



HORIZONS

Vol. 55 No. 2

SAINT SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY, Fort Smith, AR

July 2026

Simply Benedictine

Message from the Prioress



*A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it.
It just blooms.*
— Zen Proverb

Reflecting on these past months, I notice we are often busy with immediate concerns, focusing on what seems urgent. In doing so, we may forget that the world needs not just what we accomplish but, more importantly, our attention to who we are as daughters and sons of God.

There is no greater flower of purpose than the life we live, and if we live it as God asks each day we blossom beautifully. These buds bring fragrance to a world full of angst. Too often, we forget to be loving and kind—especially when the world fails to notice the quiet beauty and care of many tending to the lives around them.

What is God asking us to do in the human garden of this life? What weeds of contention, greed, uncertainty, fear, and unhealthy attitudes should we pull from our hearts? How might we plant seeds that matter to a wounded, crying world?

We have Sisters and friends who love visiting our monastery to walk the grounds, stroll the labyrinth prayerfully, and tend the vegetable garden and strawberry patch. They discover peach trees sprouting in the compost and plant them so that they will bear fruit. We take time to feed each other, not just with fresh tomatoes or turnips from the garden, but with the gift of our daily presence. I do not have a green thumb, but I enjoy the blessing of those who do!

We have been busy with many things this happy spring, now stretching into summer. May was abundant with activity: our community retreat with Sister Judith Sutura brought insights on Chapter Seven of the Rule of Benedict on Humility. We welcomed our Oblates to join us for the retreat, and it was a wonderful week together. We thank Sister Judith for her time with us. We also welcomed new enrollees who became Oblates, alongside those making their final Oblation, ending the happy day with a luncheon in gratitude for all our Oblates. We honored eight employees who marked anniversaries with us, hosting a special dinner and presenting certificates in recognition of their employment with St. Scholastica. We are blessed to have our employees, Oblates, and volunteers in our lives. In early June, we will host our annual employee and volunteer picnic, a wonderful opportunity for everyone to come together. As summer stretches on, many of our Sisters take time away with family and friends or attend various conferences and events.

We are involved in many things: welcoming guests, offering tours and visits to the gift shop, and meeting the various needs of those who come to our doors. The blessing of hospitality and living the monastic life continues to thrive. We bloom in all kinds of ways, flowering with each moment and in every way we are able. We hope your summertime will also grow in the beauty and love you desire and need, so that in all things God may be glorified. May you have a wonderful summer as you help bring forth God's flowering grace in the world.

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

Message from the Office of Mission Advancement

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT

July 2026

“as their open door to the presence of Christ”

Recently, we were asked to pray a novena for a special intention through the intercession of Blessed Stanley Rother. One phrase in the prayer we were given reverberated in my heart. Blessed Stanley was described as “interceding for them as their open door to the presence of Christ.”

How was Blessed Stanley Rother an “open door to the presence of Christ” to the people he served? Blessed Stanley was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma in 1963. From 1968 until his murder in 1981, he served at a mission in Santiago Atitlan in Guatemala. The native Mayans he served saw their pastor as an “open door to the presence of Christ” by the way he immersed himself into their lives. He was a minister of the Sacraments and the Word of God to them. He learned their language and their traditional way of farming. As opportunities presented themselves, he shared his gifts by helping translate the New Testament into their native language, by helping them with medical issues, and by introducing farming practices he had learned growing up on an Oklahoma farm.



What can I learn from Blessed Stanley about being “an open door to the presence of Christ” for those I meet? I must enter any situation open to learning, affirming the good I see, and then humbly offering the knowledge and skills I have in service. My aim is not to focus on my gifts but to point the way to Christ and his mission of love and service.

You, Oblates, Alumnae, benefactors, relatives, and friends, are “open door[s] to the presence of Christ” through your goodness to us. You not only keep the doors of the monastery open but also show us the presence of Christ through your prayerful support, your volunteering to help where needed, your openness to learning and living out Benedictine values, and your offering advice out of your experiences.

As we watch the news and hear about the troubles in the world, we often wonder what we can do to ease the suffering. We can learn from Blessed Stanley. Let our goodness and service “open the door to the presence of Christ” to those in our little corner of the universe.

Throughout the summer, may you encounter many “open doors” and serve as “open doors” to many.

