

# Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert

Gobernador, New Mexico

Summer 2010



Dear Friends,

As we continue to build an oasis of peace, I hope life is well with each of you. Summer seems to be quickly coming to an end, at least here in Gobernador. The mornings have become crisp. Shuffling to the Chapel at 4 am, to sing praises to God. I am surprised to see a bush on our mesa slope turning red and know that something wondrous is afoot. I just can't see it yet.

Friends bring us fresh vegetables from their gardens and we are even blessed with chile in our freezer. Our life of prayer is a blessing and we pray for the needs of the world and for those who are ill.

New York Bestseller, *The Cloister Walk*, by Kathleen Norris (Published by Riverhead Books) shares the story of a Benedictine monk. "I realized," he wrote to friends, "that everything I've experienced since my original bout with cancer 20 years ago has been a grace... not a bad realization for a monk. I have never felt so surrounded by love. This is the most grace-filled time in my life, an unending source of hope and well-being at the core of my being- pure gift." In thanking the many who had been praying for him, he wrote, "Thanks for helping me to choose life in this time of fear and uncertainty. Something wondrous is afoot. I just can't see it yet."

I would like to say the same to each of you, "Thanks for helping us to choose life in our times of fear and uncertainty. Something wondrous is afoot. We just can't see it yet." I wish to share this story with you, as this week we received news of Sister Hilda's father, Juan Curuchich and my sister, Loretta Gonzales, who were diagnosed with cancer. We also add to our list of those battling cancer, Patrick, Mark, Kathy, Bernice and many others that you all know and love. Together let us courageously choose life with them. Courage is trusting in God's

mercy and love and with each step we grow in strength. Something wondrous is afoot. We just can't see it yet.

Some of the events that have taken place include Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> when we celebrated our first anniversary in Gobernador, a year of wondrous challenges and miracles as the building of the monastery continues one step at a time.

Through this past summer many people have come to visit and help with the on going construction. The Kitchen/ Refectory modular now has a much needed new roof with a greater slant for water drainage, plus insulation. What a difference this has made - the kitchen was cooler this summer and the slant will mean sisters will not have to shovel snow off the roof this winter! Through the generosity of the Donald Candelaria Family, and Ernest Valencia our one mile road has 50 truck loads of sandstone plus 4 culverts donated by Leo Pacheco. Gone are the days of sisters tumbling down the road and kicking up mud in their four wheel drive to pick up guests waiting at the highway gate.

The first weekend of August was the annual Santo Niño Family Reunion of the homesteaders of Gobernador. We are very proud to be part of that heritage, to share in the pioneer spirit of our country. An auction for the needs of the reunion grounds and improvements were part of the events. We donated an icon print by Sister Elizabeth, which brought in almost \$200.

August 28th, Feast of St Rose of Lima, found us joining our friends from Blanco and surrounding areas. We deeply appreciate the 18 months we stayed at the Parish allowing us to begin the building of the monastery in Gobernador. The Parish Hall is in need of replacement and fund raising is under way. At the fiesta there was an auction to help raise funds and Mother Julianne's rum cake and Apple Cake went for over \$700.

Ernest Valencia and crew are currently putting up the donated metal frame for the winter carport.

We are now in need of rolled insulation and pro-panel for the roof that covers an area of 1360 sq ft. Any help you can give with this need is much appreciated.

The challenges life bring us are before us, whether building a monastery or battling the fight of cancer. May we be given the grace to say with each new challenge, "Something wondrous is afoot, I just can't see it yet." Our prayers are with you.

Peace and Blessings,

*M. Benedicta Serna, OSB*

Mother Benedicta Serna, OSB

### In Grateful Gratitude

The nuns couldn't do the building projects without the fantastic support of churches and businesses and all those that have given their donations in the form of in-kind services and items needed for the monastery, especially those helping hands that contributed their time and efforts to our Ice Cream Social in June.

Many thanks to the many devoted people and we apologize for those that we have not included, especially to Juan Trujillo, who we overlooked thanking in our December newsletter. Mr. Trujillo hired a professional painter who not only painted the Chapel, but also textured and trimmed the edges of its walls, windows and ceilings. Thank you for helping to making our Chapel so beautiful.

This summer we had many angels helping us with gifts of service and/or materials.



*See how the Lord in His love shows us the way of life. Prologue, Rule of St. Benedict*

Come join our Benedictine Oblate Program  
You may be asking, "What is an Oblate?"

