



BENEDICTINE VOICE

Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas

Fall/Winter 2023

RECOGNIZING GIFTS

REFLECTION FROM THE prioress



The Greatest Gift

Once again, Advent is upon us. This church season offers us time to turn our attention to preparing our mind, heart, and soul to celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation. We call to mind God's overwhelming generosity of gifting humanity

by taking on "flesh," living among us, and continuing to reveal the unfathomable love of God.

God continues to reveal this love in so many ways, such as through creation and through one another. If we have eyes to see, we can see that each person is endowed with a particular gift for the good of the world. Incredibly, this is one of the ways God shares God's goodness with the world around us, through our gifts to one another. For example, one person might have the gift of insight, another the gift of listening, another, the gift of organization, and so on. I remember my mother, and I marveled at how the women in our hometown would come to her with their problems. They trusted her insight and confidentiality, and she freely gave her time to listen to them.

In this issue of our Benedictine Voice, we reflect on the gifts we have received from our faithful Oblates, family, friends, benefactors and sometimes, strangers. We recognize these gifts of time, talent and treasure, and we are humbled by the goodness that surrounds us.

During this time of Advent I invite you to recognize your own gifts. Are you using them for the good of God's creation? Are you able to see the gifts in others around you, to listen and to respect without judgement? We can do this whether we like the person or their belief systems, or not. Maybe by doing so, we can bring some peace to the circles where we live.

And so, as we journey into this Holy Season, let us look for the good in ourselves and in others. Together, let us celebrate God's greatest gift, Jesus Christ, into our human world, and honor Emmanuel by recognizing our gifts and the many gifts around us.

With Peace and Gratitude,

Sister Bernadine

Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB
Prioress

Land Sale Benefits St. Peter's Catholic Church for Pre-K to 8th Grade Catholic School

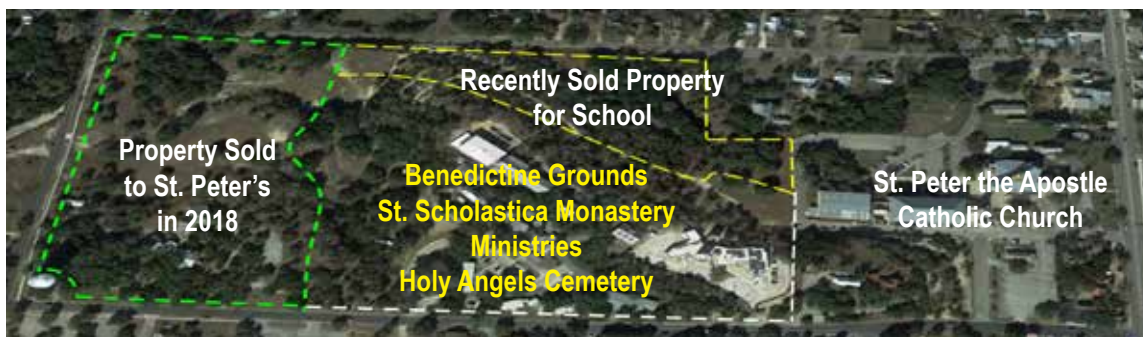


Photo left shows property recently sold as well as property sold to St. Peter's in 2018. It also shows our current property and St. Peter's Catholic Church.



Photo above - Sign on the fenceline of the recently sold property

After nearly two years of discussions with St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Boerne and their benefactors, Clarence and Tina Kahlig, of the Kahlig Auto Group, we sold eight acres of unused property to the Kahligs this summer. They then gifted the land to St. Peter's for the purpose of building a Catholic School for grades Pre-K to 8.

A portion of the funds we received from the sale have been used as follows: to replace an old electric pole that provides power to our Omega Retreat Center and Health and Wholeness ministries; to remodel our Sophia Center to relocate our Sisters' Attic Thrift Store; and to build our retirement fund. The remaining funds are earmarked for the perpetual care of our Holy Angels Cemetery, unexpected capital needs, and special projects.

Sister Sylvia, Ahr, OSB, Retires as Director of Operations



Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB

After 30-plus years of serving as Director of Operations for the Benedictine Sisters, Sister Sylvia Ahr, OSB, decided it was time to step down from this position in July. She continues to work part-time in the Monastery Office, and she remains Treasurer for the Sisters.

Melynda Weilbacher, former manager of the Omega Retreat Center, was hired as the new Director of Operations in July. Melynda holds an MBA and has vast work experience in business, project management, and accounting. She and Sister Sylvia are working closely during this time of transition.

Saying Goodbye to Our Beloved Friend, Father Victor Goertz, J.C.D.

