

BENEDICTINE VOICE



Spirit of Benedict

Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas

Summer 2025

Reflection From The Prioress



As I write these notes for our summer newsletter, our government is debating about passing the proposed budget. If this budget passes, it will devastate the poorest of the poor among us. Advocates for justice are making their voices heard. Our country is divided by voices that support our government's actions, and those who do not. Most of them profess to be people of faith.

In light of all that is happening in our country, I turned to our Benedictine tradition and specifically the spirit of Benedict, which is just as relevant today as it was in the sixth century. I have come to believe that Jesus gave us a mandate, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." Benedict, in turn, heard this mandate and set out to show us how to live it. He wrote a Rule as a guide by which to live.

Values emanate from what he wrote. Know yourself first, humility; receive others as Christ, hospitality; listen to the word of God, prayer; be rooted, stability; learn to live with others, community; contribute to making this a better world, work/service; be at peace with yourself and others. And so much more. These values give life to the spirit of Benedict which has been attracting women and men to the monastic life for centuries. The Benedictine spirit has also attracted laity who want a guide in their lifestyle.

Our Oblate program is a way for those who want to be connected to the spirit of Benedict and who want to live those values in their chosen way of life. It is a delight when the spirit of Benedict seeps out of the monastic walls into the society around it. In this issue, we are highlighting 10 faithful seekers who were attracted to the Spirit of Benedict and attended the Oblate Initial Formation classes hosted this past year. They made their Oblation in May. They were a delight to be with and we look forward to our continued connection in the years to come.

We were also blessed to have hosted nine Benedictine Sisters from various monasteries in the US, who were from the Under 55 group, a component under the Prioress' Conference. They came to learn about our border ministry, Caridad de Corazón, which is run by our Sr. Ursula Herrera in Eagle Pass, Texas. They were a gift to the ministry, and they were gifted by the experience.

We are ever so grateful for all of our ministries that make people welcome and help them to form community and provide a safe and peaceful place to be. Our Co-Ministers and Oblates have absorbed the Spirit of Benedict and share it freely. We're glad to share the Benedictine spirit here with you in this newsletter.

Wishing you a safe and restful summer,

Sister Bernadine

Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB
Prioress

*"My eyes are upon you and My ears open to your prayers."
Rule of Benedict, Prologue*

Congratulations to our 2025 Jubilarians!



Sr. Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB
80 Years



Sr. Ursula Herrera, OSB
60 Years



Sr. Susan Mika, OSB
60 Years



Summer Drawing

Grand Prize:
\$1,000 Value!

(Two \$500 Visa Gift Cards)

Drawing Date

Tuesday,
September 2, 2025

Other Prizes:

\$500 Visa Gift Card
\$250 Visa Gift Card
\$150 Visa Gift Card
\$100 Visa Gift Card

Suggested donation \$5/ticket. Donation not necessary to win.

None's Ball Update

A special **Thank You** to all who
have donated to our 2025
None's Ball!

To date, over \$40,107 has
been received for our Sisters'
Retirement needs!

It's not too late to make a
difference!

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



Pope Francis' Passing

The Sisters are grateful for
Pope Francis' leadership over
12 years. He brought integrity
to our Catholic world and
beyond. We are grateful for his
writings on which we will
continue to read and reflect.

Pope Leo XIV

The Sisters pray and look
forward to Pope Leo's
leadership, especially as
he follows the legacy of
Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903)
on social justice issues.



*The Sisters, staff, and family watched the papal
inauguration on television in anticipation of the
announcement of the new pope.*



(L-R) Father Enda McKenna, Marcy Niemeier,
Sr. Sylvia, Alexandra Pfeiffer, and Debi
Johnson



Sr. Mary Agnes
(seated) and
Sr. Bernadine
(standing)

Leaving a Legacy

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters in
your Legacy Planning. There are many ways you can make a
difference in the lives of the Sisters and those who benefit
from our programs and ministries.

Our legal title is Benedictine Sisters
(Congregation of Benedictine Sisters)
and we are a 501(c)3 charitable organization.

