

*The sisters joyfully send their heartfelt Advent and Blessed Christmas greetings of peace to all family members and friends. We deeply appreciate your ongoing prayers and generous financial support. May the miracle of Christ's birth fill your heart with lasting joy, and may His abundant blessings guide you and your loved ones throughout the coming year of 2026.*



*Monastery of Our Lady of  
the Desert  
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*Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*

**400-year anniversary of La Conquistadora**  
- On July 20, 2025, Santa Fe marked the 400-year anniversary of the arrival of *La Conquistadora*, a revered statue with a remarkable history that stretches back to 1625. First known as "Our Lady of the Assumption," *La Conquistadora* has played a significant role in the cultural and spiritual life of New Mexico for four centuries. The statue, measuring approximately 30 inches (about 2.5 feet) in height, was expertly carved in Spain from European olive wood and willow. Though the detailed documentation of her journey from Spain to New Spain is lacking, records indicate she was brought from Mexico City to Santa Fe in 1625 by Fray Alonso Benavides. This event marked the beginning of her enduring presence in the region.

*In 1680, during the Pueblo Revolt, La Conquistadora was carried by settlers from Santa Fe to El Paso for safekeeping. The statue's return to Santa Fe came in 1693 when Governor Don Diego de Vargas led the reconquest and restored her to her place of honor. Over the centuries, La Conquistadora has been a symbol of faith, resilience, and continuity for the Catholic community of New Mexico. In 1992, Archbishop Robert Sanchez changed the statue's title from "Our Lady of the Assumption" to "Our Lady of Peace." Today, La Conquistadora is permanently housed in a private chapel within the Cathedral*

**Deserved Cup of Coffee** – Sister Hilda, who has faithfully served as Prioress for nine years, is acknowledged for her faith and trust and heartfelt appreciation for her dedicated service and loving leadership throughout her tenure. May Our Lord bless her for her strong commitment and foundation! Her devotion and guidance inspired all the sisters. Sister Hilda exemplified wisdom, fostering a spirit of hope and spiritual strength within our community. We extend our deepest gratitude to Sister Hilda for the countless ways she has enriched our lives and strengthened our faith.



*One of the highlights of this past year was in February, our first Congregational meeting since the approval of our new Constitutions of the Benedictine Congregation of the Mother of the Incarnation, approved by the Vatican December 13, 2024. The Congregation consists of Saint Scholastica Priory, Petersham, Massachusetts; Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert, Blanco, New Mexico; Abbey of Saint Walburga, Virginia Dale, CO.*



Chapter of Election: October 12-14, 2025



Mother Mary Elizabeth, Mother Kateri & Sister Aileen

Election: October 12-14, 2025  
A formal chapter for the first election of the Prioress of our monastery was presided by Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB, Prioress and Facilitator, and Mother Mary Elizabeth Kloss, OSB, Prioress and President of our Benedictine Congregation of the Mother of the Incarnation. After careful deliberation and prayerful reflection, Mother Kateri Lovato was elected as the new Prioress for a six-year term and has accepted the responsibility, committing herself to serve the community.



**From Mother Kateri** - I am always amazed when I read, “Buy One Get One Free.” Sounds like a bargain in many cases and the slogan is usually written as BOGO. Giving and receiving is what matters and life can surprise us with unexpected gifts when we approach it with an open heart. During Advent and Christmas, our daily moments can be transformed into a deeper meaning and purpose. To buy into a loving kindness towards another takes an interior attitude of transformation, but somehow, grace is always reciprocated twice. Maybe the slogan should be “Blessing of God’s Offerings.”

**Desert Day, Nov 7, 2025** -- Following the celebration of Mass, Fr. Abbot Christian Leisy gave the sisters a conference on the Rule of St. Benedict. “The Rule we follow, of St. Benedict and as Benedictines, is a sure and noble path, worth the time and effort, to take it up each day, with simplicity of heart, as we offer to God all that we are and do, to the greater honor and glory of God, so that, as St. Benedict says in his Rule, “In all things God may be glorified.”



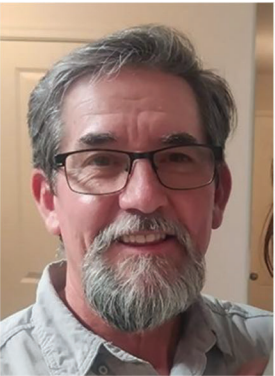
S Frances, S Benedicta, S Hilda, S Mary, S. Mercy, M Kateri, Fr Abbot Christian, S Gaudalupe, S Stephen, and S Irene. (Photo taken November 7, 2025)



**Thank you!** - On behalf of all the sisters, we thank all the contractor businesses who helped keep up our property and buildings, from fixing our wells, to uplifting the sidewalks of our Guesthouse and installing a front sidewalk in front of the Chapel. Our maintenance folks also did a terrific job in maintaining the modular buildings. We especially thank **LCOR BUILDERS**, who renovated our buildings. Call **Guillermo Moreno** for your Excavation, Septic, Concrete, Demo, and Metal Building needs.

**LCOR BUILDERS** | 10 Rd. 2620, Aztec, NM 87410 | Phone #: (970)946-6624.

**Thanks to Marin Olmos**, who patiently helps with our constructive needs and is always very cooperative with the sisters. He is responsible for inspecting, repairing, and servicing equipment for our modular buildings, which includes maintenance needs. He also performs necessary repairs, breakdowns, or leaks on the property. He is very neat, maintaining cleanliness and organization. We appreciate his help.



**From our Chaplain, Fr. Anthony**- Dear Benefactors, God bless you for your great charity. I pray that you have a very merry, blessed Christmas and a peace-filled New Year 2026. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, may peace and joy fill your hearts at this time and throughout the coming year. I share with you the words of and wisdom of St. Seraphim of Sarov: *Acquire the Spirit of Peace and a thousand souls around you will be saved.*



**What are the O’Antiphons?** - The seven O Antiphons are sung from December 17-23 that give voice to our longing for the coming of Christ and for His return at the end of time.

Boethius (c. 480-524) made a slight reference to them, thereby suggesting their presence at that time. At the Benedictine abbey of Fleury, the abbot recited these antiphons, and a gift was given to each member of the community. By the eighth century, they are in use in the liturgical celebrations in Rome and are also a part of our Christmas liturgy. On December 23 we sing “O Emmanuel,” in recognition of Jesus—Emmanuel—who has already come. It is not a matter now of Christ’s being where we are; it is a matter of our being in the consciousness of where Christ is in life. And where He is not as well. Where is Christ for you this Christmas? And is there a place in your life that you know down deep is not in the spirit of Christ at all.