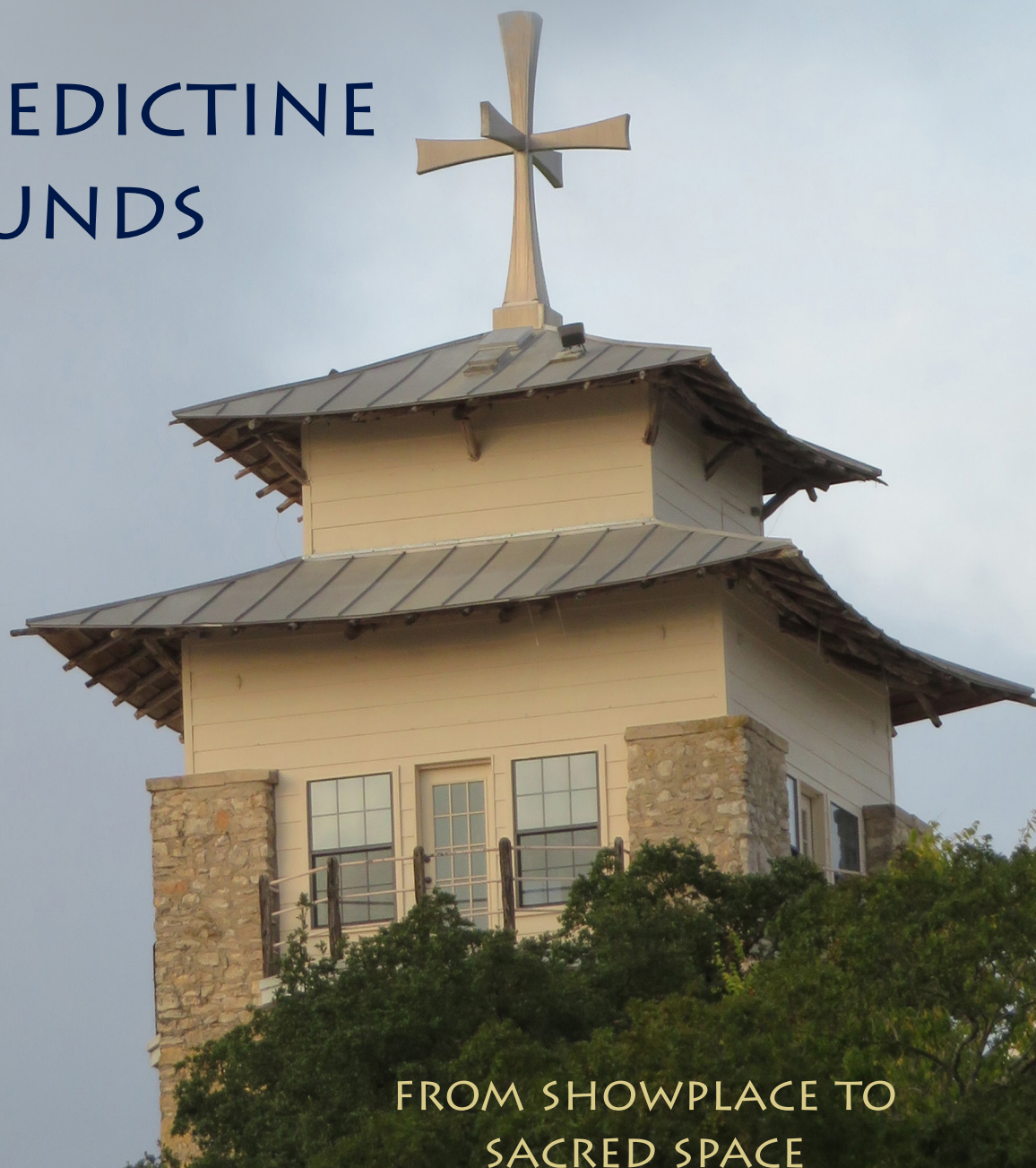


# BENEDICTINE VOICE

*Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas*

Fall 2022

## OUR BENEDICTINE GROUNDS



FROM SHOWPLACE TO  
SACRED SPACE  
1911 - 2022





## Filled With Gratitude!

Dear Friends,

Our fall issue of *Benedictine Voice* brings to mind the word *gratitude*. I am deeply grateful to all who journey

with us, whether it's been for a long time or a short while, and for the many blessings our community has received.