For more info, contact your estate planner, attorney, or
Sr. Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Treasurer at (830) 816-8504, ext. 109.

Benedictine Voice is designed for our
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*St. Benedict's image on the
cover is a photo of a tapestry
that hangs in our chapel. It
was donated by a former
Sister, Kathryn Johnson,
along with a matching
tapestry of St. Scholastica.*



2025 Feast of St. Benedict Spaghetti Dinner

Thank You to the St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church Community, the wonderful Sponsors, Underwriters, Friends of the Benedictines, Gift Basket Drawing and Live Auction Donors, Volunteers, and guests, who helped make the March 20th Feast of St. Benedict Spaghetti Dinner event a great success! This year's dinner was sold out. Proceeds totaling more than \$23,000 benefited the Sisters! It's always a joy to see so many friends and volunteers support this event.

Milan

- St. Matthew Catholic Church
- Sandra Kiolbassa
- Jody & Bill Hancock and Friends of Sr. Frances Briseño
- Kahlig Auto Group

Venezia

- Rittimann Plumbing Inc.
- Brady's Auto Repair
- Great Clips
- CTWP
- St. Benedict Catholic Church
- Frost Bank

Napoli

- Dr. Edward & Twyla Benson
- Bryden & Kay Moon
- Hill Country Animal League
- Arnold & Debbie Garza
- Deborah Franke
- Bridget Robledo, M.D.
- Wendy Walsh
- Chic Jewelry
- Cow Creek Taxidermy
- Artez & Fiona Gray
- Shang Hai Chinese Restaurant
- Hammer Next Level Excavation
- Anonymous

Friends of the Benedictines

- St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church of Boerne
- Sysco
- Mayfield Paper Company
- Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court 2690
- Knights of Columbus, Council 10940
- Bear Moon Bakery
- Blesse Pool Service
- Bret & Donna Ackerman
- Steve & Diane Beaton
- Lisa & Vernon Reeh
- Weilbacher Family



L-R: Sr. Kathleen Higgins, OSB (center) and the Knights of Columbus: Guarian Simnacher, Steve Beaton, Vernon Reeh, Bryan D'Spain, Justin Boerner, and David Detelich paused for a photo in the kitchen before the event started.



A lovely group gathered at the Cana Ballroom at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church to support the Sisters for the Feast of St. Benedict celebration.



Sr. Bernadine offered a prayer of thanks.

Senior Service Day at St. Scholastica

On May 15th Boerne High School and Champion High School Seniors spent time volunteering on the Benedictine Sisters' grounds for "Senior Service Day." This special day involves students volunteering at various locations around Boerne thus contributing to the community through service projects. In true Greyhound and Charger spirit, the soon to be graduates eagerly and joyfully took to tasks that awaited them. They helped at the various ministries including the Sisters' Attic Thrift Store, Omega Retreat Center, and the Health & Wholeness Center. There was also a crew who helped clean up the grounds.

Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB, Prioress of the Benedictine community, expressed her admiration for the students. "They were respectful and a joy to have on our grounds," she said. "We deeply appreciate all their efforts during their time here and wish them continued success!"



Boerne Champion High School seniors organized, dusted and moved items in the tower.



Boerne High School seniors shined and polished dishes at Sisters' Attic.



Pictured above is Sr. Sylvia's Godson, David Niemeier, and a fellow Boerne High School student cleaning and moving items at Sisters' Attic.

"Let us consider that God is always looking at us from heaven, that our actions are everywhere visible to the divine eyes..."

Rule of Benedict, Chapter 7

Sisters' Annual Retreat at the Monastery



Retreat leader
Abbot
John Klassen, OSB

Abbot John came to lead the Sisters' retreat from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. The topic for the annual retreat in June was "Gospel Parables." Since the retreat was held on site again this year, the Sisters observed times of silence to be able to experience a true retreat, in contrast to their day-to-day life and work in the Monastery.



Sr. Bernadine giving retreat leader Abbot John a gift of appreciation. Sr. Mary Agnes is pictured, seated in center.

"... the spirit of silence is so important..."

Rule of Benedict, Chapter 6

Oblates

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 Boerne Benedictine community provide mutual affirmation of the commitment to the Benedictine way of life.

