



LEAVEN

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**The Gift of Christmas:
Seeking God Together**

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

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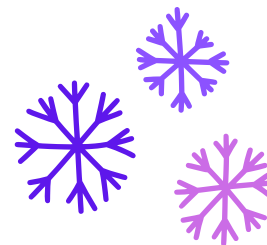
St. Walburg Monastery of Benedictine Sisters of Covington, Kentucky

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from the PRIORRESS



"In the seasons of our Advent—waking, working, eating, sleeping, being—each breath is a breathing of Christ into the world."

—Caryl Houselander

In the midst of increasing darkness and the start of winter, Advent appears as a quiet time of waiting, and yearning. Yet, there is complexity to the season of Advent. The word means "coming, arrival." This season celebrates the many comings of Christ. The historical coming, the Christ who never left us orphaned and who abides with us in the Eucharist. Paul repeatedly reminds us of Christ's continued, real presence "in the living body, the people of God." The complexity includes patient anticipation, a spirit of openness and readiness to receive Christ in the guest, the stranger, the poor, and even the relative or neighbor that causes us to wince.

Many of us lament that Advent/Christmas has become more secular and materialistic. The real meaning of Advent fades each year as advertising for the "holidays" takes precedence. There are many people who say that Christmas is and was a difficult time. Family discord, old emotional injuries play a significant role. Each of us has the potential to alter this reality. We can call ourselves to be intentional, more loving, forgiving, expressing this love in the mercy we show one another.

The words of Teresa of Avila message the Gospel, "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes with which Christ looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world. . . ." Mercy is truly what the Son of God poured forth when he joined with all humanity. "You reached out your hand in mercy, in covenant, in love." (Canticle of Zachary) Through our caring Christ's mercy continues to flow. So many in our world need to be shown the tender mercy of our God . . . and this may include ourselves. For mercy is the abiding and tender love of God exemplified by God taking on frail human flesh. Who of us doesn't need God's mercy?

Most people experience that in the act of giving, happiness significantly increases. True joy occurs when we go out of ourselves and serve others. This past year has been difficult for many. May each of us search out and find ways to manifest the tender love of God. Our community is grateful for the love, support and care shown to us over these many years. May all of our endeavors manifest God's tender love and may that growth flourish.

It is Christmas every time you let others love God through you.

Mother Teresa





IN MEMORIUM



Sr. Deborah Harmeling **1946-2025**



Sister Deborah Harmeling was born on December 24, 1946 to George O. Harmeling and Ella Mary Holt, and given the name Mary Jo. She was the older of two children; her brother George followed.

Mary Jo entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1964 and became a novice in 1965, receiving the name Deborah. First

profession followed in 1966, perpetual in 1972, silver jubilee in 1991 and golden in 2016.

Sr. Deborah received her BA in Secondary Education and History at Thomas More College in 1970 and her MS in Library Science from the University of Kentucky in 1973. She taught at Blessed Sacrament School, Villa Madonna Academy, and No. Ky. UK Extension, and served as librarian at Thomas More College (now University) and then for 28 years as librarian at the Athenaeum of Ohio. She served on the formation team at the Athenaeum, as development/communication director and archives oversight at St Walburg Monastery.

Deborah was a skilled writer and a voracious reader. The Word flourished in her words as she composed collecting prayers for the Liturgy of the Hours, articles for Leaven and other publications. At home in any library, she tapped sources far and wide.

The medieval world long held Deborah's interest, whether it be Benedictine saints, doctors of the Church, or dragons. She loved dragons, stuffed or ceramic, fierce or funny. She frowned if someone spoke ill of them. Deborah loved cats nearly as much. Cheddar and Chutney were familiar names to the sisters.

Deborah was asked once what she valued about community life. Her answer: "Community life makes me a better and more open person. Community life constantly challenges me to grow and look beyond myself and my own interests. Community life has taught me to value collaboration and to let others help me create and discern. The women of this community have shown me how to be gracious, generous, open-handed and supportive."

Deborah is preceded in death by her parents George and Ella Harmeling. She is survived by her brother, George W. Harmeling, Memphis, TN, friends and the Benedictine community.





There are tens of thousands of Benedictine Oblates around the globe, making them the largest group of lay associates in the Catholic Church.

