



HORIZONS

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SAINT SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY, Fort Smith, AR

June, 2021



Message from the Prioress



Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress

Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska
Prioress

Message from the Development Office

“**G**ratITUDE turns what we have into enough.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” “Do not be afraid.” The first of these quotes was recently posted on our electronic bulletin board, and the other two we have been hearing from Jesus in the Gospel readings during the Easter season. My reflection on these words and on the goodness and generosity poured upon us these past few months leads me to the realization that the first quote can be directed to you, our friends and supporters, “Your goodness turns what we have into enough.” Your generosity enlivens our trust in Jesus’ message. The abundance of your love and support in December when we were in quarantine after thirteen of our Sisters tested positive for COVID-19 was overwhelming. You not only provided the necessities through your gifts of money and food and your offers to run errands; you also added comfort and joy through your gifts of flowers and special treats.

Your abundant generosity has continued as you responded to our annual appeal. In our appeal letter, we had asked for help in meeting some needs in our Ministries Building and in the Guest House. Your kindness was a help in the middle of February when the below-zero temperatures caused some unplanned expenses. Frozen and broken pipes caused flooding in the sacristy and kitchen of the new monastery, in the archives and other areas on the first floor of the Ministries Building, and in the Guest House. After cleaning up the water, repairs were needed and have now been taken care of.

The frigid weather also highlighted the usefulness of our green houses. Many plants were crowded into them to save as many as possible. It was clear that one of the green houses needs repairs to the heater. Your generosity will help take care of that and other repairs needed.

As important as your tangible gifts are, your expressions of care and love mean even more. They help us to know for sure that “what we have is enough” and give us reason to trust Jesus’ Easter message to have no anxiety and fear. Our prayer for each of you is that throughout this summer, you will rest in Jesus’ comforting message: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

Sister Elise Forst
Development Director



Sister Elise Forst, Development Director

Our mission: Seeking God in our life together and enlivened by daily prayer, we, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas, respond to the needs of the people of God in a spirit of hospitality, simplicity, and reverence for one another and all creation.

Charism Statement (excerpt): We, the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, have responded to a call to seek God by a total gift of self in a religious community of celibate women, who make profession to live the Gospel according to the Rule of Benedict, the norms of the Federation of St. Gertrude, and the norms of the Monastery. By professing stability and fidelity to the monastic way of life, we promise to be faithful to our Benedictine tradition of prayer, work, and leisure, and to be a Christian community where persons are revered in their uniqueness and diversity.

Obituary of Oblate John Morgan

John M. Morgan, 74, of Fayetteville, AR, died Thursday, March 4, 2021, at his home. John was born July 26, 1946, in Wheatly, TN and spent time in New York City, South Dakota, and Arkansas.

John spent his teenage years in Mena, AR and graduated from Mena High School in 1964. After graduation he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served his country in the Vietnam War. After becoming disillusioned with the direction of the war, John made the difficult decision to serve his country through protesting and resisting the war effort.

