



H O R I Z O N S

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SAINT SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY, Fort Smith, AR

March 2023



Simply Benedictine

Message from the Prioress



Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress

Dear Friends,

To open a time capsule is an exciting experience. They're vessels of wonder, history, and at times reflect part of ourselves that we yearn to see again. Such was the experience when we opened the time capsule gifted to St. Scholastica by our foresisters from 1924. After waiting nearly 100 years, we gathered on our Founders Day, January 23, 2023, with our Benedictine Brothers from Subiaco to see what we would find when we looked inside.

The celebration was surely one of wonder, history, and shared identity. The entire day was like a time capsule. Father Jerome gave a beautiful talk on the history of our communities. Abbot Elijah gave a moving homily during Mass. And we all joined our hands in prayer, together. And though our communities have seen many seasons come and go, we are excited at the collaboration we continue to develop in the tradition of past Benedictines.

While the time capsule sat in our home year after year, transforming what was inside from historical documents to timeless treasures, we on the outside continued on as two Benedictine communities do, bound in history and faith, and

separated by our respective journeys.

While time may change, what keeps us within stability's bosom are our relationships, those people and communities with whom we travel through life. Together, unified in faith, we journey continually through time, through change, and through myriad seasons, always growing from the pain and pleasure of the past. Renewal is our calling.

When Abbot Elijah and I finally pried open the time capsule, what we found inside were pieces of each other, our shared history, and the wonder of what our next season together will bring. Though many of the artifacts were worn beyond identification, we look forward to restoring them and seeing what time reveals.

There was never a season I wasn't sad to leave or happy to see again. And on that note, I rejoice for the renewal happening at this moment, all around us. We are each other's time capsules, forever renewed by what was and by what we can grow to become together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

*For the full Founders Day story,
please see pages 8-9.*

Today, look inside your neighbor. It may be the renewal you've been searching for this season.

Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska
Prioress

Message from the Office of Mission Advancement

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

Renewal is our mantra for the year. To renew is to become whole again after shedding seasons past. It is to look within ourselves and dare to learn and grow. After a brief hiatus from working at the monastery, I am happy to rejoin the Sisters as the Director of the Office of Mission Advancement, previously the Development Office. Carly Flanagan will continue her work as the monastery's Communications Director, and Sister Elise Forst will remain in the office as an assistant. Yes, changes abound. Our goal in 2023 is to engage in development initiatives that renew and enliven the intersection of the Benedictine charism with outreach initiatives. Development endeavors are now underway, and we look forward to sharing them with you in the months to come. It is going to be an enlivened 2023! Thank you for your steadfast support of the Sisters during every season.

Below is the 2022 annual report supplied by the monastery's Chief Financial Officer, Ravi Thiagarajan. We thank you for your kind donations!

Jennifer Burchett
Director, Office of Mission Advancement

ANNUAL REPORT September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2022

Revenues		Expenses	
Donations & gifts	631,749	Lay employees	772,239
Sisters contributed benefits	215,337	Demolition	486,399
Community ministries	176,415	Institutional	289,997
Auxiliary income	62,423	Sisters' personal & medical	265,117
Investment income	(3,209,608)	Housing	227,746
Total	\$ (2,123,684)	Community ministries	166,684
		Interest	150,011
		Total	\$ 2,358,193

Total Revenues, Gains, & Other Support	\$ (2,123,684)
Total Expenses	2,358,193
Net Change in Assets	(4,481,877)

Withdrawal of \$1,800,000 from the Continuing Care Fund and the generosity of our benefactors enabled the monastery to meet expenses despite the loss of investment income.

In Loving Memory

Sister Jo Ann Senko

February 21, 1935 - November 2, 2022



Sister Jo Ann Senko, OSB, age 87, a member of St. Scholastica Monastery, died at Chapel Ridge Health & Rehab on November 02, 2022. Sister Jo Ann was born on February 21, 1935, in Slovactown, Arkansas, to John Senko, Jr. and Frances Dorothy Garrich Senko. She graduated from St.