—Sister Elise Forst, OSB

In Loving Memory

Stephen Dale Gramlich April 19, 1941 - February 28, 2026

Stephen Dale Gramlich passed away on February 28, 2026. He was born April 19, 1941, to John Bernard Gramlich and Myrtle Theresa Hough Gramlich.

Steve graduated from Fort Smith High School in 1959. He was awarded honors for constructing furniture when he was as young as 18. He enjoyed history and collecting memorabilia. Steve belonged to the Fort Smith Antique Car Club for decades. He enjoyed telling stories and building community.

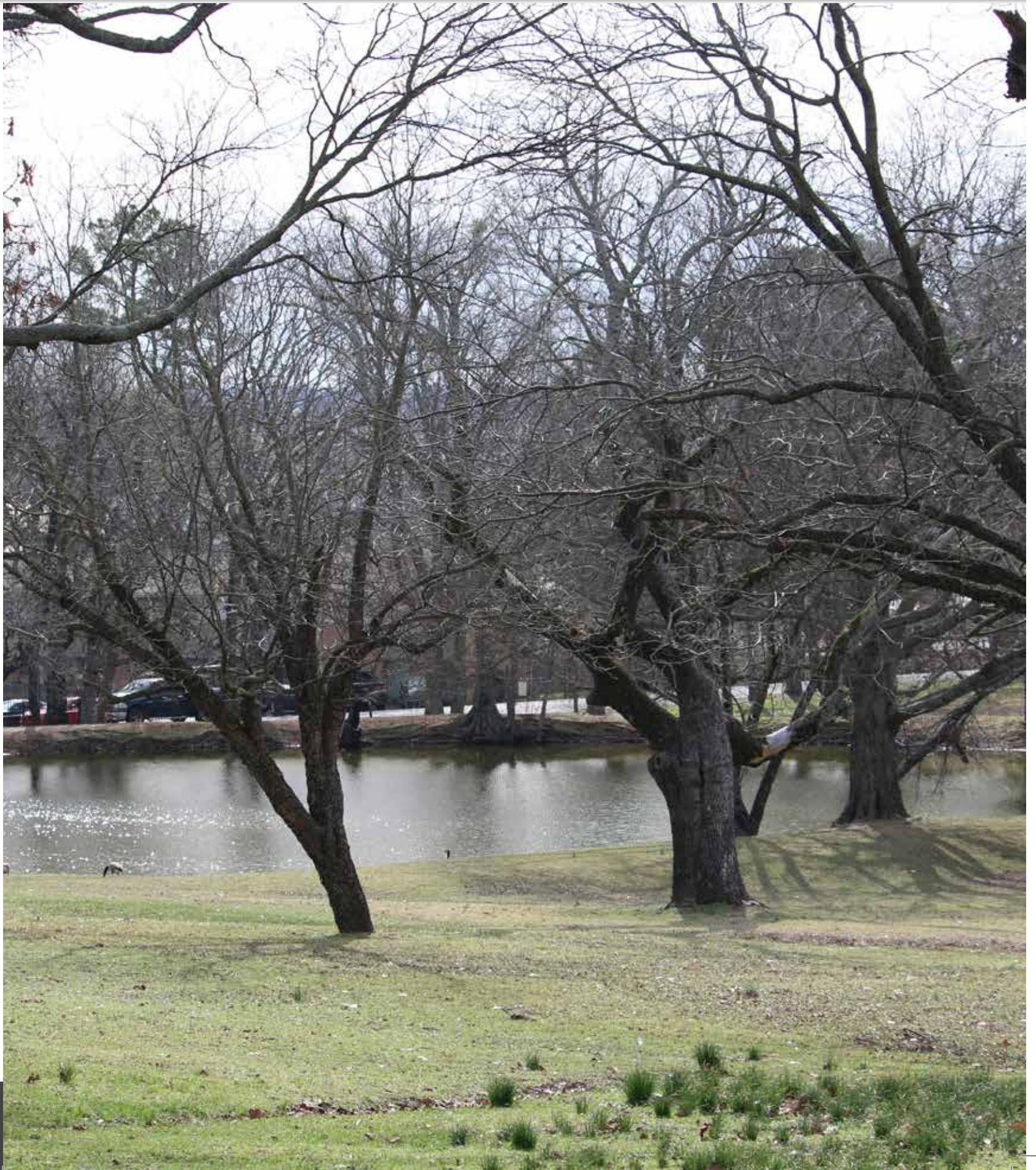
Steve was a devout Catholic who prioritized his family and his faith. He never missed Mass, even at camp in the mountains. Steve lived not only for this life, but in preparation for eternal life. He believed the words of Christ: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day" (John 6:53-54). Steve made his oblation on March 20, 1994.

