

25th
Anniversary

Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert Solemnity of Our Holy Father Benedict July 11, 2015

September 2015 NEWSLETTER

“Let us rejoice in the Lord and celebrate this feast in honor of Benedict the Abbot, on whose solemnity the angels rejoice, giving praise to the Son of God.” (From the Entrance Antiphon for the Mass)



Early days in Santa Cruz, NM, 1990: Top Row: Sr. Scholastica, Sr. Mary Catherine; Front Row: Abbot Philip, Mother Julianne, and Sr. Benedicta
Visit our website to view the slides of our 25 years of history at www.ourladyofthedesert.org, Home page, entitled “25 Years of Blessings.”

This beautiful painting of Saint Benedict holding a cup with the snake by Sister Elizabeth Tran, represents the miracle of St Benedict when his brothers attempted to poison him because he was too zealous a superior in his younger days. He holds his Rule in his left hand. The background depicts our history in pictures: February 2, 1990, we began as Oblates of the Monastery of Christ the Desert, Abiquiu, NM. At that time the sisters lived in El Rito, NM, as shown in the upper right corner. Shortly after, the sisters moved to Santa Cruz, NM, where they lived from 1990 to 1997. The Church of Santa Cruz, to the right middle of St. Benedict, is where we attended daily Mass. In 1997 the monks of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert invited us to join them in the Chama Canyon, where we lived with the monks for 10 years (upper left image church of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert). On the Feast of St Anthony, June 13, 2008 our community moved to St Rose of Lima Parish, Blanco, NM, the temporary home for eighteen months, while the initial monastery was being built in Gobernador. On August 29, 2009, Passion of St John the Baptist, with the help of friends from Blanco and surrounding community we moved to Gobernador, NM. St Benedict is depicted surrounded by the big, endless expanse of Gobernador, symbolizing a prosperous move into the future!

We ask your prayers for our Sister Elizabeth who is pursuing a transfer of her vow of stability for health reasons to the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Missouri.

“Is it possible for God, to prepare a table in the Desert?” Ps 77:19

Dear Friends,

February 2, 2015, the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple began the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of our founding. As I pondered this important mile stone, I asked myself what brought us through these 25 years? Of course the only answer is, God. The reason for coming to the monastery is to seek God. When I discovered this was the purpose of monastic life it thrilled my heart, it is no wonder the sisters and I felt drawn to this life. The possibilities were exciting! Twenty five years of searching for God in the Desert. How have we found God? Well, it has not been in visions of Jesus or his mighty angels or holy saints; nor do we spend our days in ecstasy. I must admit all this I hoped for as a young nun! But we learn to find God “among the pots and pans,” as St Theresa of Avila liked to say. God is found in our daily dealings with each other, in serving each other, in the silence and solitude of the desert and in the guests who come to our door, not very glamorous but real.

Sometime during the early days of our move to Gobernador, New Mexico in August 2009, a question from Psalm 77 caught my attention, “Is it possible for God, to prepare a table in the Desert? This verse began to accompany me on my desert journey. We chant Psalm 77 every 2nd week at the Divine Office of Vigils at 4:30 AM. Just as we wait for the light of day to break forth I learned to wait for God to come forth as we build our monastery in honor of our Lady of the Desert.



The introduction to our psalter, “The Psalms”, explains that the psalms sing to us the human and divine history of Israel. Psalm 77 is the story of Israel’s journey through the desert and is entitled, “God’s patience and humanity’s ingratitude”. In reality, the Psalms speak of our own human and divine history, which includes times of ingratitude and fear, the human condition. But if there is anything this desert journey has taught me is that God’s patience and compassion always wins out in the end and with his grace so will our compassion and gratefulness. Over the past 25 years I came to realize that challenging questions and people and times make our faith stronger as we stumble along. Like the Israelites in the desert, our journey is forming us into living witnesses of Him who is full of compassion, our God

who forgives our questioning doubts and fears and continues with us on this **JOURNEY OF FAITH**. How blessed we are to have friends like you who have also journeyed with us through these past 25 years.

Thank you. It is your love and support that has made it possible. Please know we hold you in our daily prayers as we begin our next 25 years!

Peace and Blessings,

M. Benedicta Serna, OSB

Mother Benedicta Serna, OSB, Prioress

Mother Benedicta puts her sisters to work on July 11th, but they have time for a pose. Shown are Patricia, Mother Benedicta and Roberta.