Many of you may remember Fr. Victor Goertz. He was the brother of our Benedictine Sisters, Lucille and Mary Rose Goertz. He also served as our resident Chaplain in the early 1980s. Father was a beloved friend to all the Sisters.

God called Fr. Victor home on November 6th at the age of 95. One of 12 children, Fr. Victor was a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Austin where he was ordained in 1952. In 1955 he earned a doctorate in Canon Law from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Fr. Victor served God for many years in many areas. In 2005 he moved to the Pope John Paul II Residence for Priests in Georgetown, TX. On several occasions over the past few years, Sisters Bernice Lindsey, OSB and Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB, would travel to visit Fr. Victor, always bringing him delicious goodies. The visits became precious opportunities to reminisce about the past and create new memories. The Sisters' last visit to see Father was on November 2nd, four days before he passed away.

Survived by two brothers, Elmer and William, and two sisters, Bernadette and Marcella, Fr. Victor was laid to rest on November 13th at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Bastrop TX. Many of our Sisters attended his services. He will be greatly missed!

Fr. Victor wrote a series of reflections on life's journeys after he moved to Georgetown. The book, "Meandering through the Mystery," was published by the Diocese of Austin and is a favorite of the Sisters.



Above (L-R) Sr. Mary Agnes, Fr. Victor, and Sr. Bernice during one of the Sisters' visits to Georgetown in 2022.

Our Sister Susan - On the Go

Our Sister Susan spent the last part of September and first part of October traveling and participating in various Corporate Responsibility meetings both in Canada and the United States.

Pictured below are (L-R) Christopher Cox (Seventh Generation Coalition for Responsible Investment), Duane Roberts (Dana Investment Advisors), Fr. Seamus Finn (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) and Sr. Susan (Benedictine Sisters) were the panelists at the October Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) in St. Louis. (Photo provided)





Eyes to the Skies for Annular Solar Eclipse

On September 14, 2023, the Texas skies in Boerne did not disappoint viewers for the Annular Solar Eclipse. Donned with their special eclipse glasses, the Boerne Sisters were joined by visiting Benedictines, Sisters Judith Sutera and Elizabeth Carrillo, from Atchison, KS, local friend, Kathleen Sotello, Sister Mary Lou Hernandez's son, Richard Hernandez, and caregiver, Val Gonzalez. They all witnessed quite a show, a magnificent gift of God's wonder! A special thank you to Sisters Judith and Elizabeth for the beautiful prayer service after the event!

(Photo above L-R) Sisters Elizabeth Carrillo and Kathleen Higgins, Kathleen Sotello, Sisters Bernadine Reyes, Michael Brandt, Judith Sutera, Sylvia Ahr, and Chon Nguyen.

(Photo right) Watching the eclipse from inside are Sisters Mary Agnes Zinni & Mary Lou Hernandez, and Val Gonzalez & Richard Hernandez.



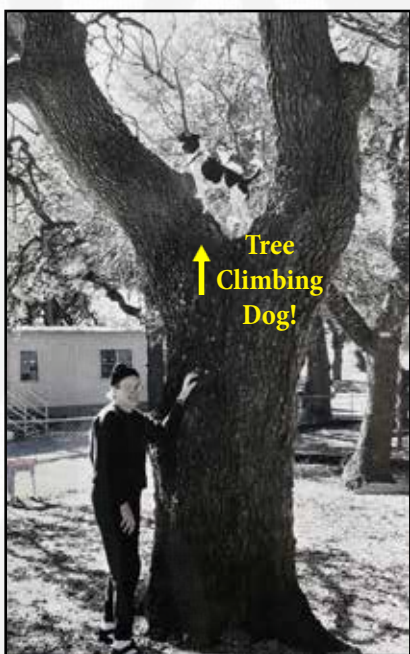
CARING FOR GOD'S CREATURES

"I WAS BORN WITH IT" By Sister Michael Brandt, OSB

When asked where Jane Goodall's love of animals came from, she (animal expert/humanitarian) exclaimed, "I was born with it. It didn't come from anywhere; it came in my package." The same might be said of me, which may explain why my Dad's nicknames for me, as a small child, were "Bugs" because I gathered ants or rollie pollies in jars with holes poked in and carried them around as pets, or "Bats," which is probably justifiably accurate to those who know me.



Going through my "ragtag" collection of quotes/sayings about animals, it turns out I'm in good company with some rather well-known and respected persons when it comes to a loving respect for animals. A cursory glance reveals such notables as Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi, George Eliot, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King Jr., Pope Francis, and life coach/psychologist/influencer Ralph Smart, who once exclaimed that "No matter how talented, rich or intelligent you are, how you treat animals tells me all I need to know about you."