He was preceded in death by his parents John Bernard Gramlich and Myrtle Theresa Hough Gramlich; his wife, Linda Joy Gramlich; his sisters, Marilyn Moore and Virginia "Ginny" Sue Stouffer; and a grandson, Aaron Nicholas Fuller and one great-granddaughter, Sunny Rose.

He is survived by his children Angela Perez (Sergio), Janet Fuller (Greg), and Dan Gramlich (Valerie); his grandchildren Jonathon Fuller (Joanne), Rachel Johnson (Carl), and Jordan Gramlich; his great-grandchildren Miles and Theo, Sylvia, Sadie, Scarlett and Siena; and his brother John Bernard (Sonny) Gramlich II and his sister Carol Pate (Rick); and many nieces and nephews.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 6, 2026, at 1:00 P.M. at St. Michael Catholic Church, Van Buren, with a rosary at 12:30 prior to the Mass. Following the Mass, the Rite of Committal was held at Roselawn Cemetery in Fort Smith, Arkansas.





St. Scholastica Monastery's Jubilarian for 2025

Sister Hilary Decker's 70th Jubilee



Sister Hilary Decker, OSB

Sister Hilary Decker knew she wanted to be a Sister, even though she had no personal experience with any women religious. Several generations of her family were educated in Rhineland, Texas, by the Olivetan Benedictines, and a young Sister Hilary grew up surrounded by stories of Benedictine Sisters.

Lenora Emma Decker was born April 25, 1938, to Jerome and Agnes Decker. She moved from Rhineland, Texas, to Morton, Texas, when she was only two. She received catechism lessons one hour a week and attended daily Mass, but there was no Catholic school where she lived. She was educated in public schools, but her call to be a sister continued through the years. However, when she was fifteen, she realized her interest in becoming a Sister was beginning to wane. Sister Hilary said there was a moment, as she was walking to get milk at the store, when she felt that if she did not leave to be a Sister soon, she would never join. She confided in her mother, who supported her decision. She first wrote to the Victory Knoll Sisters in Indiana, but she was denied entry because she did not have two years of college or two years of work experience. She then

wrote to the Benedictines in Fort Smith; they responded quickly and sent her a list of what she would need and the date she would arrive at the convent.

Her family drove her to Fort Smith on August 26, and she entered St. Scholastica Convent on August 28, 1953. She made her temporary vows on June 24, 1956, and made her perpetual vows on June 24, 1959. Sister Hilary began her legacy as a beloved educator at her first mission as a teacher of the first through fourth grades at Holy Redeemer School in Clarksville, Arkansas, from 1956 to 1958. She finished her high school education at St. Scholastica Academy in 1959 and within the same year, Sister Hilary began teaching second grade at St. Boniface Catholic School in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Sister Hilary continued to teach until 1981 in schools in Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, and Louisiana. In the 1990s and early 2000s, she worked in parish ministry at St. Anne's in Canyon, Texas, and then St. Hyacinth's in Amarillo, Texas. When she returned to St. Scholastica Monastery in 2001, she served as the Retreat Center Director.

Sister Hilary says she has received a rich education because of her community. She pursued higher education at the University of Dallas, with a Bachelor of Arts in History, and then was blessed to have the opportunity to both learn and teach through a teaching assistantship as she obtained her Masters of History at Illinois State University. She also earned an MA in Theological Studies at La Salle University in Pennsylvania. A different kind of educational experience has been her opportunities for travel to Africa, Europe, Israel, and Japan.

She said that she has been formed and educated over these years by the Benedictine motto of *ora et labora*, "prayer and work". "My response at fifteen to God's urging on that beautiful June morning seems like a faroff dream," said Sister Hilary. She knows that at fifteen she felt a genuine call of God, and, now, she is celebrating seventy years of commitment to this calling. Sister Hilary has said that the Benedictine life of prayer has guided her through good times and bad times, and she is filled with thanksgiving for her call from God, and for her community, her friends, and her family who have walked this journey with her.

