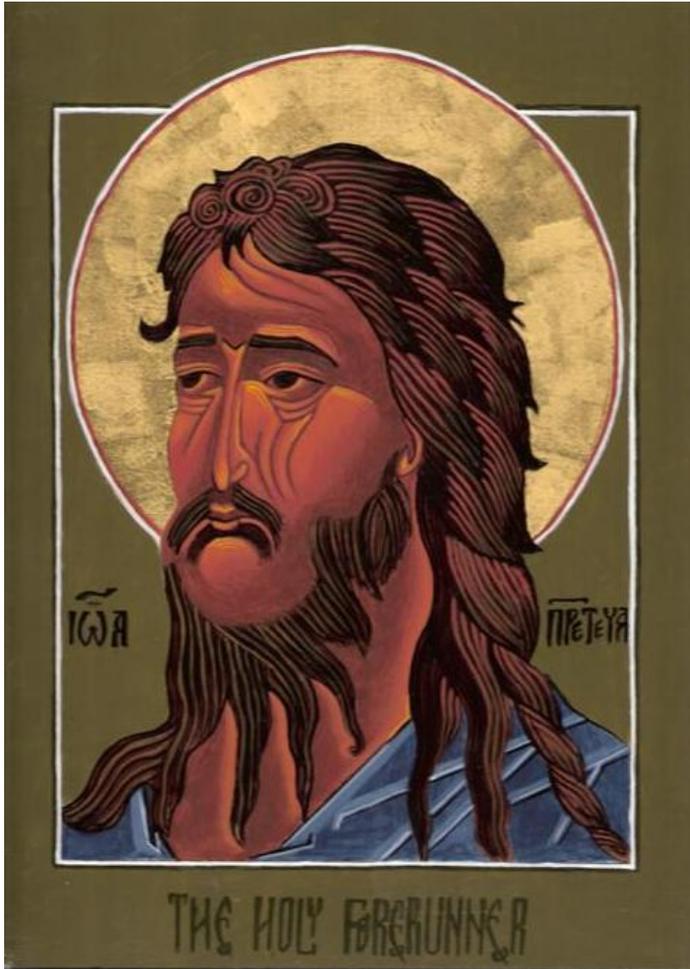


Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert

Gobernador, New Mexico

Advent 2009

A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord..' "' Luke 3:4



From a commentary by Eusebius of Caesarea, bishop (Cap.40:PG24, 366-367) The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. The prophecy makes clear that it is to be fulfilled, not in Jerusalem but in the wilderness: it is there that the glory of the Lord is to appear and God's salvation is to be made known to all... It was in the wilderness that God's saving presence was proclaimed by John the Baptist, and there that God's salvation was seen. The words of this prophecy were fulfilled when Christ and his glory were made manifest to all: after his baptism the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rested on him, and the Father's voice was heard, bearing witness to the Son: This is my beloved Son, listen to him. The prophecy meant that God was to come to a deserted place, inaccessible from the beginning...Prepare the way of the Lord: the way is the preaching of the Gospel, the new message of consolation, ready to bring to all...the knowledge of God's saving power."

From Mother Benedicta

....I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord with courage. Be stout hearted and wait for the Lord!

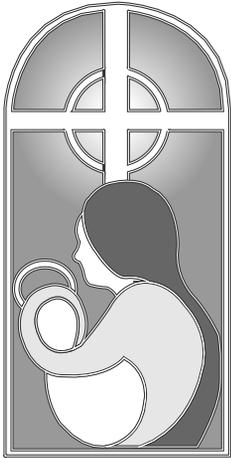
Psalm 27:13-14

Dear Friends and Family,

Truly we have seen the goodness of the Lord in the high desert land of Gobernador through the love and kindness of so many people like you who are with us while we build the monastery. On August 29, 2009, after two years of dreaming, planning and building we made the move to the initial monastery in Gobernador, New Mexico We could not have done it without the help of our friends and neighbors from St Rose of Lima, Blanco and beyond! Thank you for joining us on this walk of faith, for giving of your time, talents and financial help. It has been a journey of challenges, of waiting in prayer and when the doors opened ever so slightly, taking courage with apprehension and moving forward.

