

BENEDICTINE VOICE

Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas

Summer 2023



“Let Peace Be Your
Quest and Aim”

REFLECTION FROM THE prioress

"Let Peace Be Your Quest and Aim"



In the Rule, Prologue 14-17, St. Benedict writes, "Seeking his workers in a multitude of people, God calls out and says again: *Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?* (Ps 34:13) If you hear this and your answer is 'I do', God then directs these words to you: If you desire true and eternal

life, *keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim.*" (Ps 34:14-15)

When we met weeks ago to select a theme for this newsletter, peace was mentioned. It felt right as a topic, after all, peace is a hallmark of Benedictine Spirituality, and is as relevant in the 21st century as it was for Benedict in the 6th century.

In a recent initial formation inter-congregational gathering, Sr. Anne Munley, IHM, posed a question that caught my attention. "What is the call in our day?" We must listen intently to hear what this call might be. There may be many answers to this question, but for me, it is a call to be who we profess we are. Jesus taught us the greatest commandment is to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. My sense is that many in our society do not know how to love self, therefore, cannot love their neighbor. Thus, we are enduring gun violence, demeaning posting in social media, inflammatory political rhetoric, and racism. There is a lack of peace among us.

To love self is to know self. I remember in psychology 101, many years ago, being taught when we do not like what we see in ourselves, we tend to project onto

another person. It is easier to see what I do not like in myself in another person. Scripture sets out the task, we may need a whole lifetime to learn, to love God and love neighbor as ourselves. Benedict, on the other hand, set out to teach us how to do this. "Let peace be our quest and our aim." His Rule has a whole chapter on humility and another chapter on tools we can use to monitor our heart, speech, and actions. I call Benedict our "how to" guide, meaning he has taken the commandment from God and given us the tools for how to live well with one another. Once we are at peace with ourselves, we might just be able to listen to each other, stop blaming others for problems, refrain from bullying, be more compassionate, and maybe lend a helping hand.

For this edition of our newsletter, we invited our Sisters to give us some thoughts about how they experience peace. We also invited our co-ministers, those who manage our ministries, to reflect on how they are called to be peacemakers in the arena of their respective ministry. These co-ministers are the ones who offer Benedictine Spirituality through our ministries. We are so grateful for their commitment.

As we enter the summer months, we hope you will take time to consider the theme of peace in your lives and to spread that peace among those you love and care for.

Let us surround all who are not at peace in our society, and lift the brokenness around us to God, so that all may have life, and life in abundance.

Peace,

Sister Bernadine

Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB
Prioress

A Privileged Journey

By Nan Neff, ObOSB

I had the privilege of accompanying our new Oblates through their initial formation. Since the monastery was closed when their journey began, we met every month online via Zoom. There were challenges to this year's program; luckily, I had a lot of help and didn't have to start from scratch. Jan Davis, ObOSB, had the curriculum in place and with suggestions from her and the rest of the Oblate Leadership team, presenter positions were quickly filled. All the people who were invited to give a presentation very graciously (and quickly) said, "Yes!"

One of the more difficult challenges was how to build a sense of community in a virtual meeting. I asked each of the presenters to submit questions about their presentation that would help each participant to further reflect upon and to respond to how they were being called to manifest the spirit of Benedict in their lives. I called this Contemplative Integration. What made this experience very rich for all was the fact that, along with the Sisters, many of our Oblates accepted the invitation to join the Initial Formation Sessions. The additional people allowed us to go into small breakout rooms for more intimate sharing and learning. The initial candidates told me that the breakout rooms were the highlight of the sessions. We were able to create a lovely community online!



(L-R) Oblate Initial Formation Leader, Nan Neff, ObOSB, newly committed Oblates - Elizabeth Crismale, ObOSB and Susan Huff, ObOSB, and Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB. Not pictured: Sue Shirley, ObOSB, who made her commitment virtually.

It was with a great sense of joy that we could come together in person and embrace one another at the Oblation ceremony.

