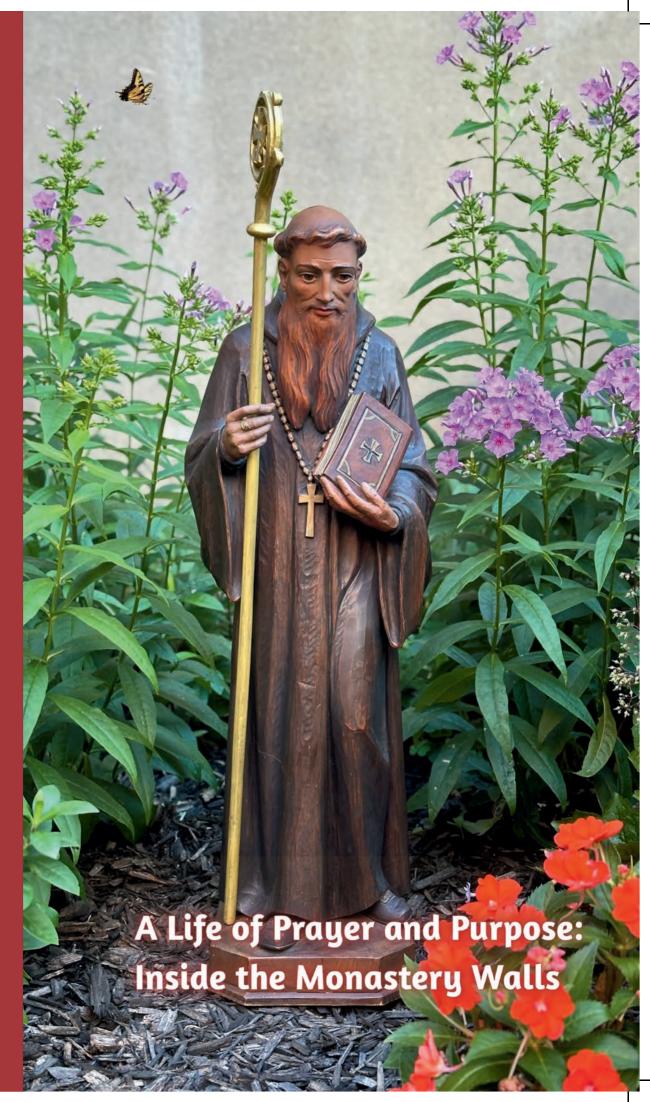


Z Ш **Х** Ш

VOLUME 43
ISSUE 2
SUMMER 2025



LEAVEN
SUMMER 2025
VOLUME 43
ISSUE 2

Editor: Becky Motley

Contributors: Srs. Rita Brink,
Aileen Bankemper, Christa
Kreinbrink, Mary Tewes,
Deborah Harmeling,
Dorothy Schuette,
Colleen Winston and
Nancy Kordenbrock

Photos: Becky Motley, Srs. Mary Tewes, Dorothy Schuette, Cathy Bauer and Aileen Bankemper.

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

www.stwalburg.org

Follow us on Facebook Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery and on Instagram st.walburgmonastery







from the Rioress



"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

(Attributed to an African proverb)

"From June 23- 25 prioresses and delegates from the 17 monasteries of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica gathered via Zoom for a pre-chapter meeting centering on the theme of "Calling the Community to Counsel." Rule of Benedict, chapter 3. For 1500 years Benedictines have had as their guide that all members, the young, the seniors are called to listen and give counsel in important matters facing the community. An important tenet of Chapter 3 is that regardless of ability, all are to be listened to and respected, and all members are to be respectful in how they share ideas, visions. Our Benedictine practice of gathering the community for important matters is our version of a synodal process. It is a valuable gift to the world in showing the importance of full participation that is respectfully and humbly practiced in deciding crucial decisions. These are special times for communities as each community faces unknown futures. Prayer, listening and planning together is key to the outcome.

At the end of our time together, a theme for our 2026 congregational chapter meeting was decided by the delegates "Radical acceptance of our reality/intentional monastic living." There was consensus that the following items are true for us and that we strive to daily live out: Our life is for the world, we recognize our mutual interdependence upholding the dignity of each person regardless of ability, and we continue the important practice of calling the community for counsel.