Pope Francis Declares a Year of Consecrated Life Nov 30, 2014 – Feb 2, 2016: "Look to the past with gratitude, the present with passion ...Live the present with passion...Embrace the future with hope."

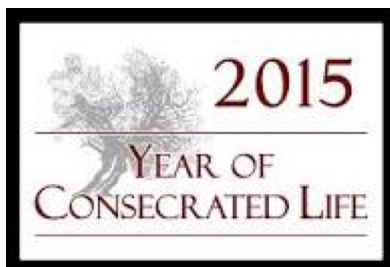
Canonical visitors, with guests and community: Bottom row: Mother Mary Elizabeth Kloss, St. Scholastica Priory, Petersham, Massachusetts, Right Rev. Dom Cuthbert Brogan, St. Michael's Abbey, Farnborough, Hampshire, United Kingdom, Mother Julianne. Second row are S. Hilda, S. Maria Manzano, also from St. Scholastica Priory, S. Guadalupe, S. Agnes Le and Mother Benedicta. Top row are S. Kateri, S. Mary and Brother Francis Martinez, from the Monastery of Christ in the Desert.

CANONICAL VISITATION - *In administering correction she (superior) should act prudently and not go to excess, lest in seeking too eagerly to scrape off the rust she break the vessel (Rule of St. Benedict, 64).* In his Rule, St. Benedict takes into account charity keeping in mind those times of necessary corrections for the community members. - The overall purpose of a monastic visitation is to help the community grow in self-understanding, to recognize and acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses, to identify what should be corrected or eliminated in our monastic life and to help with the vision and values. As part of the Catholic Church, a visitation helps to further the progress of our vocation. The visitors, Abbot Cuthbert & Mother Mary Elizabeth stressed the concept of help and encouragement during our visitation July 20-21, 2015, and spoke individually with each sister. The final report was very positive and we were reassured of the stability of the community. The sisters will now work on some of the suggestions to make our community even stronger.

VOCATION – Each person has a vocation. God created each person with gifts and talents toward a specific way of life, a vocation to serve God and others in a unique way, whether it be the single life, married life, or consecrated life.

With your support, we were able to purchase and prepare a 6- bedroom building, St. Walburga, to house candidates interested in our monastic way of life. Now, we look forward to three women coming for a time of discernment to share our life: Dailes from Zambia, who has received a visa and will begin planning her flight very soon; Maria Rosario from Vera Cruz, Mexico, is waiting for an invitation letter for her Visa; and Cynthia from Austin, Texas, has asked to return for an Observership. We ask that you join us in praying for these women that they may know the will of God in their lives.

Please share this newsletter with the young women who might have a monastic vocation! Help us continue building a monastery of women dedicated to a life of prayer for the world and worship of God almighty in silence and solitude in the desert tradition of monastic life. Our next **"Come and See," vocation weekend is planned for November 20-22, 2015.**





Along with the Presider, Bishop James E. Wall, there were nine priests who celebrated the Mass for the Solemnity of St. Benedict. Over 150 friends from far and near joined us for this great day.

In his homily, Bishop James E. Wall, emphasized the virtue of humility in our lives as taught by St. Augustine of Hippo. He came to realize that only a person with humility can follow Christ.



Plans for the construction of the St. Joseph patio began in February 2015. By March 2015, the lumber for the covering was purchased. The work on the frame for the concrete floor and the placement of the spike beams, began. The project also included the framing, placing of the rebar and the trench work necessary for the foundation. Thank you to all who have helped with the building projects since 2008, here in Gobernador.

MONASTERY NEWS - In April of this year, our Chaplain, Fr. Thomas Benedict, a monk from the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, spent three months giving formation classes at St. Benedict's Abbey in Polokwane, Limpopo, South Africa. We are blessed with his talents and help with many of our projects. His dog, Rosco, likes to take Father for walks. Check out U-tube, "Rosco Scaring a Rabbit from a Pipe."

Sister Agnes Le enjoys gardening. tending to the beautiful flowers and vegetables, plus painting the sacramental candles. She attended her son's wedding in Kansas for a few days. - Sister Guadalupe is now creating handmade chains for small and large crosses. We appreciate her efforts in being the chantress and playing the keyboard. - Mother Julianne continues to manage the bookkeeping and loves to pamper those cats. She is the community driver and makes sure the cars are in good shape.

