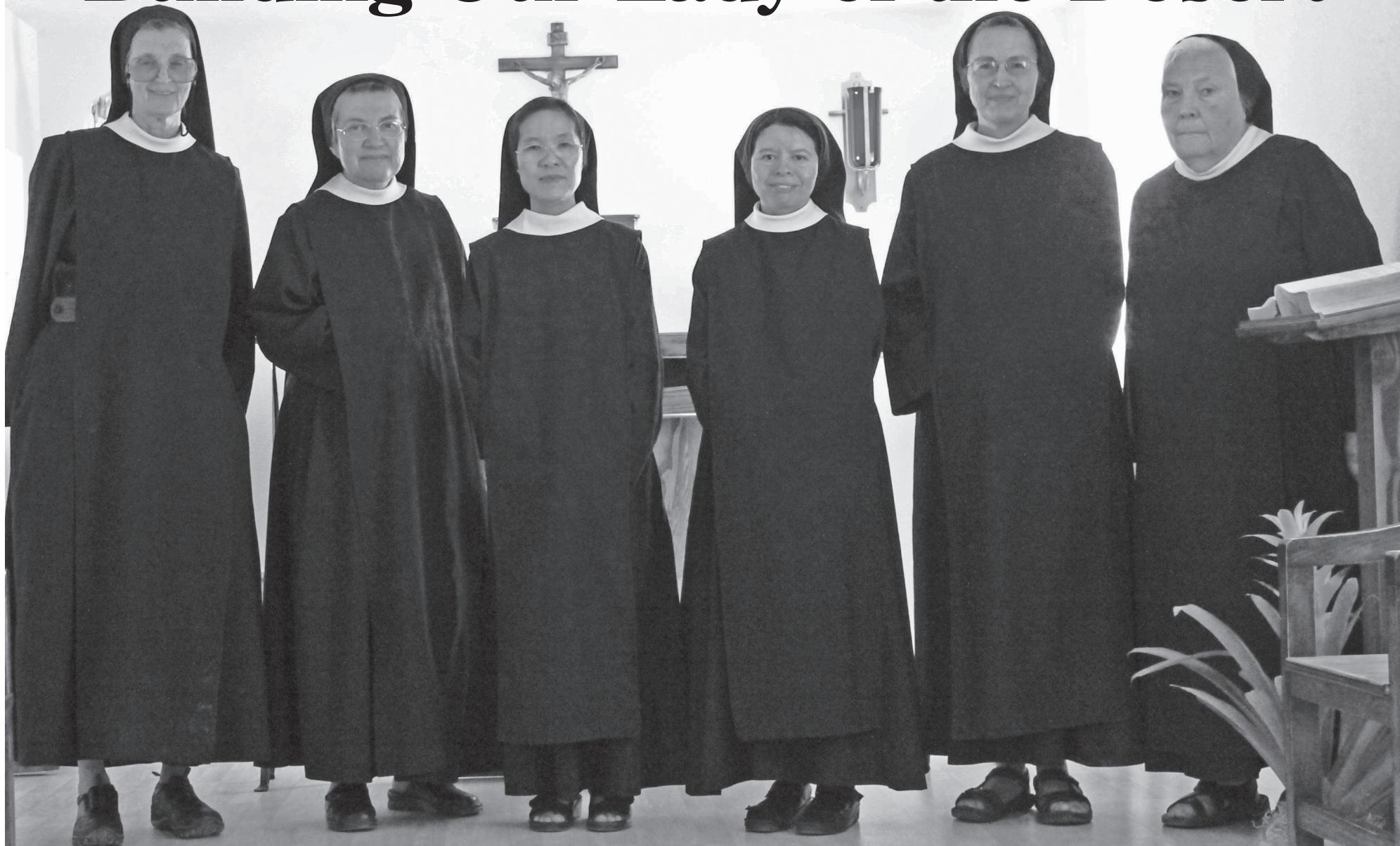


Solitude in a Busy World:

Building Our Lady of the Desert

*Continued from cover >*

Many factors have played into building. Just as in medieval times, there are also various forms of volunteer and some paid workers. Friends, both close and afar, are the greatest asset for the six sisters, as they provide financial donations, supplies, use of tools and equipment the sisters would not otherwise have access to.

The construction phase is a Journey of Trust, which began 20 years ago, and every step has taught the sisters a deeper reliance on faith. Each site, they hoped would be the home of their monastery. When plans—as they are known to do—fell through, the sisters humbly continued to pray and walk on in faith. They knew the Lord would provide. In 1997, the monks of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert invited the sisters to join them on their property in the Chama Canyon. By July 11, 2007, the sisters were gifted with 40 acres of beautiful mesa property in Gobernador, New Mexico, through the generosity of Jose and Florence Florez. Residing at the Saint Rose of Lima parish in Blanco for one and a half years, Phase I was being built. And so, with prayer and occasionally with hammers, the sisters follow the dream of Saint Benedict to live in community.

Who are these women? They are six nuns who come from ordinary backgrounds and three countries who feel called by God to a life of prayer and have found that monastic life enables them to live that call and to share that experience of God. Sister Elizabeth from Vietnam, Sister Hilda from Guatemala, and four from the USA: Mother

Julianne, their retired prioress, who is from Texas; Sister Mary from upstate New York; and Sister Kateri and Mother Benedicta are from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Mother Benedicta's parents, Rachel and Johnny Serna, were from San Rafael and Grants. So for Mother Benedicta, founding a monastery here in the Gallup Diocese is a coming back to her roots.

Each sister has a unique background such as Sister Mary who traveled the world before deciding to settle down to monastic life. Sister Kateri was married, has two grown children, had a successful career, but as a result of a visit to the monastery discovered God was calling her

to monastic life. Mother Benedicta practiced as a nurse for 13 years at Presbyterian in Albuquerque and did not feel called to the monastic life until she was 37 years old. Mother Julianne, Sister Hilda, and Sister Elizabeth came from active communities and felt called to a more contemplative life.

As Benedictine nuns, they want to offer hospitality to those seeking God, which includes a guesthouse—a place where men and women can come to join them for a time of prayer, renewal, refreshment, and silence and solitude. With all the construction taking place, the “quiet” is put on a temporary hold now and then.

Fundraising for this project has proved to be a challenge at times, but they continue to forge ahead, balancing their prayer life with fundraising and building—their Journey of Trust.

Mother Benedicta Serna is pleased to announce that more than half of the needed \$90,000 for the guesthouse has been raised with the help of many supporters who desire to see the monastery grow and succeed. If you would like to help build the Monastery in any way, please visit their website at www.ourladyofthedesert.org for more information or write to the Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert, PO Box 556, Blanco, NM 87412-0556.

The nuns invite you to join them for Sunday Mass at 10 a.m. Directions are on the website. If you have a particular prayer or Mass request, please let them know. The sisters will continue to pray for the needs of all those in the Gallup Diocese.