BENEDICTINE OBLATES

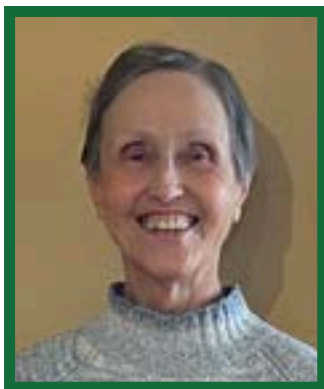
by: Dorothy Schuette



Our Oblate Weekend, held November 7–9, was filled with reflection, connection, and renewal. Of our 35 Oblates renewing their oblation, ten were present on Sunday. The weekend concluded with the Oblate Renewal ceremony on Sunday.

Pictured are: Seated (LR): Sr. Mary Tewes, Vickie Cimprich, Cheryl Weber, and Dick Michalack. Standing (L-R); Louise Jewett, Laura Tenzel, Kathleen Rosing, Margie Hardebeck, Gayle Underdown, Gail Michalack, Jessie Lamantia and Sr. Dorothy Schuette.

Oblate Observations

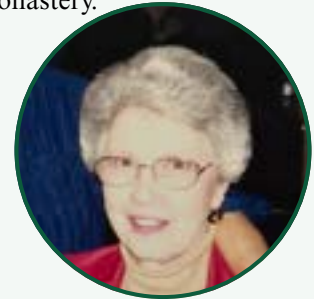


“Hospitality is my favorite Benedictine value. Since I taught at Villa, I have felt like turning in the gates to the monastery is like coming home. I feel peaceful, appreciated and loved by the Benedictines. It is my pleasure to share this blessing of hospitality with others. I like to visit those who are shut-ins and call people to catch up with their lives and let them know someone is thinking of them. Sometimes I think God helps me notice people who need a little TLC. Last

week at church, I saw a friend sitting across the church from me. She looked sad and bereft –not her usual self. After Mass I went over to ask what was wrong and give her a hug. It was a sweet moment for both of us.”

Oblate Anniversaries

We celebrated the special anniversaries of Oblation for four women on November 9 during our Oblate Renewal ceremony at the Monastery.



20 Years

Mary Jo Poole Hall
Guthrie, Kentucky



20 Years

Debbie Lueke
Ft. Wright, Kentucky



25 Years

Laura Flippen Tenzel
Nashville, Tennessee



25 Years

Cynthia Jones Zegarra
Rock Springs, Georgia





The first Christmas card appeared in 1843, the same year A Christmas Carol was published.



THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

by: Rita Brink

“I cannot dance Lord, unless you lead me.
If you want me to leap with abundance,
you must intone the song.
Then I shall leap into love.”
Mecthtild of Magdeburg
(13th century mystic)

A child, a son, a counselor, a prince of peace, came down to earth and the dance began. Our leap into love at the birth of Christ is our fundamental link to the fullness of life. Love, pure gift, freely given in endless abundance, waiting to be embraced by open hearts.

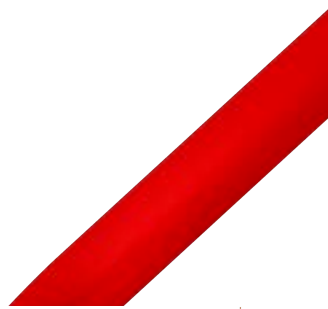
God’s love present in our lives turns our winters into spring, and we dance. Our grateful thanks for the gift of Christ in our lives is active and alive in our celebrations at Christmas, in our sharing of love with family and friends near and far.

These days many find themselves busy about Christmas preparations. Shopping, gift wrapping, list checking, assuring little ones’ hopes and dreams are fulfilled as anticipation and excitement heightens, wondering just what awaits them Christmas morning as the sounds of Christmas intone the songs for dancing.

May Christ your pure gift, invade your life, deepening your song of thanks, strengthening your bonds of love, and announcing to the world a path of lasting peace.

A Child is born,
A son is given,
Wonder Counselor,
Prince of Peace. (Is. 9 ;6)

And we dance!



We invite you to take some quiet time this advent!

COME AND JOIN US FOR

Lectio Divina

Reflection and prayer on the Sunday Gospels

TUESDAY EVENINGS
December 2, December 9, and December 16

7:30 PM
Monastery Chapel

Advent

hope

peace

joy

love

Lectio Divina has four steps...
Read, meditate, pray, and
contemplate...simple
but powerful.



