



LEAVEN

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SUMMER 2024



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Published three times a year for the friends of St. Walburg Monastery.

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Photos: Becky Motley and Srs. Aileen Bankemper, Rita Brink, Cathy Bauer, Nancy Kordenbrock, Mary Tewes and public domain.

The Benedictine Sisters are deeply grateful for the support provided by our benefactors. You are remembered whenever the community gathers for prayer. For purposes of donations, bequests, and annuities, our legal title is:

**St. Walburg Monastery of
Benedictine Sisters of
Covington, Kentucky**

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from the PRIORRESS

June 3, 2024 marked the start of the celebration of 165 years since our foundation in Covington. As we commemorate our beginnings, the community wants to share with you in another article the ways in which we are looking toward our future.

The community began the celebration of our founding with a special dinner. Our next celebratory event was a special Fourth of July sale of cherry, apple and blueberry pies (think red, white and blue). Many in the community participated in the pie preparation donating the proceeds to the Emergency Shelter of Northern KY. It was quite successful and may become a new summer tradition. Then on July 11, along with many of our oblates, we celebrated Mass for the feast of St. Benedict, again followed by a wonderful meal.

In this issue, Sister Deborah presents a summary of the first 55 years of our life in the diocese. In subsequent issues of Leaven, she will write about the next two 55-year periods. If you know stories of those early years of our sisters, we invite you to share them with us. There are other events for the upcoming year in the planning stages. We will keep you informed.

Know that we truly appreciate all our relatives, friends and benefactors. You continue to enrich our lives; we are grateful and we pray for you daily.

Sr. Aileen Bankemper, OSB
Prioress





St. Walburg Monastery Looks Forward Visioning our Future

St. Walburg Monastery has been home to Benedictine women since their arrival in Covington on June 3, 1859. They came from Erie PA in response to a call to establish a Benedictine monastery and provide education for the young girls of families residing in the developing area.

One hundred sixty-five years later the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery remain a monastic presence in the area, sponsoring Villa Madonna Academy. The K-12 school offers an education for students rooted in the Benedictine traditions of scholarship, service, and hospitality, as well as Montessori education for three-to five-year-olds.

Over the years the sisters served in the dioceses of Covington, Lexington, Pueblo, CO and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, working in education, healthcare, parish ministries, social work, and counseling services. Community membership peaked in 1961 with 271 members. Today the community has twenty-six professed members.

Current reality serves as the catalyst for planning. As we develop a strategic plan for the years ahead we are committed to our monastic presence in Northern Kentucky serving the local church, maintaining a strong relationship with Villa Madonna Academy and with our various publics.

Responsible stewardship of the monastery's buildings and grounds and our available resources will require us to make changes in our life together. We seek a future that allows us to continue to live a Christ-centered community life of prayer and hospitality.

Working with professional consultants and a newly formed group of lay advisors we appreciate and welcome your prayer as we work through the challenges and decision-making before us. Periodic updates will be communicated through the community's newsletter, LEAVEN, and social media.

Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery
Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB
Prioress



**THIS IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF THREE ARTICLES
COMMEMORATING THE 165 YEARS
OF ST. WALBURG MONASTERY HISTORY
1859-1914**

by: Sr. Deborah Harmeling



Mother Alexia Lechner



Chapel at St. Walburg Monastery

St. Walburg Monastery began on June 3, 1859 when Sisters Josephine Buerkle, Anselma Schoenhofer and Ruperta Albert came from Erie, Pennsylvania by train to Covington, Kentucky, to teach the German children of St. Joseph Parish. The early annals say that they began under “very inconvenient circumstances.” The school was used for the girls and the sisters rented a small house on Bush Street. The newly appointed prioress, 32-year old Sister Alexia Lechner, and Sister Salesia Haas arrived August 2. The annals say, “Conditions improved; religious order and discipline were restored by the lawful superior.” Two postulants entered in 1860. One was Helen Saelinger who became Sister Walburga and later the second prioress.

In its first fifty-five years the community grew at a rapid rate that astounds us today. One of the foundation stories tells us that Mother Alexia arrived with three pennies and gave them to a person begging for money. By the spring of 1862 Mother Alexia had fifty dollars and began to ask for contributions to help in building the four-story brick building which served as the motherhouse and the beginnings of St. Walburg Academy. On December 11 Bishop George A. Carrell, first Bishop of Covington, solemnly blessed the new St. Walburg Monastery. Twelve community members moved in that day.