This year we commemorated our 60th year in Boerne and 40th Anniversary of the Omega Retreat Center. I am grateful to Albert and Bessie Kronkosky, Jr., for selling us the beautiful Boerne property in 1961. We moved our Monastery from San Antonio to Boerne in 1962. I am grateful for the ministries that we birthed on this property, including the Omega Retreat Center, the Health and Wholeness Center, and the Sisters' Attic Thrift Store, as well as our sponsored ministries, Caridad de Corazón and Corporate Responsibility. All of our ministries continue to address the spiritual, health, community, immigration, and peace and justice needs of the people served, especially the poor.

I am grateful for the years of religious life and the years of ministry celebrated by our two Sisters this past August. We were able to open our Monastery, in a limited way, to family and friends for this celebration.

My gratitude extends to our Oblates and our staff, and to our numerous volunteers who serve in our Boerne ministries and our border ministry, Caridad de Corazón, in Eagle Pass, TX. All of you are an extension of our hearts, hands, and feet.

I am thankful for the generosity of our donors who have responded to us over this past year. We are humbled by your continued support. You give your commitment of time, energy, and treasure not only to us, but to our ministries that are important to you. We are so blessed to have you with us!

*"We all have people and situations in our lives for which to be grateful."*

*Raise them up in your hearts and in your prayers."*

We all have people and situations in our lives for which to be grateful. Raise them up in your hearts and in your prayers. As you receive this newsletter, we will be in the Advent season and looking forward to the celebration of Christ's birth. May we all be filled with gratitude for God's greatest gift to us, and to our world, Jesus!

Wishing you and your loved ones Peace and Joy this Christmastime, and a Hopeful, Happy New Year ~

With a grateful heart,

*Sister Bernadine*

Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB  
Prioress

## 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.



## 2022 Jubilee

A Jubilee Celebration was held on Sunday, August 28 to honor Sisters Victoria Anne Olivares, OSB (Professed 60 years) and Mary Louise Hernandez, OSB (Professed 45 years). A small group of family members joined the Sisters for Mass and lunch. The Mass was livestreamed for those family and friends who were unable to attend, and is still available on our Facebook page. Special thanks to our Celebrants, Msgr. Enda McKenna, and Msgr. Albert Hubertus, for being a part of this special day!



(Above, standing L-R) Sisters Chon Nguyen, OSB, Michael Brandt, OSB, Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Bernice Lindsey, OSB, Kathleen Higgins, OSB, Susan Mika, OSB, and Ursula Herrera, OSB. (Seated L-R) Sisters Frances Briseño, OSB, Bernadine Reyes, OSB, Mary Louise Hernandez, OSB, Victoria Anne Olivares, OSB, Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB, and Antoinette Van Galen, OSB.



(Pictured above: clockwise from left) Sister Victoria Anne Olivares, OSB, with cousin, Theresa Olivares (standing) and sister, Socorro Nelson; Sister Mary Louise Hernandez, OSB; Sister Mary Louise with son, Richard Hernandez and granddaughter, Ellen Miller; Msgr. Albert Hubertus, Msgr. Enda McKenna, and Sisters Bernadine Reyes, OSB and Kathleen Higgins, OSB; and Sister Victoria Anne, OSB.



# NOTABLE NEWS

## Blessings Abound!

In late October, the Benedictine Sisters were blessed with a new car by anonymous donors! “We were in need of a new vehicle to transport our Sisters to medical appointments,” explained Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB, Prioress. “When faithful donors heard about this, they wasted no time in coming to our rescue. We are deeply grateful to these generous supporters. They provided us the opportunity to purchase a new car - it’s unbelievable - what a blessing!”

