

Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert PO Box 556, Blanco, NM 87412-0556

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Advent 2012

Dear Friends,

Once again we come to the end of another Liturgical Year and the beginning of the Holy Season of Advent. Also, our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has called us to a Year of Faith which began October 11, 2012. (You can visit "Vatican.va/" for updates.) Advent and Faith, do they have meaning for people of the 21st Century? I believe they have a lot to offer our world that is suffering from war, disease, financial crisis... The Advent Season is a season of preparation for Christmas, the time we remember Christ's birth among us, God becoming man because he loves us. *The Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation. Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world. (Porta Fidei 1).* I believe these words alone can be our Advent prayer to guide us into Christmas.



For us at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert, it was taking a Journey of Trust, leaving our home alongside the monks of Christ in the Desert and moving to Gobernador where we have been living a life of faith for four year as we continue to build the monastery rock by rock, building by building, step by step. With trepidation and fear we took the risk to build a monastery in the desert, trusting that God would provide and God has. We have experienced one miracle after the other. This summer we thought we were just going to be setting up the Guesthouse but the money came not only for the setup of the Guesthouse but St Joseph Center as well. All this has come about because of your faith in us and your willingness to take this Journey of Faith with us. I realize now our Journey of Trust, as I called it, was really a Journey of Faith, in our faithful God who loves us all. May all of us continue to grow in our faith and love of God. Thank you for your encouragement and love. A most blessed Advent and Christmas to you. Our daily prayers are with you and your loved ones. Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!

M. Benedicta Serna, OSB

M Benedicta Serna, OSB, Prioress

Advent is also a time for us to prepare for Christ's second coming at the end of time, which can be a scary subject. In the Gospel of Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36 for the 1st Sunday of Advent Jesus tells his disciples, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth, nations will be in dismay... people will die of fright ... And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." This is where faith comes in.

Pope Benedict XVI Apostolic Letter tells us, "The door of faith (Acts of the Apostles 14:27) is always open to us, ushering us into the life of communion with God." He goes on to tell us that it is through the word of God that our hearts are transformed and readied for a life centered on God. It is in the word that we meet Jesus who gives us life. Meeting Jesus in his word transforms our hearts to step out in faith. And, with each step of faith our faith grows.



As we searched for a Chaplain, Deacon Roger Garcia, occasionally would celebrate the Communion Service for us. In September he blessed our new Missals. – We now have a Chaplain – Let us pray for all priests and deacons.



The statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Patron of our Gallup Diocese. The statue was given to us by Donna and Victor Lovato. The statue is located in a new *nicho* in our Chapel.



In August 2012, the doors of the Guesthouse were opened. It took about eight months to set it up; it was an exciting and challenging summer. The cement portal was poured just in time to receive a guest. With Mother Julianne’s eye for beauty, the Guesthouse is nicely furnished. Please read the enclosed brochure for details.

Besides the Guesthouse, we were also happy to set up the St. Joseph Center, a gift from the Abbey of St. Walburga, Virginia Dale, CO. The outside of the building was repainted, and cement was poured for the *patio*, and five large windows added. The kitchen area has been remodeled and conference tables and chairs are in place. The St. Joseph Center can now be booked for meetings.



Our guests going for coffee at the St. Joseph Center after Mass on Sunday.



Our new Novice, Sister Mary Agnes Le Doan, was clothed with the monastic habit on Sept. 15, 2012, Our Lady of Sorrows. She is now studying the Psalms with the Benedictine Distance Learning Program through the Monastery of the Ascension. They offer many classes of interest. www.idahomonks.org/

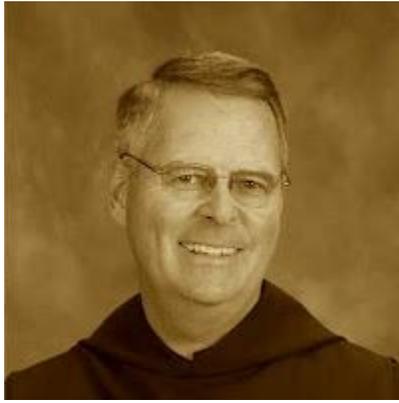
Welcome to Our New Guesthouse and St. Joseph Center

Our 4-room Guesthouse modular building was delivered last year in December to the tune of \$105,000.00. This would not have been possible without the help of volunteers, foundation grants, fund raising events, and the generosity of the many pastors who supported us by allowing us to sell our crafts and religious items in the parishes.