Canon Law is older than most legal systems in the world. Canon law has roots going back to the 4th century, well before common law or modern civil law traditions.



Meet SR. MARY CATHERINE: *A Life Rooted in Faith, Service and Leadership*

by: Christa Kreinbrink



Mary Catherine Wenstrup, 1957 graduate of Holy Cross High School, received her diploma and headed straight for life as a Benedictine with clear aim and focus. She, like so many members of St. Walburg Monastery, began the ministry of teaching without benefit of college degree or teaching certificate. After achieving both, she taught English and Religion to high school girls at Villa Madonna. Her favorite piece of advice for them: When in doubt, don't.

The following years were a time of multiple ministries with overlapping timelines: getting an MA in Religious Studies from Catholic U, serving on the monastery formation team for sisters in the novitiate and beyond, working at the diocesan Dept. of Religious Education, and once again teaching religion at VMA. The related fields provided a wealth of experience and diversity.

When Sr. Justina was elected prioress in 1978, she chose Sr. Mary Catherine for subprioress. In a Leaven interview, Sr. Mary Catherine commented: *"The thing I do most is listen, and when she wants to know what I think, I tell her. I see that we are complementary in terms of our gifts."* Eight years later she herself was elected by the community to serve as prioress. Her comment at the time: *"What I've learned from working with Sr. Justina is that if you have enough trust in yourself and enough trust in the community, you really don't have to be afraid of the future... There's a dialog that goes on*

between the prioress and the community...that works best when there is mutual trust and affection between the two."

Sr. Mary Catherine engaged the community in a program of studying and making recommendations in the areas of monastic prayer, worship space and music. Out of it came a renovated chapel, a complete set of books for praying the Liturgy of the Hours, new liturgical music resources and an appreciation for images of God within the language for worship. Re-elected after four years, she outlined tasks for the next four years as a Revitalization program:

1. Facilitate liturgical and contemplative prayer;
2. Challenge and transform possessive individualism;
3. Promote hospitality, stewardship and collaboration;
4. Accept responsibility for peace, justice and unity.

Benedictine life has a number of self-checking practices to measure progress toward goals. Sisters from OSB communities assist each other in answering the question "Are we moving forward?" Sr. Mary Catherine provided this service for many communities, working within teams of visitors or election committees.

Having directed the community toward liturgical, personal and communal renewal, Sr. Mary Catherine turned to



Sr. Mary Catherine is a fantastic baker! Her favorites are the homemade breads she learned from James Beard's Beard on Bread, and she loved gifting her delicious loaves.



renewal of buildings. The architect for the chapel, Jack Pecsok, warned her in 1989 that the contrast between the chapel and the rest of the building would lead to more renovation. In a few years, committees sent out surveys and the dust and noise began. The monastery was completed in 1995, the infirmary in 1998, A/C was extended and windows replaced in 2008.

What does one do after twelve years as prioress? For Sr. Mary Catherine, study canon law. She learned that it would be less expensive to study in Louvain, Belgium than to study in the states, and headed for Belgium. Why canon law? *"Whenever I consulted [it], I found it instructive, a good source of practical advice and fair... The real purpose is to unify the church... The connection I see between canon law and what I was responsible for as prioress was unity."*

Now with a JCL degree in canon law, Sr. Mary Catherine worked in the diocesan tribunal as a Defender of the Bond (of matrimony) before and after being called by the community in 2006 to return to the office of prioress. She did like the job, and served for three terms again.

Travel to Africa was a longtime wish. Sr. Mary Catherine was invited, along with Sr. Martha Walther, to work with a Benedictine community in Namibia in the fields of spirituality, human development, formation and eventually,

canon law as it pertained to their constitutions. She noted: *"It is a privilege to help the sisters match their history and culture with traditional Benedictine values so they can flourish in the future."* Twice Sr. Mary Catherine assisted religious communities in China with constitutional matters. These were not zoom calls; she was there in person.

St. Walburg's need for future planning received a boost in 2013 when the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) funded consultants in the areas of eldercare, buildings and grounds, and finance. The most visible outcome was the sale of land to Madonna Manor and to Ashley Builders Group. Public meetings to present plans for the western area were often painful experiences for Sr. Mary Catherine and the sisters. Plans changed; today Sanctuary Village replaces hay fields and pastures for cattle.

