadership Team members for their years of service:

- Anne Brunet
- Oscar and Kathy Hannig
- Bill Howden and Jan Davis
- Robert Johnson
- Peggy Raley
- Emilie Rogers (Team Leader)

The Sisters welcome Nan Neff to this year's Team, and returning members, Bill, Jan, and Emilie.

## **Congratulations New Oblates**

Therese McAteer &  
Jesus Ramon

## **INITIAL FORMATION CLASSES TO BEGIN IN JANUARY 2022**

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian women and men who associate themselves with a Benedictine community in order to enrich their Christian way of life. Oblates and the community provide mutual affirmation of the commitment to the Benedictine way of life.

Under the direction of Jan Davis, ObOSB, DMin, Oblate Initial Formation classes will begin in January. As an Oblate, scholar, and member of the Oblate Leadership Team, Jan is well versed in the Benedictine way of life. She often refers to herself as a "Servant of the Monastery" and looks forward to teaching others about Benedictine spirituality and Benedictine values.

Anyone interested in learning more about our Oblate Program, please call (830) 816-8504 or visit us at <http://www.boernebenedictines.org>



## Grateful for Pool Water (H2O)

By Connie Callender Lindsay, Health and Wholeness Center Member and Volunteer



*The “Miracle Lady”, Connie Callender Lindsay (front), with her Thursday morning water aerobics class.*

H2O...a chemical name for Di-hydrogen Oxide. Sounds strange, doesn't it? Doesn't have to be so. To me, it is water. And the best water to me is our pool water...the water that is in our Health and Wholeness swimming pool. Yes, the pool that is open for us all to swim in and do our water aerobics in daily.

I started using this pool in 2007. At first, it was a wonderful way for me to exercise after having my stomach removed. Surgeons had stopped an incessant bleeding that required an unbelievable total of 97 blood transfusions over a period of 2 years. It took a lot of talking on a friend's part, to get me to squeeze into a bathing suit at my size and appear in public at a pool. But, with God's blessing and help, I did it! I felt like a busted can of biscuits my first day squeezing into that swimsuit. But I accomplished it!

After two years of loving the exercise (and eating less), weight fell off. I lost a total of 160 pounds. But the encouragement of all those around me, helped most of all. I didn't give up. After our water aerobics instructor had to leave, I decided to step up and volunteer as the instructor. I learned over the years, how to teach water aerobics. But most importantly, I learned how to give my heart to others. That is when I knew what H2O really meant:

**H = HEARTS    2 = TO    O = OTHERS**

Yes, we give our hearts to others in this miraculous pool of water. This water brings us all together as friends in times of need; comforters; peace-makers; consolers of grief; soul touchers; lenders and borrowers, and crisis counselors. Sometimes we don't realize the peaceful water's powers. Innocently, we come with just a goal to exercise as women and men getting in shape, feeling healthier, getting the feeling that we are helping our bodies in our older years. But we are benefiting in more than exercise of the body. We are benefiting in ways more than the physical. We are benefiting our souls, our spirits. We have met friends for life in this pool.

We have all talked about our lives, our children, grandchildren, our personal problems, our faith in God, perhaps our lack of faith at times, our needs, our sorrows, and even our losses. We have been comforted by others, hugged, and helped in ways of the spirit, and gentleness of friendships, kindnesses, and in the very joy of just having someone to listen to us at times. We have laughed about our jobs we once had, our spouses, our vacations, our expected hopes still for future years.

I can tell you, it has been my experience, to see people that have had nobody else to turn to outside the pool, to come to class and bare their personal stories to someone. It is a rich and loving feeling to see friendships made. It has given so many riches beyond measure. This pool water has its own magical powers. No, it is not a holy water. Nobody is claiming that. But it is a spiritual well of its own nature. I believe this pool is also blessed by God, and I believe that God would believe that many happy moments have come from this pool, this water. I truly believe that God is smiling down on the happiness, the laughter and the camaraderie that has graced this pool. There is a reason for this pool water. It has healing powers of its own.

I have been coming to this Health and Wellness Center pool for 14 years. I have taught water aerobics for almost 13 years now. I am 74. I hope to continue teaching as long as they will allow me. I just love it so much.

My journey has been long. I have had my stomach removed; 97 blood transfusions; numerous iron infusions; double heart bypass surgery; 2 brain tumor surgeries; 38 radiation treatments; ruptured appendix then surgery for removal; gall bladder removed; two cataract surgeries on both eyes; Saddle block pulmonary embolism; and Type II diabetes. And out of all that, God has blessed me and I have recovered. I am His miracle. At Brooke Army Medical Center, they jokingly refer to me in many clinics as “The Miracle Lady!” I don't mind. I am thankful. I have always recovered and come back to the pool. Pool water.

Let us bathe ourselves in it when we can. Let us never lose the opportunity to feel its coolness, its calming effects not only on our bodies but on our souls and friendships, as we love one another, and love the Almighty God that gives us our opportunities to enjoy our times together in the pool.

Our Health and Wholeness Center has been improving the quality of life for individuals ages 50 and older in Kendall and surrounding counties since 1990. It is a place where the young at heart can feel at home and share the fullness of life with others. With a theme of “Seniors helping Seniors”, the Center offers water exercise programs and other beneficial activities.