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We hope that you enjoy the pictures and excerpts from our daily chronicles throughout this newsletter, which is our way of sharing this adventure with you. We invite you to, COME and SEE, come for a day or two of *Ora et Labora* (pray and work), to experience our Benedictine tradition with us. At present we have two guest rooms available (for women only) and have begun plans for a four-bedroom guest house for both men and women. Grant requests have gone out and fund raising events are in the planning stages to begin construction of an additional guest house in the spring. The Journey of Trust continues!

Enclosed are raffle tickets for an exquisite quilt made by Julia Lobato, of St Rose of Lima, Blanco and genuine pieces of donated jewelry. We will soon post more information on our website at www.ourladyofthedesert.org. The raffle will be on February 2, Presentation of the Lord, the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert.

During the pilgrimage of our Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Holy Land in May he encouraged the people with the words of our beloved Pope John Paul II, “Do not be afraid...be a bridge of dialogue and constructive cooperation in the building of a culture of peace to replace the present stalemate of fear, aggression and frustration. Build up your local Churches, making them workshops of dialogue, tolerance and hope, as well as solidarity and practical charity.” These words speak of Benedictine hospitality. As Benedictines we join the peoples of the Holy Land “in being witness to the power of life of the Risen Christ that can transform even the darkest and most hopeless situation. Our world not only needs new economic and community structures, but a new ‘spiritual infrastructure’ capable of galvanizing the energies of all men and women of good will in the service of education, development and the promotion of the common good.”

Together as we “wait for the Lord,” let us take up this challenge of Pope Benedict XVI by building an oasis of peace in our troubled world as witnesses of God among us. And, may we fix our hearts to the idea that in times of doubt, instead of desolation; we go forward with courage, strength and trust. I pray that the Christmas readings of our Savior Jesus Christ bring you and your loved ones peace, joy and love, especially throughout the New Year.

Peace and Blessings,

M. Benedicta Serna, OSB

Mother Benedicta Serna, OSB, Prioress



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NOTES FROM 2009

We are so grateful to all of you who have supported us in so many ways, i.e., providing prayers, encouragement, advice, food, building materials, labor and so many, many other things that have given us the beginnings of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert in Gobernador. The list of names is unending!

During the winter months of this past year we had to cut a road to the property in Gobernador, NM, contact professionals, hook up utilities, dig a water well and install a water pump. Sister Mary was busy making many phone calls and made arrangements with Homes Direct of Farmington regarding the design, plans and purchase of the new 8-cell modular building and placement of the building on the property. Robert Florez helped to organize volunteer committees for the move to Gobernador. Mother Benedicta, Sisters Mary and Kateri also took time during the winter months to attend a development workshop with Dot Teso, Director of the Catholic People's Foundation, Diocese of Gallup. **February 2** Presentation of the Lord - Feast - Today was the 19th anniversary of the founding of our community. At the end of February the sisters go out to check on the possibility of a water storage tank



Volunteers putting in the culverts for the road; drilling for water; and the sisters getting ready to take a tour of our modular building with Deserie Peguero at the factory of Karsten Homes in Albuquerque, NM.



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Sister Janice shown with Mother Benedicta taking a brisk walk in Gobernador - **February 5** Sister Janice Robertson arrived from our mother house, Jamberoo Abbey in Australia. It was a good visit and she helped us with the Divine Office and also guided us through an expectation reality check. Sister Janice stayed with us until April 16 - **March 19** Saint Joseph, Husband of Mary – Solemnity - Our novena of Masses ended today for the intentions of those without work, those who are struggling to support their families.

With spring in the air the sisters start cooking and sending meals to the workers on the property. Mother Benedicta and Sister Mary have meetings with Ernest Valencia, to start leveling the land in Gobernador.

Below are pictures of the leveled land and then to the right an areal view of the buildings.