In challenging times Sr. Mary Catherine went to the kitchen and baked. Her copy of James Beard's bread book was well-used. Sisters, family and friends of the community enjoyed her crescent rolls, fruitcake, breads and cakes. She expressed her gratitude to them regularly in Leaven for those who provided support, friendship, advice, and donations for St. Walburg Monastery and its ministries. Using words from the Easter hymn *Now the green blade rises*, she wrote: *"You are part of the rich soil that nourishes and waters our green blades."*





*130 Years of Justice:
Catholic Social Teaching
began in 1891 with Rerum
Novarum and still guides
the Church today.*

INTERCOMMUNITY PEACE AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Shared Mission, Share Compassion

by: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock

In May representatives of the Notre Dame, Divine Providence and Benedictine Sisters formed a committee to address peace and justice concerns. As a result of their meetings they decided to focus on the immigration issue as it relates to Church social teaching. They planned open meetings to offer Church teaching and information about the plight of immigrants and refugees.

Both meetings in June and August were held at Howard Hall at the Chancery. Over 200 people attended each session. In the first session, speakers included professors from Thomas More University and sisters who have worked with immigrants in our area as well as at the Mexican border. The professors laid the groundwork in Catholic teaching and the sisters shared their personal experiences. The emphasis on respect and compassion was very clear.

In the second session an immigration lawyer spoke at length about the complexities of getting a green card or other necessary documents. It was clear that it takes at least a year to get them, possibly many years. More personal experiences were shared and representatives of agencies helping the immigrants were there to offer suggestions for action. Participants asked to learn more about actions that they can take to make a positive difference for immigrants and refugees

That request led to the third session in October that was focused on agencies and volunteer opportunities. Three groups presented their work: Fiesta, Kentucky Refugee Program and Esperanza. It is difficult to mention specifics because of the fear of ICE and their random detaining of women, children and men. The attendees learned ways to give their time and energy to meet some of the needs of the immigrants.

In addition, the committee planned a prayer service in September during immigration and refugee week. Bishop Iffert presided and the prayer was that suggested by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishop Iffert gave a great homily that could be repeated in every parish.

As he said, we are all immigrants. It was also quite moving when, before the service began, a woman who has been in the US for many years shared her testimony of getting her documents after ten years of trying.

The work of the committee will continue. It may continue to focus on immigration or may address other topics, such as gun violence or racism. As always, this work is a result of Catholic social teaching calling for respect and compassion for all people.



“Whatever you do for the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

— Matthew 25:40





View of Montserrat from the funicular.



CIB Delegates from around the world.

Benedictine women today unite worldwide through the CIB, amplifying their voice as monastic women.