Above, Sister Michael with her tree climbing terrier, JD. That dog was fearless!

Above right, one of Sister Michael's feral cats that God has entrusted to her care.

These days I am caring for a few feral cats here on Monastery grounds. Dogs have always been the recipients of my stewardship and affection, but my efforts have saved far less complex life forms as well, for example birds, spiders, crickets, gnats, beetles, and centipedes to name a very few. By the way, it has been speculated that "there are more life forms in a handful of forest soil than there are people on the planet." And, most importantly, each of the life forms, as every other, manifests our God.

Yes, my love for animals has saved or aided animals through donations, volunteer work or otherwise. But not only that, it has brought me many laughs, such as once when a friend was appalled, as we dined in a local Mexican restaurant, just because I extracted a fly from the guacamole and, in so doing, resuscitated it. Furthermore, it survived!

And though one may snicker at my unorthodox regard for and approach to all manner of life forms, I fall back on Cesar Chavez as he proclaimed, "Only when we have become nonviolent towards all life will we have learned to live well with others," and on Francis of Assisi, who taught, "If you have those who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have those who will deal likewise with their fellow human beings."

In closing, as you might imagine, "Bats" was probably a prophetic nickname for me from my earliest years.

Benedictine Voice

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

Editor: Mary Anne Oehler • Assistant: Susan Damon

Contributing Photographers:
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Special thanks to:

Sister Michael Brandt, OSB for her gifts of time & wisdom

Printing by: Alamo Mailing, San Antonio, Texas

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.

NOTABLE NEWS

Honoring a Hero - Mission Accomplished

By Mary Anne Oehler

A trip to the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, TX (formerly the Nimitz Museum) seemed the perfect outing for Sister Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB and her visiting nieces, Christine Zinni of NY and Rose Steele of FL. The two cousins had come to Texas to celebrate Sister's 98th birthday in September. For years, Sister Mary Agnes had wanted to go to the museum to honor her brother, Nicholas Zinni (Christine's dad and Rose's uncle) who served in World War II.



Sister Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB (center) with her nieces, Rose Steele (left) and Christine Zinni (right).



(L-R) Rose, Karen, Sister Mary Agnes, Christine, Sister Bernice and Mary Anne in front of a statue of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

With documents and photos in hand, Sister Mary Agnes, Christine, and Rose were joined by Rose's childhood friend, Karen Beaty, Sister Bernice Lindsey, OSB, and Mary Anne Oehler, Director of Mission Advancement for the Benedictine Sisters, on the trip to the museum. Upon arrival, and with no expectations, the group sought a representative from the museum with the hopes of telling Nicholas' story and to ask questions about possible donations of military memorabilia to the museum.

It was their lucky day! After touring the museum, the delegates, who were on a mission, met with the museum's Collections and Exhibits Director, Nicole Bagley. Sister Mary Agnes spoke briefly about her family, what it was like growing up in Batavia, NY, and how happy she was to finally be at the museum. Christine then shared stories of her dad and his amazing wartime accomplishments.

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Captain Nicholas Zinni

“Achieving the rank of Captain, Nicholas Zinni served with the US Army Air Force from May 13, 1942 through August 22, 1946. He was a fighter pilot, flying P-38s in the Asiatic/Pacific Theatre. He served in the Philippines, New Guinea and Australia. His Battle Campaigns included 170 combat missions in P-38s over Bismarck Archipelago, Philippines, New Guinea, Luzon and South Western Pacific. Nicholas was reportedly the P-38 pilot who confirmed the 27th aircraft shot down by Richard Bong, American United States Air Force of WWII, in which (Bong) broke the WWI record (26) of Eddie Rickenbacker. He also flew numerous other fighter aircraft including P-51s and P-47s.

His awards included the Air Medal with 6 oak leaf clusters, Presidential Unit Citation Medal, Philippine Liberator Medal, Asiatic/Pacific Service Medal and the WWII Service Medal. He was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for participating in a P-38 squadron nighttime attack of December 26, 1944 against a Japanese convoy that was shelling American positions and airbase Mindoro Island, Philippines. The U.S. lost 25 out of 75 planes that engaged in that mission.” *Written by Family*

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Christine, a Lecturer at the State University of New York Brockport College and published author, is currently working on another book about her dad. She expressed her interest to Nicole in donating some of her dad's wartime memorabilia to the museum, possibly in the future. Nicole answered questions and was extremely receptive to hearing what both Sister Mary Agnes and Christine had to say.

