

BENEDICTINE VOICE



*The
Call
of
Benedict
in
These
Times*

Reflection From The Prioress



Dear Friends,

It amazes me that at the time Benedict wrote his Rule, society was still in disarray from the fall of the Roman Empire, and yet, we do not get a glimpse of that reality in the Rule which he wrote. He did not write for the masses but for those who chose to abide his way of living. Yet, in history, these monasteries that rose here and there in the continent and beyond, slowly influenced the society around them and were key in preserving social order and knowledge.

Benedict's followers, who were or became literate, preserved both biblical and classical texts. The values that rose from his Rule provided a way of life that was a framework for order, morality and community in a time of social disintegration. Benedict's Rule became a foundational document for thousands of religious communities across Europe. In 1980, on the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of Benedict, he was named the Father of Europe. His way of life and his values helped civilize and preserve culture in Europe.

Some of the timeless values that emanate from the Rule are community, prayer, work, humility, silence, obedience, stewardship, listening, peace, hospitality, to name a few. These values build character in a person that truly delves into their meaning, and they teach how to live well with each other. In preparing for the publication of this newsletter, we asked ourselves, "what is the call of Benedict in these times?" Our world does not seem all that different from what was in his time. We focused on the values of Peace and Hospitality and asked Sr. Michael Brandt and our Oblate, Michael Guerra to share their reflections on these values for this issue.

Hopefully you will reflect on these values in your own life and in your interaction with your family, friends and neighbors. How might they slowly help transform your world as much as they transformed communities in earlier times.

It is our hope that your celebration of the coming of the Christ Child deepens your sense of God's love for you and the human family.

Peace,

Sister Bernadine

Sister Bernadine Reyes, OSB

Prioress

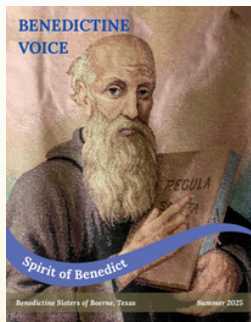
St. Benedict says in the Prologue of the Rule:

"God then says to thee...

'My eyes are upon you and My ears open to your prayers.'"



The image of St. Benedict on the cover - "Benedict of Nursia" by Unknown Author, public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons



Correction: The image of St. Benedict on the cover of our Summer Benedictine Voice is a tapestry that hangs in our chapel. It was donated by a former Sister, Dr. Catherine Young, along with this matching tapestry of St. Scholastica. We apologize for the error.



Benedictine Hospitality and the San Antonio Food Bank

By Michael Guerra, ObOSB, Chief Philanthropy Office at the San Antonio Food Bank

At first view, it would be easy to think a food bank like the very large ones in San Antonio, Austin, Houston, etc., might be only about food. And yes, this is certainly a priority (thus the name “food bank”), but having now been in the space of food banking since 2004, and in that time also making annual promises as a Benedictine Oblate, I can also suggest that maybe the bigger priority is the individual who will engage around food – those needing food and those helping get food to the community. Let me say more.

The Benedictine value hierarchy prioritizes hospitality over just about everything else: fasting, interruption of prayer, even the discomfort of shared spaces. Prioritizing hospitality is, in many ways, also a value in the space of food banking. For Benedict, the aim is Christ, and we meet Christ in each other and particularly in the stranger, the visitor, and the “real poor.” For us in the professional space of hunger relief, the aim is food and nutrition security, for sure. But the bigger goal is meeting a brother or sister and sharing what we have and inviting the larger community to share in keeping that brother or sister’s table full during their unique chapter of need.

Those who give help are also prioritized in the value hierarchy of food banking. Organizations like the San Antonio Food Bank, where I have spent nearly 15 years in service, have dedicated entire portions of their campus to provide hospitality for those who give the gift of time (volunteerism). We provide the space so they can give and connect to those needing food. A volunteer provides food through their service, but their selfless service also transforms them in return.

In the end, the real win is a connected, transformed community, and not merely a well fed or nourished community. Both the giver and receiver are strengthened in the interaction. And in the end, it’s a bit hard to tell who is giving and who is receiving. That’s the miracle of hospitality in action. And in many ways that is the untold miracle accomplished through the work of Feeding America food banks and their pantry partners across the US: tables are set with food, and neighbors strengthen and serve neighbors for a better (and more Christlike, more Benedictine-spirited) world.