For more information contact Annie Walther at 830.816.8470 or hwcliving@gmail.com.



# HAPPENINGS ON THE HILL

## A.C.T.S. Group Honors Sister Mary Rose Goertz, OSB



Above: Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB (2nd from left) with A.C.T.S. Core Team members, (l-r), Belinda Camarillo, Corina Nuñez, and Rob Johnson (photo courtesy of Raquel Martinez)

Recently, members of the St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church's A.C.T.S. Core Team presented a beautiful plaque to the Benedictine Sisters in honor and in memory of Sister Mary Rose Goertz, OSB. Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB, Director of Ministries, was on hand to receive the plaque.

Team member and one of our Oblates, Rob Johnson, said, "Sister Mary Rose was such an integral part of our retreat memories at Omega. She was always so uplifting."

The retreat center was the site of the first A.C.T.S. Retreat in 1987. (A.C.T.S. is an acronym for Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service)

### AN OPORTUNITY TO LEAVE A LEGACY GIFT

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. Have our ministries touched your life?

If so, would you consider leaving a Legacy Gift to us?

We will honor your priorities and wishes for any planned giving you choose to establish.

Our legal title is Benedictine Sisters (Congregation of Benedictine Sisters).

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.

### Honoring our 2021 Jubilarians

Sisters Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB (left) and Antoinette Van Galen, OSB (right) were honored on August 26, 2021 for their 76 and 75 years of Religious Life. A private Mass was live streamed from St. Scholastica Chapel followed by a luncheon. We are grateful for these two women of faith who continue to serve God and their community. Congratulations Sisters!







## *Sister Mary Rose Goertz, OSB*

*December 11, 1928 - March 27, 2021*

*Perpetual Profession - January 6, 1952*



Our Sister Mary Rose (religious name Walburga) Goertz, OSB, was born in Red Rock Texas, one of twelve children. She learned values from her parents who taught love, not by what they said, but through their actions.

Sister attended Sacred Heart Church and School in Rockne where the Benedictine Sisters taught. She was drawn to the Benedictine community and after graduating from high school, she entered religious life with them.

Sister Mary Rose received her bachelor's degree in education and teacher certification from Incarnate Word. Sister served in many ministries including: teaching, St. Benedict's Hospital and Nursing Home where she worked as an LVN and Dietician, and in Leadership of her Benedictine Community as Sub-Prioress for 8 years and Prioress for 6 years. In 1989 she began working at the Omega Retreat Center in Boerne, first in the office, and then in food service. She served at Omega for nearly 30 years. Sister Mary Rose will be remembered for her genuine welcoming presence, her delightful sense of humor, and her love for Christ.



## *Sister Germaine Marie Sutton, OSB*

*November 9, 1941 - September 20, 2021*

*Perpetual Profession - June 6, 1966*



Born Mary Bruna Elizabeth Sutton in Laredo, Texas, our Sister Germaine Marie Sutton, OSB was the youngest, with two older brothers. Her father died when she was very young. Sister Germaine and her brothers were raised by their mother, who inspired her to follow religious life. Sister was introduced to the Benedictine Sisters while attending high school at Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio. She entered St. Scholastica Monastery on September 3, 1961.

Sister Germaine Marie earned a degree in Education at Our Lady of the Lake University as well as her teaching certification. She taught first grade for many years in Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of San Antonio including Holy Spirit, St. Benedict's, and St. John the Evangelist. She also volunteered with infants at Santa Rosa Children's Hospital in San Antonio.

In 2005, Sister Germaine moved to Eagle Pass, Texas. While there, she helped welcome mission groups at the Sisters' Caridad de Corazón Mission House. In addition, she taught religion classes to 3year olds through 3rd grade at Our Lady of Refuge Catholic School, and classes for the sacraments of First Communion and Reconciliation. She also tutored students after school in preparation for Academic Fairs. Sister retired from a stellar 54-year teaching career in 2015 and moved to St. Scholastica Monastery in December 2017. She will always be remembered for her collection of Angels, her love of butterflies, and her commitment to Christ.

*Sisters Mary Rose and Germaine Marie sought God in their work and in their prayer. They lived the Benedictine way of life as the Rule of Benedict invited them. "If we wish to dwell in God's tent, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds." (RB, Prologue)*

*We rejoice with our Sisters as they walk into the arms of the Holy One and we remember St. Benedict's words in the prologue: "What is more delightful than this voice of the Holy One calling to us? See how God's love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see the Holy One."*

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**FIND US ON:**



*Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB offers lemonade to a Haitian migrant.  
(photo courtesy of Nuri Vallbona and Global Sisters Report - printed  
with permission).*

**“FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD,  
I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK,  
A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME”**

*Matthew 25:35*

Sister Ursula Hererra, OSB was featured in the September 30th **Global Sisters Report** when she and other good-souled volunteers helped Haitian migrants in Ciudad Acuña, Mexico. The article, “**Faith groups band together to help Haitians camped at US-Mexico border**” by freelance documentary photojournalist, **Nuri Vallbona**, vividly describes the plight of the migrant caravan as well as those who offered them assistance.

To read the complete story visit: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/news/news/faith-groups-band-together-help-haitians-camped-us-mexico-border>