On May 4th, 10 new initial formation candidates made their Oblation to become Oblates of St. Scholastica Monastery. They now will be part of the Oblate program's ongoing formation. We are always studying and learning together to deepen our understanding of Benedictine spirituality.

Sr. Antoinette Van Galen directed our initial formation program for Oblates for many years. Jan Davis stepped in to lead the initial formation classes for a year, followed by Nan Neff, who has led the group for the past several years. Each has done an amazing job and volunteered innumerable hours and a tremendous amount of work to guide people wanting to learn more about Benedictine spirituality, with many ultimately making their Oblation, becoming Benedictine Oblates. Nan just passed the torch of leading the initial formation program to Becky Roberts, who will be guiding the program in the fall.

Becky has an interesting history with the Sisters, which she gladly shared. "In 1971, I met a Benedictine Sister when we were both involved in a retreat program for high school juniors and seniors. I was considering religious life and due to her persistence and that of several of the older Sisters in Boerne, I entered community at St. Scholastica Monastery. I did leave after just over two years, but my dedication to the community was formed. In the early 90s, several of us lay people approached Sr. Mary Agnes about expanding the Oblate program and so began the groundwork of the program we have today. The Benedictine Spirituality that is strong in the Monastery in Boerne has kept me going through the years since I made my first Oblation around 1992. Even during the 15 years I spent driving a truck over the road and not being home to attend meetings, I felt a closeness to the Community and their way of life. Now that I am retired, I look forward to the enriching topics of our meetings and the fellowship with the other Oblates. As I move into the role of director of initial formation, I only pray that I can be an instrument to instill a love of the Rule, the Monastery and Benedictine way of life." We appreciate Becky's willingness to oversee the Initial Formation classes.

Emilie Rogers became an Oblate in 2005 and has been the head of the Oblate leadership team for the past six years. That group oversees the Oblate program. Emilie recently stepped down from her role and reflected on how being an Oblate has impacted her life. "Over the past 20 years I've experienced many changes in life, and during those times there were often struggles. The foundation and stability of the Sisters and Oblate community's presence in my life have made all the difference." Emilie also noted that there have been changes in the Oblate team's membership over the years while she has been privileged to serve on the team. Emilie said, "Even though there have been changes, each member brought a strong commitment along with their own spirituality which were essential to guide and help plan activities for the Oblate program and maintain the focus of sharing our Benedictine spirituality."



Sr. Bernadine (left) leads the initial formation candidates as they make their Oblation during the ceremony.



L-R: Regina Rivas, Dr. Lisa Ramirez, Wendy Walsh, Nora Loyd, Debbie Garza, Letty Sifuentes, Nan Neff, Thomas Stone, Leticia Huerta, Brian Hammer and Alejandra Hammer.

*"God then says to thee... "My eyes are upon you and
My ears open to your prayers. (Psalm 34:16)."*



**Sr. Bernadine asked the Oblate Initial Formation candidates the question,
“How will you bring Benedictine spirituality into your daily life?
Their thoughtful and prayerful answers are below.**

I will bring Benedictine spirituality into my daily life by the practice of obedience, listening and responding in love to each person and life situation God places before me.

- *Debbie Garza, Boerne, TX*

I will keep embracing the teachings of St. Benedict, seeking to recognize the sacred in the everyday moments. I strive to deepen my compassion and integrate his values in all areas of my life, whether in my family, workplace, or personal growth.

- *Alejandra Hammer, Boerne, TX*

Hospitality is an important aspect of Benedictine life. One way to incorporate Benedictine spirituality into my daily life is by practicing hospitality, treating everyone with respect, sharing meals with family and friends, and showing dignity to all individuals.

- *Brian Hammer, Boerne, TX*

I will bring Benedictine spirituality to my family by practicing humility and hospitality. I remain steady in faith through God's word, silent to his will and an open heart for compassionate service. It's not so much what I do as much to who I am becoming.

- *Leticia Huerta, San Antonio, TX*

With God's help, I hope to grow in humility and hospitality.