Michael Guerra, ObOSB, reflects the Benedictine value of Hospitality while working at the San Antonio Food Bank.

Photo by Julian Ledezma

The Real Question Is...

By Sr. Michael Brandt, OSB

Ah, that elusive PEACE! When asked to share a reflection on peace, these words, from a traditional song adapted by Carey Landry, immediately came to mind, "peace is flowing like a river, flowing out of you and me." "You and me" really hit home.

I quickly began recalling persons well-known, so as to learn what they had to say about peace. Many came to mind - Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Henry Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, St. Benedict, Joan Chittister, Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddha, Khalil Gibran, and Ronald Rolheiser, to name a few. But much of what I found referred mostly to the world at large - mostly to violence, war, and division.



Keating believed peace to be a process, not an achievement. Merton proposed that Benedictinism is the answer to all problems concerning peace. Joan Chittister wrote *In God's Holy Light* that violence is always unnecessary, but that "peace must be taught." Ronald Rolheiser wrote that peace requires positive action, and all effort must be rooted in non-violence.

Yes, there it is - non-violence! Google revealed that the common thread among all mentioned above is that they are PEOPLE - no wait, try again. A second go-round came up with, you guessed it, they are all staunch promoters of non-violence. But, still and all, it was "the you and me," I had identified earlier, that stood out for me. Thomas Keating viewed peace as emanating from inside, not from influencers or circumstances. "Benedictine peace is the fruit of inward journey," he wrote, "and a continual return to God's presence." Some of his suggestions for "cultivating" peace within include Centering Prayer, *Lectio*, and what he calls, "acceptance of wounds."

Chittister advised that, discerning what the Spirit within is trying to teach us brings peace. Coming to peace is not just achieving a sense of internal serenity; it must be taught. So as to squelch an altercation, refuse to argue or pick sides "regardless of who tries to fan the fire or make a case where none exists..." Buddha chimes in with "Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without. It is not the absence of conflict, but rather the ability to handle conflict" peacefully.

Khalil Gibran, author of *The Prophet*, suggested that the need to talk often stems from a lack of peace with one's own thoughts. When one is at peace, he or she is less compelled to speak, and words are a diversion.

And lastly, in regard to peace, this in my mind, is the big take-away (wait for it)... Merton's belief that inner peace leads to communal peace, which, in turn, leads to world peace. The Dalai Lama himself has written something similar. "Only through compassion and inner peace can one spread world peace. Inner peace leads to a peaceful individual, which in turn leads to a peaceful family, then a peaceful community, and finally a peaceful world." (Sept. 20, 2018) In fact he, as Martin Luther King, once claimed that the holy man Thich Nhat Hanh was indeed one who showed us the connection between personal inner peace and peace on earth.

In closing, the challenge issued on a current television public service announcement by Franklin Graham, Billy's son, goes like this: in his estimation, **The REAL QUESTION IS - are YOU at peace?**

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.

Every Texan's 40th Anniversary

On October 30th, Sister Bernadine and Sr. Susan joined in celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Every Texan—an organization deeply rooted in the Sisters' own ministry and vision for a just and compassionate society.

The story of Every Texan begins with the Benedictine Sisters' long-standing commitment to healing and service. For sixty years, the Sisters owned and operated St. Benedict's Hospital and Nursing Home in San Antonio, caring for generations of families with dignity and compassion. When the Sisters sold the facility in 1985, they sought new ways to respond to the evolving needs of the people of Texas. From that transition was born the Benedictine Health Resource Center (BHRC)—a ministry dedicated not only to physical health, but to the broader well-being of entire communities.

As the work of BHRC grew, the Sisters and their collaborators began asking deeper questions: Were families able to put food on the table? Did low-income Texans have access to quality health care? How were public funds being used to serve the common good? What was happening to children's health and access to Medicaid? These questions led to a bold new direction—one rooted in the Benedictine values of justice, stewardship, and concern for the poor. The ministry's mission expanded from direct service to public advocacy, striving to make systemic change that would uplift all Texans.

