



H O R I Z O N S

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Stepping Stones

Every charitable act is a stepping stone toward heaven.

Henry Ward Beecher

Living life by taking a pebbled path is not an easy way to walk. The Sisters of St. Scholastica have been making their journey as a Benedictine community in Arkansas for one hundred and forty-five years. Our simple beginnings were not without struggle in answering the call from God to establish monastic life in the River Valley. Four women were called from Ferdinand, Indiana, to a rural and rugged country along a developing railway route in the hills of Arkansas, to assist German immigrants to form a larger community of faith.

We are still walking the Benedictine path in communion with our Brothers at Subiaco Abbey, through ministry at Hesychia House of Prayer, through the graduates from our School of Spiritual Direction, and by meeting the educational and pastoral needs in the diocese and in Esquipulas, Guatemala. Most importantly, we are women of deep prayer and continue to do outreach as we are able here at the monastery. Our Oblate program continues to welcome new members to the program, and the renewed fervor found there profoundly touches us all. We offer a space of sacredness and welcome strangers to become friends at our doors. The Sisters of St. Scholastica look for new stepping stones along the path that God is asking us to walk.

Our reality as women religious in the world is vastly different from when we first ventured on the way of Benedictine life, and yet it is tenderly familiar. Our beginning was small and full of faith, and our future feels the same. We are no longer present in five states, teaching in multiple Catholic schools, running orphanages, or managing hospitals. Like many other vowed celibate persons, we are seeing fewer young people feeling sustained in this life. There are many reasons for this decline. We understand the shift our paths are taking today in the twenty-first century and see it within our own diocese and monastic houses. As we step out with the same sense of calling to live the Benedictine life just as God has always called us to do, we live out the call with the same loving diligence as the many monastic women who have gone before us. We have been companions to and have been companioned by many: our families, our students, our St. Scholastica Alumnae, and the dioceses and places that we ministered to and with. These are the very stepping stones of who we are as Benedictines. Some of these stones have aged well, and others have been worn thin, suffering from the weather of life's difficulty, and yet we, in confidence, step on.

As we look at the steps ahead, we see an unknown future. We are smaller in number, and the reality of our aging and ability are very real. We know we could not be where we are now without those who have helped us land on the next stepping stone all along the way. We have embraced everything God has given us, we have carried the cross, and we have seen the joy of what that cross really means. We will begin taking new steps together to the unknown places God asks us to take with Him. We will begin to build a columbarium, for both the Sisters and the public. We are placing new signage at the monastery so that people will discover and rediscover that there are women of faith praying for the world each day.

For the last three years, much work has been done at Hesychia House of Prayer in New Blaine, where we are blessed to be in collaboration with the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Sisters Lisa Atkins and Sister Anita DeSalvo. Our own Sister Louise Sharum continues as a mentor to the team. Hesychia is on the site of the first of our many stepping stones, and we are grateful to all who have supported and continue to support Hesychia to be all that it is.

We are establishing a task force committee to help us to plan for the former monastery space, and dream toward the future. Where will our future take us? That is for God to know and for us to receive in faith. We will, as always, keep pace on the stepping stones toward heaven with you.

Sister Kimberly Prohaska, O.S.B., Prioress



Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress, at the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana.

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 Monastic Congregation 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.

In Loving Memory



Sister Stephanie Schroeder

September 25, 1932 -
December 7, 2023

Sister Stephanie Schroeder, age 91, a member of St. Scholastica Monastery, died December 7, 2023, at the monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Sister Stephanie was born September 25, 1932, in Windthorst, Texas, to Ben and Sophia Humpert Schroeder and was named Florentine Lucy. She was the fifth child of eleven born to the Schroeder family. Sister Stephanie entered St. Scholastica Monastery as a candidate on August 29, 1951, joining her sisters, Sister Barbara and Sister Marietta, as a Benedictine.

When she became a novice, she was given the name Mary Stephen but later she changed her name to Stephanie. Following her novitiate, Sister Stephanie made her first profession on June 24, 1954, and her final profession on June 24, 1957. Sister Stephanie was gifted in teaching and providing spiritual direction. She loved parish ministry. She spent many years as the liturgist for the monastic community. Her love of the liturgy was a part of her life until God called her home to life eternal.

Her ministry as a teacher took her to Paris, Atkins, Fort Smith, Russellville, Brinkley, Rogers, and Clarksville in Arkansas, and Moberly and Lebanon in Missouri for many years. In Springfield, Missouri, she taught for two years, then became a Pastoral Minister and Director of Religious Education.

Sister Stephanie was Vocation Director from 1989 to 2002. She was the Liturgist and Sacristan for thirty-five years at the monastery. She accompanied people as a certified spiritual director. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Avila College in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1970 and her Master of Pastoral Arts and Liturgy from Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, in 1979. Sister Stephanie continued learning throughout her life in many programs, including The Institute for Retreats and Pastoral Ministry, Formation in Ministry of Monastic Spiritual Direction, Healing Trauma, Gifts of Prayer and Spiritual Direction, Understanding Teens, Parent Effectiveness Training, RCIA for Catechumens, and Benedictine Conferences for Vocation and Formation Directors.