In these early years teaching was the sisters’ primary ministry, and in 1863 St. Walburg Academy took in boarders as well as day students. The sisters established other foundations in Ferdinand, Indiana (1867), Covington, Louisiana (1873) and Cullman, Alabama (1902). In 1867 St. Walburg Monastery obtained a charter of incorporation required by Kentucky law. In 1869 the community purchased a 38 acre farm (called Subiaco) on Horsebranch Road and in 1871 undertook the responsibility of St. John Orphanage as well as the parish school. From 1875 to 1899 the community said yes to



St. Walburg Academy and Monastery,
12th Street, Covington, Kentucky



staffing Annunciation Parish, Paris, KY (1875), Holy Guardian Angels School, Sandfortown, KY (1880), St. Benedict School, Covington, KY (1885), St. Rose School, Fulton, OH (1886), Holy Cross School, Milldale (Latonia), KY (1891), and St. Henry School, Erlanger, KY (1899). These were schools in the Diocese of Covington and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. They were also staffing schools at this time around Ferdinand, IN, New Orleans, LA and Birmingham, AL.

In 1889 Sister Walburga Saelinger was elected “Acting Prioress.” Mother Alexia was given the title “Honorary Prioress” for life. In 1890 the community built a new St. Walburg Academy building on Twelfth Street, and in 1891 Mother Alexia died on December 13 and was buried in the newly purchased space in Mother of God Cemetery. Remains of nine sisters buried in Buena Vista Cemetery were transferred and buried alongside her in one grave.

In 1903 Mother Walburg visited the Collins homestead, a site of 86 acres west of Covington. She thought that the home overlooking the Ohio River would be ideal for a Benedictine motherhouse and an academy for girls. She purchased the house and property and named it Villa Madonna, placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Villa Madonna Academy opened in the Collins House with Sister Vincentia Dolan as Directress. Ten boarders from St. Walburg Academy in Covington transferred to Villa Madonna, and Villa Madonna Academy opened in 1904. In 1907 a new VMA building opened with facilities for grade and high school boarders and day students.

The first fifty-five years of our history were years of expansion and growth. The community sent many of its young sisters to the foundation communities—some even to be formed there. God certainly blessed the young community with good resources and the sisters made the best of them.



Berry pickers at St. John Orphanage in Fort Mitchell.



Mother Walburga Saelinger



Classroom in the Collins House



St. Walburg Academy



SR. BARBARA WOESTE RETIREMENT



Pictured are front: Oblate Carol Leonhart; back (L-R): Sr. Christa Kreinbrink, Oblate Mary Creech, Srs. Rita Brink, Kimberly Porter, Nancy Kordenbrock, Barbara Woeste, Cathy Bauer and Bishop John C. Iffert.

On Sunday, April 28, Sr. Barbara Woeste enjoyed a retirement party with family, friends and staff members of the cathedral, and Bishop Iffert. Sr. Barbara retired after 26 years of dedicated service as Director of Religious Education from The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. She was thanked for teaching and helping so many people in the faith, taking such good care of the sick and homebound parishioners, taking care of the poor and so many in need and for her gentleness, kindness and witness of deep faith and love of the Lord. Barbara officially retired on June 30.

— HAPPY —
Retirement



Sr. Barbara enjoyed a celebratory dinner at Frisch's.





ALLIES IN MISSION (AIM)

by: Sr. Dorothy Schuette

Sisters Cathy Bauer and Dorothy Schuette spoke to the parishioners of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Antoninus, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Martin of Tours and Our Lady of Lourdes in Cincinnati, OH June 22 and 23 to raise awareness of and support for missions of Benedictines and Cistercians around the world. Specifically, they invited their audiences to participate in the missionary efforts through AIM, the Alliance for International Monasticism. (For

more information see aim-usa.org.) Sr. Cathy shared her experience of going to Tanzania several years ago with an AIM mission group. Sr. Dorothy related how our U.S. communities have been assisting the Ukrainian Benedictines in these turbulent times. Both sisters were warmly received by the gracious and generous people who heard them.

VISION FOR THE JOURNEY: LIVING INTO OUR EMERGING FUTURE

by: Sr. Kimberly Porter

Benedictine sisters 55 & under from the United States and Mexico met at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD from July 5-8. This weekend culminated a three-year process in which we built relationships, collaborated on projects, and explored our visions for the future of monastic life.

Several project groups presented proposals developed over the past year. These projects included areas of focus such as the environment, leadership, sharing resources, preserving the arts, interculturality, mentoring and sharing Benedictine life in parishes. Several of these projects will move forward into the implementation phase.