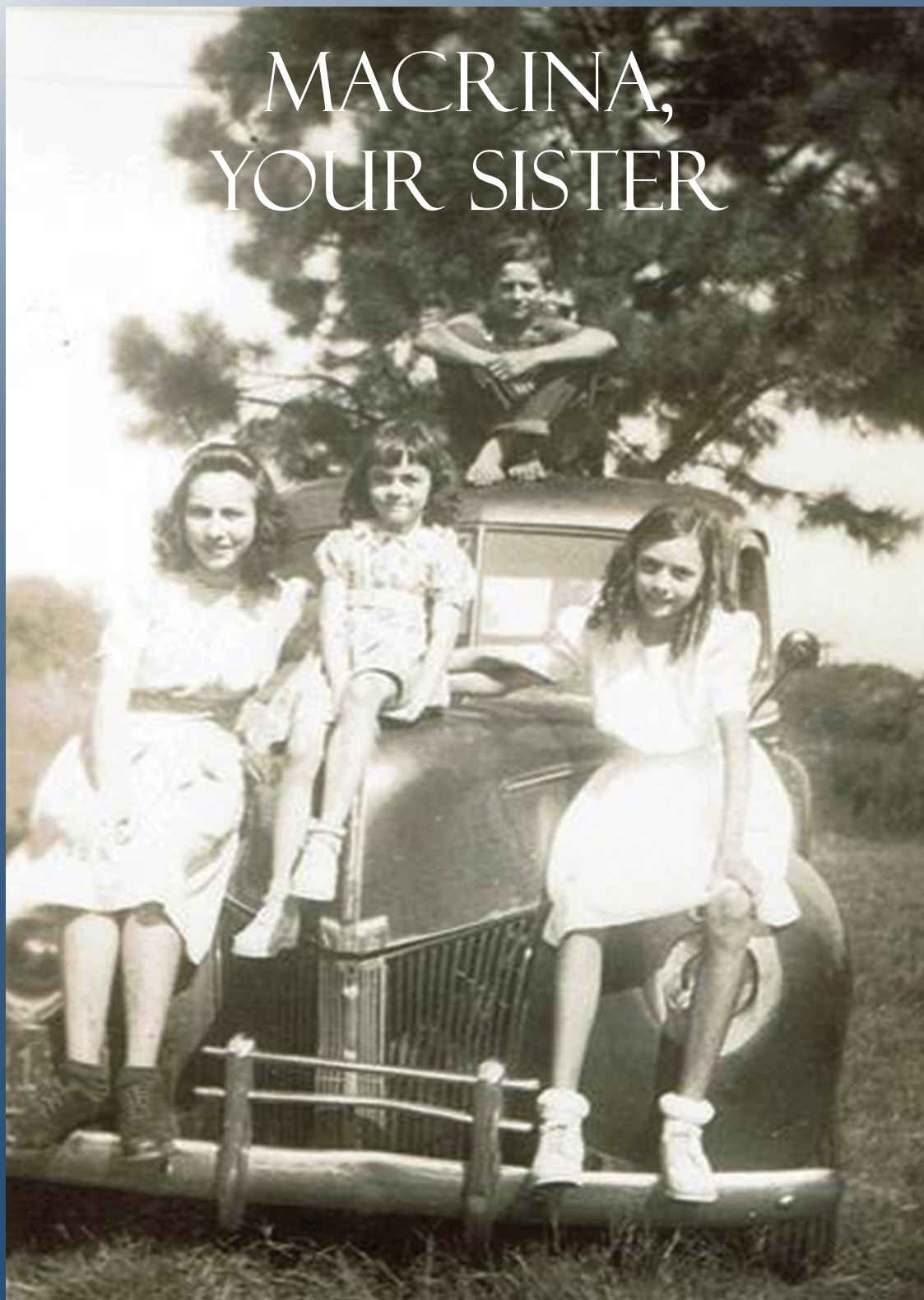
On XXX John made his Oblation as a Benedictine Oblate of St. Scholastica's Monastery. He was a devoted member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville. John served as a Stephen's Minister, teacher in the Servant Leadership School, and Mentor in the Education for Ministry Program while a member of St. Paul's.

He was preceded in death by his father, John Marshall Morgan, Sr.; his mother, Lela Mae Hurt Morgan; and his sisters, Doris and Dorothy.

A Memorial Service was held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville on March 19 at 1:00 pm.



MACRINA, YOUR SISTER



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Purchase Price:
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Pre-order your copy
starting
July 1, 2021

Book releases on
July 28, 2021 & will be
available to pick up at
monastery at that time

Follow us on Facebook
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dates draw near.

St. Scholastica Monastery will publish a collection of memorials, tributes, and reflections about the life and death of Sister Macrina Wiederkehr, who passed away from an aggressive brain tumor in April of 2020. The book will be sold for \$15.99 and will be available on July 28, 2021, Sister Macrina's birthday. We hope you will join us in celebrating the life and mourning the death of Sister Macrina.