Benedictine Oblates are Christian men and women who wish to offer themselves to God through association with a Benedictine Religious Community so as to deepen, strengthen and enrich their Christian Faith.

The word oblate comes from the Medieval Latin word *Oblatus*.- one who offers herself/ himself to a monastery. Benedictine Oblates have been in existence since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Their history is fascinating, but that's for another time.

What does it mean to become an Oblate of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert?

As Christians we know that God first loved us and chose us (*Jn. 15:16*). He offered up His only begotten Son, to take on our humanity, in obedience unto death on a cross (*Phil. 2:6-11*), so as to enable us to grow into all that he created us to be. The life of every Christian is a self offering in which with great love and gratitude we respond to His choosing us first.

The Oblate program is a means through which one can grow more deeply into the image and likeness of Christ through Prayer; *Lectio Divina* (prayerful reading, meditating and praying with the Scriptures); mutual support with like minded Christians; discussions; etc.

We will come together once a month at the monastery for Mass, sharing a meal, a spiritual exercise, etc. Each Oblate group is generally organized according to the needs of its members. The first meeting is scheduled in the Spring. Please pray for our efforts.

If you would like to know more about the Oblate program, please contact Sister Mary by phone: 505-419-2938 or 505-419-3302 or e-mail: [monasterymary@gmail.com](mailto:monasterymary@gmail.com)



### Medal of St. Benedict

We have had requests to explain the lettering on the back of the medal of St. Benedict. Above the cross is *pax* (peace) that has been the Benedictine motto for centuries. On the arms of the cross there are initials of a Latin prayer: *Crux sacra sit mihi lux! Nunquam draco sit mihi dux!* (May the holy cross be my light! May the dragon never be my guide!)

In the angles of the cross there are letters C S P B, which stand for *Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti* (The cross of our holy Father Benedict).

Notice the letters around the outer section of the medal: V R S N S M V – S M Q L I V B:  
*Vade retro Satana! Nunquam suade mihi vana! Sunt malo quae libas. Ipse venana bibas!* (Another Latin prayer: Be gone Satan! Never tempt me with your vanities! What you offer me is evil. Drink the poison yourself!)

### Community Update

\*\*Plans are underway for our guesthouse as we come closer to our goal of \$90,000. As we have mentioned the Koch Foundation was generous to grant us \$20,000 and we have recently received \$6,400 from the Subiaco Solidarity Fund.

\*\*We are happy to welcome Sister Elvira Leyva-Padilla to our community from Mexico where she lived monastic life for several years but desired to live monastic life in the desert.

As most of you know Sister Elvira spent six months with us from Oct 2009-March 2010. The immigration papers were processed successfully. She picked up the English language quickly with the help of the Divine Office when she was with us and has been studying English in Mexico.



\*\*Sister Therese from Jamberoo Abbey is on the left shown with Sister Gertrude, newly professed. We are very excited to be welcoming Sister Therese, September 18th- October 30th. From time to time, our Mother House helps our little community to pause, regroup, reflect, and renew.



\*\*Father Terrence Kardong, OSB, who will be with us giving conferences this month Sept 18-25, is a monk of Assumption Abbey, Richardton, North Dakota. He is the author of “Benedicts Rule, A Translation and Commentary,” “Day by Day with St. Benedict,” (published by Liturgical Press). In addition, he is editor of *American Benedictine Review*. We look forward to this learning experience.



Our **Santo Niño Gift Shop** is up and running with espresso and regular grind coffee bags \$12 plus postage. You can choose from four delicious flavors via our website at [www.ourladyofthedesert.org](http://www.ourladyofthedesert.org). While you enjoy a cup of grand coffee you will be contributing to our future guesthouse. Thank you!

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*Listen...*

*And incline the ear of your heart*

“If there is a single master-theme in the prologue, it is the need for action. The first verse states succinctly: Accept my words and translate them into action! Throughout the exhortation, the listener is urged to take concrete steps to put the doctrine, Christian and monastic, into energetic practice. A religion such as Christianity, with its huge body of subtle and complex doctrines, runs the risk of getting bogged down in a morass of speculation; conversely, it can float around as a cloud of irrelevant piety. The Prologue takes a much more hardheaded line, demanding that we prove our religious convictions by solid deeds of fidelity to God.”

(Benedict’s Rule, A Translation and Commentary by  
Terrence G. Kardong, pg. 28)