MONTSERRAT

CIB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

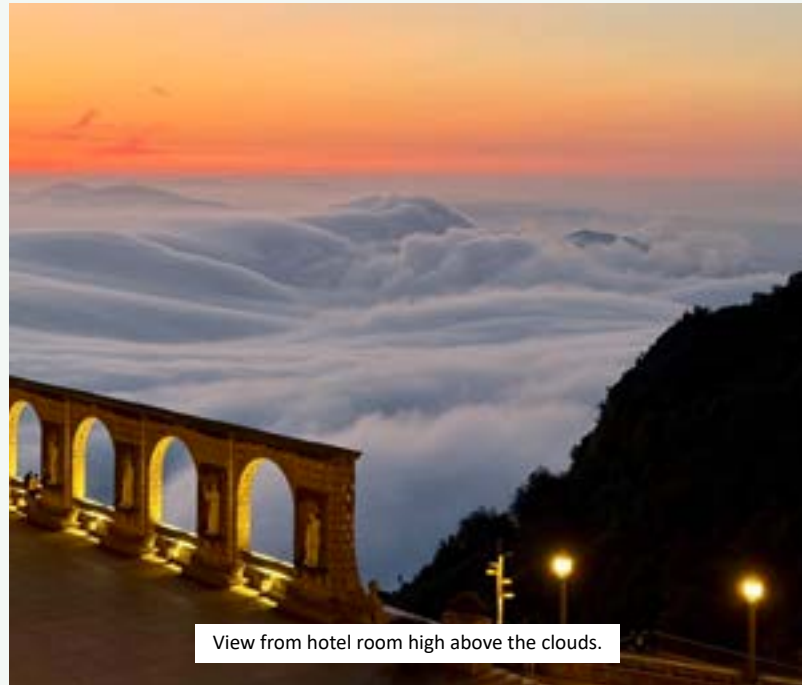


by: Aileen Bankemper

The meeting of the 40 delegates of the CIB (Communion of International Benedictine Women) took place in September when we met at the Santa Maria de Montserrat Abbey, Spain. What a gorgeous place to meet! It was an excellent meeting. Progress continues to be made in providing worldwide Benedictine women their voice with the dicastery of consecrated life, side by side with our Benedictine brothers. To that end, Sister Simona Brambilla, the first woman prefect of the dicastery of consecrated life was invited to meet with us. Her past experiences did not include knowledge or acquaintance with Benedictine women. In her role at the dicastery she will have an important say when our formal request is made. She gave a wonderful talk calling us to ongoing renewal, fidelity to our charism and interacting in the model of synodality. Following the presentation Sister Simona offered to lengthen her time with us allowing the delegates to have a question and answer session with her.

A special moment Sister Simona shared with us was a discussion of her first meeting with Pope Francis. It was at this meeting that he first asked her to be the Secretary of the dicastery. Although she has many qualifications, she told him that she didn't think that she had the kind of knowledge or experience that would go with the position. Pope Francis listened intently and responded "Neither did I have knowledge or experience in becoming the Pope." I imagine she felt a bit gob-smacked - what could she say after that!

On our final day of meetings, the delegates met with the presidents of the Benedictine abbots. Some of the agenda included updates on the progress of the CIB, discussion in preparation for the 2029 Jubilee Year in which Benedictines will celebrate marking the 1500th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey of Monte Casino by St. Benedict in 529.



View from hotel room high above the clouds.



Boys choir at Santa Maria Abbey of Montserrat.





*Our 24 sisters hold
56 degrees, living the
Benedictine value of
love of learning!*

WALBURG MONASTERY
EMERGENCY SHELTER
OF NORTHERN KENTUCKY

CHRONICLES

A Glimpse into Our Daily Lives

by: Sr. Mary Tewes



Sr. Cathy leading Seek Retreat.

July 11: Feast of St. Benedict. The feast has a long history, reaching back to the eighth century. Pope Pius XII named Benedict the “Father of Europe” in 1947. Pope Paul VI declared St. Benedict the “Patron Saint of Europe” in 1964. In the Benedictine liturgical calendar which we use, the title for St. Benedict on July 11 is “Patriarch of Western Monasticism.” St. Benedict’s March 21 feast always falls in Lent, but Benedictines celebrate both of them in high style.



Sr. Aileen with Bishop John Iffert at the World Day of Migrants and Refugees prayer service

July, August, September & October: Sr. Cathy Bauer led Seek Retreats for confirmation students at St. Joseph, Crescent Springs Parish, St. Agnes Parish and Mary Queen of Heaven Parish.

July 28-Aug. 2: St. Walburg Monastery retreat with Fr. John Klassen, OSB, from St. John’s, Collegeville, MN on Metaphors, Parables and the Reign of God.

Aug. 9: Oblate Gathering to plan meetings for the year.



Sr. Dorothy and Sr. Ann John at their VMA 65th Reunion

Aug. 11-16: Sr. Aileen Bankemper attended the LCWR National Assembly in Atlanta, GA. Focus: Hope Unbroken: Journeying in God’s Promise. Speakers: Sr. Simona Brambilla, MC and James Martin, SJ.

Aug. 18: Many attended the diocesan Peace & Justice meeting. Part 2 “Immigration: The Catholic Perspective.”

Aug. 24-30: Sr. Dorothy Schuette served as a spiritual director for Mt. St. Joseph, Sisters of Charity retreat.

Aug. 26: Women’s Equality Day: Celebrating the ratification of the 19th Amendment to US Constitution.



Left: Sr. Nancy harvesting summer vegetables.



Right: Sr. Mary enjoying Monday Activities.

Aug. 28: Poetry Night at the monastery led by Sisters Rita Brink and Kimberly Porter.

Aug. 30: Sisters attended the LCWR Module 4 discussion of Our Emerging Future at St. Ann Convent, Melbourne, KY.

Sept. 4: Sr. Deborah Harmeling died. Visitation was Sunday Sept.7 and funeral services on Sept. 8.