Back in 2005 when I was searching for community, I found St. Scholastica Monastery from a search on Google. Little did I know when I made my first Oblation in 2006 that 16 years later I would be assisting others explore the beauty of the Rule! We already have people interested in the next formation classes and I look forward to working with them.

For more information about our Oblate Program, please visit our website at www.boernebenedictines.org

Oblation Sunday

On Sunday, May 7th, the Benedictine Sisters welcomed the Oblate Leadership Team, the Initial Formation Candidates, and Oblates to St. Scholastica Monastery for first commitment and re-commitment Oblation ceremonies. The smiles below are indicators that joy and the peace of God were present on this special day! For those who were unable to attend, the event was livestreamed on our Facebook page.



EVENTS

2023 Feast of St. Benedict Spaghetti Dinner

After a three year hiatus, the Feast of St. Benedict Spaghetti Dinner *Friendraiser* was held on March 9th at St. Peter the Apostle Cana Ballroom in Boerne. The Sisters are grateful to the St. Peter's church community, sponsors, underwriters, volunteers, family, friends, and guests who supported this event. Nearly \$14,000 was raised for the Sisters. Plans are already underway for next year's dinner, which will include a Silent Auction! More information will be provided in our winter newsletter.

THANK YOU SPONSORS, UNDERWRITERS, & FRIENDS!

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Jody and Bill Hancock & Friends of
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Guests of the Kahlig Auto Group visit at and around their table during the dinner.



Bill and Jody Hancock were happy to be a part of the festivities.



Friends from St. Benedict Catholic Church, San Antonio, with Sisters. (L-R) Fr. Francisco Puente - Pastor; Sr. Susan, Belinda Montoya, Mary and Armando Carranza, Evelyn Holt and seated - Sr. Victoria Anne. (Photo provided)



Enjoying the event are Sandi Kiolbassa (right) with (L-R) daughter, Wendy Stiles, & daughter-in-law and son, Lori & Rob Stiles.



MORE PHOTOS
CAN BE VIEWED
ON OUR WEBSITE
EVENT PAGE!





Update *2023 None's Ball*

The Benedictine Sisters wish to thank all who have contributed to this year's None's Ball - No-show Event.

Your generosity has raised over \$43,000 for the Sisters' retirement needs!

Gifts are still being accepted in person, by mail, or online at boernebenedictines.org

With Heartfelt Gratitude

The Benedictine Sisters extend a special thank you to the following grantors for their generosity, and for recognizing the needs of the Sisters and their ministries:

- **SOAR! (Support our Aging Religious)** awarded a grant in the amount of \$16,686 to replace outside security cameras at the Monastery.
- **Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Region 12 Border Projects** awarded the Sisters a grant in the amount of \$4,000 for Caridad de Corazón's and Corporate Responsibility's immigration work at the Texas/Mexico border.

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.



TAKE A CHANCE!

You could win one of these great prizes in our 2023 Summer Drawing!

GRAND PRIZE - \$1000 VALUE!
(TWO (2) \$500 VISA GIFT CARDS)

OTHER PRIZES:

\$500 VISA GIFT CARD

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Suggested donation: \$5 each ticket
(Donation not necessary to win)

Drawing will be held on
Tuesday, September 5, 2023
No need to be present to win!

Deadline to submit tickets:
Friday, September 1, 2023



Blessed are the Peacemakers

By Sister Frances Briseño, OSB

As I sit down to reflect on this article, I look up and in front of me is a three-foot statue of St. Francis of Assisi and a rock in front of it that reads: *The power that compels us comes from the Spirit who indwells us.* I am moved to read St. Francis' Prayer.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is
injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is
despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

It is easy to figure out from the prayer that the Spirit driving Francis is one of humility and love for God and all God's creation. It is one of a loving response to whoever or whatever he encounters. It is one of putting aside one's own desires and remaining open to others' needs. Most of us who know the story of St. Francis of Assisi know that he lived the words of that prayer.