Radical acceptance of our reality is what we have been about for several years. To this end the community continues to work closely with KEB, the consulting firm from Springfield, IL in order to envision our future. In May, Bethany Jaeger, a consultant, met with the community and presented factual information, "reality statements" that describe our current circumstances. Together we listened, discussed and have a shared understanding of the facts that are of paramount importance in planning. Accepting "reality" can be a freeing experience, though not necessarily easy to determine and accept the next steps that will be required. This session was followed by considering some hypothetical scenarios for our future. Some are more hypothetical than others, but certainly an opportunity to think outside the box. As a community we pray daily for guidance in following the obedient path of Jesus, and for attitudes of openness and cheerfulness as we together pursue this path.

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety"

(Proverbs 11:14)

Sr. Aileen Bankemper, OSB



"IN ALL THINGS, EVEN SUNSHINE GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED."



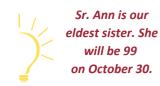












MEET SR. ANN MIDDENDORF: A Journey of Faith

by: Colleen Winston

When Ann Middendorf entered the St. Walburg Community in 1952, she greatly surprised her family and friends. She was a very social person, was dating someone., and at a time when women were generally not into sports, Ann was a multi-sport athlete including golf, horseback riding, and swimming.

When she entered she also brought an AB in music and a beautiful singing voice. Her first ministry in community was as a teacher in elementary education.

From 1952 - 1962 she served in four schools of the Covington, KY diocese: Holy Cross, St. Henry and St. Pius X in Northern KY and St. James in Brooksville.

In 1962, because of a strong need for education of children with handicaps Sr. Ann was asked to go into special education. She attended Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, Wis. which had this program. In preparation for her graduation, she researched the need for special ed in the Covington diocese. She found that although pastors, principals, and doctors were all aware of the need, 305 children were not in Catholic school because there were no facilities to serve them.

Meanwhile, another St. Walburg
Benedictine, Sr. Wendeline Burkard, had
been repeatedly approaching diocesan
officials about this need. They were
finally convinced and in 1962 she
helped start Good Counsel School
in downtown Covington. When
Sr. Ann graduated from Cardinal
Stritch that year, she became part
of this pioneering effort, serving
with Sr. Wendeline and several other
sisters. She taught there until 1975 when
she left and began to serve two Northern
KY parishes as a pastoral associate, Holy
and Blessed Sacrament. She did this for

Cross and Blessed Sacrament. She did this for seven years, after which she served only at Blessed Sacrament. She was there until her retirement in 2002 at the age of 76.

While living at the monastery in retirement, she worked in a variety of ministries. Besides monastic liturgy of the hours, there were the normal kinds of jobs that keep families functioning, things like doing dishes, cleaning, and helping in the kitchen. One day during a family gathering Sr. Ann was asked "What are you doing these days? Her nephew Bob chuckles as he recalls the response of his aunt who was in her 80's: "It's surprising how busy I am driving older sisters to their appointments."







Left: Sr. Ann getting ready to ride a horse before she entered the community. Middle: In 1982, Sr. Ann became first Benedictine to become a pastoral associate at Blessed Sacrament. Right: Pictured with fellow jubilarians (L-R) Srs. Ann Middendorf, Denise Gough, Martha Walther and Rosemary McCormack.

Grand Marshall

Steve
Hutton
Middendorf

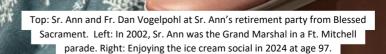
In 1955, a group of parents founded Riverside, and the Diocese established Good Counsel.
The two merged in 1966 as Riverside-Good Counsel, and in 1985, they became New Perceptions, which continues to operate today. The legacy of Good Counsel helped shape this enduring institution.



Besides these in-house ministries, Sr. Ann was overseeing the welfare of her aging parents. Dr. Ann Whitlatch, Sr. Ann's niece, said that because Sr. Ann lived closer than the rest of the family, she took the leadership on how they were faring. In a 2018 thumbnail autobiography, Sr. Ann wrote that her current ministry was to listen and pray with people, helping them to "hang in there" with their problems. Dr. Ann remarked that she did this in many circumstances.

A couple of other family memories shared by Dr. Ann and Bob reveal other sides of Sr. Ann: One was that Dr. Ann said that her mother often asked Ann to sing, especially O Holy Night; she had a clear, lovely soprano voice. She also remembered delightful gatherings at St. Mary's House with Sr Ann and Sr. Rose Rauen, great friends and housemates, hosting family parties.

A much more recent memory came from Bob. The family was gathered around Sr. Ann taking a selfie. Sr. Ann's take? "Who is that old lady?"