A Reflection by Sister Rachel Dietz

A day or two after I tested positive for covid-19, the house nurse came into my bedroom telling me that the ambulance was at the door waiting to take me to the hospital.

In what seemed like a matter of moments, I was at the hospital, surrounded by nurses, taking vitals, giving me shots, and shuffling me down the hall to another unknown place. At some point someone came in with a gurney and said I was being admitted to the hospital.

I awakened later in the day feeling confused and lost. I had no idea where I was or why I was there. There was no one in the room to answer my questions. I tried to push the call button but there was still no answer. In my moment of awareness, my feelings started to surge. I felt abandoned and scared out of my wits. Why was I here? What happened to me? I felt as if time stood still in my detachment from the world around me. Time meant nothing. This was my introduction to treatment for the coronavirus.

I asked the nurses what the coronavirus was and how they knew I had it. I was told I had all the symptoms and that I had a fever, so I needed to stay in bed. I was desperate for answers. When I did not have answers to my questions, I began to make up my own.

What I didn't know was that hospital rules prevented me from having any visitors. It was difficult for the sisters to send my personal things to me. I also did not know that everyone at the monastery was sick or busy preparing meals and caring for those who were sick. It wasn't just my world that was turned upside down, but that of my fellow sisters as well.

Underneath my fear, sadness, anger, and loneliness lurked a lion ready to make her plunge. Everything, my emotions, my sense of abandonment, seemed to be growing exponentially, and out of my control.

All this behavior was a sign of my anxiety, fear, and lack of information about what was going on. My reactions were typical for people who know so little about their own

situation. When people cannot get any information about something, like this disease, they tend to make it up based on the information they have at their disposal. At this point in my story, I did not have information about the disease.

All I had was faith. Instead of dwelling on the feelings of abandonment, I focused on the Word of God in Scripture.



*Sister Rachel Dietz,
Spiritual Advisor*

When I reflect on what those days were like for me, I'm brought to the realization that while I could name some of my feelings, I did not realize what a gift those feelings were at the time. Feelings connect us to God and to each other. If I can discover their value and learn how best to manage them, it could possibly help me be more at peace with myself and my situation. For people to be aware of their gifts and how they can share them is a way to help others adapt to whatever situation they are in; and accepting the gifts in others helps bring their gifts forward.

Being admitted to the hospital for covid-19 was a very scary ordeal for me, as it is for a great many others, especially when friends and family are not permitted to visit. Accepting the gifts of my emotions guided me to use the tools God blessed me with to cope with my situation.

It is my prayer that all those who suffer from covid-19 find peace and oneness with God and their communities as they process the fears and pains of this deadly pandemic.



Monastery Operations:

Monastery operations have changed with every ebb and flow of the coronavirus pandemic. After two quarantines, managing our community when many fell ill with covid-19, and maintaining distance from our friends and family, St. Scholastica Monastery has adjusted our practices to accommodate our recent vaccinations and the positivity rate in Arkansas.

MASKS:

Sisters may now remove their masks in the monastery when no other people are around. This means that the sisters may refrain from wearing their masks during prayer, Mass, meals, and leisure time. This practice is extended to all employees who have been vaccinated. Sisters are still required to wear masks when they leave the monastery and are urged to maintain social distance with others while in public.

SCREENING:

In months prior, sisters were required to adhere to daily screenings. However, now that all of the sisters have been vaccinated, daily screenings are not required except for employees and guests. These individuals will be screened at the door by a nurse or by a sister who is trained in documenting vitals.



Sister Madeline Bariola checks Ravi Thiagarajan's temperature. As CFO, Sister makes sure his numbers are right!

MEALS:

Sisters are allowed to sit four at a table (increased from the previous limit of two). Employees and all outside individuals continue to be prohibited from eating in the dining room with the sisters.

GUESTS:

All guests must be screened upon entering St. Scholastica Monastery, the guest house, or the Ministries Building. Guests are permitted to visit with a sister only after checking with the Prioress. No more than seven individuals are allowed to meet together at any time. The guest house and ministries building continue to be closed for overnight guests. All guests must wear masks at all times and must be screened daily. We prefer for all guests to be fully vaccinated and to show no symptoms.