I stop and ask myself, "Am I a peacemaker? Is the spirit that indwells me one of peace?" Questions I hope all who read this newsletter will ask themselves as well.

What is a peacemaker? How does one achieve that designation?

Pope Francis explained that a peacemaker is a person who, "by God's grace, imitates Jesus in bringing reconciliation to others by giving of themselves, always and everywhere!" If I am honest, I can admit that there


have been times in my life when I have received the grace of being a peacemaker, but most of the time I do not consciously find myself in that space. I think that is true for many of us. I am an extrovert so, more often than not, I am ready to give an answer, argue about who's right or wrong, or challenge statements made.

As I continued thinking about peacemaking, I turned to the Rule of Benedict. A word often associated with Benedictines is the Latin term, *Pax*, meaning peace. Medieval monasteries would even carve the phrase *Pax Intranitibus* over their doorway stating, "peace to those who enter here." St. Benedict lived in Italy during a tumultuous era. It was a hard world to live in, it was a loud world with factions fighting over who or what was right. It was a place of violence and unrest, not unlike our own world today. However, Benedict sought peace.

In the prologue of the Rule, Benedict says that we are "to strive for peace on all levels: with self, others, and God." Peace is something that requires constant effort and is acquired over time. Living in a state of peace, with oneself and with others, is a gift from God. It is a gift that we, as individuals, can also give to others. And it is a gift that this world desperately needs.

Adrian Burke, OSB, states, "Peace expresses the spirit of the Benedictine way of life, even though the *Rule* directly mentions peace in only a few key places. But as far as Benedictine values are concerned, it's my firm belief that this is the foremost of them all. After all, being dedicated to the pursuit of Christian peace is one of the most important things monks and nuns can do in a world torn by the violence, social discord, and outright warfare that we read about in news feeds and daily newspapers." I could not agree more!

Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, puts it another way: "Though Chapter 4 of the Rule is a general chapter referring to varying aspects of Gospel teaching, many of the short statements contain points that, if lived out, would lead



to peace on all levels.” The most basic point I take from this chapter is that peace, on the large scale, must begin in our hearts and in our own lives. These are the tools of the spiritual craft. They are to be worked at ceaselessly and faithfully, so that they become part of us. They are tools that are possible for all of us to use as we live our ordinary lives. I do think we grow into a peaceful stance. I know I find myself more at peace the older I get.

Visitors to our monastery will often say they leave with such a sense of peace. They feel tranquil and refreshed. I have heard many other monastics say the same thing about their visitors and their monasteries. I suppose this speaks well of our efforts as Benedictines, consciously and subconsciously, to instill peace into our daily living.

But the challenge to be a peacemaker continues.

Benedictine peace is not simply the absence of war. It is a lifestyle that makes war unacceptable and violence unnecessary. I would hope that all Benedictines and all those whose lives we touch would share that gift of peace and that perspective of peace with others.

Burke also writes, “Benedictine peace is the product of a life characterized by obedience, humility and simplicity. In short, Christian peace stems from putting one's whole “self” out of mind, and the needs of others ahead of one's own.”

Like the other beatitudes, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons and daughters of God,” is also a portrait of Jesus Christ. The Son of God brought peace, reconciling us to God and to one another. Christ wished His Apostles peace at the Last Supper: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (Jn 14:27). The very first thing Christ said to His Apostles when He rose from the dead was, “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:21). “Blessed are the meek”, Jesus also says in the Beatitudes. Thomas Merton wrote that “meekness” is the biblical word for nonviolence. He also presents a grand challenge to all of us, “If we want to survive, we all have to become

nonviolent, and we all have to work to create a more nonviolent world. That is the only sane choice left”. This reminds me of theologian Karl Rahner's statement, “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all.”

