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# Solitude in a Busy World: Building Our Lady of the Desert

*"The monastery itself ought to be built so as to contain all necessities within it...so that nuns shall have no need to wonder abroad, as this is not helpful for their souls."*

- Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia, Italy (5th Century)

by Lindsey Bright

In medieval times, stonemasons, woodcutters, and blacksmiths all worked together as a large team of masterbuilders. That tradition continues today into the 21st Century with modern equipment such as backhoes, cranes, chain saws, electric drills, and also prefabricated modular buildings.

Constructing a monastery requires a tremendous amount of work and faith, which poses a great challenge, especially for a small group of Benedictine nuns living in Gobernador, New Mexico—a rural area in northern New Mexico—where they are raising up the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert with the help of the surrounding community.

In Gobernador, the oil field workers are no longer the lone sound makers. There are hammers, saws, and nail guns, all roaring upward with monastic chants. A road was built, and the land was leveled. A water well was successfully drilled during a Novena to Saint Joseph. Electricity and gas were installed, along with a septic system. A brand new modular building from Homes Direct was custom made, purchased,

and delivered. Two modular buildings were donated and with the generous help of new and old friends of the monastery painting, laying linoleum, putting in a new roof, and tearing out partitions to enlarge rooms, the modulars were transformed into a small lovely chapel and kitchen and refectory with two guestrooms.

During this phase, the sisters continued their prayers seven times a day, coming together to chant the Divine Office—the official prayer of the Church. In between this, they cooked for the workers and learned a lot of “how-to’s,” such as maneuvering a backhoe and sheetrocking. As the first snows of winter began, the portals that covered the walkways were completed, allowing the sisters to walk from one building to another during one of the worst winters in 20 years.

Each sister was assigned a section of the concrete walkway to sweep and shovel each hour to keep the walkways from freezing. In the spring, students from Saint Francis Catholic School in Lumberton and two forest rangers from Chama volunteered their time to plant 100 trees and shrubs.

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