

**MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE DESERT
GOVERNADOR, New Mexico**

Lent 2011



RETURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD.

From the 1st reading of Ash Wednesday, the book of the prophet Joel 2:12

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your love, support and prayers, as we celebrate our second Lent here in Gobernador. The Rule of St Benedict has a chapter just on Lent, Chapter 49 The Observance of Lent, in which Benedict tells us that Lent is a time for us to wash away the negligence of the past year, a time to return to the Lord our God. Well, my Lenten return started a little early this year.

After three years of fundraising, two moves and seemingly nonstop building projects, it was time for me as Prioress, to take a break. I spent two weeks at Santa Rita Abbey, Trappistine Monastery (www.santaritabbey.org), in the desert foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson, Arizona.

Until I returned to the monastery and found myself in quiet peaceful prayer, I didn't even know how much I needed this time away. Remaining still, at peace, in solitude, I saw an image of what my prayer time had become - hamster running on the treadmill, round and round, getting nowhere. I, of course, was the hamster. As I let everything around me build up, the lists of community needs, the needs of the monastery, building plans, circled around me making a useless running. And then I was continuing to scurry by on my treadmill made of needs. Finally, through the help of the good sisters of Santa Rita, the hand of God reached down and stopped the treadmill, and I got off. Even in the monastery how easy it is to get caught up in the concerns and worries of life. Did you know we can miss heaven by 18 inches? This is the approximate distance between the head and the heart. (American Feb 7, 2011, *A Theology of Migration* by Daniel G. Groody). The silence and solitude of Santa Rita

Abbey helped me to become aware of where my thoughts were taking me. My time away allowed me to stop, step off the treadmill and begin the 18 inch journey back to my heart.

I look forward to the completion of our Guesthouse, a place where the silence and solitude of the desert can renew the hearts of those searching for God and allow them to hear the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. Until our Guesthouse is ready please take time for a retreat, two weeks, one week, one day, half a day, half an hour. Find a monastery or retreat house or a church. Many cities now have Blessed Sacrament Chapels; stop by for 10 minutes with Jesus! Return to the Lord your God! Our prayers are with you and your loved ones during this Holy Season of Lent.

Peace and Blessings,

M. Benedicta Serna, OSB

M Benedicta Serna, OSB
Prioress



January 17-21, 2011, Mother Benedicta attended the Mexican and USA superiors meeting of the Subiaco Congregation at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert. She is shown welcoming the superiors to our monastery. She enjoys showing visitors our chapel – all the good God has done for us through the help of so many loving, generous people!



A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Ps 51:12

Lent is upon us once again. We often think of this time as one of giving up certain foods or entertainment, etc. I would like to briefly share another practice that can be very enlightening and encouraging, *Lectio Divina*. (Reading Scripture). It is a way of reading the Scriptures, thinking about what I've read, praying about what I hear God saying to me. Then, quietly I am in God's presence.

Lectio can be done alone, with family, prayer group, or a friend, the list is endless. You may want to use the following list of Lenten Gospels for *Lectio*:

- 1st Sunday of Lent** - Temptation in the Desert –
Matthew 4:1-11
- 2nd Sunday of Lent** – Transfiguration –
Matthew 17:1-9
- 3rd Sunday of Lent** - Samaritan Women at the Well
John 4:5-42
- 4th Sunday of Lent** - Blind man healed on Sabbath, disbelief - John 9:1-42
- 5th Sunday of Lent** - Raising Lazarus –
John 11:1-45
- Palm Sunday** - Passion Narrative –
Matthew 26:14 - 27:66

When and how often you spend time with the Gospel is your choice. You can spend five or more minutes daily or perhaps once a week for 30 minutes to an hour depending upon the needs of the group and the ages. The goal is not “to read and meditate on every one of them before Easter.” *Lectio* is NOT a time for study! When we want to get to know someone we spend ‘time with them.’ We LISTEN and we RESPOND to the other.

Lectio is a way of coming to know God more intimately. It is a way of listening for God's word in our heart. After slowly reading the passage and a time of reflection, we may ask ourselves “What do I hear God saying to me?” Or “What do I hear God asking me to be aware of or to do?” We pray that you all have a very blessed and fruitful Lent and may you come to KNOW the incredible greatness of God's love for you.