In time, this broader vision gave rise to the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP), which emerged from the Benedictine Resource Center in San Antonio. The Sisters had already pioneered a model of nurturing new ministries to independence—helping them develop strong leadership and sustainable structures, as they had done with JOVEN, a program serving at-risk youth. After three years of support, CPPP became an independent organization, carrying forward the Benedictine call to serve those most in need. Through thoughtful research and public policy analysis, the new organization sought to give voice to the marginalized and ensure that justice and opportunity remained within reach for all Texans.

Over the past forty years, CPPP—now known as Every Texan—has continued to embody the spirit of its founding vision. Despite changes in leadership and the passing of time, its focus has remained steady: promoting equity, dignity, and opportunity for all people across the state. Sr. Bernadine reflected that the non-profit has not forgotten its roots. The organization continues to honor the values of compassion, integrity, and service that were planted by the Benedictine Sisters so many years ago. In doing so, it carries forward the spiritual legacy of the Sisters' ministry, now lived out in the world of research, advocacy, and public policy.

As Every Texan celebrates four decades of transformative work, the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne give thanks for the enduring partnership that began so humbly in their own ministry. They continue to see Every Texan as part of their extended spiritual family—a living expression of their commitment to justice and the common good. Sr. Bernadine offered a heartfelt reminder that the need for such work is greater now than ever. "The communities of Texas have never needed this organization more than today," she shared. "There are forces that would seek to bring down such organizations. It is incumbent upon us to continue to support this needed work in our state." With gratitude and faith, the Benedictine Sisters celebrate forty years of Every Texan and look with hope toward the future—trusting that the Spirit who inspired its beginnings will continue to guide its mission in the years ahead.



EVERY TEXAN



L-R: Sr. Bernadine, Michelle Smith, Sr. Susan, and Anna Falkenberg

Directors:

Helen Farabee
Diane Stewart
DeAnn Friedholm
F. Scott McGown
Ann Beeson
Marisa Bono

Interim Directors:

Kathy Miller
Michelle Smith

Thanks to all our directors, staff and board members over these years. You are our voice in the public marketplace across Texas. You are a beacon of light and hope during these 40 years.

Our Centenarian Sister

Sister Mary Agnes' 100th Birthday and 80th Jubilee



Pictured is Sr. Mary Agnes
with Bishop Michael
Boulette.

The Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, family, and friends, joined in joyful celebration on September 27th, 2025, as Sr. Mary Agnes marked two extraordinary milestones — her 100th birthday and her 80th jubilee of profession.

Born in 1925, Sr. Mary Agnes began religious life with the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, NY and she was soon sent to Austin, TX for ministry. Life led her out of that community to follow a request from a Bishop to found a community of Sisters in the Austin diocese. When that did not come to fruition, she entered the Benedictine community, answering God's call to a life of prayer, work, and service in the spirit of St. Benedict's Rule. She was a hospital administrator working with young moms on welfare; Co-Director of the Omega Retreat Center in Boerne, TX; served on team with St. Peter Upon the Water, a center for spiritual direction formation; with the group that brought mysticism presentations to San Antonio and she led Centering Prayer groups for many years.

She was Co-Director at Omega when Fr. Patrick Cronin, Joe Hayes, Ed Courtney and Marty Sablik came to talk with her and Sr. Kathleen Higgins about an idea for a retreat they named ACTS, that focused on Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service. The Sisters supported their idea and helped to host the first ACTS retreat at Omega Retreat Center.

Known for her wisdom, humility, and ready smile, Sr. Mary Agnes embodies the Benedictine values of peace, community, and stability. When asked about her favorite quote from the Rule of Benedict, she stated, "Never turn away when someone needs your love." RB 4:26

A Eucharistic celebration, with Bishop Michael Boulette presiding, was held in her honor at the St. Scholastica Monastery chapel, followed by a reception during which the community, family and friends gathered to celebrate her. Sr. Mary Agnes' life stands as a shining witness to God's enduring faithfulness and the timeless beauty of the Benedictine way.



Pictured above with Sr. Mary Agnes are her
nieces, L-R: Rose Steele and Christine Zinni.