Sept. 9-23: Sr. Aileen flew to Spain for the CIB meeting in Barcelona.



Community living = built-in support: There's always someone to pray with, laugh with, or share a cup of coffee with.

Sept. 26: Sisters attended the Prayer Service on Immigration at the Cathedral led by Bishop John Iffert.

Sept. 27-Oct. 7: Sr. Nancy Kordenbrock flew to Dallas, TX, to participate in the RCRI Conference for Treasurers and Community Leaders.

Oct. 3-6: Sr. Kimberly Porter met with other congregational councilors in Atchison, KS.

Oct. 8-12: Sisters Cathy Bauer and Dorothy Schuette joined the group of sisters on the "Pilgrimage of Hope" to Selma and Montgomery, AL.

Oct. 12: Many sisters participated in the picnic provided by the Campbell County K of C. It was an afternoon full of games and many prizes with sisters from all over Northern KY.

Oct. 12-15: Sr. Aileen facilitated the first election of prioress at Our Lady of the Desert Monastery in New Mexico.

Oct. 21: The NKY Youth Choir, directed by Becky Schaffer Wells, performed for us.

Oct. 27: Sr. Aileen welcomed the local superiors of women religious for a luncheon meeting at the monastery.

Oct. 31: The Montessori students with teachers and parents visited the monastery in costume for Halloween. Led by a teacher, the three to five-year-olds sang spooky songs for the sisters.

Oct. 31: Halloween Party at the monastery. An occasion to clean out the Halloween trunk, keep the best costume elements and say sayonara to the rest. Amazing to see what was in there. The plethora of hats inspired one sister to dress as The Mad Hatter.

Nov. 7-9: Benedictine Oblate Retreat was led by Sr. Dorothy Schuette: Making Time Holy—Liturgy of the Hours. Oblate Renewal took place on Sunday followed by lunch for oblates and community.



L-R: Sr. Ann John, Mary Catherine, Colleen, Joan and Mary Tewes at the KofC picnic.



Sr. Emmanuel enjoyed teaching art to Sr. Stephanie from Erie, PA during her visit.



Sr. Christa and Sr. Colleen preparing for Liturgy.



VMA students visited and brought a basket of goodies.



Sr. Ann's 99th Birthday was celebrated on October 30.





166 Years of Stories. Our archives hold records of 329 sisters who lived and served at St. Walburg since 1859.

PRESERVING ARCHIVES -in Cleveland

by: Christa Kreinbrink

Religious communities are joining together to preserve their archives. In Cleveland a large building is now under construction for the Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC: pronounced rack) Heritage Center. WRAC’s website adds: “Set to open in 2027, it will be the nation’s first independent repository for Catholic sisters’ archives collections. It will offer dynamic public programming, exhibitions, meeting space, and be an important meeting place for research and remembrance.”

WRAC will house the archives of over 75 congregations. As these groups grow smaller, they are in danger of losing the ability to care for their archival holdings, both in loss of space and in loss of trained archival personnel. Fortunately for St. Walburg Monastery, the WRAC Heritage Center comes at an opportune time. The challenge is to prepare the material suitably for transport to Cleveland, where it will eventually be made available for use in person and online.



Images ©WRAC Heritage Center



The world’s largest pumpkin pie weighted 3600 pounds and was over 20 feet wide. Baked in Ohio in 2010.

A Slice of Benedictine Hospitality

PIES for a PURPOSE



Thanks to your generosity, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery sold 125 pies during our Thanksgiving Pie Sale, with all proceeds supporting Hispanic Immigrants.

Sisters of all talents, from apple peelers to crust crimpers, came together for this community-driven project. Even Sr. Nancy, recovering from a broken arm and surgery just a week earlier, supervised and helped distribute pies with her usual dedication. We are grateful to everyone who participated and look forward to our Pies in July sale.





PILGRIMAGE OF HOPE; JUBILEE OF CONSECRATED LIFE

by: Sr. Dorothy Schuette, OSB

*St. Benedict wrote about
caring for the poor,
welcoming the stranger,
and treating every person
with dignity;
social justice is
part of our DNA.*



In 1965 the United States passed The Voting Rights Act which addressed the injustices, even atrocities, experienced by many of our citizens. It was to memorialize the importance of Voting Rights that a group of six, Benedictine Sisters Cathy Bauer and Dorothy Schuette, Sister of Notre Dame Ruth Lubbers, Sisters of Divine Providence Jean Menke, Judy Riese and Leslie Keener, set out from Covington, KY on October 8 to make a five-day pilgrimage to Selma, Alabama where a protest march in 1965 was the precipitating action for the passage of this legislation.