Sister Mary

Become an Oblate

Oblates are individuals who associate themselves with a Benedictine community in order to develop a Christian way of life according to the wisdom of St. Benedict. They strive to become holy in their way of life by combining their prayer and work, helping to make God present in our society. With the coming of spring to the desert, we will be having our first Oblate meeting on **Sunday, May 15, 2011, beginning with Mass at 10 am, followed by an Introduction, meal, and ending with the Divine Office at 2 pm.** Please RSVP by May 1. You can contact us via our website or email me directly at monasterymary@gmail.com

Your Sister in the Lord, Sister Mary



Rule of St. Benedict on Lent

Benedict's chapter on Lent (Rule of St. Benedict 49:1-10) starts off a little vigorous in verse 1, “The life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent.” Then he gently instructs his monks how to improve their spiritual lives, “By devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial...so that each of us will have something above the assigned measure to offer God,” (verses 4,5,6). By using the word “us,” St. Benedict not only instructs his monks, but also includes himself in his instruction. He walked the talk. By Sister Kateri

Guest House Update



Foundation, with water lines & septic system are ready for the Guesthouse!

Since receiving the grant from the Koch Foundation, we have collaborated with our local electrical, solar energy, plumbing, forestry and heavy equipment specialists to set up the foundation, septic system and water lines.

Because of the economic situation, global warming, and most recently, the loss of natural gas this winter in the state of New Mexico, we felt it wise to build a self sustaining Guesthouse and monastery. Mark Snyder, an electrical engineer, who specializes in “Net Zero Energy Star” modular buildings, the co-founder of Woodland Homes, website: www.woodlandhomesusa.com, has evaluated our land and the present buildings and made recommendations for improving heating and cooling retention of the present and future modular buildings. This will decrease our energy costs.

On a second visit in December 2010, Mark re-evaluated the solar photo-voltaic and solar thermal energy logistics. We had been considering geo-thermal energy for heating and hot-water. However, because of our rocky ground the cost would have been prohibitive. After further consultations and three follow-up visits from Mark, we finalized the plans for the use of solar energy for the Guesthouse and monastery. The solar thermal and solar voltaic system will be expanded to the rest of the monastery as money allows. The basic solar voltaic system cost is approximately \$25,000.00. We are working with local utility companies to expand our knowledge of self-sustainability.

This project is teaching us how to use natural energy from the sun. We look forward to our Guesthouse being a model for others to learn the “How To’s” of sustainable building and solar energy, especially for those who have modular homes like we have. Soon, we will be adding an informational section on our website about sustainable building.

Pennies From Heaven

Thank you for your continued support of our fund raising to build the Guesthouse. Your ongoing support encourages us to continue the Journey of Trust. As you may remember, this is the name we gave our campaign when we began building a monastery in honor of Our Lady of the Desert. A special gift that we received a peanut butter jar full of pennies from 7 year old, Joey Paul. He and his

family are members of Sacred Heart Parish in Farmington. Here is his story:

***Why I Gave to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Desert* BY JOEY PAUL**

I decided to do this because I had a lot of money and I didn't know what to do with it. One Sunday at church (Sacred Heart Parish in Farmington) they had envelopes to donate money in and some handmade rosaries. “That's it!!!” I thought. I took an envelope and the sisters let me have a blue rosary. Day by day I put more money in the envelope. “I'll donate half of what I have,” I thought. “No, I'll give them more.” So, I kept putting more in. “Too much.” I took a little out and “that's it, just right.” Eventually we gave the money to my mom's friend Tina, who spends lots of time out at the monastery. She delivered it for me and then later the sisters called my mom. They told her they wanted a picture with me and wanted to put my story in the newsletter. It was alright with me. So, I wrote this. The End



Joey Paul giving Sister Kateri his peanut butter jar full of pennies to be used for the Guesthouse. Picture taken outside the Sacred Heart Parish. Thank you Joey! Can anyone guess how many pennies are in the jar? Email us with your guess no later than April 24th through our web only and win a prize!



Moses, our beloved cat, died February 28, 2011. Irene and Sister Mary buried him near the grape vines. Moses was one of the first members of our community when we lived in Santa Cruz, NM from 1990 to 1997. Moses was with us for 17 years.

VIDEOS

Thank You to Father Luis Regalado, from the Monastery of Christ in the Desert for being our Chaplain since December 2010. He brings laughter and joy to his homilies at Mass.



Le Doan and Fr. Luis during community recreation

Please welcome and remember in your prayers Le Doan. She has joined us as an Observer, February 23, 2011. Le is energetic to seek God in our monastic way of life.

Sister Guadalupe is studying English at the CNM South Valley Campus, Albuquerque, NM. We are grateful to the Canossian Sisters for their hospitality to Sister Guadalupe at the Cristo Rey Convent, location of the Canossian Spirituality Center, www.canossianspiritualitycenter.org

The parents of Sister Kateri are in the best of spirits with her visits to help with their care. She is very proud of her grandson, Andrew, who will be 2 years old March 19th.