Sister Stephanie was known for making delicious coconut cakes, snacking on raisins and Fig Newtons, and tending to the monastery rose garden. Her hobbies included crocheting, listening to classical music and symphonies, and playing various card games. Sister Stephanie was a gentle, creative, and approachable person. She loved taking quiet walks in nature and possessed a lovely singing voice. She truly knew what it meant to live the Benedictine life as she often guided souls in discernment for their life call and as a spiritual director. She was dedicated to her family, faithfully keeping in touch with family and friends through letter-writing and telephone calls. She was preceded in death by her parents, her siblings, Clarence Schroeder, Elmer Schroeder, Raymond Schroeder, Brother Leonard Schroeder, OSB, of Subiaco Abbey, and Sisters Barbara Schroeder and Marietta Schroeder, OSB.

She is survived by her sisters, Sister Regina Schroeder, OSB, and Mary Rose (Schroeder) and her husband, Bob Lehmann, her brothers, George and his wife Ann Schroeder, Bernard and his wife Emily Schroeder, her sister-in-law, Anita Schroeder, many beloved nieces and nephews, and the members of her Benedictine family.

A Vespers Service will be held on Friday, June 28, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. The Funeral Mass will be Saturday, June 29, 2024, at 10:30 a.m., with Father Jerome Koddell, OSB, as presider and Fr. Joseph Chan, chaplain, as concelebrant. Both services will be at St. Scholastica Monastery Chapel, with interment in St. Scholastica Cemetery Columbarium at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Scholastica Monastery Continuing Care Fund, 1315 S. Albert Pike, Fort Smith, AR 72903.

Around the Monastery



Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress, Sister Laura Cathcart, and Sister Maria Goretti DeAngeli at Sister Laura's Rite of Transfer ceremony.

Sister Laura Cathcart Begins Transfer Process

On October 22, 2023, St. Scholastica Monastery welcomed Sister Laura Cathcart, OSB, into the Fort Smith community of Benedictine Sisters during her rite of transfer ceremony. After evening prayer, Sister Laura was given the community pin by Prioress Sister Kimberly Prohaska during a special ceremony. The community held a reception dinner in honor of her transfer from Holy Angels Convent in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Sister Laura manages the St. Scholastica gift shop and directs the Oblates of St. Scholastica under the mentorship of Sisters Hilary Decker and Maria Goretti DeAngeli.

2023 Bake Sale

On December 9, 2023, the Sisters held their annual bake sale at the monastery. Sister Maria DeAngeli raises herbs to sell and use in seasoned vinegars and oils. Sisters Maria and Madeline Bariola work for months baking breads, fruit cakes, jellies, preserves, and other things. A few weeks before the sale, many other Sisters contribute their specialties. Beautiful afghans and other handmade items were for sale alongside the pickles, jams, jellies, and sweet treats. Our Oblates, Alumnae, and friends also make their contributions. Thank you to all of our volunteers who helped and to all those who supported the sale with your purchases and donations.



Father Joseph Chan and Sister Dolores Vincent Bauer wait for the Mass to begin.

Founders Day 2024: St. Scholastica Monastery Celebrates 145 Years

On January 23, 2024, St. Scholastica Monastery celebrated 145 years since the community's founding in Shoal Creek. The celebration began with morning prayers. Afterward, Father Joseph Chan was celebrant of the Mass. In his homily, Fr. Joseph spoke of the young founders and their dedication to their calling. At the conclusion of Mass, the Sisters then enjoyed a delicious brunch and fellowship. The evening held a special dinner and social time during which they enjoyed a trivia game using facts from the community's history.

Oblate Happenings



On Saturday, February 4, 2024, Oblates Terry and Bill Baker, Katie Shields, and Annie Woody attended a day of reflection at Hesychia House of Prayer in New Blaine, Arkansas.

The theme for the day was “Time Made Holy”. The Oblates were welcomed to the grounds by the Sisters of Hesychia then had time for prayer and contemplation to walk the land in the peace and

beauty unique to the silence of the countryside, or to sit in the stillness of the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament.



Oblates enjoyed a simple lunch together (above, Annie Woody and Terry Baker; below, Katie Shields and Bill Baker).



Around noon, they gathered to pray the liturgy of the hours, after which they enjoyed a simple lunch and visit with the Sisters. The remaining hours of the reflection day were spent in solitude with the Lord, culminating in a prayer service where they shared some of their insights from the day.

The Sisters from Hesychia said, “The Oblates radiated God’s presence, and hearts of hospitality and peace. It was a joy getting to know them! The Hesychia Sisters look forward to seeing them and other Oblates in May.”

The stillness and beauty this sanctuary provides is open to all who seek a place to deepen their relationship with God through solitude and prayer. Reservation requests can be made via the Hesychia House of Prayer website: seektheholys.org



Oblates spent time in contemplation in the chapel.