The lively sounds of mariachi music filled the room as
we celebrated Sr. Mary Agnes' remarkable 100 years.

Sr. Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB
100th Birthday & 80th Jubilee Celebration
September 27, 2025



"As we progress in this way of life and faith...



our hearts overflow with the inexpressible delight of love."
Rule of Benedict, Prologue 49



Ministries

The ACTS Gala & A Very Special Award

On September 27th, Sr. Bernadine, Sr. Sylvia, Sr. Ursula and Sr. Kathleen attended ACTS 14th Annual Gala. The Sisters were deeply honored to be presented with the Archbishop Patrick Flores Visionary Award while recognized by ACTS Missions for the Sisters' role in the early beginnings of the ACTS retreat movement — an encounter that has touched countless lives and faith communities over the years.

The Sisters fondly remember the fateful day when Fr. Patrick Cronin, Joe Hayes, Marty Sablick, and Ed Courtney arrived at the Omega Retreat Center to meet with the then Co-Directors, Sr. Mary Agnes Zinni and Sr. Kathleen Higgins. They came with an idea—a parish based retreat with themes of Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service. As Sr. Bernadine recalled, the Sisters listened with open hearts and responded with their characteristic hospitality: “Give it a try. We are happy to help and to host your retreat.” That simple act of encouragement and welcome became the seed from which the ACTS retreat movement was born.

From those humble beginnings, the ACTS retreat has grown into a powerful movement of renewal and community-building across parishes worldwide. “As we all know,” Sr. Bernadine shared, “the rest is history.” On behalf of the Benedictine Sisters, she expressed heartfelt congratulations to ACTS Missions for its leadership and for guiding countless parishes in hosting retreats that have transformed lives and strengthened faith communities. Speaking from her own experience, Sr. Bernadine reflected, “I have been a retreatant in an ACTS retreat with St. Peter’s and have also served as a Spiritual Companion with our Spanish Women’s ACTS retreats a few times. ACTS changes lives—and just as importantly, it builds community.”

The Sisters also acknowledged the recent, prayerful decision to close the Omega Retreat Center—a place that had long served as a spiritual home for many retreatants and ministries. “This decision was part of our community’s overall future planning,” Sr. Bernadine explained. “We remain deeply supportive of retreat ministry and the vital role it plays in nurturing faith.”

With gratitude and humility, the Benedictine Sisters extend their blessings to all who continue the work of ACTS Missions. The Sisters’ legacy of hospitality, prayer, and community continues to live on in every ACTS retreat, where hearts are opened and lives are renewed.



Sr. Bernadine and Deborah Ann Alaniz, the Executive Director of ACTS Missions in San Antonio.



Pictured above L-R: Sr. Bernadine, Sr. Sylvia, Sr. Ursula, and Sr. Kathleen.

Photos by Carlos Ramirez Photography

The Health & Wholeness Center's 35th Anniversary

On November 18th, the Health and Wholeness Center celebrated its 35th anniversary at their annual Friendsgiving event. This year marks a joyful milestone for the Health and Wholeness Center, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, as it celebrates 35 years of serving the community. Since opening in 1990, the Center has remained dedicated to enhancing the wellness of adults ages 50 and older—addressing the needs of body, mind, and spirit through programs rooted in the Benedictine tradition of hospitality and community.

From the beginning, the Center has served as an ecumenical “home away from home” where people from all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed with warmth and respect. Its mission has always been about more than fitness—it’s about fostering community, encouraging healthy living, and nurturing joy in every season of life. A key part of the Center’s success lies in its volunteer philosophy of “Seniors Serving Seniors.” Nearly 30 volunteers contribute their time and talents throughout the year, assisting with classes, events, and grounds beautification. Their service reflects the spirit of community that has sustained the ministry for three and a half decades. Each weekday, the Center is filled with activity and laughter. Members enjoy water aerobics and lap swimming in the enclosed Jr. Olympic-size pool, surrounded by windows that frame the peaceful Hill Country landscape. Art and fitness classes, Bible study groups, and social gatherings round out the schedule, offering something for everyone.



The pool was built in 1968.