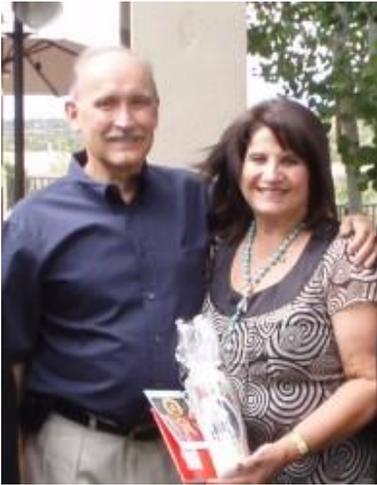


May 4 - Father Fernando Salazar Hool arrived from Mexico. Fr. Fernando is a monk and architect at the Monastery of La Soledad in Mexico. He was with us until May 22, to help design our permanent monastery on the top of the mesa. Equipped with tools and ready for staking and measuring are Father Fernando, Mother Benedicta and Sister Hilda.

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June 13 We are here one year today at the St. Rose of Lima Parish in Blanco, NM. - During the next few months we planned for the set-up of electrical lines for the property in Gobernador, discussed the possibilities of getting propane and solar energy. Volunteers helped the sisters with the cooking for the workers who are renovating the two modular buildings and setting up the septic system. Mother Benedicta bought the paint and other supplies for a modular donated by Valley National Bank, Espanola, NM, and continued to make necessary phone calls. - **June 20** Marie Colon, from Farmington, NM, sponsors a "Mostly Mozart Tea" fund raiser in her home from 2-4 pm, which was well attended. Lori Lovato, clairnet; Cherokee Randolph, viola; and, Michael Bowen, on piano, volunteered their musical talents and entertained us with music from Mozart. Below is a picture of Dr. Francisco Colon and his wife Marie.



For the month of June volunteers assisted with the construction of the pump house and the sisters were busy either cooking or helping putting foam in the space pockets of the modular buildings, etc. Mother Benedicta and Sister Mary put up a big tent with the help of other volunteers - **July 11 Solemnity of Saint Benedict** – We had our official first Mass under a tent and a pot luck shared by many.

July 31 thru August 1 – The sisters took time to work on their crafts and received items donated by generous friends to sell at a garage sale in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the home of Sister Kateri's parents, Mr. & Mrs. Ernest M. Lovato. – During these summer months the sisters kept the construction site clean and assisted with removing the carpet and linoleum of the Refectory building by taking out staples from the floor. The new floor was provided by Timmy, Anita and family. The workers insulated the Chapel with mud, texture, nails, tape and dry wall. Thanks also to Matilda de Herrera, Irene Troy, Barbara Serna, Pauline Montoya, Reyes Marin, Juan Tafoya, and Ishmael Garcia, Jesus Fuentes and Harry Lobato for their work in the Refectory and other contributions.



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Besides counting her blessings, Mother Benedicta counted bricks to be laid for the foundation of the new 8-cell modular, which was transported to Gobernador. Did she have enough? Yes, thanks be to God!

We are grateful to the youth who helped us with our funding with a garage sale in August. Thank you Isabella Chavez and Augusta Gallegos!

August 31 - Organized, unpacked and settled in our new 8-cell modular building in Gobernador, NM. What a special day! All is well. Some of the sisters went back to St. Rose of Lima Educational Center to clean. We are very thankful for the efforts of Fr. Jim Walker, who arranged for us to stay at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Blanco while we prepared the move to the property.

September 26-27 We sold our crafts at the San Juan Winery Festival. **October 1** Sister Elvira Leyva Padilla arrived from Mexico. She is interested in our monastic way of life. **October 11-17** - Father Brendan Creedan, OSB, from Holy Cross Monastery in Chicago, Illinois, was our Retreat Master. **November 7** – We were honored by the visit of Bishop James S. Wall, who was here for the Blessing of our monastery. Bishop James blessed everyone, including our cells, Refectory, Chaplains Quarters, Pump House and the Chapel.



Pump house to the left, next to the 8-cell modular building. Note the supplies protected under the portal from the first snow fall.

Before restoration of interior Chapel



Juan Tafoya donated the paint for our new Chapel; tabernacle crafted by Nick Chavez; statue of St. Joseph donated to us by Felix Herrera and family; flooring and installation provided by Timmy and Anita Martinez and family; electric service by Ernest Monster Montoya.



Renovation of the Refectory took many helping hands!

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Peace On Earth



Special blessings,
Special friends!