On Thursday, November 3rd, a special blessing was held at the Monastery. Sister Bernadine blessed the car and then Sisters and healthcare staff extended hands over the donors, petitioning blessings of the Lord be upon them. A small reception followed.



*(Above) A brand new Subaru Forrester arrived at the Monastery in late October thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor!*

*(Left) Sister Antoinette Van Galen, OSB, waves as Elder Care Coordinator, Carolyn Ruiz, LVN, drives her to physical therapy in the new car.*



## Nonagenarians Welcome Nieces

(Right) In October, Sister Antoinette Van Galen, OSB, thoroughly enjoyed a visit from four of her nieces. (L to R) - Terri Merlau Frederick of Biloxi, MS, Patty Merlau of Ocean Springs, MS, Linda Howell of Manvel, TX, and Deborah Guerra of McAllen, TX.



(Left) Sister Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB was delighted to be able to visit with her niece, Rose Steele, from Glen Allen, VA. They have had several family Zoom calls during the pandemic, and to see each other in person was a special gift, as you can see by their smiles!



## Volunteers Share Their Stories

Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB, Director of the Sisters' Caridad de Corazón (Charity of the Heart) border ministry in Eagle Pass, TX, welcomes volunteers throughout the year. Below are personal accounts from two volunteers who recently spent time at the border with Sister Ursula.

**My name is Rayna Schmidt**, and I spent October in Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras with Sr. Ursula. Over and over the past years, I've felt a pull to get active in volunteering. I started giving my time to local organizations, such as Christ in the City, in Denver, CO, and helping with art therapy programs at local hospitals. The more I got involved, the more I wanted to be doing. Following this call, I decided to jump in, head first, and give volunteering solo a try for an extended amount of time.

While helping at the border, one of my days was spent visiting the orphanages in Piedras Negras to drop off donations and spend time with the little ones there. Kids have always held a very special spot in my heart, so I left their homes feeling overwhelmed with love for the children and gratitude for the gift Jesus blessed me with to be able to meet them. Even with a large language barrier (I speak very little Spanish!),



*(Above) Rayna, with mask, enjoys spending time with the children at the girls' orphanage in Piedras Negras, Mexico.*

we were able to connect through our smiles, dancing, and playing together. By the end of the visits there wasn't enough time in the world to hug each other goodbye!

Being here gave me unlimited opportunities to carry out the call to service and I will cherish each memory for many years to come. "My cup runneth over." Psalms 23:5

**I am Sister Krista Ferrell**, a Benedictine Sister with Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck, ND. The Benedictine Sisters of Boerne and my Benedictine community accept volunteers through the Benedictine Volunteers Program. A few of our Sisters and a volunteer went to Eagle Pass, TX to work with Sister Ursula a few years ago. I had done volunteering on the border in the past, and I wanted to volunteer in Eagle Pass.

What I found unexpected was the number of immigrants who came through the shelter and their varied ages and backgrounds. There were a couple favorite experiences while I was volunteering. The first was while working with the immigrants at the shelter in Eagle Pass. Despite the language barrier, I was able to get to know them and have fun with them.

I felt their gratitude and it was very heartwarming. Going over the border into Mexico was also a great experience. One thing that stood out for me was when one of the boys at the boys' orphanage came over and started to play with me. That reminded me that children are the same anywhere you are in the world.



One difficult experience for me was feeling like a minority because of the language barrier. It was hard for me because I only knew a little Spanish. The first day I worked at the immigrant shelter I was by myself, and it was hard to know what to do. Those difficulties helped me understand how the immigrants feel when they move on to where they will call home in the United States.

For those who are interested in volunteering at the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne's Caridad de Corazón border ministry, you will have an enriching, humbling, and heart expanding experience with Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB.