TRAVEL and LEAVING THE MONASTERY:

Only in the case of an emergency is a sister permitted to travel to another town. Exceptions may be made under the thoughtful discretion of the Prioress. When a sister leaves the monastery to run errands she must wear her mask



Chefs Cheryl and Jennifer, and Housekeeper Shay (front) bring masks and smiles to work.

After the Quarantine

properly fitted. Likewise, when employees are sent on a task off the monastery grounds they are expected to wear their masks when around others until they are safely back at the monastery.

Structured visits to Chapel Ridge Health and Rehab have begun in an effort to visit our sisters who reside at the facility. All sisters and friends who enter Chapel Ridge must carefully follow their rules. The community is waiting to hear directives from the facility regarding resuming Mass for our sisters and other residents who would like to attend.

MASS, COMMUNITY PRAYER, and OBLATES:

Sisters will continue to maintain a two-chair distance from others in Chapel. Oblate gatherings will resume in September.

St. Scholastica is in the process of scheduling missed celebrations and funerals that we were forced to postpone. This includes things such as an Employee Appreciation Reception, Retirement Dinner, and funerals. The community will announce scheduled events as they are planned.

GIFT SHOP:

The gift shop has reopened by appointment only. Only three people are allowed in the gift shop at one time, and all entrants must be screened and wear a masks. Sisters are not permitted to visit with patrons who enter the monastery to shop. Shop hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9 AM – 12 PM, though we may be able to accommodate your schedule if these times do not work for you. We also continue to maintain our online gift shop.

While we understand that our safety protocols may seem like an inconvenience, it is a small inconvenience to protect our sisters and our community. These regulations have been put into effect after consultation with our Federation and for the sole purpose of saving lives. We, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, are committed to working with our community to end the coronavirus pandemic.



Sister Regina Schroeder runs errands on behalf of the community.



Sister Adrian Wewers with Shiloh, River, & Maya.

Oblate Reflections

St. Scholastica Monastery's Oblate Program is a wonderful way for lay people to integrate the Benedictine Charism into their daily lives. This program is open to men and women of any religious denomination. Spiritual guidance is offered according to the values of the Benedictine Charism including hospitality, prayer, stability, community, justice & peace, and a love of Christ & neighbor. Oblates meet once per month under the spiritual direction of Sisters Hilary Decker and Maria DeAngeli.

I was an oblate at St. Benedict Monastery in Canyon, Texas for about 10 years. It was a place of great serenity for me. I cry each time I think about it being closed. I have not become established with St. Scholastica oblates yet. I miss the interaction. Maybe 2021 will offer more opportunity to get involved. Peace and Love to all.

~Debra Aaron

Visiting St Scholastica for over 20 years, I have always been drawn to the amazing sisters and the Benedictine way of life. My family witnessed the positive change in me upon my return home from each stay at St Scholastica, and later when I was cross, my youngest would tell me "you need to go be with your nuns again!" I became friends with Sister Macrina, and that brought me back to the monastery every year, even after my move from MS to VA. She invited me to become an oblate, and I readily accepted. Although the values of Community, Work and Prayer, and Hospitality originally drew me in, it is the loving embodiment of Christ in each of the sisters that keeps me connected and committed to St Scholastica, Fort Smith, AR.

~ Karen Massingale-Ewan

Selah is a word that appears in the psalms in some versions of the Bible. I was told that it means a musical interlude where you meditate on the words that came before. In my practice of Selah, I call to mind all that God has done for me and trials that He brought me through. I stand on the banks of the Red Sea and sing "the Lord is gloriously triumphant."

~ Ann McElmurry

During the pandemic I baked, and ate, a lot of bread. Maybe it was an unconscious longing for the "Bread of Life" which was on hold publically. It was a longing to be part of the Body of Christ and the invitation to become that Body, that Sacred bread. Would that I could be like Saint Polycarp, whose body when burned at the stake smelled, not like burning flesh, but like a loaf of bread baking in the oven and it spread a delicious fragrance. "You be the bread!" "You give them something to eat!" Blessed be God forever!