We visited several sites in Selma which were significant in planning and implementing a peaceful civil rights march to Montgomery to demand justice. We walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge where those marchers were blocked and brutally attacked by local police. And we stopped by the now abandoned Good Samaritan Hospital where the injured were cared for. It was the only hospital in a six-county area that served African-Americans. The next day we drove to Montgomery, Alabama to experience three venues:

1. The Legacy Museum which presented the stories of many persons who were kidnapped from Africa and brought forcibly to the Americas, subjected to slavery and then “Jim Crow” for decades;
2. The Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, and
3. The National Memorial of Peace and Justice, dedicated to the victims of racial terror lynchings.

Our shared prayer and reflections at the close of each day were valuable opportunities for the six of us to express our deep emotions of compassion, sorrow, solidarity and empathy for those who have been so abused in the past. We also became more aware of the traces of racial hatred that continue to exist in the society in which we live. But we are women of hope witnessing to the deepest desire of humankind to live in peace with one another.

We are grateful to the Edmundites Missions for hosting us for our pilgrimage. Their wide range of services to the community of Selma and rural Alabama demonstrates their generous commitment to and wise advocacy for the poor.



VILLA MADONNA ACADEMY

Benedictine House Systems Build Community

by: Pamela McQueen | Executive Director/High School Principal

Recognizing that community is at the heart of Benedictine education and is, in fact, one of the hallmarks of a Benedictine school, both our high school and elementary school have launched new House systems to develop leadership, celebrate successes, strengthen school spirit, and deepen the experience of community. The results are nothing short of amazing!

The high school administration worked for the past two years with St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, New Jersey, to develop a House system that is unique to Villa's high school, which serves students in grades 7-12. The six student-led Houses are rooted in our foundational Benedictine values: Houses of Hospitality Prayer, Respect, Scholarship, Service, and Stewardship. Students and teachers completed an extensive Benedictine Preference Survey to determine their House, and the House Leadership Team sorted the students into their Houses. The ownership is entirely with the students as they plan, execute, and reflect on all programs and activities. The structure includes: One Head of Students (senior), three Deans (Activities, Wellness, Outreach), six Dean Assistants, and twelve House Leaders – all elected and trained the previous summer. Built into the daily schedule is a 30-minute House period devoted to specific activities, thus protecting important academic time:

- Monday: Convocation and House Meetings
- Tuesday: Club Meetings
- Wednesday: Wellness Programs
- Thursday: Prayer (Mass, Prayer Services, Sacrament of Reconciliation, etc.)
- Friday: Flex Day (Pep Rallies, House Competitions, Picnics, Service, etc. – all help earn House points)

This first year, each House is designing an individual logo and flag so that it reflects the Villa mission.

The elementary House system involves the younger students (Grades 1-6) in the promotion of character development, academic growth, and a sense of belonging. Their four houses – House of Givers (the soul), House of Friendship (the heart), House of Courage (strength) and House of Dreamers (the mind) - each has its own Benedictine Saint, guiding values, colors, symbols, and heritage connections. The elementary students were sorted into Houses during a Viking Sorting Ceremony held early in the school year, and they host weekly House meetings to pray, learn, grow, and earn House points. In addition to weekly House meetings, weekly House lunches and two Leadership Retreats encourage students to apply skills from House meetings and focus on communication and problem-solving. Recent House lessons have included:

- Positive Thinking: Turning complaints into optimistic or grateful statements
- Safety and Fun: Exploring everyday safety while engaging in friendly competition
- School Spirit: Showcasing creativity and teamwork
- Service: Serving others and participating in projects

Together, these two House systems are cultivating a culture where leadership is nurtured, relationships are strengthened, and every student has a place to belong. This is community in the Benedictine tradition—alive, joyful, and transformative.



The HS House of Prayer making rosaries.



Students from Altruismo - the House of Givers - wait to hear which house earned the most points.



SR. EMMANUEL - ART

Where Faith Becomes Beauty

Sr. Emmanuel earned her BA and MA in Fine Art over 16 summers at the University of Notre Dame, back when women could take classes only during summer sessions.