The same is true for those of us who want peace in our world. We must consciously carry within us the spirit of peace and love. As Benedictines, we hear the call to peace through the scriptures as we read about the non-violent Jesus, and we hear it loud and clear in the Rule. “Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else. You are not to act in anger or nurse a grudge. Rid your heart of all deceit. Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love. Bind yourself to no oath lest it prove false, but speak the truth with heart and tongue,” Chapter 4 continues.

As I kept thinking about peacemaking, I was led to a book by John Dear, *They Will Inherit the Earth*. He challenges the reader to stay committed to following the nonviolent Jesus. He writes, “For Christians, the best way forward in these scary times, perhaps the only way forward, is to keep our hearts and minds and our eyes set on the nonviolent Jesus at all times, come what may. Jesus embodies nonviolence and the campaign for a nonviolent world. He walked the earth, formed a nonviolent grassroots movement of steadfast resistance to imperial domination and systemic injustice, and gave his life to that nonviolent campaign.”

My prayer for all reading this newsletter is that together we may work toward building a peaceful world.



MESSAGES OF PEACE

Peace Within By Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB, Director, Caridad de Corazón Border Ministry

Being on the Texas/Mexico border is certainly a challenge at this day and time for any peacemaker. The migrants we receive at Mission Border Hope in Eagle Pass have passed through many difficult and dangerous situations which have caused them to become distrustful and frustrated. Our job is to make them feel comfortable, safe, and at home.

As I enter the room where they are sitting, I arm myself with a smile and a greeting, “Bienvenidos”. Their sad and confused faces light up as they respond, “Gracias”. They are then informed of the next steps to help them continue their journey to relatives or sponsors. The faces that showed confusion are now at peace and smiling again.



Working at Mission Border Hope Shelter in Eagle Pass, Sister Ursula offers her peaceful presence to migrant families. (Photo provided)

As the folks register and connect with families, we are busy in the kitchen preparing their meal. Once they know that meals are free, they line up joyfully. During their arduous journey some folks have not eaten very well or even skipped meals once their money was gone. Some parents have given up their food to ensure that the children had enough to eat. But now, as they receive their plate of food, their grateful smiles say it all. Better still, when they come back for seconds, we know they feel at home and not fearful of asking for more. They are very complementary of the food we serve. Adding a little love to the food makes it extra special.

As the migrants come to the end of their stay with us, they come by the kitchen to say their final thank you and good-byes. We wish them well and ask God to be with them as they continue to their destination.

With all the activity within the shelter one could easily become frustrated. However, real peace comes from within. Despite all the noise, sitting still under a tree and listening only to the birds chirping and the leaves rustling brings a genuine inner peace. Suddenly the noise all around is nonexistent. I feel the arms of God embracing me. I feel the warmth of God's loving touch as the breeze warms my face. Then Christ's reassuring words come to mind, “Peace is my farewell to you, my peace is my gift to you.” John 14:27.

In this world of so much gun violence, whether it be on a battle field or on our city streets, I have to admit it is hard to have peace within my soul. I pray daily that gun violence **STOPS!**

When I pray, I feel I am doing a small part to bring about peace. If I seek peace, then I need to spread a peaceful attitude in all that I do and to all people I meet. This is not so easy, but what if each of us did it? WOW! Peace just might be attainable in our world.

Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB



Peace is to love and to seek the best for every person and every nation. We need to collectively help each other and to constantly be aware of the needs of others and to assist with those needs.

We must never stop caring and promoting the well-being of each person and our earthly home. We must keep our hearts full of gratitude to our loving God who created us to love everyone and everything that is good!

One of my favorite quotes from the Rule of St. Benedict is, “Never turn away when someone needs your love.” (RB 4:26) It reminds me of my wonderful parents whose love filled our family life and reached far beyond to so many others.

Sister Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB

PEACE IN OUR BOERNE MINISTRIES

Bringing God's Peace to the Omega Retreat Center

By Melynda Weilbacher, Omega Manager and
Cindy McCorkle, Administrative Assistant

In chapter four of the Rule of Benedict, "Tools of Good Works", we are reminded that peace must have a starting place in our hearts and lives. Peace is a gift of God that builds and maintains our relationship with Him and others. Because we are called to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), we must always act in love to be peacemakers.