Around the Monastery

St. Anne's Homeschool Catholic Co-Op Program



Family members, friends, and the Sisters gathered in the community room and chapel on March 27, 2026, for the St. Anne's Homeschool Co-Op's displays of visual art, research projects, music, and the performing arts. Katie Sharum, one of the mothers who volunteers in the co-op said, "The students form lasting friendships, study prayers in Latin, celebrate saints, dive into Catholic book studies, and showcase their sacred choral and art projects."

The first portion of the program featured PowerPoint presentations on the history of saints. While the presentation looped, the students stood by their sewing and art projects in the Chapter Room for guests to enjoy at their leisure. Afterward, the Sisters, students, and

guests gathered in the chapel. Father Brian of Christ the King Catholic Church in Fort Smith opened the next portion of the event with a prayer, and students shared the prayers they had learned in Latin and performed choral pieces and an original skit on the life of St. Thomas Aquinas. At the conclusion of the event, the students presented the Sisters with homemade art and a small handmade quilt. Sisters and guests then looked over the work featured in the exhibition room and spent time in conversation until the end of the program. The Sisters passed out home-made cookies and chatted with the students and their families as the families departed.

To inquire about the St. Anne's Homeschool Co-Op, please contact Katie Sharum at ktea12@yahoo.com for further information or interest in the fall term.



2026 Oblate Enrollees and Oblations

During Mass on Sunday, May 3, 2026, St. Scholastica Monastery's Oblate program welcomed new enrollees, celebrated those who made their Oblation, and renewed their commitment as Oblates. After Mass, the Sisters, Oblates, and guests enjoyed a special luncheon.



From left to right: Sr. Laura Cathcart, Josh Dunmeyer, Serena Scherrey Smith, Freda Dudley, Becky Yates, and Sr. Maria Goretti DeAngeli



From left to right: Sr. Laura Cathcart, Carrie Moore, Marie Mariott, Mary Anette Chaney, Jill Thompson, Maria Goretti DeAngeli, and Amy Calma

Employee Anniversary Dinner

Eight important employee anniversaries were celebrated on May 19, 2026. The Sisters welcomed employees celebrating both five and ten years to a dinner honoring their years of employment at the monastery. Vanessa Bradley was honored for ten years of service, and Sister Lisa Atkins, RSM, Sister Anita DeSalvo RSM, Cheryl Driver, Yanim Mendoza Esquivel, Lisa Johnson, and Melody Strassmann for five years. Each received a special certificate of appreciation and recognition at the conclusion of the dinner. We thank all of our employees for their commitment to excellence in service.



*Back row from left to right: Fr. Joseph Chan, Melody Strassmann, Lisa Johnson, Vanessa Bradley
Front row from left to right: Cheryl Driver, Sr. Anita DeSalvo, RSM, Sr. Lisa Atkins, RSM,
and Yanim Mendoza*

The Oblate Program of St. Scholastica Monastery

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 women and men are welcome to join our Oblate program. We meet on the third Sunday from September to May, in person and via Zoom. There are no meetings in the summer. If you have an interest in our program, 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.

From the Gardens of St. Scholastica by Carly Flanagan

... I love my garden, and I love working in it. To potter with green growing things, watching each day to see the dear, new sprouts come up, is like taking a hand in creation, I think. Just now my garden is like faith - the substance of things hoped for.

-Lucy Maud Montgomery

Last November, Sister Laura Cathcart scattered watermelon seeds in the compost just to see what green things would emerge, playing hide and seek with the seeds. Her life as a city girl never afforded her the opportunity to “play in the dirt”, but when she turned to the monastery grounds as a way to leave the office and spend time outside, she cast her eyes to what working in the soil might



November watermelons!

offer. “It was a way to get outside and refresh. It began as a pastime, and now it’s become a hobby,” said Sister Laura. Last year, she harvested strawberries and some tomatoes, feeling the joy of growing things. “This year, I am actually learning to do stuff. With the strawberries I grew again, I made sorbet. With the radishes, I learned how to make the radish dressing. The Sisters teach me things they’ve known

for years.” She’s learned about soil and the critters who also love her garden. The groundskeepers, Lisa Johnson and Armando Gonzales, have passed on to her the gardening wisdom Sister Pierre Vorster taught to them.