*(Left) Sister Krista, center, and Sister Ursula, back right, visit with girls at the orphanage in Mexico.*

**A special "Thank You" to Rayna and Sister Krista and to ALL who have volunteered at the border. There is still a lot of work to be done!**

**For more information visit [benedictinevolunteers.com](http://benedictinevolunteers.com) or [boernebenedictines.org/caridad-de-corazon](http://boernebenedictines.org/caridad-de-corazon)**



# HEALTH AND WHOLENESS CENTER

## *Keepers of the Gardens*

by Mary Anne Oehler



*Above, clockwise: Merrilyn Pruske is ready to plant Muehly Grass for the winter months, Lorene Franke waters a Periwinkle, and Sherry Zogheib cares for a beautiful Begonia.*



There is a trio of women who have taken it upon themselves to maintain the gardens in and near the cul-de-sac on “The Hill”. They are angels who have been members of the Health and Wholeness Center for a combined 72 years!

**Merrilyn Pruske** became a member of the Health and Wholeness Center (HWC) 30 years ago. She served as its manager from 1992-1999, and has lead water aerobics classes for 21 years. She is the Matriarch of the “Keepers of the Gardens,” having cared for them for 30 years. She explains her passion for gardening, “It is a pastime meant for anyone. It’s healthy, beautiful, and rewarding, (except when the deer enjoy a meal). I love being in the garden to experience the silence, and it is a natural anti-depressant.”

Merrilyn enjoys being a member of the HWC. She reflected on the past years’ road trips, special events, arts and crafts classes, book clubs, and the various fitness and health programs. She remembered the times when some of the members got together to put on plays and

skits. “We all love the water aerobics,” she says. “We exercise, talk, and afterwards have coffee while trying to solve the problems of the world.” To her, the HWC is a home away from home for many of its members.

**Lorene Franke** joined the HWC in 2001. She helped with the Center’s High Tea special event for years, from planning to cleaning up. She also made all the chocolate balls for the Christmas fund-raiser. She is a substitute leader for water aerobic classes.

Lorene began taking care of her section of the gardens about 19 years ago. “I wanted the place to have flowers,” she commented. “I just want to keep the gardens green and growing.” What she enjoys most about the HWC are the water exercise classes and the people she has met and the friends she has made.

**Sherry Zogheib** has been a member of the HWC for the past 21 years. She is a water aerobics leader and served as the main organizer for the High Tea event. She also organized the Holiday candy fund-raiser.





*(Above clockwise) Lush gardens near the Haider-Kean Inn (formerly Children's Inn); yellow Senna blooms near the Omega Office area; swimmer figurines decorate a healthy Potato Plant in a nook by the pool, and vibrant Oxblood Lilies adorn the gardens.*

Sherry began caring for the gardens about 17 years ago. In her words, "The rock structures surrounding the pool area are beautiful. They just needed a little greenery." She always admired the beautiful flowers around the former Children's Inn that were nurtured by Marilyn Haider (co-founder of the Inn). "Marilyn was my inspiration," says Sherry. "I'm continuing to follow her lead."

Sherry calls the HWC, "Our special place. Everyone is welcoming and supportive of the needs of others. We are all equal and treated with respect and kindness."

We are grateful to Marilyn, Lorene, and Sherry for their selfless gifts of time, treasure, and talent given to the HWC over the past three decades. Their timeless volunteer hours spent in the gardens of the cul-de-sac watering, pruning, mulching beds, and planting are not in vain. The love they give is reflected in the life that blooms each season, bringing joy and smiles to all who visit "The Hill". A special shout-out to the husbands of these three "Keepers of the Gardens", Jim Pruske, Jerry Franke, and Alex Zogheib - for their support and lending a hand when needed. They, too, have earned their angel wings.



# FROM SHOWPLACE

## Digging Into the History of Our Boerne Grounds

By Mary Anne Oehler

Sister Bernice Lindsey, OSB, has a passion for history and genealogy. So it was a perfect fit when she was asked to work in the Benedictine Sisters' archives in 2021. She transitioned into this role with ease.

For the past year Sister Bernice has been retrieving boxes of files and photos, and sorting through a maze of information. She has been particularly interested in the history of the Benedictine grounds in Boerne, especially as the Sisters commemorate their 60th Anniversary in Boerne this year.