What "tools" are necessary to facilitate God's love and peace? The answer is respect for all, honest communication, hospitality, and humility. We, co-ministers at Omega, are servants to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Since guests come to Omega to find solace, tranquility, and spiritual guidance, we are the ministers of Christ's peace and love. We are called to be peacemakers to our guests, to each other, and to all who enter here.

The office staff are at the front of our ministry as we receive inquiries for possible retreats. Through clear communication, along with respect and warmth to all who contact us, we begin the process of spreading God's peace. Because the Bible and the Rule of Benedict teaches us to value humility and put the needs of

others before our own, the office staff emphasize listening with the ears of our hearts to our guests and fellow staff members. This ensures every person experiences hospitality and God's peace at Omega.

Behind the scenes, dedicated house-keeping staff, Omega's "Marthas," provide areas for guests to experience God's peace. Though they are often unseen, their presence is strongly encountered in the spotlessly clean spaces they provide for our guests. Their efforts ensure all who enter Omega will feel comfortable and welcomed - true hospitality.

Another group who share Benedictine hospitality are our wonderful kitchen staff.

Each staff member cheerfully works to prepare nutritious and delicious food for guests at Omega.

Every meal is lovingly made from start to finish with the goal of satisfying the needs of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Special dietary needs are carefully planned for as well - no one is overlooked. Showing this kind of hospitality facilitates God's peace and love.

The staff of the Omega Retreat Center work together to provide a space for all who come to experience the Lord's peace. Using the tools of respect, honest communication, hospitality, and humility, every brother and sister in Christ is welcomed with love. We strive to be peacemakers at all times.



Sharing their messages of peace are co-ministers (Left, L-R) Angie Lozano, Belinda Hearn, (Right, Back - Front) Melynda Weilbacher, Annie Walther, and Cindy McCorkle.

Peace on the Hill and in the Water

By Annie Walther, Health and Wholeness Center Manager

"It's just so peaceful up here!" This is a common phrase uttered by visitors to the "Hill", and it's one of my absolute favorite things to hear. I have the privilege of taking visitors on tours around the property for various reasons and the feeling of PEACE is almost palpable. Many people are brought to tears as they walk the property and realize that this feeling of peace is what they have been looking for. *(Continued next page)*

PEACE IN OUR BOERNE MINISTRIES

(Continued from page 9)

Health and Wholeness is designed to focus on the Physical Health and Personal Wholeness of its members, and peace is a huge byproduct of both. The members often come to the pool with pain and joint issues. Being in the pool brings them peace as the water allows them to move more easily. Many members say that the peaceful aquatics of the program are healing to both their body and their soul. They gain mental clarity as they are able to focus on their health and set aside their problems. The community, created by friendships, encourages peace as they care for one another. They also bring peace to each other through the difficult moments - the death of a loved one or medical challenges.

The Benedictine value of *Peace* is always in the front of the minds of our staff and our members. Sometimes, when the peace on the hill is briefly interrupted with personal preferences or opinions, gentle reminders of the “peaceful spirit” members felt when they first came to the property is all that is needed to renew peace among us.

Being a part of the staff of the Benedictine Sisters is a blessing, and I love being able to share the peace of “The Hill” and our pool with everyone who comes to visit.

Messages of Peace from the Sisters' Attic

Peace is in the person who is willing to share it with others. As for myself, working at Sisters' Attic, I have always been willing to share my Peace with my co-workers and the people who come into the store. We never know what might be going on in the lives of others. I always try to offer a peaceful greeting and a smile, and sometimes a hug - it's something I can give to others at no charge!

The smallest gesture of peace can mean the world to someone who needs it at that time. So when you come to visit Sisters' Attic you will find peace, a smile, and of course, a hug if needed. And you don't even need to ask for it!