Caring for the earth and sharing communion with nature through keeping a garden flows throughout the history of the monastery. As Sister Maria Goretti DeAngeli said, “We’ve always had some kind of garden. I think we’ve always been a community that treasured the earth.”

After the first winter at the new convent in Shoal Creek, one of the first tasks for the Benedictine Sisters was to eke out a garden from the hard soil. There has been a garden ever since. At the new location in Fort Smith, the Sisters developed a thriving garden of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. “We raised everything. We really did survive on our garden,” said Sister Maria. She said when she entered the monastery, Sister Fintana Gilmore was in charge of raising vegetables. She recalled the tomatoes, lettuce, beets, and potatoes. In later years, Sister Annette Ketter planted a large asparagus patch. All were grown as sources of nourishment. For many years, there were large strawberry patches and orchards east of the monastery. The orchards contained pear, apple, peach, and cherry trees. Sister Elise Forst said she remembered picking up potatoes near the old ball fields (Yes, the Sisters played softball and volleyball!).

Canning “parties” were a part of every summer. Sisters sat in the Green Hall,



Radishes grown by Sister Laaura.

now part of the Ministries Building, or out under the trees, peeling peaches. Other Sisters worked in the hot canning room, now the Archives, putting the fruit in gallon jars, ready to be enjoyed in the winter.

Sister Kimberly Prohaska said that as a postulant and novice, she remembers Sisters Anenne Siebenmorgen and Sister Pierre teaching her about the garden. She'll never forget learning from Sister Pierre that peanuts grew in the ground. It was a thrill to help to grow and harvest the bumper crop of peaches-and-cream corn.

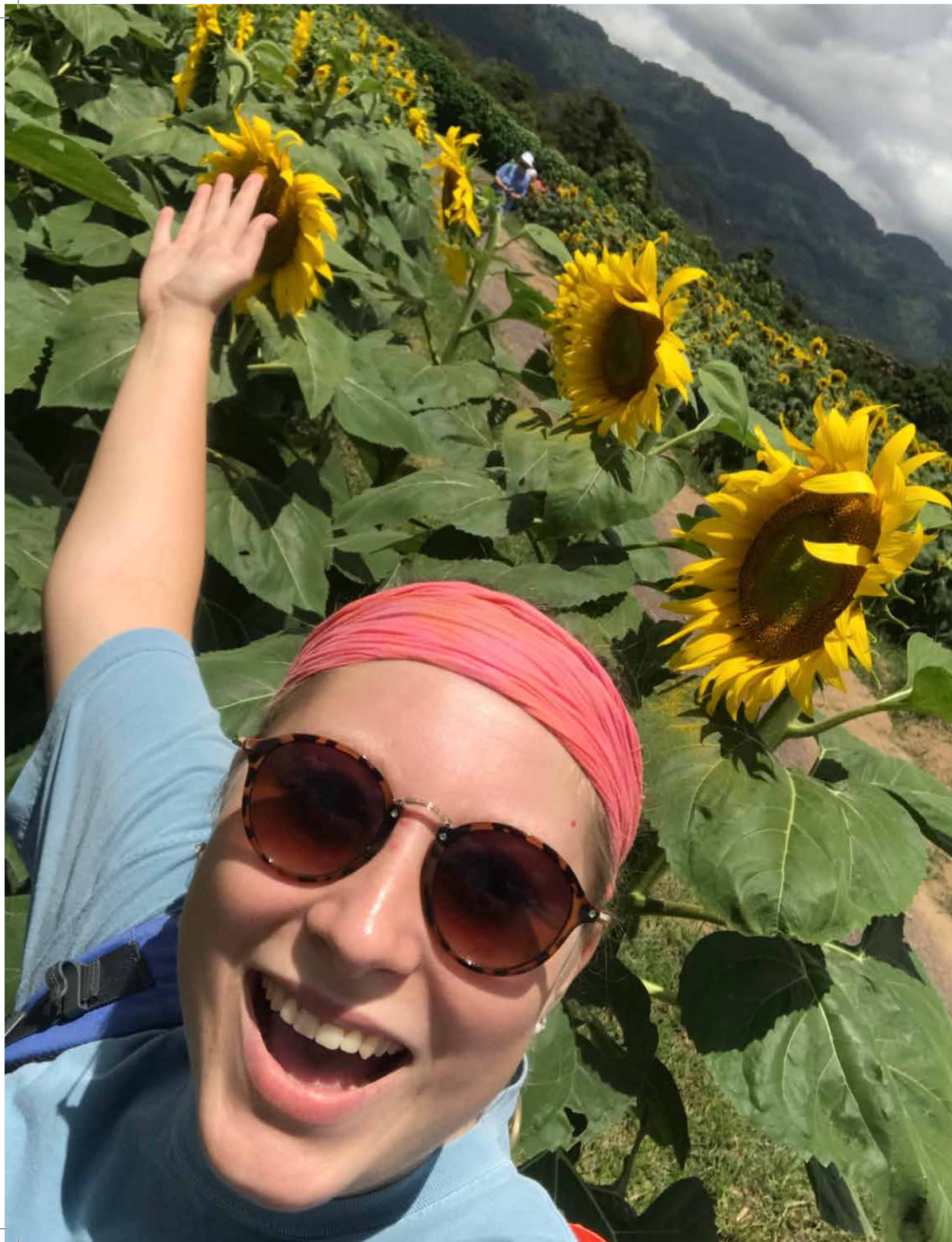
Sister Maria still tends an herb garden. She raises the herbs, crushes them, grinds them, and bottles them. These precious herbs are used in cooking and baking for the Sisters and for the annual Bake Sale and are sold in bottles in the gift shop.