- *Nora Loyd, Irving, TX*

I consider St. Benedict as a spiritual guide and a wise advisor and role model. For this next year, I will focus on developing in myself St. Benedict's steps of humility, continue being open to conversion of life, and work on the prayer/work balance (ora et labora) according to Benedictine principles. I will also try to bring Benedictine hospitality with me wherever I may go.

- *Dr. Lisa Ramirez, Corpus Christi, TX*

Over the next year, my oblation is to follow Christ closely, read up on scripture and the Rule of Benedict. Where I most need a conversion of life is in my work life. I will focus on the values of stability and listening with the ears of my heart for his teachings and secondly on humility, to speak less often and remember to persevere in difficult conditions.

- *Regina Rivas, Carrollton, TX*

When I leave my house every morning my prayer is for all to see God in me and that I may see God in them. Hospitality - "Let all guests be received as Christ."

- *Letty Sifuentes, Kerrville, TX*

I will use the Rule of St. Benedict so that others may find Christ in me, and I will look for Christ in others in all my vocations.

- *Thomas Stone, San Antonio, TX*

Obedient love, forgiveness in abundance and community care.

- *Wendy Walsh, San Antonio, TX*



**Would you like to learn more about becoming a Benedictine Oblate?
Please visit our website: www.boernebenedictines.org/oblates**

Notable News

Merced Housing's 30th Anniversary

On May 8th, Srs. Bernadine, Susan, Kathleen, Michael, Ursula and some Monastery staff attended Merced Housing Texas' 30th Anniversary Celebration. Merced Housing Texas was founded in 1995, inspired by a call to action from civic leader Maria Antonietta Berriozábal and Catholic women religious who saw affordable housing as San Antonio's greatest need. Guided by leaders like Susan R. Sheeran and Kristin L. Davila, Merced has developed 14 multifamily communities, launched a major home repair program, and expanded resident support services—advancing a vision of safe, affordable housing for all.



(L-R) Alejandra Hammer, Gloria Villanueva, Nina Martinez, Sr. Michael, Sr. Susan, Sr. Ursula, Esther Ng, Sr. Kathleen, Sr. Bernadine and Robert McKinley.

Photo by Randon Martinez

In 1995, The Benedictine Sisters were one of the six following founding communities: Congregation of Benedictine Sisters, Congregation of Divine Providence, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence and Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate.

The Sisters are sincerely honored to have been recognized as a founding member at this meaningful event. We are grateful to have played a role in Merced Housing Texas' journey and are heartened by the remarkable progress it has made. We look ahead with confidence and prayerful support for its continued growth and enduring impact in the years to come!



Rachel Sakai awarding Sr. Bernadine a gift of appreciation from Merced Housing.
Photo by Randon Martinez

Sisters' Attic Volunteer Appreciation

Sisters' Attic Thrift Store is a robust ministry for the Benedictine Sisters. Open since 2009, the Thrift Store has grown to be quite a busy place, with all proceeds benefiting the Sisters' Boerne ministries. There are two full-time employees, two part-time employees, and many dedicated volunteers who have assisted throughout the years.

Angie Lozano, manager of Sisters' Attic, recently presented certificates of appreciation to current volunteers who have given between 10-192 hours of service in the past year. Angie said, "Sisters' Attic wouldn't be possible without our hard working and dedicated volunteers. They help us with everything, including laundry, cleaning, pricing, organizing, and so much more! Without their hard work it would be impossible for us to get the large amount of work done every week! We are able to serve so many families because of our amazing team."

We are deeply grateful to the Sisters' Attic employees, volunteers, donors and shoppers! If you are interested in volunteering or donating to Sisters' Attic, please contact Angie at (830) 249-0020.



Pictured L-R: June Mecke, Ruth Bulyar and Patricia Laxson.



Pictured L-R: Joan Roberson Wondercheck, Carolyn Cuyler, Margaret Witkowski, Dale Bowman, Joyce Finger and Eny Gatewood.

Benedictine Sisters' Border Experience

"All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, who said: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt. 25:35)."