Three other sisters and I participated in panels during our gathering to share how communities are living new models of monastic life, what conversations take place in our communities about the future, and our

own dreams for the future of monastic life. The weekend was filled with energy, hope and possibility. I left Yankton, SD with a certainty that Benedictines will continue the living legacy of our foremothers as we share a love of prayer, good zeal for the monastic life, and a desire to serve others as we live into our emerging future.



CHRONICLES

by: Sr. Mary Tewes

Sisters' travels: Month of April

- Sr. Aileen Bankemper visited Sister Andrea Vasquez in Pueblo, CO; both spent time with the Benedictine Sisters in Colorado Springs.
- Sr. Kimberly presented a day of reflection, Stability of the Heart, to the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia as part of their year-long study of the Rule of St. Benedict.
- Sr. Rita Brink attended the annual meeting of subprioresses in Beech Grove, IN.
- Sr. Cathy Bauer attended the North American Benedictine Vocation and Formation Conference (NABVFC) and was elected to join the Core Team.
- Sr. Aileen along with Sr. Lynn McKenzie facilitated the Visitation process for the Pittsburgh Benedictine community.



Sr. Andrea Vasquez, OSB

- Sr. Dorothy Schuette served as spiritual director in a weekend retreat at Bergamo, OH.

April 20: Br. Phillip Smith, CSC visited from Notre Dame, IN to share with the community his efforts on behalf of the canonization of Br. Columba O'Neill, CSC. He recounted the healing of Sr. Lioba Holtz of her life-threatening illness in 1923 while she studied at Notre Dame. Sr. Lioba later served as prioress of St. Walburg's 1931-43.

April 25-28: Sisters signed up to pray with inmates of the Warren Correctional Institution in Lebanon, OH, during a prayer vigil directed by volunteers of the Kairos Prison Ministry Team.

April 28: Sr. Barbara Woeste was honored at a retirement party for 26 years of service to the diocesan cathedral parish.



Sr. Cathy Bauer and the Core Team at NABVFC

May 19: The community welcomed VMA Alumni to Sunday Eucharist before the annual gathering of alums for luncheon.

May 20: Sisters Aileen and Rita Brink participated in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Hub meeting on future planning.

June 7: Bishop John Iffert and the Serra Club hosted the women religious of the diocese on the B & B Riverboat on this wonderfully cool June day.

June 8: St. Walburg Benedictine Oblates treated the community to the annual Ice Cream Social, beginning with the Ky. Dulcimer Club for entertainment.



Srs. Martha Walther and Nancy Kordenbrock at Serra Club outing.



CHRONICLES

June 14-15: All members of St. Walburg Monastery considered together how to bring the values of Christ-centeredness, prayer, hospitality, stewardship and community into the future.

June 19: St. Walburg Monastery held a retirement luncheon for Rick Glendening and thanked him for over twenty years of service as one of the maintenance staff.

June 19: Sr. Mary Tewes, secretary of the Tri-State Associate Directors, took part in the annual meeting at Mount St. Joseph, Cincinnati.

June 22: Several sisters walked in the Chase & Cole Memorial 5K in honor of Chase & Cole Fischer, Villa graduates, to raise funds for one of the boys' favorite benefits, The Boys & Girls Club.



Sr. Christa Kreinbrink, Rick Glendening and Sr. Aileen Bankemper at retirement party.



Sr. Mary Tewes was busy peeling apples for the pie sale

June 22 & 23: Sisters Dorothy Schuette and Cathy Bauer gave AIM mission talks to two archdiocesan parishes. Donations are used to respond to the needs of monasteries in developing countries. AIM USA is the Alliance for International Monasticism.

July 3: Sisters gathered to peel apples for the Pie Sale on July 4th. Maureen Smain, Sr. Nancy and crew baked 75 red, white & blue pies: cherry, apple and blueberry, benefitting the Emergency Shelter in Covington. Sold out!

July 5: Sr. Mary Carol Hellmann celebrated her 90th birthday with her four remaining siblings and a large gathering of friends.

Sisters' travels: Month of July

- Sr. Kimberly Porter attended Vision for the Journey: Living into Our Emerging Future, a gathering of Benedictine sisters 55 & under from the United States and Mexico at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD.
- Sr. Dorothy Schuette and Oblate Margie Hardebeck attended the NAABOD Conference for Benedictine oblate directors in Schuyler, NE.
- Sr. Cathy Bauer attended the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, IN.