~Mary Adams

My relationship with the Benedictine Sisters has been a constant in my life, and I know that Sister Agatha continues to pray for me. I was blessed to FaceTime with her on her feast day this year. Last year, I traveled from Chicago to the monastery to spend sometime with Sister Macrina at the beginning of March. It was a blessing and grace to be able to say goodbye to one another. She sent me the medal of Saint Benedict that she wore often shortly after our visit. I wear it daily to remember her and to remember to always pray for the Sisters at St. Scholastica.

~ Kyle Meadors

Sacristy and Liturgy with Sister Stephanie

Since 2008, Sister Stephanie Schroeder has been the Monastery Sacristan and Liturgy Director. Though the two positions work hand-in-hand and are the breath of any parish or monastic community, Benedictine liturgy is particularly important because it is the foundation for any monastic community. Because Benedictine spirituality is centered around listening to the Scriptures, one's work and leisure are formed into continuing acts of prayer, thereby enhancing the breadth of the gift of prayer and its value in daily life.

Liturgy is the action of a community, usually a parish, to come together and pray, and includes the seven sacraments, the rosary, Benediction, Stations of the Cross, communion services, and Liturgy of the Hours. Benedictine liturgy is rooted in the Psalms and other Scriptures and is not designed to take people out of the world to find God, but instead to enable people to realize that God is in the world around them. By looking at Benedictine spirituality in this context, work becomes an essential function of one's prayer life, not as idle action but as purposeful acts of love formed as an extension of a relationship with God.

"Of course work and prayer go together. My whole day is centered around liturgy and work, so my entire day is like a prayer. What fun I have in the day, sharing food, sharing prayer, playing cards together, and then at night when I go to bed and am quiet with God. My whole day is a prayer," shares Sister Stephanie.

The act of coming together to pray as a community, to share in praise that builds a relationship with God, also builds and strengthens interpersonal relationships among community members or parish members. Because liturgy is the heart

of a relationship with God and a relationship with others, coming together for prayer is essential to a peaceful and cohesive monastic community.

"You deepen your relationship with God and your relationship with others. It is that whole thing with forming relationships.

When we come

together to pray, we pray for the whole church and that is the world," explains Sister Stephanie. "Benedictine spirituality is centered around prayer, which includes liturgy and *lectio divina*. Receiving the Eucharist is more than a prayer. The whole Eucharist is his passion, death, and resurrection, and we celebrate that whole paschal mystery every time we receive the Eucharist. Sometimes I strive to be in a prayerful state, but sometimes it is just about being present, being with the community, and being with the pain. I unite my suffering with Jesus."

Not only is being the Liturgy Director and Sacristan very spiritual positions, but they are also very technical positions. To prepare for Mass and prayer, decorations are chosen to match the feast and the liturgical season. To keep up with practices, Sister Stephanie reads *Pastoral Liturgy* and other publications to keep herself informed about rituals and changes.

"A sacristan prepares for the Eucharist, which includes setting up the chalice, the bread, and the wine, and everything that is needed for the Eucharistic celebration. Along with that is knowing the vestments that the celebrant needs to wear, opening the books like the lectionary and the sacramentary, and the gospel book," explains Sister Stephanie.

The liturgist and sacristan merge Benedictine spirituality with the rituals of the Church so that people heed God's call to spread love and joy out into the world. By merging prayer, work, and leisure through liturgy, Benedictine spirituality is effective at changing ordinary acts into signs of love for the world. For information about joining the sisters for Mass or prayer after the pandemic, please contact the monastery office.



Top Right: Sister Stephanie proclaims Scripture during noon praise.
Bottom Left: Sister Leona Marie Selig listens during Sister Stephanie's proclamation.