Rule of Benedict 53:1-2



Sisters from congregations across the United States traveled to our Caridad de Corazón ministry, (which means Charity of the Heart) in Eagle Pass, TX. They also did mission work in Piedras Negras, Mexico. Their ministry included service at the immigrant shelter, the orphanages of Nazareth and the Casa Bethesda (orphanage for children with disabilities/special needs). At the orphanage they assisted children with their homework and spent time playing with them, giving the resident Sisters a well-deserved break. At the immigrant shelter, they engaged with both children and adults through games and conversation. Meanwhile, at Casa Bethesda, some Sisters focused on cleaning, while others led craft activities with the children. On the final day, they hosted a joyful celebration complete with a candy-filled piñata. "We had as much fun as the children did!" said Sr. Ursula. The Sisters also enjoyed lunch and visiting the St. Scholastica Monastery in Boerne, and then the River Walk in San Antonio.

"I was reminded that fulfillment is not found in abundance, but in gratitude for the little things." – Sr. Siena Fisk

Sr. Siena's reflection brought forward the spiritual impact of the mission. In serving, she found deeper joy in simplicity and a reorientation toward what truly matters.

"Love knows no language." – Sr. Carmela Luke

A recurring truth across the reflections. Even without shared language, love was spoken clearly through action, presence, and compassion.

"Sometimes it's helping by serving. But sometimes, it's just sitting and watching God work through others." – Sr. Teresa Gunter

This quote captures the contemplative heart of the Benedictine spirit: being fully present, whether in action or stillness, and trusting that God is at work.

"We were just nine Benedictine sisters plus Sr. Ursula—and not very much time or resources. At times I felt like it was an impossible task." – Sr. Paz Vital

This line captures both the overwhelming challenge and the courage it takes to serve despite limitations—a testament to faith, perseverance, and collective effort.

"We saw God in the laughter and smiles of the children and adults in the orphanages and shelters. It felt like we received much more than we gave." – Sr. Michelle St. Marie

This quote reflects the core Benedictine values of humility, hospitality, and the sacredness of presence.

"We were a response to the cry of the poor—bringing what is proper to our Benedictine charism: hospitality, presence, and showing God's love." – Sr. Gabriela Ramirez

Sr. Gabby's words summarize the spiritual heart of the mission work, reminding us that their presence itself was a ministry.



Sr. Ursula Herrera, OSB (center, in blue) gathered our guests around the statue of St. Scholastica in front of the Monastery. Pictured (L-R): Srs. Michelle St. Marie (Cullman, AL), Paz Vital (Lacy, WA), Gabby Ramirez (Cullman, AL), Siena Fisk (Fort Smith, AR), Carmela Luke (Yankton, SD), Lucy Marie Fitzmorris (Tulsa, OK), Teresa Gunter (Ferdinand, IN), Kathy Burt (Yankton, SD)

"The only people we needed to worry about were the people standing right in front of us... It let us be single-minded about our purpose and so live into it fully."

– Sr. Lucy Marie Fitzmorris

This quote beautifully captures the gift of presence, a central Benedictine value, and how the mission trip helped her live it deeply.

"I did not do any one great thing, but the little things we all did made a huge impact on the people we served—and on me."

– Sr. Kathy Burt

Every little thing we do matters!

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.

Ministries

Health & Wholeness Center News

The Health & Wholeness Center, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, opened in 1990. It serves as an ecumenical “home away from home” for individuals ages 50 and older. Its overall purpose is to address the needs of the whole person by providing programs designed to enhance the wellness of body, mind, and spirit. The Center offers activities Monday thru Friday including water exercise classes and lap swimming in an enclosed, Jr. Olympic size pool with regulated temperatures. Regularly scheduled art and fitness classes are also offered as well as opportunities to socialize.

The Health & Wholeness Center’s Annual Giving Campaign has surpassed our goal of \$35,000!