July 11: Feast of St. Benedict – St. Walburg Monastery celebrated 165 years in Covington, KY with our oblates.

July 21-26: Community retreat directed by Bonnie Thurston, New Testament scripture scholar, writer, poet and an ordained Episcopal minister. Her focus was "The Women in John's Gospel" in which named and un-named women are in the spotlight.



Sr. Mary Carol Hellmann celebrating her 90th birthday



Bonnie Thurston,
Retreat director





Sr. Mary Peter Youtsey and Emma Linkugel



Sr. Denise Gough and Emily Brown



Sr. Cathy Bauer and Sophia McVay

BLESSED

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

We are blessed with wonderful nurse assistants, who work after school and on the weekends. Emily Brown and Emma Linkugel graduated and will be attending Thomas More University in the fall. They have enjoyed working here and will be staying on even as they attend college. Sophia McVay graduated from TMU and began as a volunteer at St. Walburg. With this experience she decided to get her CNA. When an opportunity became available, she became part of our staff.

Emma and Emily both commented on feeling that their job is very fulfilling, helping the sisters who need a variety of services. Hearing the sisters' stories and getting to know them has been one of the best benefits of the job. Seeing and feeling the kindness of the sisters has been inspiring as well.

They have emphasized that the job is much more than a paycheck. What they do is a meaningful service. In addition, they have learned some life skills, including time management, building relationships, better cleaning and organization.

Emma is majoring in biology and looking toward a career in medicine. Emily is majoring in psychology. Sophia works full time at Children's Hospital and is looking forward to getting into PA school. Whatever they do will reflect their compassion and care for others that we have witnessed.

We are grateful for all of our young nurse assistants. We look forward to seeing Emma, Emily and Sophia excel in college as they remain a part of our St. Walburg family.

PIES IN JULY

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

The Fourth of July Red, White and Blue pie sale was a success. Thanks to all who purchased pies. We were able to donate \$900 to the Emergency Shelter of Northern Kentucky. One of the best parts of the sale is seeing old and new friends at pick-up time!

Many sisters were involved in the project, including apple peelers, crust crimpers and pie assembly. It was a great community event for us.

We will have another pie sale on November 26 for Thanksgiving. Pumpkin and pecan pies will be offered. Watch for more information on Facebook, our website and by email.



SUMMER DELIGHTS!

by: Sr. Rita Brink

John Updike's poem entitled
"June" offers the following:

The sun in rich and gladly pays
in golden hours,
Silver days,

School's out
The time is ours to spend.



Vegetable gardeners offer fresh produce as they flourish under the sun and care of Sr. Cathy and her garden assistants.



Summer weather and green thumbs go hand in hand. All appreciate Sr. Dorothy's labors and artistry.



Enjoying the outside some travel the world, others pack up and head to the woods as do our campers, Sr. Barbara and Sr. Christa.



Sisters began summer on a B&B Riverboat cruise thanks to Bishop Iffert and the Diocesan Serra Club. Are Sr. Martha and Sr. Nancy captaining the boat?



Sr. Mary Carol's face radiates the delights of summer as she enjoys the fresh air on a sunny afternoon.



Our grillers entertain with picnic meals, especially on holidays, while adding various trays of dining delights. Thanks Kim for your grilling skills.



OBLATE NEWS

by: Srs. Dorothy Schuette and Mary Tewes

Shared Celebration of the Feast of St. Benedict July 11 included Eucharist and Dinner with the monastic community and oblates.



Tim & Cheryl Weber, Gail & Dick Michalack, Jesse & Steve Lamantia, Gayle Underdown, Joan McAlonan, Mary Jo Rehtin, Sr. Mary Tewes, Sr. Dorothy Schuette



Benedictine Oblate Directors Conference (NAABOD) was held July 5-9 at St. Benedict's Center in Schuyler NE. Sister Dorothy Schuette and Oblate Margie Hardebeck attended. The theme was "Carrying Wisdom Across the Threshold". The presentations and the fellowship with other oblate leadership were both informational and energizing to Sr. Dorothy and Margie who will be sharing the wisdom with oblates as they gather for meetings in the months ahead.

IN MEMORIAM



Oblate Mary Bach Loreaux began her association with the Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery over 40 years ago through their ministry of Manna-fold, a cottage by the Academy lake for "time and space to just be". She was a periodic visitor, a brilliant, creative woman, who worked at healing and finding how God was working in her life. She used photography, writing, and painting as a few of her tools. Some of her poetry was published and her art was part of at least one public exhibit in Cincinnati.