The Child Cannot Wait

A G.E.M Reflection



By
Sister Rosalie Ruesewald and
Oblate Kathy Jarvis,
Directors of the G.E.M. Scholarship
Program

*St. Scholastica Monastery asks that
you join us in supporting the work
of the G.E.M Scholarship Program
by making a donation to sponsor the
education of a Guatemalan girl.*

Please make checks payable to:

*St. Scholastica Monastery
Memo: "Guatemala Scholarships"*

When asked to write a reflection on our G.E.M. (Girls' Education Matters) scholarship program, the words of Chilean educator and writer Gabriela Mistral came to mind.

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time [her] bones are being formed, her blood is being made, and her senses are being developed. To her we cannot answer, 'Tomorrow,' her name is today."

Ten years ago our monastery began a collaboration with our Benedictine brothers in Guatemala who have an excellent K-12 school, Colegio San Benito, in Esquipulas. The G.E.M. (Girls' Education Matters) scholarship program continues our community's 140+ year tradition of teaching.

During these ten years, we have learned a great deal about the reality of life in Guatemala, especially for the young. That explains why Mistral's words resonated with us. Over the years, we have seen so many young children not in school, selling trinkets on the street to help their families survive. Surely the pandemic has worsened the situation, but the systemic problems can't be denied. Budgets are a reflection of a nation's priorities and values and, in Guatemala, those budgets for education and healthcare have been slashed.

We also have to consider the horrific statistics on violence against girls and women in Guatemala as we reflect on education in that country. At this particular time when girls' education worldwide is threatened, we wonder about what effect this threat has on all girls, including those in our G.E.M. scholarship program. They have learned from their mothers and grandmothers that Guatemalan women must struggle to get their rights -



including the right to education- because "machismo" (male domination and female submission) has been endemic for so long. They have learned well from their elders to work very hard and they are thriving. It is a joy to see them blossom.



*A young G.E.M. Scholar sits in class at
Colegio San Benito*

Some of our G.E.M.'s have been raised at the orphanage where the valiant "mama bear" Franciscan Sister Dina has managed to take care of them. She has done this without any help from the Guatemalan government. No help for food, clothing, medicines, etc. Nada. Thank God for the life-saving social services the Catholic Church provides!

What would have happened to little Sofia had there not been a Catholic orphanage for her and 4 of her siblings to live in when their parents died? Would she now be standing on her feet 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, making tortillas like her oldest sister (16 years her senior) who didn't live in the orphanage? What are the chances that Sofia would be in a scholarship program preparing her for a bright future? Thanks to G.E.M., Sofia is now a star 6th grade student at Colegio San Benito.

As we ponder the evolution of the scholarship program over the last ten years, we realize that Padre Hugo Lopez, Superintendent of Colegio San Benito, and Gloria Portillo, Coordinator of G.E.M., have guided the program all along with the wisdom and urgency of Gabriela Mistral's words. We are most grateful.



Left Title Photo:

Two young G.E.M. scholars hold their 2016 graduation certificates after completing a year at Colegio San Benito thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

Left:

Sister Kimberly Prohaska (monastery Prioress) sits with a child from the orphanage and a Franciscan sister who helps run the orphanage that the GEM Scholarship Program works closely with.

Top Right:

Sister Dolores Vincent hugs a child from the orphanage during one of the earlier visits to Guatemala.

Right Middle:

A group of G.E.M. Scholars welcome travelers from the United States during a visit in 2016.

Right:

Haym e Ginliani, a St. Scholastica Oblate, sits with a few G.E.M. scholars at Colegio San Benito.



Sisters Who Are Mothers



Sister Frances Anne with her children.



Sister Alice with her children when she graduated from nursing school in 1994.



Novice Faustina with her children when she became a novice. On June 24, 2021, Novice Faustina will make temporary profession.

Women who take their monastic vows at St. Scholastica Monastery come from diverse walks of life, including those who were previously married and are mothers. The Sisters who are mothers, though few in numbers, reflect the community's openness to helping women answer their call to live monastic life in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict. Though the changing landscape of profession means that many women are waiting until later in life (and after having been married or having children) to become affiliates, the practice of accepting women who are mothers is not new.



Sister Cecelia with her daughter, Jenni.