St. Scholastica Oblates

Oblates study topics on the Holy Rule of St. Benedict that we Benedictines follow. Participation in the Oblate Program allows lay people the opportunity to seek God through prayer, achieve a greater attentiveness to the Word of God, learn a balance of prayer, work, and holy leisure, and many other spiritually enriching aspects of the Benedictine lifestyle. Both men and women are welcome to join our Oblate program.

If you have any interest in our program, visit our Oblate section on the St. Scholastica website:

www.stscho.org.

To learn more about our program and make any inquiries, please email us at: oblates@stscho.org

Girls' Education Matters (G.E.M) Donor List

Created over a decade ago, G.E.M aids girls and women in Esquipulas, Guatemala, as they attend school from elementary age on into college years.

We humbly thank all of the 2023 donors to the Guatemalan scholarship program.

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Vocation Corner by Sister Siena Fisk

Discernment Days

Advent is a festive season at St. Scholastica. It is a time of joyous expectation and anticipation of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We were blessed to have had the presence of our vocation discerner, Juanita Rios, with us from December 16-21, 2023.

Juanita, who hails from El Dorado Springs, MO, was able to participate in the monastery's regular schedule as well as in some of our Christmas activities. To name a few of her monastic experiences, she met and dined with some of our Oblates at their Christmas gathering. The monastery also had an evening of Christmas tree decorating in which Juanita joyfully hung some tree ornaments. She had a day of visits to both Hesychia House of Prayer and Subiaco Abbey. Our special thanks to both Sr. Anita de Salvo, RSM, and Br. Francis Kirchner, OSB, for graciously acting as her tour guides.

We, the Sisters of St. Scholastica, would like to extend an invitation to women who are seeking God to come visit us and experience how we live our Benedictine charism of work, prayer, and radical hospitality. For inquiries, please contact the Vocation Director at (479) 783-4147.



Juanita participated in the Christmas traditions of the Sisters during her visit.

St. Scholastica Monastery: Fort Smith, AR

Do you want to know more about Benedictine life and what it means to be a monastic in today's world?

Do you need a companion on your journey?

Contact St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and learn more about seeking God through prayer and contemplation.

 www.stscho.org

 vocationdirector@stscho.org

 479-783-4147



*Listen with the ear
of your heart.*
~St. Benedict of Nursia~



#SimplyBenedictine

The 2023 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC)

Every year, the youth of high school age from different Catholic dioceses around the country gather for a three-day experience of prayer, catechesis, service, adoration, and community. Last year's NCYC conference was held in Indianapolis, IN, November 16-18, which I was blessed to be one of the approximately 13,000 participants.



*Sister Siena poses with attendees and volunteers from the NCYC, 2023.
Photo courtesy of NRVC.*

I worked as a volunteer at the National Religious Vocation Conference's (NRVC) t-shirt swap area where we, Vocation Directors from different religious institutes, brought t-shirts to swap with the youth who themselves brought t-shirts to donate and swap.

Working at the t-shirt swap gave me the opportunity to meet and engage in conversation with youth from all over the country -- some came from as far as Hawaii! It was also a great opportunity for me to meet my peers in vocations ministry but most especially to reconnect with my cohort from NRVC's Orientation for New Vocation Directors workshop which I attended in July of 2023.



Sister Siena with Chris Padgett. Photo courtesy of NRVC.

I met some who, unbeknownst to me, are well-known singers: Dana Catherine and Thomas Muglia, as well as Catholic speaker, musician, author, and comedian, Chris Padgett.

I was proud to have been able to make Mr. Padgett laugh at some point in my conversation with him!

Aside from helping at the t-shirt swap, I also participated in some conference sessions, concerts, and talks.

Overall, it was heartwarming to see the excitement, vigor, and love that our youth have for our Lord and our Blessed Mother. Having witnessed these has given me hope for the future of our Church.



*Sister Siena with singers Dana Catherine and Thomas Muglia
Photo courtesy of NRVC.*

HONOR ROLL OF BENEFACTORS FOR 2023

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 during the year 2023.

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E-mail: elise@stscho.org

News Briefs

November 4, 2023: Sisters Barbara Bock and Cecelia Brickell attended a conference on Nutrition as Medicine in Little Rock.

December 6, 2023: Sister Maria Goretti DeAngeli gave a presentation at the Sacred Heart of Mary Church in Barling, Arkansas.

December 10, 2023: Chuck Pennington spoke to the Sisters on the evolution of care for the mentally ill in Fort Smith in the last forty years.

January 28-February 3, 2024: During Catholic Schools Week, seven Sisters participated in a Mass at Trinity Catholic School with students from all the Catholic schools in Fort Smith. On January 30, Sisters Dolores Vincent Bauer and Siena Fisk visited St. John School in Russellville. On February 1, Sisters Siena Fisk and Laura Cathcart visited St. Joseph School in Paris.

January 30-February 6, 2024: Sister Kimberly attended the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana.

February 3, 2024: Sisters Madeline Bariola, Barbara Bock, and Siena Fisk joined other Sisters in the Diocese of Little Rock to celebrate World Day for Consecrated Life at the Carmelite monastery in Little Rock.

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