In 1987 Mary joined several other friends of the community in becoming a Benedictine Associate, now Oblate. Through her visits to the monastery, Mary developed and appreciated some lasting connections with members of the sister and oblate communities. Although circumstances kept her from regular oblate gatherings, she said she read every word of oblate and community publications.

Mary died May 12 of this year at 77 years of age. She had a big heart holding dreams of peace and, for the oppressed, justice. She did what she could to bring both to the world. In her death surely she has found that peace in the arms of the God who was with her through her difficult years.





ICE CREAM SOCIAL



Annual Ice Cream Social put on by oblates with a concert by the Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer Society and bingo with prizes started the summer June 8th. Everyone had a great time and the sisters are very grateful to all the oblates for their generosity and friendship.



VILLA MADONNA ACADEMY

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock



This has been a busy time at Villa Madonna. The class of 2024 graduated on May 24. This was a remarkable class. Among their achievements are:

- 100% of the 2024 graduates were accepted into college;
- 100% received scholarships;

The 39 graduates earned 313 scholarships totaling \$12 million dollars.



The renovation of the Center building is moving forward and the progress is remarkable. Finish date should be this Fall. Both the Elementary and Montessori schools are at maximum enrollment capacity. We can hardly wait to see the final transformation.



Chase and Cole Memorial 5K

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock



The inaugural memorial Chase and Cole Fischer 5K took place, beginning at Villa and following a route through part of Villa Hills. Three members of the class of 2024, Tommy Wenning, Sydney Short and Adam Kolar, originated the idea and asked the city of Villa Hills for their support. The city council and police department were enthusiastic in their support.



The students garnered support of numerous sponsors and worked with professional running groups to have a wonderful event. There were over 800 runners/walkers. Generous donors provided bottles of water, protein bars, grilled sandwiches, cookies and Kona ice to the participants and volunteers. It was amazing to see the technology and organization involved in the race. Plans are to continue this as an annual event.

Sisters Cathy, Christa and Kimberly walked the race. Sr. Nancy volunteered at the water station at the finish line.



SR. EMMANUEL'S ART



Mark your calendar for October 1 when Sr. Emmanuel's art will once again be available. A limited number of signed prints, Christmas cards and note cards will be available while supplies last. Below is a sneak peak as to items being offered. Follow us on Facebook or sign up for our weekly newsletter for more information.



RETREAT SPACE

Benedictine hospitality has been the gift of St. Benedict for many centuries to those who seek peace.

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery continue that tradition of hospitality by welcoming you to our Guest House and Hermitage. This reflective space provides for individuals or small groups to join in the monastic horarium.



GUEST HOUSE

The Collins house was built in the late 1880s and was purchased by the Sisters in 1903. This historical home has served as classrooms, dorms, and a chapel.

We offer accommodations for groups (16 or less) and individuals for day or overnight gatherings/retreats. This 3-story house has ten bedrooms. There is no elevator, smoking or pets.

HERMITAGE

Hermitage is a single occupancy cottage equipped with a kitchen. It is nestled in trees. You might even catch a glimpse of various animals that call St. Walburg their home. Hermitage is a perfect quiet place to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life.



LITURGY

Guests are welcome to join the Sisters for Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist.



For more information, contact Sr. Cathy Bauer
859-331-6324 or bauerstb@yahoo.com

Benedictine Sisters Annual

Thanksgiving Pie Sale



For more information, follow us on Facebook at
[www.facebook.com/Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg](https://www.facebook.com/BenedictineSistersofStWalburg)
Monastery of Covington, Kentucky or email
swm.development@gmail.com



WISH LIST



The grounds of St. Walburg Monastery are enjoyed by our sisters and the numerous walkers from the area. Some come to exercise and others a place to find peace.

We are in need of park benches. You are invited to partner with the monastery by donating toward this effort to enrich and enhance the lives of the sisters and our guests. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Donate Now





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Ken Overberg is a Jesuit priest who taught theology at Xavier University for more than 40 years. He has also published numerous books and articles on social ethics and on questions of God and suffering. He is now sacramental minister for the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg (who taught him in grade school) and has been celebrating Eucharist here at St Walburg since before Covid!

To register, call
859-331-6324 or email
kybenedictines@gmail.com.

\$25 suggested donation
by cash or check.

Save the Date

Center of Spirituality

September 28, 2024

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM



Puzzled or concerned about the Fall elections?

Catholic teaching offers sound guidance;

come hear

Global Crises and

the Consistent Ethic of Life

with Ken Overberg, SJ