Another lesson learned from that first garden in Shoal Creek was that even in necessity and poverty, the Sisters made sure to plant flowers simply for beauty. The flowers of the monastery had their own place of importance. The monastery grounds boast many trees, flowers, and flowering shrubs because of the efforts of Sisters in the past, like Sisters Alexis Fritz, Mary John Wiederkehr, and Pierre Vorster. Sisters Barbara Bock and Madeline Bariola continue to care for flower beds on the grounds. Sister Macrina Wiederkehr and friends of the monastery created a labyrinth surrounded by the beauty of flowers and shrubs for Sisters and guests to experience a place to meet God in prayer and meditation. Sister Barbara and volunteers maintain the labyrinth and surrounding area.

Many of the Sisters find delight in caring for house plants. Sisters Madeline Bariola and Siena Fisk grow beautiful violets. Sister Siena also nurtures orchids, one of God's most delicate flowers. She said of the experience, "It's so Benedictine – working with our hands." Sister Madeline Bariola has an infamous "green thumb" and has rescued many plants beyond hope, restoring them to health. Sister Maria said, "Plants galore of Sister Madeline's line the halls."

The author C.S. Lewis stated that in his imagination, Paradise would always be linked to his brother's garden. And so it is that the Sisters of St. Scholastica not only grew and harvested food from the gardens, but they grew and harvested beauty, wisdom, relationships, and an understanding of their Creator God.





One Family in Christ by Claire Hollenbeck

When I was in junior high at Trinity, I watched a presentation by Ms. Kathy Jarvis on her recent travels to Esquipulas, Guatemala. I was so moved by the stories of the young girls. I was inspired by their passion for education and desire to improve their community. It was a realization that the education and opportunities I had were a gift from God. This first encounter with the GEM program was like a spark. The Holy Spirit moves in our lives in so many ways, and looking back, I wish I could tell my junior high self the ways this program would impact my life.

Following that presentation, I began to get more involved with the GEM program as a volunteer. I helped with the Fiesta of Solidarity annual fundraiser numerous times and began to learn more about the girls receiving scholarships through the GEM program. In the summer of 2019, I had the opportunity to go to Esquipulas for two weeks to work with the girls in the program. What I thought would be a time for us to help the girls in their studies turned into one of the best learning opportunities I ever had. Stepping completely out of my comfort zone, the girls in the GEM program showed me such grace and kindness. I am forever grateful for everything they have taught me.



Claire Hollenbeck with the girls of Esquipulas.

I remember when we were getting ready to leave Guatemala that summer, I was so sad and talking with some of the girls when one of them told me “nostros es una familia en Cristo”, or “we are one family in Christ”. This is something that is very talked about with the GEM program and something I now think about with my work at Catholic Charities. Before that trip I thought it was somewhat cheesy, but it is now something I have on my bulletin board at Catholic Charities. I am sure the young woman did not realize this, but her saying that to me goes beyond my bulletin board. It is part of my everyday work mindset.