Scholastica Academy in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1952. Sister Jo Ann was a wonderful big sister to her brothers Frederick, Gary, and Michael and to her sister Shirley who were several years younger than Sister Jo Ann.

Before entering St. Scholastica Monastery, she worked at the Daily Leader Newspaper in Stuttgart. She was an excellent typist and possessed an engaging and outgoing nature with people. Sister Jo Ann entered the monastery on October 7, 1956, and became a novice on June 24, 1957, where she took the name, Sister Mary Chrysostom. On June 24, 1959, she made her first profession, and in 1962 she made her

perpetual profession as a member of St. Scholastica Monastery.



Her first ministry assignment was to teach at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Paris, Arkansas. She was a good teacher, and her students did well under her guidance; however, she quickly surmised that teaching was not meant to be her profession. Sister worked as a cook at St. Joseph's Orphanage in North Little Rock and Subiaco Abbey. Sister Jo Ann loved to cook and loved to help people. Over time, she became a clinical dietitian. She earned a bachelor of science degree in Home Economics from the University of Missouri. In the 1970's she began her Dietetic Internship with Barnes Hospital in St. Louis and continued her studies until she graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1972. Sister Jo Ann was a clinical dietitian at St. Mary's Hospital and Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, and St. Edward's (Mercy) in Fort Smith, Arkansas. In 1977 Sister Jo Ann was asked to be the monastery Procurator for the community. She did this for two years. From 1979 to 1981, Sister Jo Ann worked in Social Work in Amarillo, Texas. She returned to work in St. Louis at St. Mary's as a clinical dietitian from 1981 to 1996. From 1996 to 1997, Sister Jo Ann took a sabbatical, attending classes at St. John's University in Minnesota.

Following her sabbatical, Sister Jo Ann was the director of food hospitality for St. Scholastica Retreat Center. She served her sisters and many people in this role for four years.

Because of declining health, Sister Jo Ann moved to the monastery infirmary in 2001 and Chapel Ridge Health & Rehab in 2017. Sister Jo Ann was an enthusiastic, outgoing person. She took great pleasure in preparing healthy and tasty meals for people to enjoy. She possessed a love of humor and the arts. Sister Jo Ann loved the symphony and the Opera. She enjoyed poetry and writing haikus. She was well-read. She played the accordion and loved community

Creation

By Sister Jo Ann Senko, OSB

Fragments of white clouds
sprinkled amid the blue sky
Creation anew.

events. She was proud of her Slovak heritage and family history.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother Gary Senko, and her sister-in-law, Linda Senko. She is survived by her brother, Frederick, and sister-in-law, Marilyn, in Henderson, Nevada; her brother Michael in North Little Rock, Arkansas; her sister, Shirley Senko, from Memphis, Tennessee; her nephews, Mark, Paul, and Fred Senko; her nieces, Pamela Senko Spencer, Paula Senko Woloeiec, Patricia Senko Stallard, Angela Senko Hynum, and Lydia Senko; many beloved great nephews and nieces; and the members of her Benedictine community.

A Vespers Service was held on November 27, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. The funeral Mass was on November 28, 2022, at 10:30 a.m., with Rev. Jerome Kodell, OSB, and Rev. Joseph Chan presiding. Both services were at St. Scholastica Monastery. Burial followed in St. Scholastica's cemetery.

Oblate Bertha Bodine

April 28, 1927 - October 14, 2021

Bertha Bodine, 94, passed away in her home on October 14, 2021, in Springfield, Missouri. She was born on April 28, 1927 in Karlsruhe, North Dakota. She was an active member of St. Joseph Church in Springfield and enjoyed hosting family gatherings into her nineties.

She is survived by her five children: Roger Bodine, Marvin Bodine and his wife Patty, Bruce Bodine and his wife Sheila, Annette (Bodine) Henderson and her husband Kevin, and Anthony Bodine. Survivors also include her grandchildren, great grandchildren, her brother Conrad, nieces, and nephews.