WELCOMING THE STRANGER:

A Call to Understand Immigration

by: Sr. Rita Brink

Immigration is a fundamental part of human history. Over time, attitudes toward immigrants have fluctuated from favorable to hostile. Today we find ourselves in a climate of growing hostility with unfounded statements being voiced by federal administrators, coupled with daily news reports of immigrants, some with legal status as US citizens, being arrested and treated as less than human.

Unless we learn more about the truth, reflect on the dignity and worth of every individual created in God's image, and respond with justice and mercy, we fall short of our Gospel response to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The root causes of immigration stem from economic, social, political, or environmental conditions. The goal of immigration is to seek a better life for the immigrant, and the immigrant's family.

Few, if any, reading this article have or will ever know the depth of the immigrants' pain and suffering. Few, if any, will ever find themselves in flight from economic, social, political, or environmental conditions.

Today we have available, at our fingertips, ample better information to be informed on the truth about immigration. The internet ample offers learning opportunities, and scholarly research to immigration laws

and their implementation. "Misperceptions About Immigration to the U.S: What the Evidence Shows," compiled by the Immigration Initiative at Harvard, addresses many of the myths being voiced.

Catholic social teachings on immigration acknowledge:

- -that people have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families,
- -that a country has the right to regulate its borders, and to control immigration, and
- -that a country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

The website, Justice for Migrants, produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

offers numerous resources for learning and reflection on the issues of immigration from a Gospel stance.

me. re pa

As women and men of faith, as responsible citizens we play a part in the actions, the responses, and the success of our nation. Pursuing information strengthens our views, our belief and our support of issues before us. Reflecting on Gospel values shapes our response on behalf of justice and mercy.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

I was in pain and you comforted me.

I was hungry, and you fed me.

I was homeless, and you sheltered me.

(Matthew Ch. 25)



LET ALL BE CARED FOR: A Wishlist for Dementia Trackers

by: Sr. Aileen Bankemper

Through personal experience many of you are well acquainted with the fact that dementia can occur with aging. Safety, knowing the location of the person is a primary concern. We, too, have sisters dealing with dementia. We are in the process of finding tracking devices. An option that has been recommended

involves purchasing a dedicated iPhone that will include monthly payments and Air-tags that will keep track of the location of each sister using the system.

If you would like to help with this endeavor we would appreciate your support.







What do 14 pounds of butter, 60 cups flour, and 40 cups brown sugar make?

Delicious crumb topping!



Thank you to all who supported the Red, White, and Blue Pie Sale! In less than 24 hours, 75 pies were sold and \$1,000 was raised to benefit Fiesta NKY. The event brought together sisters, oblates, and volunteers for a meaningful community effort. We're grateful for your support and look forward to the Thanksgiving Pie Sale.







BENEDICTINE

In Memorium

Benedictine Oblate Betty Bradbury passed away June 30, 2025. Betty came to know the sisters of St. Walburg Monastery in the 1950's. She was a Frontier Nurse-Midwife in the Kentucky mountains and had occasion to visit frequently with the sisters at Mount Mary Hospital in Hazard, KY. Betty joined the community and was given the name Sister Ann Paul. At this time she expanded her skills with advanced degrees in education. After several years in community, Betty's life took a different pathway that led her to Florida and back to her connection with the (now) Frontier Nursing University. Upon retiring, Betty came full circle to live at Madonna Manor and become an oblate in 2005 with Sharon Rust as her oblate prayer partner and faithful friend. with transportation and visits. She was also a volunteer for the Women's Crisis Center of Northern Kentucky, receiving the "Volunteer of the Year" award in 2014. Betty was a dynamic person – very interested in life and the concerns of those she loved. She leaves her loving niece Kathryn Homer (Robert) together with cousins, many friends, and the St. Walburg community of sisters and oblates.



(L-R) Sr. Xavier Anneken (deceased) and Betty Bradbury shared many interests including a love of Kentucky history and mountain folklore.

Oblate Observations



Through the Oblate program at St. Walburg, with the guidance of Sr. Mary Tewes and the support of my prayer partner, Gail Michalack, I came to embrace "a way of life " according to the Rule of St. Benedict. The cordial hospitality of the sisters at St. Walburg and the oblates provide opportunities to understand the mission of the oblates: to seek God in all we do.

- Jessie Lamantia

Oblates in Action

Monthly Oblate meetings on second Saturdays have been enriched with participation in a five-part webinar on "Listening with the Ear of the Heart" presented by the Center for Benedictine Life in Cottonwood, ID for oblate formation.