Angie Lozano - Sisters' Attic Manager

“Being a peacemaker at Sisters' Attic is about prayer. Prayer gives me peace of mind. I try to listen to others and not vent; Rejoice with others and keep the peace; Be courageous and encourage others to feel the peace and to share it. May peace be with you.”

Belinda Hearn - Staff member

“Peace...

It's a feeling of comfort. It happens while helping others through work and welcoming each person who comes into our life.”

JORW - Volunteer

In the midst of a busy day, or even a routine, mundane day, you can find peace if you are open to it. If you are willing to take the risk of thinking and caring about others rather than focusing on yourself, life gets calmer, sweeter, purposeful, and peaceful. Peace comes from within, and I believe it begins with a smile.

Every day at The Sister's Attic Thrift Shop I see people in need. Some need the necessities in life, a warm coat or a comfortable pair of shoes. While others are looking for that bargain of a lifetime that makes the hunt for something so satisfying. Some are just looking for something to do.

I believe they are all looking for that smile. That smile that can bring about that peace they so desperately want to feel in their lives. I know I look for it every day. I find it here when I smile at people, and they smile at me. When one can help someone find their smile it is a big deal. It's the beginning of a really good peaceful day for both of you.

When you pray, I believe God is smiling at you, and wanting you to receive peace. God wants to give you so much joy for life that you can't stop smiling. Peace is a gift from God. I think smiles are contagious. Now that's something to spread around!

Whether at a little thrift shop in Boerne, Texas or at a world peace conference, God wants us all to feel and share peace. And it all begins with a smile!

Pat Laxson - Volunteer

A Job Well Done!

Sister Chon Nguyen, OSB, (pictured below) has been working as a CNA at Methodist Hospital in San Antonio since November, 2022. She enjoys her work which includes caring for post-surgery patients.

Sister commented on how her patients often ask her, "Will you please come back tomorrow?" It makes her happy knowing she is making a difference in their lives.



Local VFW and Volunteers Honor Our Fallen Heroes on Memorial Day



Holy Angels Cemetery on the Benedictine grounds.

Each year for Memorial Day, the local Private Bruno Phillip Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 688 honors and remembers our veterans and those members of the military who have died while serving our country, by placing flags on their graves in the Boerne Cemetery. In addition, and as an important part of the program, they also make sure to include and recognize those fallen heroes in our own Holy Angels Cemetery, which is located on our grounds. This year, more than 780 flags were placed by VFW post members and volunteers on graves in both cemeteries.

Our honored Veterans buried at Holy Angels Cemetery are:
 R. R. (Spud) Bennington, US Army, WWI; Cecil Douglas Dashiell, US Army, WWI; Joseph M. Higgins, Sr., US Navy, WWII; Guillermo Herrera, US Army; Dolores Houser, US Air Force; George Robert Hugman, WWI; David Edward King, US Air Force; Steven J. Kueber, US Air Force, WWII, Korea; Wayne Logan Shinn, Jr., US Air Force, Vietnam; Pedro R. Sotello; Raymond Sotello, US Air Force; and Sally L. Maloney Stenstrom, US Air Force, Vietnam.

While every effort has been made to identify the graves of veterans in our cemetery, there may be others that we are unaware of. We hope that if any of our readers know of any others who need to be recognized, or have more detailed information on those listed above, please contact us.

Special thanks to our friend, Paula McGehee, for helping place flags on the graves at Holy Angels Cemetery this past Memorial Day Weekend, and for providing the above information and photo.

SISTERS' ATTIC THRIFT STORE IS MOVING THIS SUMMER

JUST ACROSS THE PARKING LOT FROM THE MONASTERY!

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DONATIONS ACCEPTED TUE - SAT 10 AM - 2 PM (830) 249-0020




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*If our world is to be
at peace,
Each heart must be
at peace.*

*Join us in praying
for peaceful hearts.*