Sister Mary Anna Schaefer was born in Langendorf, Bavaria, on September 20, 1876 and entered Pilot Grove Monastery in 1904, after her husband and child died. In 1916, Sister Mary Anna and the rest of her Pilot Grove community amalgamated with the St. Scholastica Community.

Many years later, Sister Frances Anne Braddock, born on April 2, 1919, made monastic profession after her husband died and after having raised seven children with him. Sister Frances Anne entered St. Scholastica in 1985, joining two of her biological sisters, Sister Roberta Hyland and Sister DeChantal Hyland.

Until very recently, three women at St. Scholastica were mothers: Novice Faustina Nguyen, Sister Cecelia Brickell, and Sister Alice O'Brien, who passed away in 2020. After first taking vows at Our Lady of Peace Monastery in Columbia, Missouri, Sister Alice transferred to St. Scholastica Monastery in 2008. To enter a monastery and become a professed sister, Sister Alice obtained an annulment from the Church after her divorce. As a sister, Sister Alice remained very close to her six children and many grandchildren.

Sister Cecelia Brickell made her profession on June 24, 2007 after marrying and divorcing very young. As she described in her Vocation Story, "God gave me a great gift, second only to his love, my daughter, Jenni." After her daughter went to college, Sister Cecelia, who is also an RN, became more involved in parish life. Then, one day when Sister Kimberly Prohaska came for a talk somebody said that Cecelia would make a good sister, and immediately, she knew that was what she was meant to do next.

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery look forward to the first vows of Novice Faustina, herself a mother of two, in June of 2021. If you are interested in becoming a sister, please contact our Vocation Director, Sister Judith Timmerman by calling the monastery office. Your gifts, your diversity, and your path in life is a blessing from God that we hope you share with us.

Sisters Reflect on Covid, Quarantine, & Faith



“Be still!” Jesus said as He calmed the stormy waves as the disciples in the fishing boat feared for their lives. I needed these words of Jesus during 2020. My fears were affected by the unsettling events such as the pandemic, deaths, world unrest, national election, riots, natural and manmade disasters... A ceramic piece of art in my bedroom has the words engraved: “Be Still.” In that stillness is God.

~ Sister Barbara Bock

When I first heard of the virus, I prayed for God’s protection. Shortly after that I discovered that some sisters in our house had the virus. So my prayers became global and I prayed for all of us, especially for myself. When I missed the virus I prayed prayers of thanksgiving even though I was confused. How did I miss it? There were so many unanswered questions during the whole time. As we progressed through the quarantine of our whole community I felt gratefulness and relief. Finally it passed and on Easter, even though we were still in quarantine I felt a sense of accomplishment. When we sang the Easter songs I prayed, “Thank you gracious God, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

~ Sister Madeline Clifton

This past year I kept thinking, “How much longer is this going to last?” I longed for the freedom to live a common daily life and to be free of the masks. The days of quarantine were especially hard when we didn’t have meals and prayers together. I really missed seeing my blood sisters who live in Fort Smith. To deal with it, I walked around my room, prayed and read the Bible more, and wrote cards and letters to my sisters and former students. I tried to accept what is and not grieve. God has been my strength.

~ Sister Adrian Wewers

Gift Shop Open!



St. Scholastica Monastery

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

St. Scholastica Monastery has named Katie Shields as the new gift shop manager. Katie will be responsible for operations related to the gift shop, including book orders, in-store purchases, and online orders. We'd like to thank our friends for your patience by offering a 10% discount on all in-store items during the month of June.

Beginning in June, St. Scholastica Monastery will allow people to shop on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 AM until noon.

Patrons are required to show their vaccine card and must wear a medical grade face mask. While we understand this may place a burden on our friends, we hope you will understand our need to remain vigilant given the age of our sisters and the possible risks associated with contracting covid-19.

If you would like more information on gift shop operations or would like to pre-order your copy of *Macrina, Your Sister*, please contact Katie Shields during gift shop hours at ...

giftshop@stscho.org
479-242-2501