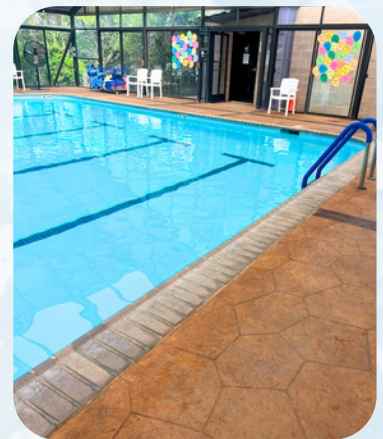
With the help of funds received from many of our faithful donors, several repairs were made at the Health & Wholeness Center. They upgraded the showerheads, the pool deck, installed commercial toilets, replaced handles on the sliding doors and purchased new fan. Our heartfelt thanks to ALL who helped make these repairs and upgrades possible!

*“Nothing is to be
preferred
to the Work of God.”*

Rule of Benedict, 43:3



New rain showerheads were installed in the bathhouse.



The pool deck was repaired.

Update from our Corporate Responsibility Ministry by Sr. Susan

The 2025 Proxy Season is winding down. Our staff works to monitor the changes made in company policy on important areas and adapt our questions accordingly. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) rules may make it more difficult for small shareholders to file resolutions and get the votes needed to continue raising issues.

Our monastery led the shareholder dialogue with McDonald’s, continuing to receive updates on the company’s efforts to remove the antibiotics which we humans use in their beef and pork supply chain. Due to these efforts, over ten years ago, McDonald’s implemented serving chickens which were raised according to this directive.

Sr. Susan presented a shareholder resolution at the Netflix annual meeting, asking the Board of Directors to amend the publicly available Code of Ethics to expand the topic “Inclusive & Respectful Work Environment,” addressing key issues such as non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and whistleblower protection.

Sr. Susan presented a shareholder resolution at the Walmart annual meeting, asking the Board of Directors to report to shareholders on the governance measures Walmart has implemented since 2019 to more effectively monitor and manage human risks related to workplace health and safety.

Omega Retreat Center's Closing Ritual

Sr. Bernadine, Omega Staff, Monastery staff and supporters of the Omega Retreat Center attended the Omega Ritual and Luncheon to celebrate and honor the closing of the Omega Retreat Center. In 1982, one of the Sisters proposed to start a retreat center, thus Omega was born. It had a slow start, first as a summer camp for lower income boys and girls, ages 9-12. In 1987, Fr. Cronin from Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and three men from the parish proposed an idea called ACTS. ACTS, stands for A- Adoration, C- Community, T-Theology and S-Service. The first ACTS retreat was held at Omega in 1987. For 43 years various retreat groups came to Omega, including ACTS, Walk to Emmaus; Born Again Emmaus, Diakonia, Private/Silent Retreats, and many more.

"Omega has been an oasis for retreat groups and individuals seeking quiet space and time away from the busyness of life. Many have called it 'sacred ground' and people's lives changed," said Sr. Bernadine. Since 1982, between 60,000-80,000 people have been served at the Omega Retreat Center. There have been many faithful servants, including directors, managers and volunteers who have served at Omega and ensured its success. Sr. Bernadine and others reflected upon their time at the Omega Retreat Center and their many beautiful memories. A prayer and blessing commemorated the closing of Omega.



Pictured above is Sr. Bernadine with Omega staff at the closing ritual.



The Sisters had their own ritual to honor and reflect on this ministry. During that time, they blessed the water which was used for the group's closing blessing of Omega.

Health & Wholeness Center Co-Managers



(L-R) Lisa Reeh and Cindy McCorkle

Since joining the Omega Retreat Center in 2023, Cindy McCorkle has faithfully served as the assistant to the Omega Manager and later as Omega Manager. In these roles, she has coordinated retreat schedules, welcomed thousands of retreatants, led informational tours, and ensured that each guest experiences the warmth and hospitality rooted in our Benedictine values.

We are excited to announce that as of July 1st, Cindy has taken on a role as co-manager of the Health & Wholeness Center alongside Lisa Reeh. Together, they look forward to continuing the ministry of promoting health, healing, and holistic well-being in alignment with our spiritual mission.

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters
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boernebenedictines.org

Find Us On:



“Never lose hope in God’s mercy.”

Rule of Benedict, Chapter 4



St. Scholastica Monastery, Boerne, TX