Blanco, Ms. Kitty and Feisty say, “Don’t forget to fill out your Raffle tickets. This will help us get through the cold winter months!”

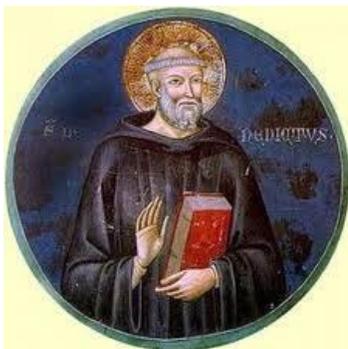
Brother Daniel Sokol, OSB, from the Prince of Peace Abbey in California, directed our retreat, October 1-7, 2012. One of the themes posted on the white board at the St. Joseph



Ctr. was, *Liturgy is the place we go to Encounter Christ*. Visit the Abbey's website at: <http://princeofpeaceabbey.blogspot.com/>

Commentary by Sister Hilda

The title of Chapter 73, Rule of St. Benedict is, "This Rule only a Beginning of Perfection." In June 2012, I attended a month of classes with Sister Aquinata Böckmann, OSB, a true scholar from the Missionary Sisters of Tutzing. The classes were held at the Immaculata Spiritual Center in Norfolk, Nebraska. For the whole month, Sister Aquinata helped us to reflect on the sinful community of people during the time of St. Benedict of Nursia. In his Rule, St. Benedict mentions about monks who are proud, negligent, murmurers; the list goes on. When we look at ourselves we are not free from vices nor from the "demons," as the Desert Fathers would say. It is no wonder that life in community and in families, is not easy. When we look around and see the difficulties others are facing, we should not think what is wrong with them, but ask the question, "What is wrong with me?" – The good news is that Jesus Christ is our hope. He has conquered sin and death on the cross for us (New Testament, Romans 5:12-21). This Year of Faith invites us to renew our relationship with Jesus Christ. May God bless you!



The reason we have written this rule is that, by observing it in monasteries, we can show that we have some degree of virtue...RB73:1

Community Update

We welcomed Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB, Ph.D., for a week in July. Her third workshop with us was entitled "Conversation on Monastic Living and Practices." Our goal for the week was to have a deeper understanding of the Rule of St. Benedict and its application today. Sister Kateri learned that it is important for her to listen to others without condemning or judging in conversation and to open the window of her heart to let faith enter into her day.

After a year of studying English, Sister Guadalupe is grateful to be back at the monastery, enjoying the silence and solitude. Currently, she is studying about prayer, common life and monastic work.

Mother Julianne continues to be our *chauffeur*, making sure our vehicles are in tip top shape, sewing, and helping the sisters with her expertise of cooking and spiritual direction.



In December 2011, Sister Kateri made a 30-day hermit retreat at the Norbertine Monastery, in ABQ, NM. www.norbertinecommunity.org/ and appreciated the kindness & hospitality she received. Now, as Novice Mistress, she is guiding Sister Mary Agnes Le.

A smiley Sister Mary transports cleaning or food supplies from the monastery to the Guesthouse. She is now our Guest Mistress, getting her exercise and enjoying her new assignment.

Sister Elizabeth is in her final year of studying Fine Arts at the Community College of NM in ABQ, NM. She hopes to be with us for Christmas.

In May, Sister Hilda also attended a 5-day Gregorian Chant Workshop at the St. Vincent College in Latrobe, PA. One of the topics, "Why Sing Gregorian Chant?"



Sister Elizabeth feels right at home with the Canossian Daughters of Charity, where she is staying while studying her final year of Fine Arts at CNM in ABQ. God bless the Canossians for their ministry. Visit Their website: www.canossiansisters.org



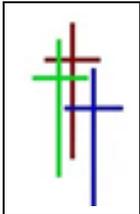
Hats off to the Knights of Columbus who helped us with the Bingo at our 3rd fun-filled Ice Cream Social in June.



Dr. & Mrs. Colon hosted a successful Classical Musical Get Together in August. Thanks to Melissa Sassaman, Lori Lovato, and, Brian Tuffnell, for playing "Mozart Trios for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon."



Thank you Donna & Victor Lovato for the statue of the Sacred Heart. God bless you.



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