Before heading back to the Monastery, Sister Mary Agnes presented Nicole with a photo and newspaper write-up of Nicholas. Both Christine and Rose were elated that a connection with Nicole and the museum had been made. As the group traveled back to Boerne, all agreed it had been a great, successful day - mission accomplished!



Nicole Bagley, Collections and Exhibits Director (left), listens intently during the meeting with Sister Mary Agnes, Christine, and Rose.



A very special "Thank You" to Nicole and the staff of the National Museum of the Pacific War for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality.

**For more information about the museum visit
<https://www.pacificwarmuseum.org>**

Photo left: Nicole Bagley was grateful to receive information from Sister Mary Agnes about her brother, Captain Nicholas Zinni.

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.

Christmas Eve Liturgy

December 24th • 5 pm

**St. Scholastica Monastery
216 W. Highland Drive
Boerne, Texas**

Reception to Follow



Unexpected Gifts

By Mary Anne Oehler

When local artist and member of our Health and Wholeness Center (HWC), Lleanna Griffin Brinsmade, was invited to give a presentation at the monastery in celebration of National Art Day, she didn't hesitate to say, "Yes!" On October 25th, Lleanna and her artwork graced the conference room while Sisters, co-ministers, and guests listened intently as her inspirational story unfolded.

Hailing from Mission, Texas, Lleanna graduated from Trinity University in San Antonio with a degree in Home Economics and a minor in Residential Construction. She learned to sail on Canyon Lake and became a competitive sailor. She spent several years in Atlanta, GA where her sailing skills helped land her career as a certified PMP, project management professional.

Lleanna eventually made her way back to Texas to help her aging mom, Bette Griffin, who had settled in Boerne. At that time, Lleanna was experiencing some health issues herself. During one of his Boerne visits from Atlanta, her brother discovered the HWC and thought it would be a good place for both Lleanna and her mom. Lleanna remembers the kindness and welcoming spirit she and her mom received at the Center. Bette's caregivers were also welcomed as they were needed to help Bette in and out of the pool area.

In the spring of 2012, Bette was diagnosed with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP). Even as her health declined, she faithfully attended her HWC water exercise classes and then

pastel classes, beginning in 2014, taught by artist, Anne Brunet, ObOSB.

Thanks to the love and generosity of her sister and brother-in-law, Lleanna continued in the shared honor of her mom's care and often accompanied her and her mom's caregivers to the Center. Such was the case on November 12, 2014, a date Lleanna will never forget. Something happened that changed her life. Bette's vision was failing and while in pastel class that day, Bette was having difficulty seeing. Anticipating her ability to paint was coming to an end, but not wanting to stop coming to the classes, she handed Lleanna a pastel stick and said, "Here, you paint; one of us needs to so we can keep coming to class." Lleanna had never painted, let alone worked with pastels, but she took the pastel from her mom and did her best to begin to paint.

Bette passed away in 2015, but the unexpected gift she gave to Lleanna had already begun to open a brand new chapter in her daughter's life. Lleanna continued taking pastel classes under the direction of Anne who saved her 7-10 years of figuring out the best materials. In 2018, Lleanna, publicly displayed her art for the first time at the Boerne Art Waddle, a local event. One day, Anne gave her a DVD of Alain Picard, an award-winning landscape, portrait, and figurative painter. Not long after, Lleanna attended a workshop in her hometown, Mission, conducted by Alain. "Bold marks, delicious colors, and courage" are words she used to describe skills learned at that workshop.

Continued from page 8

She added, “Alain helped me streamline my work and passion for creating portraits of people, faces, and pets.”

Over the next couple years, Lleanna strived to perfect her artistic talent, always ready to learn from other artists.

Then, in 2019, the unthinkable happened. Lleanna was the victim of two separate car accidents. For over two years, she had very limited use of both arms. During this time, she never gave up. As she began to regain use of her arms, she once again, began to paint with pastels. In 2022, she painted a series of several musicians who performed on opening night at a local music venue back in 2019. She then explored the use of color while creating a series of pastel portraits with a variety of skin tones.

Lleanna’s paintings are brilliant and true to life, her subjects reflect her masterful vision. She enjoys sharing her art with others, and says, “art spreads love.”

Radiating a joyful spirit, Lleanna knows she is destined to paint, attributing much of her artistic “ancestral DNA awakening”, as she calls it, to the Health and Wholeness Center. She humbly expressed her gratitude to the Sisters for this ministry, for their tranquil grounds, and for a safe refuge that both she and her mom could embrace. In fact, in her closing remarks, Lleanna gave the Sisters an unexpected gift of affirmation, assuring them their work in Boerne has been life-changing, not only for her, but for many other grateful souls.