OBLATES

by: Sr. Dorothy Schuette



Annual Oblate ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Our Annual Oblate Ice Cream Social was held on June 21st. The fun began with The Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer Concert, a treat that was made possible by four members of the group who are also part of our oblate family: Gayle and Dick Michalack and Jesse and Steve Lamantia. Mary Easterling Creech organized the Ice Cream Social and Bingo. In all, 14 oblates, 4 guests and about 20 sisters had a great party. Every one walked away with prizes and good memories of the day.









(L-R) Srs. Tonette Sperando and Emmanuel Pieper

CHRON | A Glimpse into C

Mar. 21: Solemnity of St. Benedict: Eucharist followed by festive dinner.

Mar. 22: Spring Spirituality Day featured Sr. Tonette Sperando, OSB, from Cullman, AL. "Hospitality; A Gospel Way of Living." The community participated in her creative presentation, while the Oblates hosted the event.

April 1-3: Sr. Dorothy Schuette led a retreat at the Guest House for seven participants on "Seeking Peace".

April 3-6: A group of eight came from Jesus Our Savior Catholic Church in Morehead, KY to spend retreat time at the Guest House. The leaders are good friends of Sr. Rosemary, who spent many years at the parish in Morehead.

April 3: Representatives from the Sisters of Notre Dame, Congregation of Divine Providence and the Benedictines met for the first time at St. Walburg for an organizational meeting to form an intercommunity committee on peace and Justice.





April 10: Sr. Rita Brink began a Spring Book Study group of Catholic teachings on immigration.

April 11-14: Sr. Aileen participated in a futuring workshop with the sisters of St. Benedict's Monastery, Bakerstown, PA.

April 23: Local superiors met at St. Charles community center.

April 24-28: Sr. Aileen and Sr. Jennifer Horner from Beech Grove, IN, facilitated the direction statement process with the community of Mount St. Benedict in Erie, PA.

April 25-27: Sr. Dorothy Schuette spent weekend at Jesuit Renewal Center in Milford, OH, directing four women.

April 29 and May 6: Sr. Cathy Bauer led Seek Retreats for St. Agnes' eighth grade groups.

May 18: Villa Alumni joined us for Sunday Eucharist and then joined in the Alumni Luncheon at the Academy.

May 22-27: Sr. Aileen co-facilitated the discernment process for the Sisters of Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie PA.

May 23: VMA High School graduation at Mother of God Parish Church in Covington, Ky.





IICLES

Our Daily Lives

by: Sr. Mary Tewes

May 31-June 7: Sr. Aileen visited with Sr. Andrea Vasquez at Benet Hill Monastery and both participated in their community retreat.

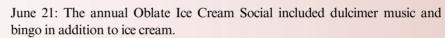
June 3: Founders Day, 166 years since the first sisters arrived in Covington, Ky from Eichstätt, Bavaria via Erie, PA.

June 8-14: Sr. Dorothy Schuette will direct four sisters at Mount. St. Joseph, Sisters of Charity during their retreat week.

June 10-15: Sr. Kimberly to Ferdinand, IN to help facilitate the election process for prioress.

June 14: LCWR Gathering for Our Emerging Future, discussion held at the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY.

June 19: Employee Appreciation Luncheon to recognize and thankTony Jarman for 45 years of service maintaining our facilities, and Maureen Smain for 20 years of service as food service director for the community.



June 23-25: Congregation Pre-Chapter will happen on Zoom, available for the community to hear the presentations.

June 25: The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Committee along with the diocese presented "Immigration: The Catholic Perspective" at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium.

June 27: Diocesan Sisters Picnic was held in Devou Park at the Golf & Events Center by the Serra Club of the diocese.

July 2: Apple peeling party for the 4th of July Pie Sale benefitting Fiesta of Northern KY.

(L-R) Srs. Mary Carol Hellmann and Deborah Harmeling

July 8: Oblate Betty Bradbury (96) died at Madonna Manor. She had been a former member in the 1950's to 1960's as Sr. Anne Paul. Betty became an oblate in 2005.





If our 25 sisters, each pray for you 4 times a

day, that's 100 prayers a day or 36,500 prayers for

you each year.