The HWC pool today.

For many, the Health and Wholeness Center is more than a place to exercise—it is a source of friendship, faith, and healing. Barry and Louise, longtime participants, describe the impact the Center has had on their lives: “The camaraderie makes the class so fun. We’ve made friendships that continue after class—including lots of fun parties. The pool keeps us active and healthy, and the laughter keeps us coming back.” Rachelle, who has attended since 2003, shared how transformative the ministry has been for her: “Because of the water therapy, my quality of life has improved tremendously. The emotional and spiritual support I’ve received here is unlike anything else.”

As the Health and Wholeness Center celebrates its 35th anniversary, the Benedictine Sisters give thanks for the staff, volunteers, donors, and participants who make this ministry possible. Their combined efforts ensure that the Center continues to be a place where older adults find not only health, but also community and purpose. For 35 years, the Health and Wholeness Center has embodied the Sisters’ commitment to caring for the whole person—a ministry where movement meets mindfulness, and where hearts and spirits are renewed each day. Here’s to 35 years of health and wholeness—and to many more years of serving together in the spirit of Benedictine hospitality.



Friendsgiving



Announcements

Honor Roll of Donors

Please know our gratitude is truly immeasurable to each one of our donors and supporters and we hold you in our prayer always! We historically have listed the "Honor Roll of Donors" in our Fall/Winter newsletter. We learned that it was somewhat confusing for donors because we were thanking them for donations made during our fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). Going forward we will be recognizing our donors for the calendar year (gifts given between January 1 - December 31). Our "Honor Roll of Donors" will appear in the next edition of the Benedictine Voice newsletter, our Spring/Summer edition. Hopefully this will lessen confusion. Thank you for understanding!

2025 Summer Drawing Winners

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!



Pictured above L-R: Sr. Antoinette, Sr. Michael, and Sr. Mary Agnes drew the winning tickets as Sr. Bernadine held the entries for the drawing.

**Thank you to all who supported our 2025**

Summer **DRAWING**

Held on September 2nd

Congratulations to the Winners!

\$1,000 - Sandra Barnes
\$500 - Craig & Naomi Weckesser
\$250 - Monica Kadura
\$150 - Clara Santos (donated her prize back to the Sisters)
\$100 - Vickie Nickel

Thank You

Thank you to all who have supported our 2025 Annual Giving Campaign. Your generosity is truly appreciated!

A Year End Gift

If you are considering a year end tax-deductible donation to our 2025 Annual Giving Campaign, please visit our website - www.boernebenedictines.org or use the enclosed envelope in this newsletter. Thank You!

All donations to our AGC are designated for the ongoing healthcare needs of the Sisters and the day-to-day operations of St. Scholastica Monastery.

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. Thank you for considering this way to give a gift!

A New Volunteer at the Monastery



Catherine Marshall,
Volunteer

We are delighted to introduce Catherine Marshall, one of our newest volunteers who joined us in June! Catherine brings a warm and welcoming presence that you'll notice the moment you walk through our doors or give us a call. During her Wednesday volunteer shifts, she's often the friendly face greeting visitors and the cheerful voice on the phone, helping direct questions and offer support. Recently she assisted with a Sisters' Attic video, and helps photograph and post items for sale on social media for our thrift store.

Catherine shares, "I have loved getting to know the Sisters and learning about the impact they have had in the community over the years!"

We're truly grateful to have her with us!

Farewell and Welcome Health and Wholeness Center Managers

On October 28th, Cindy McCorkle hosted a farewell celebration for former Health and Wholeness Manager, Lisa Reeh. We thank her for her commitment to the members and Health and Wholeness and wish her success in her future endeavors!

We are delighted to welcome Perla Lopez, who brings valuable experience and knowledge. She will work alongside Cindy as a Health and Wholeness Manager. Welcome Perla!



L-R: Sr. Bernadine
and Lisa Reeh



L-R: Cindy McCorkle
and Perla Lopez



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Find Us On:



Please Join Us For Our
*Christmas
Eve Liturgy*

December 24, 2025
at 6 pm

St. Scholastica Monastery
216 W. Highland Dr.
Boerne

Reception to follow

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!