Sister Elizabeth continues to write icons and is researching further education in graphic arts.

Sister Hilda is getting ready for her family visit. She will be traveling to Guatemala this spring. Please continue to pray for her father, whose leukemia is in remission. He is doing great.

Sister Mary had successful cataract surgeries and is doing fine. Keeping busy with the planning of our Guesthouse and Oblate program, plus helping Mother Benedicta, somehow she finds time for crafts.

Mother Julianne will be visiting her sister and brother-in-law, Anella and Ron Oldham, in April at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert. The winter has been challenging, but she survived her first winter in Gobernador. Mother Julianne is preparing to give us a conference on "Silence," during Lent.

Mother Benedicta asks for continued prayers for her sister, Loretta, who is in treatment for breast cancer. Loretta is so full of joy and hope!

Alphagraphics, Santa Fe, NM, continues to help us bring the newsletters to you! For any printing projects that you may have, contact them via Internet at www.us494.alphagraphics.com

CREATION STORY BY S. KAVERI

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds." Genesis 1:24

In early February, the creation story had a deeper meaning for me. The Mass readings at this time were from the Book of Genesis. Little did I know that one of God's *living creatures* began showing up on the monastery grounds. A huge bull elk, as if God whispered our Mass readings into his ears for one month, became one of our most frequent guests.



Valentino, our new friend.

The experience of having this visitor was unique. Throughout the day he could be found feasting at the compost pile or sitting under the trees or taking a stroll by our windows. We were so taken by this lovely creature, that we named him Valentino. Everyone at the monastery couldn't help but take notice of Valentino and interact with him personally. One of the sisters couldn't sleep for fear that the elk might ram our building, which he never did. Ninja, our Labrador, had conversations with the elk – Valentino would stare, Ninja would keep on barking. Even Moses our little tabby cat seemed to utter, "I can walk faster than you, Valentino," as he stared at the elk keeping his steady pace.

We called the New Mexico Game & Fish. Tim Cimbal, Navajo Dam District Officer, came and took some pictures and gave us an impromptu class of elk habits and diet. He also mentioned that there is even a bigger elk roaming this area and the Game and Fish have named him "Monastery Elk." Thanks to the Internet, I learned that the elk is one of the largest distinct species in the world. Unlike Valentino, whose diet for a while was from our compost pile, the elk usually feed on plants, leaves, grasses and bark.

I find it interesting that some cultures revere the elk as a noble, spiritual force and we experienced that with Valentino during the cold, dark winter days of February. Valentino lifted our spirits. We missed him when he moved on! *Oh Lord, as I ponder your creation, I see your love for us. May I grow more and more in appreciation of all your creatures.*

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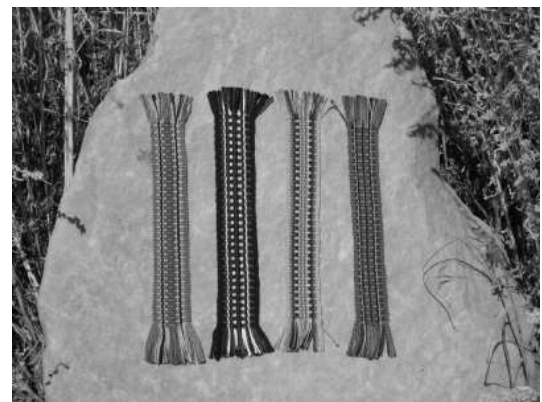
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St. Joseph Novena

St. Joseph was a man of faith, and obedient without knowing the outcome. Please join us in our Novena of Masses to St. Joseph. This year we especially pray for the unborn, the unemployed, those in difficult situations, and for the sick and the dying. Please know that you are in our prayers and if you have a special intention, please let us know. We began the Novena of Masses to St. Joseph on March 10, 2011.

O GLORIOUS St. JOSEPH, FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST, TO YOU DO WE RAISE OUR HEARTS AND HANDS TO IMPLORER YOUR POWERFUL INTERCESSION IN OBTAINING FROM THE HEART OF JESUS ALL THE HELPS AND GRACES NECESSARY FOR OUR SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL NEEDS, PARTICULARLY THE GRACE OF A HAPPY DEATH, AND THE SPECIAL FAVOR WE NOW IMPLORER.

O GUARDIAN OF THE WORD INCARNATE, WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT YOUR PRAYERS ON OUR BEHALF WILL BE GRACIOUSLY HEARD BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD. AMEN.



St. JOSEPH, PRAY FOR US!

Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert

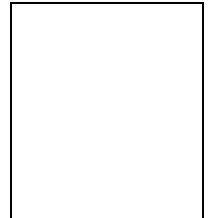
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