Bertha Bodine made oblation on April 23, 1996, in Springfield, Missouri.



Oblate Agatha Farmer

January 31st, 1929 - June 5th, 2022

Agatha Farmer of Conway, died on June 5, 2022. She was born in Clarksville, Arkansas, on January 31, 1929. Agatha was a practicing pharmacist for 50 years and graduated in 1949 with the first class of pharmacists in Arkansas. She and another woman in her class were the first women to receive a pharmacy degree in Arkansas. Later she was awarded an honorary doctorate in pharmacology from the University of Arkansas.

Agatha is survived by five of her seven children: Rita A. Moore, Karl K. Cates, Julia G. Cates, Stanley F. Park, and Donald R. Park. She was preceded in death by two of her children: Leah B. Cates and Steven L. Park. She was also preceded in death by her husband, Harris E. Farmer.

Agatha made oblation on April 25, 2004, in Springfield, Missouri.

Oblate Sandra Gass

October 9, 1946 - December 8, 2022

Sandra Gass from Ruston, Louisiana passed away December 8, 2022 in Monroe, Louisiana. She was born October 9, 1946, in New Orleans, Louisiana. She loved oil and water color painting and was active in St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Ruston. Sandra volunteered for over 20 years at a camp for children with cancer. She worked to raise funds for children's cancer organizations.

She is survived by her husband of 54 years, John Henry Gass of Ruston; her son, John Henry Gass, Jr. and his wife, Kathleen.

Sandra made oblation on May 20, 2007 in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



Right: Painting of monastery pond by Sandra Gass

Sister Therese: Student, Graduate, Benedictine

Written by Carly Flanagan



*Above: Sister Therese with
her mother, Diana Moreno, at
graduation.*

Sister Therese Moreno credits the influence of Saint Therese of Lisieux for her courage to acknowledge the call to enter religious life. This vocation to religious life brought her to mission work as a co-worker, a student, and now a graduate.

Sister Therese began her time at the University of Arkansas as an administrative assistant in the department of Graduate School and International Education, where she assisted students and faculty and staff members. She greeted them when they entered and took part in recruitment events. Her work guiding and helping others felt directly related to her call as a Benedictine because a major focus of the Benedictine monastic life is hospitality. As her coworkers began to learn more about her vocation to religious life, they felt comfortable to come to her with prayer requests and for spiritual direction.

In 2017, just one year after she began her work as an administrative assistant, Sister Therese followed the next step in her mission – as a graduate student. Her time before and after her entry into religious life provided experience in education. Once she decided to pursue her graduate degree, she felt teaching was the right calling. “After looking at all the programs the university had to offer, I decided on helping adults learn the English language.” In order to become a teacher, she became a student, and her life took on yet another facet at UA Fayetteville.

Away from the scheduled rhythm of the monastic community at St. Scholastica, Sister Therese found life at the university to be much more “fluid”. As she balanced work, studies, and her place at St. Scholastica as a Benedictine, she met help and understanding from the community of sisters: “Taking classes, studying and trying to participate in functions in the monastery was a challenge for me and the community. The community has been very accommodating in my quest to get my master’s degree. I feel supported and loved by the sisters,” Sister Therese said.

Sister Therese’s experience moving through various aspects of ministry while fulfilling her religious vocation is much like Saint Therese’s own understanding of vocations: “I understood that love comprises all vocations – that love is everything, and because it is eternal, embraces all times and places.”

After working full-time at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and studying for her Masters of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Sister Therese witnessed her years of study bear fruit as she received her graduate diploma on Saturday, December 17, 2022. She said, “I knew that Jesus and the Holy Spirit had taken every step of this journey with me, especially when I started every research project and paper with, ‘Come, Holy Spirit,’ but to actually complete my degree was rewarding. The only thing I could say is ‘Thank you Lord, we made it through’. For me, graduating was a spiritual event full of praise, joy and thanksgiving.” Her invocation to the Holy Spirit was the call to God to bring her deeds, her works to perfection in Christ, just as the Rule of Benedict instructs.