In her quest to learn more, Sister Bernice visited with Archivists at Boerne's Patrick Heath Public Library, members of the Genealogical Society of Kendall County, and staff at the Boerne Visitors Center. Her findings are conveyed below:



*Sister Bernice Lindsey, OSB (right) with Boerne Public Library Archivists, Regina Adam and Mary Taylor. (Photo provided)*

In 1911, when Mother Lidwina Weber, OSB (Foundress of the Boerne Benedictines), and three other Sisters were making their way from St. Marys, Pennsylvania to the Isle of Pines in Cuba, Albert Kronkosky, Sr., a San Antonio business tycoon, was purchasing a 27 acre estate in Boerne, Texas. Little did the Sisters know that they were destined to acquire this property 50 years later.

While the Sisters remained in Cuba until 1918, Mr. Kronkosky, Sr. would transform his Boerne country retreat into his home, and the grounds into a lavish showplace for visitors from all over the world to see.

Many of the structures on the Kronkosky Estate were built to resemble Asian pagodas, including the iconic water tower that could be seen for miles. Albert's brother, Theodore Kronkosky, lived on property east of "The Hill" with his family - wife, Katherine, son, Lawrence, and daughters, Margaret and Mary. Water was pumped from a well to a concrete cistern on Theodore's property, and then pumped to the water tower on the estate.



Rock structures were built including two houses, servants' quarters, a dance pavilion, and a garage. There was a bridge (as seen in the photo left) that connected the two ends of the estate where Kronkosky's brother-in-law, Charles Graebner, had his residence. That portion of the land was eventually sold to the Kennedy Family and then purchased by the Sisters in 1982. The Sisters moved their Monastery to that location until 2016 when they sold the land to St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church and moved to their new Monastery on the original Kronkosky Estate.

There were beautiful flower gardens and, ponds throughout the estate property, and a caliche carriage trail that brought the horse and buggies to a stone staircase leading to the Kronkosky's front door.

In 1931, Albert suffered a severe illness. He moved his family to California where he died in 1944. The Boerne estate was passed to his only child, Albert Kronkosky, Jr. Except for a caretaker, the property was unoccupied for many years.



In the 1950s the Sisters would come to Boerne on retreat near the Kronkosky estate. They would secretly throw medals over the fence onto the property and pray that someday it would be theirs. In 1961, their prayers were answered when Albert, Jr. and his wife, Bessie, sold “The Hill” to the Sisters. In 1962, the Sisters relocated their Monastery from San Antonio to Boerne.

The Sisters and the Kronkoskys remained friends until Albert passed in October 1995 and Bessie in September 2010. The Sisters described them as humble and quiet spoken. They often broke bread together, and Mrs. Kronkosky always sponsored the food for the summer camps the Sisters held on the property from 1983-1987.

Many of the original buildings still stand and have housed Sisters, St. Scholastica Monastery, St. Albert’s Boarding School, Hilltop Treasures Gift Shop, and the Children’s Inn. Since 1982, the Omega Retreat Center has occupied some of the buildings and in 1990, the Health and Wholeness Center opened and uses another building for its office and gathering space.

Today, a small rock building near Omega has been transformed into a Chapel, and another small building houses “Bethany” a quiet space for day retreats. Overnight retreatants sometimes stay in the former Kronkosky homes. In 2016, the Sisters moved into their new St. Scholastica Monastery that was built around the iconic tower. The carriage trail still remains a beautiful walking path around the property.



*Sister Bernice (2nd from right) with Jan Carr (left) with the Genealogical Society of Kendall County and Val Anderson with the Boerne Visitors Center. (Photo provided)*

The connecting bridge was already impassable by the time the Sisters’ purchased the property. In the late 1960s it was further damaged by lightning and the main part of the bridge has since been removed. However, you can still see some of the cement pillars in the park near the cemetery. There are no visible signs of the dance pavilion.

It’s been 111 years since Albert Kronkosky, Sr. purchased the land in Boerne and Mother Lidwina ventured to Cuba. Different journeys, yet both contributed to significant legacies. The showplace estate that Mr. Kronkosky built was transformed by the Benedictine Sisters over the past 60 years. Many who come to “The Hill” refer to it as “Holy Ground”. It is indeed a beautiful reflection of God’s sacred space.