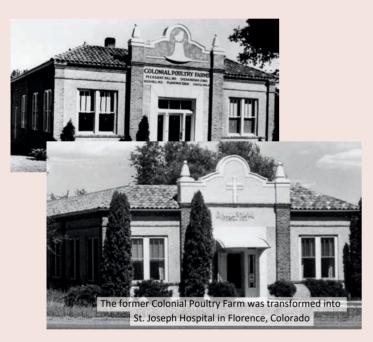


July 4: No fireworks but party and picnic supper for all.

July 11: Feast of St. Benedict, an opportunity for a little fun and special food.

July 28-Aug. 2: Community retreat with Fr. John Klassen, OSB, from Collegeville, MN. "Metaphors, Parables and the Reign of God."

Sr. Alphonsa Spatz, OSB





FROM THE A Benedictine Women

When the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery arrived in Covington in 1859, their mission was to teach the German children in the Diocese of Covington. Those sisters would have been surprised to realize the amount of health care ministry the community has undertaken during its history. This article is about a specific time in the community's history—the hospital years:1945-1986.

There are two stories about the sisters providing health care before 1945. During the Civil War, Union soldiers were stationed in Covington. At the same time Mother Alexia was building a new monastery, and the soldiers offered to help with brickwork. One got mortar in his eyes and was in danger of losing his sight. The sisters prayed for a miracle and used a relic of St. Walburg to ask for her intercession. The soldier's sight was saved, and in gratitude the soldiers gathered donations which were used to buy a new statue of the Blessed Mother for the chapel.

In 1918 when the flu epidemic hit, the sisters responded. On October 10 Mother Walburga sent sisters to the mountains of Kentucky and Lexington. When they returned on October 31, all sisters were well except Sr. Alphonsa who had the flu. On November 16, schools in Covington were closed; sisters who had no training in health care were called out to nurse until December 6 when the schools reopened.

In 1945 Bishop William T. Mulloy asked the community to undertake hospital ministry. The August 6, 1946 community chapter minutes note, "The reverend bishop is anxious for us to undertake hospital work because he wants us to expand and have an income over and above what the schools are paying." The March 2, 1947 council minutes continues 'Reverend Towell called late last night to inform Reverend Mother that the most Reverend Bishop expects her to go to Hazard, Kentucky to sign the contract for the hospital there." The community was expected to purchase Hazard General Hospital that would become Mount Mary Hospital. It provided services for the area until 1967.

ARCHIVES

in Healthcare

by: Sr. Deborah Harmeling

At the same time (1947) the community was discussing St. Joseph Hospital Florence Colorado. This hospital would be established from a one-story building on the former Colonial Poultry Farm that was given as a gift to the sisters. Such a gift meant changing the poultry farm into a hospital.

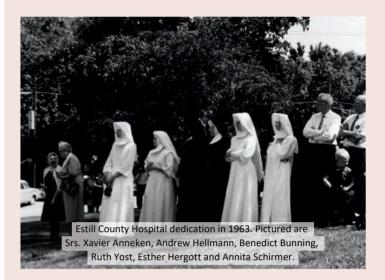
Bishop Mulloy was right about the expanded income but each of the hospitals eventually needed more resources than the community could provide. Community records are full of discussion about how to pay for the hospitals, how to renovate them, how to buy equipment and how to train sisters as administrators and nurses. The community would eventually say yes to taking on two more hospitals—one in LaJunta, Colorado and one in Estill County, Kentucky.

In 1950 the community took over Sante Fe Hospital, La Junta, Colorado. The hospital was originally only open to the employees of the Sante Fe railroad. The sisters assumed the debt and began a renovation process to add an emergency room, an obstetric department, an operating room, and X-ray and laboratory facilities. The hospital closed in 1963.

On May 6, 1969 the community signed a 99-year lease to operate Estill County Hospital in Irvine, Kentucky. Some local residents of the town resisted the idea of a religious-based healthcare facility. A group of citizens filed suit to prevent them from running the hospital, claiming that the arrangement violated the separation of church and state. Over the next three years the suit went all the way to the US Supreme Court with the court ruling in favor of the sisters. In 1980 the hospital was renamed Marcum and Wallace Memorial Hospital in honor of four local physicians who were two married couples. In 1986 the Benedictine community requested that the lease agreement be turned over to the Mercy Health Systems.

Hospital work was a ministry that required more and more resources through the years. Although leaving hospital ministry was a sadness for most of the trained sisters, many of them went on to different forms of healthcare ministry. In 1959, at Estill County Hospital and according to Sr. Callista's journal entry, "the hospital was scheduled to open on September 10. All was ready, until Mrs. Wilson came in on the 9th and had her baby and the hospital was opened."