Sister Therese and the community will discern the next steps together, and she will fulfill the next portion of her mission work with the same humble supplication, “Come, Holy Spirit.”

G.E.M. Donor List

We humbly thank all of the 2022 G.E.M. Scholarship Program
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Looking Inside:

Written by Jennifer Burchett

Hidden within the cornerstone on the southwest side of the former monastery building was a treasure that waited in darkness for nearly a century. It was a time capsule, buried within the walls of the sisters' former home during its 1924 construction by the original Fort Smith founders. Like the paintings that adorn the walls of the monastery or the pages of the sisters' history books, the time capsule told a story, and on St. Scholastica's Founders Day, January 23, 2023, it was read and revived.

The journey the original founding Sisters took when they ventured to Arkansas in 1878 was not unlike the modern journey St. Scholastica Monastery has undergone in the past year. It was with intention that the foresisters sought, with God's grace that they found, and in partnership with their Benedictine Brothers that they braved the wilds of Arkansas.

Sisters Bonaventura Wagner, Josepha Schmidt, Isidore Luebbermann, and Xaveria Schroeder departed from their home at Immaculate Conception Convent (now Monastery Immaculate Conception) in Ferdinand, Indiana on September 16, 1878 to rendezvous with three Benedictine Brothers from St. Meinrad's Abbey before beginning their journey south. After months of excitement, the time had finally come. Together with Father Boniface Luebbermann, Brother Gall Graf, and Brother Martial Kraus, the four Sisters set out for "The Southern Apostolate", as their Mother Superior Agatha Werb called it.

But after a long journey on trains and wagons, with

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for whosoever will, he may come and take of the water of life freely. Asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh shall be opened."

excitement brimming at every turn, they arrived at St. Benedict's (now Subiaco Abbey) to a very underwhelming site. Sister Bonaventura described the area as poor, with the church resembling a barn. It was only in March of earlier that year that Father Wolfgang Schlumpf, Brother Gaspar Hildesheim, and Brother Hilary Beinetz (all also from St. Meinrad's) first settled the area. Though the Sisters and Brothers had finally arrived, their journey together was far from over.

It was a difficult time, and resources were few. The reality of starting monasteries and parishes in 1800's Arkansas was physically and emotionally demanding, and success hinged on their ability to depend on one another. Blessedly, that was one resource the brothers and sisters had in plenty. They took care of each other like family, like brothers and sisters in Christ, building the bones of their respective legacies. In November 1878, Sisters Josepha Schmidt and Isidore Luebbermann started the first parochial school in Logan County Arkansas, St. Benedict's School. This school continued serving children in the area until 1974.

The four Sisters spent months with the Brothers while parishioners from St. Scholastica in Shoal Creek built their house/school where the sisters would live and teach. Because there was nowhere else to stay at Subiaco, the Brothers let the Sisters stay in the monastery while the Brothers slept in the sacristy and church tower.



*Sister Pierre
Vorster and Sister
Madeline Clifton
during Founders
Day Mass*



*Father William
Wewers during
community
prayer*

Treasures from Founders Day

knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8

On January 23, 1879, St. Scholastica Parishioners completed construction on the four-room log cabin that served as convent and school. Sisters Bonaventura Wagner and Xaveria Schroeder departed St. Benedict's with Father Wolfgang and headed for Shoal Creek, thus beginning St. Scholastica Convent. It wasn't until 46 years later when St. Scholastica Convent moved to Fort Smith that they planted a time capsule for their Sisters to find. They didn't know if or when it would be opened, but in faith, they did so anyway.