## Amazing Connections Discovered

While conducting her research, Sister Bernice also visited with Martha Hawkins (photo right), a local historian in her own right. Martha has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to Boerne’s history. She and her family moved to Boerne in 1947 when her parents purchased the property that was once owned by Theodore Kronkosky. The large cistern that was used to pump water to the water tower on the Kronkosky Estate, though no longer in use, is still visible today (photo left).



Theodore’s daughter, Margaret, married George Hugman, Sr. The Hugmans are among the Sisters’ first Oblates and are buried in the Sisters’ Holy Angels Cemetery. Their grandson, Michael Hugman, was married to Sister Bernice’s daughter, Cynthia, who passed away from cancer in 2004. “What a small world,” commented Sister Bernice. “What a connection for the Sisters and for me!”



# SISTERS' ATTIC - VOLUNTEERS

Thank You To All Our Wonderful  
2021-2022 Volunteers at Sisters' Attic!  
We couldn't do it without you!

With a combined 487.5 hours of volunteer hours, we salute these faithful volunteers! Each received a certificate of appreciation and, what we hope, was a winning lotto ticket!

For more information visit:  
[boernebenedictines.org/sisters-attic](http://boernebenedictines.org/sisters-attic)



Dale Bowman (118 hrs)



Elaine Nadeau (29.5 hrs)



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Eny Subari Galewood (96 hrs)



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Pat Laxson (61.5 hrs)

## Plan a Gift Today That Will Make A Difference in the Future

Have the Benedictine Sisters and/or our ministries touched your life? If so, would you consider leaving a Legacy Gift that will make a difference in the future? We will honor your priorities and wishes for any planned giving you choose to establish. There are opportunities to support the general needs of the Sisters and/or our ministries. 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 Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Treasurer, at 830.816.8504.



## Omega Retreat Center Turns 40!

The Benedictine Sisters celebrated another milestone on October 26, 2022 by commemorating the Omega Retreat Center's 40th Anniversary with a Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting Ceremony! Sisters, co-ministers, and Chamber staff and members, gathered in front of the Omega Office. Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB spoke about Omega's humble beginnings, how the Center was used for summer camps from 1982-1987, and how it has always been a sacred space, offering Benedictine spirituality and hospitality to those seeking time away.



*(Above) Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Kimberley Blohm (back, far right) with Sisters, co-ministers, and Chamber members at the Ribbon Cutting.*

*(Right) Melynda Weilbacher, Manager of Omega, and Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB with a commemorative certificate from the Chamber.*



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### THANK YOU, MONTHLY DONORS!

We are deeply grateful to those who support us and our ministries with a monthly gift. Your donations are invaluable and truly help in so many ways!

Anyone wishing to learn more about monthly giving, please email:  
[gifts@boernebenedictines.org](mailto:gifts@boernebenedictines.org)

### SAVE THE DATE

**FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT**  
**SPAGHETTI DINNER**  
**THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023**  
**5-7 PM**

**CANA BALLROOM - St. Peter the**  
**Apostle Catholic Church - Boerne**  
**Tickets: Adults \$20 each**  
**Children 12 and under: \$10 each**  
**On Sale in January**

**Visit our website in**  
**January for more info!**  
**[boernebenedictines.org](http://boernebenedictines.org)**



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"Above all, let us not forget to thank: if we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit, but that is enough to transmit a bit of hope. The world needs hope. And with gratitude, with this habit of saying thank you, we transmit a bit of hope. Everything is united and everything is connected, and everyone needs to do his or her part wherever we are."

Pope Francis



Congregation of Benedictine Sisters  
216 West Highland Dr.  
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*Be God's  
Beacon of Light  
this Christmas and  
in the New Year!*

Due to the Monastery being closed, our Christmas Eve Liturgy will not be open to the public this year. Be assured you and your loved ones will be remembered in our prayers.