TIME FLIES When You Love What You Do

by: Sr. Dorothy Schuette

On June 19, 2025, at our Annual Employee Recognition Dinner, we honored two remarkable individuals, Maureen Smain and Tony Jarman. Maureen and Tony embody the Benedictine values of St. Walburg Monastery.

We thank and congratulate them on their exceptional service.



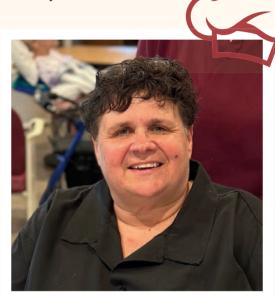
Tony Jarman

Maintenance Manager

45 Years

Tony's efforts have kept our cars running and our building maintained. Every sister knows that Tony can do EVERYTHING. The job comes with phone calls at night and on weekends, when something is almost scheduled to go wrong. Never a complaint, sometimes a sigh. "It's job security", says Tony.

We are grateful. Grateful for your self-discipline, patience, and stick-to-a-tive-ness. Grateful for your care with equipment, your consistent hard work, and your great attitude.



Maureen Smain

Kitchen Manager

20 Years

We are so blessed to have Maureen as our kitchen manager, chief chef and bargain hunter for 20 years.

Each of us could name our favorite dishes that she makes. We appreciate getting to select our birthday meals, to say nothing of our Thanksgiving, Christmas and special celebration feasts

If anyone finds a new recipe and passes it on, she is happy to try it. Don't ask for her recipes because they aren't written down and can change with each preparation.

We appreciate you so much and hope for another 20 years with us.





VILLA MADONNA ACADEMY

Honoring Tradition, Embracing the Future

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

The class of 2025 graduated on May 23, after garnering over \$15 million in scholarships. For a class of 35 that is a remarkable accomplishment. They will be attending 22 different colleges all over the US. In addition, five of the graduates will be following their athletic path at the college level. While at Villa they also gave 5,000 hours of service to various individuals and agencies. To say we are proud is an understatement.

Throughout the year the students at all levels were engaged in some wonderful traditions.

The first graders wrote and illustrated their own books.

The fourth graders kept in touch with their pen pals. They also tried their skills at interviewing some of the sisters and shared their findings.

"It was fun to interview Sr. Mary Carol. She even played the organ for us. She was so nice and very kind-hearted." -Giana and Uly, 4th grade students The sixth graders gave their annual Stations of the Cross. Each year they create the text and perform the Stations with music and reverence. It is such a moving experience.

Many annual field trips also add to their learning experiences. The end of the year brings the class picnics and field day to bring the year to a fun conclusion.

"Sr. Ann John was just awesome and we had a very fun time. She was always listening to us and we enjoyed listening to her stories."

-Ella and Sawyer, 4th grade students

Moving into the renovated elementary building was a blessing that everyone continues to enjoy. Construction on the Chase and Cole Fischer STEM wing in the high school building will begin soon. We continue to be grateful to all our contributors, especially the Fischer family for their vision and support.









St. Walburg Monastery 2500 Amsterdam Road Villa Hills, KY 41017

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org US Postage Paid Cincinnati. OH Permit #6207

Need to update address or contact information? Call 859-331-6324 or swm.development@gmail.com.

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please provide your email address.

UPCOMING EVENTS



The Catholic Perspective

Monday, August 18

6:30-7:00 PM Networking

7:00-8:30 PM Prayer and Program

Diocesan Curia

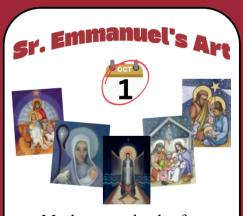
Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium 1125 Madison Avenue

This presentation will include a deeper dive into Catholic Social Teaching related to immigration, followed by a presentation by an immigration lawyer on the various pathways to entering the US and why it is now so difficult for migrants to enter the US through any of those pathways. We will also have time for conversations in small groups and will provide additional action steps that can be taken to make a difference in the lives of all those seeking a safe home in this country.



The Benedictine Sisters will once again be hosting their annual Thanksgiving Pie Sale to benefit a local organization.

For more information, follow us on Facebook or sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at swm.development@gmail.com



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.

> For more information, follow us on Facebook or sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at swm.development@gmail.com