It was with bated breath that the Brothers from Subiaco and the Sisters from St. Scholastica gathered together on Founders Day, 2023, and watched as Abbot Elijah and Sister Kimberly pried open the copper box. The experience was yet another historical moment the Brothers and Sisters would share on their journey together. But when Father Elijah and Sister Kimberly finally opened the time capsule, they were disappointed to discover that the items locked inside had been water-damaged, leaving them unidentifiable. But just like the experience the foresisters had when they first laid eyes on their new home, though disappointing, it was not the defining moment. No amount of disappointment could distract from the unifying process the journey brought to the Brothers and Sisters.

The entire experience was one of shared history, faith, and a journey that started when two communities first stepped foot in Arkansas 145 years ago. The Brothers and Sisters were there for one another. They supported one another.

And they depended on one another. That's a relationship the two communities have re-examined and re-opened in recent months, and one the two communities are excited to journey together.

According to the community history book 'As Green Leaves' by Sister Mary Agnes Sanders, the following items (see right) were placed in the time capsule: the cornerstone contained the Holy Rule of St. Benedict; medals of St. Benedict and the Blessed Virgin; photographs of Pope Pius XI, of Bishop John B. Morris, Father Basil Egloff, OSB, Mother Perpetua, Mother Agatha, and Mother Meinrada; the names of Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States, Governor McRae of Arkansas, and Mayor David L. Ford of Fort Smith; a short history of St. Scholastica's Convent; a history of the Convent published in German in 1904 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee; copies of the daily papers; and a few coins.



Perhaps it was no coincidence that the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery found the gift their foresisters left them at such a tumultuous time in their history. Restoration efforts are currently underway to decipher the artifacts. Just like their foresisters, the Sisters today know that to seek is to find, and in doing so they have found the unwavering support of their Benedictine Brothers once again.



Fathers Reginald Udonj and Mark Stengel after Mass



Sister Kimberly and Abbot Elijah Owens opening the time capsule after Founders Day Mass

HONOR ROLL OF BENEFACTORS FOR 2022

The Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery thank each of our benefactors and volunteers for your generous support. You are remembered in our love and prayers. On the second Tuesday of each month, a Mass is offered for you and your intentions. Benefactors and volunteers listed here supported the Monastery and Hesychia House of Prayer in 2022.

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News Briefs

Sept. 2-7, 2022: Sr. Kimberly Prohaska and Ravi Thiagarajan attended the Resource Center for Religious Institutes Conference in Dallas, TX.

Oct. 10-11, 2022: Sr. Kimberly virtually participated in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Region 13 meeting.

Jan. 29 - Feb. 4, 2023: Catholic Schools Week.

Feb. 1-8, 2023: Sr. Kimberly attended the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses meeting in Cullman, AL.

Feb. 4, 2023: Seven sisters attended the Day of Consecrated Life at Carmelite Monastery in Little Rock, AR. (See photo below)

Feb. 17, 2023: Sisters attended the dedication of Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City, OK.



Above: Sister Siena Fisk, OSB, Sister Anna, OP, Sister Maria De Angeli, OSB, Sister Maria Nguyen, OP, and Sister Mary Catherine Breidt, BSC, at the Day of Consecrated Life in Little Rock.

St. Scholastica Monastery

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Oblate Program

Written by Sister Maria DeAngeli, OSB

Our Oblate Program was reorganized in the latter part of the 1970s by Sister Columba Walters and Sister Antonia Lutz. Since then, it has blossomed. We have members all over the United States and England. Our enrollment is approximately 200 members. We meet the third Sunday from September to May; the summer months are free of meetings. The Oblates study topics on the Holy Rule of St. Benedict that we Benedictines follow. This year's study is a book written by Sister Joan Chittister titled *Twelve Steps to Inner Peace: Humility Revisited*.

Both women and men are welcome to join our Oblate Program. Recently, we have had a few women who have expressed interest in our program. We hope they will join us, and if you have an interest, visit our Oblate section on the St. Scholastica website: www.stscho.org. To learn more about our Oblate Program and make any inquiries, please email us at oblates@st.scho.org

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Horizons

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