This is our third year sharing the joy of offering artwork by Sr. Emmanuel Pieper.

Now, at 97, Sr. Emmanuel continues to share her artistic gifts. This year's collection includes a limited number of signed prints, as well as note cards and Christmas cards featuring her original artwork.

A Benedictine Sister for more than 75 years, Sr. Emmanuel remains deeply grateful to her community for the many opportunities she has had to teach and create. If you want to find her, she is most likely in her studio, still creating art every day.



St. Walburg Monastery

Order Form

To see art close-up, go to stwalburg.org/art

Item	Description	Quantity	Suggested Donation	Amount
	11" x 14" print signed by Sr. Emmanuel		\$50	
	Note cards: (set of 10) 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" blank		\$10	
	11" x 14" print signed by Sr. Emmanuel		\$50	
	Note cards: (set of 10) 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" blank		\$10	
	11" x 14" print signed by Sr. Emmanuel		\$50	
	Note cards: (set of 10) 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" blank		\$10	
	11" x 14" print signed by Sr. Emmanuel		\$50	
	Note cards: (set of 10) 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" blank		\$10	
	"Light of the World" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"Prince of Peace" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"Behold the Shepherd Comes" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"The Immigrants" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"Hope for the World" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"The Divine Grace" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"Savior Comes" Christmas card: (set of 10) 5" x 7"		\$10	
	"Madonna and Child" by Frank Duveneck Note card: (set of 6) 5" x 7" blank		\$10	
	"Swirls" Note card: (set of 6 - 2 of each design) 5" x 7" blank		\$10	
	"Blue Wave" Note card: (set of 10) 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" blank		\$10	

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City State Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail this form and payment to:
St. Walburg Monastery - Art
2500 Amsterdam Road
Villa Hills, KY 41017

or email what you would like and pay
at pick up or go to
stwalburg.org for payment

Yes, I will pick up at St. Walburg

No, I will not pick up and would like item(s) to be mailed to address to the right. Contact swm.development@gmail.com for shipping cost.

ITEM MAY BE PICKED UP AT ST. WALBURG OR CONTACT SWM.DEVELOPMENT@GMAIL.COM FOR SHIPPING COST.	
TOTAL	
Check Enclosed	

Thank you for your support!

Questions?
[email swm.development@gmail.com](mailto:swm.development@gmail.com)

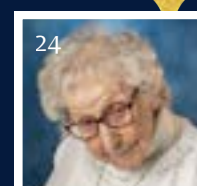
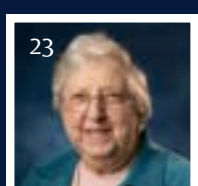
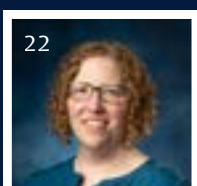
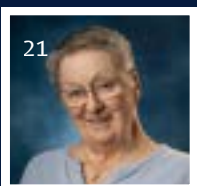
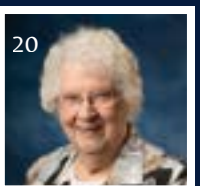
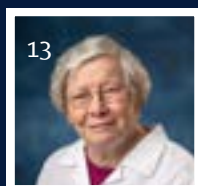
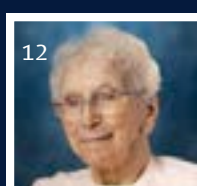
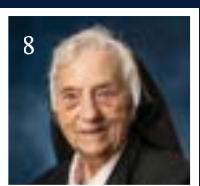
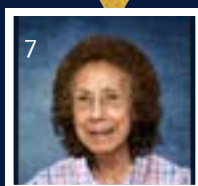
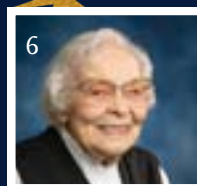
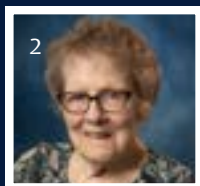
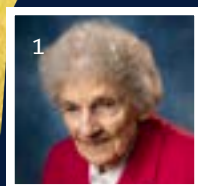




St. Walburg Monastery
2500 Amsterdam Road
Villa Hills, KY 41017

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Christmas Blessings to you and all you love.
Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg



Advent Calendar