Note: Lleanna is a member of the Boerne Art League and has been named Artist of the Month three times, March 2019, June 2022, and September 2023. Her work has been displayed in local banks and other businesses in Boerne.

Photo right: Lleanna describing some of her art at the October 25th presentation at St. Scholastica Monastery.



“Art Spreads Love”



Photos Above: (Top L-R) Lleanna, with her art on display in September at Frost Bank Boerne surrounded by bank employees, Adam Hughes, Dalilah Imming, Sharon Babbitt, and Mary Luevano.

(Middle L-R) Lleanna with her mom, Bette, at one of the HWC's pastel classes; HWC pastel art teacher and Oblate, Anne Brunet, ObOSB, with Lleanna and her pastel of Anne at the Boerne Art Waddle.

(Bottom) Lleanna with Art Critique Coach and friend, international artist and art educator, Jeannette MacDougall





Volunteers Are Gifts From God By Susan Damon, ObOSB

Volunteers are gifts from God, and they are invaluable to us and our ministries. We want to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to every volunteer who serves. Whether it be at our Monastery or for our Oblate Program, at our Boerne Ministries, (Health and Wholeness Center, Omega Retreat Center, or Sisters' Attic), or at our Caridad de Corazón border ministry, we recognize their talents and gifts!

We are deeply grateful for each volunteer's willingness to share their time and their gifts with us. Everything we are able to accomplish is a gift from God, often presented through the hands and feet of others, helping us in many ways, as we work together to serve God's people, especially those in need.

Photos clockwise from top: Sisters' Attic Thrift Store Ribbon Cutting in October, celebrating the move to a new location on our grounds. It was a major undertaking, as you might imagine, and we couldn't have done all that was needed without the many volunteers who helped every step of the way!

Oblate, Gloria Villanueva, ObOSB, has been volunteering to fill in at the Monastery reception desk for the past few months. We are blessed by her presence as she exemplifies the Benedictine way with her kindness and grace!

Abby Panther is a new volunteer at the Omega Retreat Center, and we are grateful for her smile and enthusiasm.

Evan and Jane Sutton (our departed Sister Germaine Sutton's nephew and his wife), traveled from Pennsylvania to volunteer at our Caridad de Corazón border ministry in Eagle Pass, TX. They were so helpful, and organized the food pantry in a day!

Health and Wholeness Center members, Kathy Rocha (left) with Sue Haley. Kathy is one of the many volunteers at the Center. She has her American Heart Association Basic Life Support (BLS) instructor certification and offers initial and re-certification to our swim class leaders and backup instructors.

Our dedicated Oblate Team whose leadership goes above and beyond to ensure our Oblate Program runs smoothly. (front) Emilie Rogers, ObOSB (center row) Michael Guerra, ObOSB, Nan Neff, ObOSB, Bill Howden, ObOSB (back row) Jim Williams, ObOSB, Sr. Antoinette Van Galen, OSB and Sr. Susan, OSB [not pictured are Jan Davis, ObOSB, and Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB.





2023 Summer Drawing a Success!



Our Summer Drawing was held on Tuesday, September 5th. Sr. Bernadine held the bin of over 2,000 entries as some of the Sisters helped draw the winning tickets. (Pictured above L-R top) Sister Bernadine with Sisters Antoinette and Mary Lou, (L-R bottom) Mary Agnes and Sylvia drawing the winning tickets.

CONGRATULATIONS to the following winners, **and THANK YOU** to all who sent in your donations and tickets for this successful summer drawing that raised over \$12,000 for the Sisters' needs!

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

\$500 VISA GIFT CARD: Rachel Aldaz
\$250 VISA GIFT CARD: Belinda Hearn
\$250 AMAZON GIFT CARD: Lady Ellen Clark

2023 Annual Giving Campaign Underway

Thank you to all who have responded so generously to our Annual Giving Campaign! There's still plenty time to participate.

Gifts can be mailed or made online.

Visit our website
www.boernebenedictines.org
for more information.

Save the Date!

**FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT
SPAGHETTI DINNER and
SILENT AUCTION**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024
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



"WE ARE NEVER MORE THAN ONE GRATEFUL THOUGHT AWAY FROM PEACE OF HEART."

Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB

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“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another
as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” 1 Peter 4:10



*The Benedictine Sisters wish you and yours
the gifts of Faith, Hope, & Love this
Holy Season and in the New Year!*