From February thru August 2015, Sister Kateri took a sixth month leave to help her ill parents. She is transitioning back to the community in full force. This summer she completed a 2-year online Benedictine Spiritual Formation Program, with the sisters of Benet Hill, Colorado Springs, CO. - Sister Hilda takes care of the Guesthouse and does a great job in making the assignments for the sisters. She also assists in bookkeeping and still has time to weave beautiful bookmarks. We look forward to her mother's visit from Guatemala. Sister Mary is pretty much the keeper of our cats. Currently, she tends our little Santo Niño Giftshop, and is always willing to give a hand with liturgical and English pronunciation, as well as serving as Portress. - Mother Benedicta spent a few days with her family for the one year anniversary of the death of her brother, Johnny Serna.

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"THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE, I'M GONNA LET IT SHINE!"**



CHRISTMAS CANDLES

- C1 - NATIVITY 1
- C2 - NATIVITY 2



LOVE CANDLES

- L1 - LOVE IS GENTLE
- L2 - GOD IS LOVE
- L3 - LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



- B1 - GOD BLESS YOU ON YOUR BIRTHDAY
- B2 - MAY GOD SHOWER BLESSINGS UPON YOU
- B3 - MAY THE ROAD RISE UP TO MEET YOU AND THE
WIND BE AT YOUR BACK AND THE LORD HOLD
YOU ALWAYS IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND

OTHER CANDLES

Order form for these candles on next page

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Blanco, NM 87412-0556

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Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Questions?
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505-419-2938

PRICE INCLUDES SHIPPING

ITEM	COST/EACH	QTY	TOTAL
B1-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
B2-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
B3-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
C1-Parafin wax, 3x6"	\$19.95		\$
C2-Parafin wax, 3x6"	\$19.95		\$
L1-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
L2-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
L3-Parafin wax, 2x9"	\$14.95		\$
TOTAL COST OF ORDER			\$

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BAPTISM



1ST HOLY COMMUNION

CONFIRMATION



WEDDING



HOLY ORDERS

Thank you for purchasing our crafts!

God reward you for your generosity in supporting our monastic way of life.

Let us pray for Pope Francis for his apostolic journey to the United States, which is scheduled for September 22-27, 2015. He will visit Washington, New York and Philadelphia.

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY
DEC 8, 2015 – NOV 20, 2016
“It will be a Holy Year of Mercy.” - Pope Francis

MERCY CHANGES EVERYTHING by Father Thomas Benedict Baxter

There were two monks who committed a very serious sin when they went to the village to sell their wares. But they were wise enough not to let the devil trick them into discouragement and so they came back to the desert and went to the Abba to confess their sins. To ease them into their conversion, they were asked to go and live on their own for one month on bread and water, to pray and do penance. When the time was over, Abba himself came over to reunite them with the disciples. However he was very surprised because one came out grim, downcast and pale while the other was radiant, buoyant and brisk.

"What did you meditate upon?" Abba asked. The sad monk answered: "I thought constantly on the punishment which I merit and the justice of God". The joy-filled monk answered: "Well, I would remind myself constantly of the mercy of God and the love which Jesus Christ had for the sinner." Both of them were joyfully accepted back in the community but Abba remarked on the wisdom of the brother who kept his mind fixed on the *compassion of God*.

Cardinal Walter Casper in speaking of the mercy of God teaches: *“Mercy is the faithfulness of God to his own being as love. Because God is love. And mercy is the love revealed to us in concrete deeds and words. So mercy becomes not only the central attribute of God, but also the key of Christian existence. Be merciful as God is merciful. We have to imitate God’s mercy.”*
(Commonweal, May 7, 2014)

Christian community is called to manifest concrete deeds of love, mercy and forgiveness. It is the only way that we can be sustained in our commitment to the Gospel. As a priest, when I hear confessions, I know that my task is not judgement but reconciliation. God calls those who are far off to come near and we need to meet them on the way not with condemnation but with the warm embrace of mercy. The Gospel story of the Prodigal teaches us this in a very strong way.

Our prayers before God in the Eucharist are filled with petitions for mercy: “Kyrie eleison, have mercy on us Lord.” We who cry for mercy must offer it in turn. This means being compassionate to those who reach out to us for mercy and forgiveness. It is not an optional way of living together. It is the only way to live together. This is the first lesson in living in community and the primary way that we witness to the Gospel in the world.

Who is it that needs your forgiveness today?

Who is it that cries out for mercy at your door?



Blessed the Merciful, They Shall Receive Mercy!