The way the Holy Spirit moves in our lives is so incredible. My time in Esquipulas helped to solidify my passion about Catholic Social Teaching and my feeling that the Lord was calling me to service in some way. In my current role at Catholic Charities of Arkansas, I have the privilege of putting my faith into action through my work. Through social media I have had the opportunity to keep up with many of the people I met in Guatemala, and I am so grateful for that. I know that supporters of the GEM program, myself included, pray frequently for the students, and I also know that the students pray for us. In Christ we are truly one family. I know God has great plans for the GEM program, and I am so honored to watch that unfold.



To make a single or monthly donation through PayPal, click on the QR code and select “Guatemala Scholarships” from the drop down menu.

Save the date for the Fiesta of Solidarity!

OCT. 24

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH HALL

Doors open @ 6 p.m.

Sr. Louise's Final Gift To US: *Hesychia Reflection Journal* By Sister Lisa Atkins, RSM



Sister Louise was sharing one day that for most of us the biggest leap is from our heads to our hearts to meet and be met by God. It is in this heart space where we encounter the LIVING GOD who waits, creates, heals, loves, and draws us into an ever-deepening relationship with God's self. In this heart space we always have access to encounter God's presence, love, and steadfast wisdom. The transition from simply "knowing about God" in our heads to "experiencing the Living God" is possible for each one of us. However, most of us have never been taught how to make this profound transition from our heads to our hearts in our relationship with God.

Sister Louise felt invited by God to create the *Hesychia Reflection Journal* to guide us and companion us in making the transition from "knowing about God" in our heads to "experiencing God" in our hearts. After much prayer, Sister Louise created this journal so that each day we have the possibility to encounter God in Scripture, beautiful Hesychia nature pictures, and God-led and inspired questions.



Each day, we are invited and guided by Sister Louise to learn more fully how to slow down, notice, listen, and receive in order to trust

God's presence, love, and wisdom within our hearts. Essentially, this journal helps us to connect the God-dots in our lives to enable the Spirit of God to lead us to greater integration, authenticity, and wholeness.

Sister Louise completed about 90% of this book before she went home to God, October 26, 2025. *Hesychia Reflection Journal* is dedicated to Sister Louise. This journal came directly from her own prayerful reflections and her own God wisdom. It was Sister Louise's hope and prayer that this journal would serve as a pathway for a deeper encounter and relationship with God for each of us.

If you desire and are ready to go deeper in your relationship with God, this *Hesychia Reflection Journal* is for you!

You may purchase a *Hesychia Reflection Journal* at the Gift Shop at St. Scholastica Monastery and at Hesychia House of Prayer for a donation of \$10 each; this price does not include shipping and other associated costs.

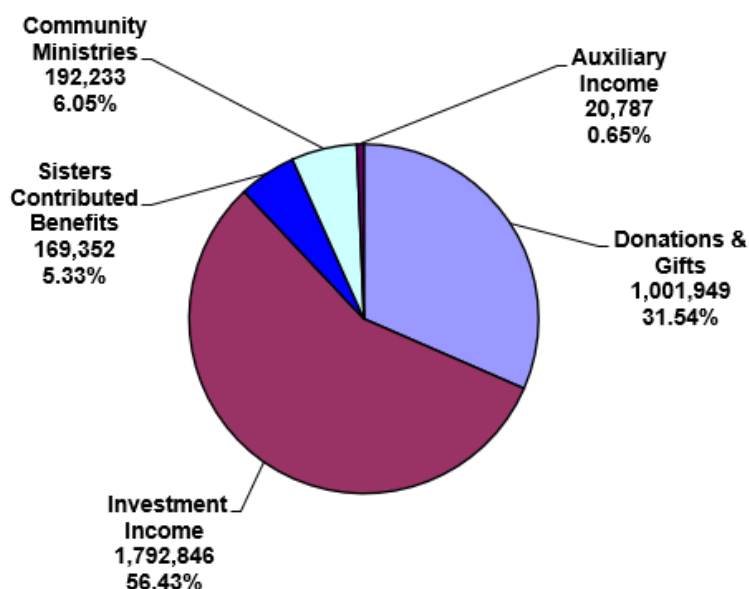
Sr. Lisa Atkins, RSM
Director, Hesychia House of Prayer

To learn more about Hesychia House of Prayer and/or to schedule a hermitage retreat please go to: www.seektheholly.org.

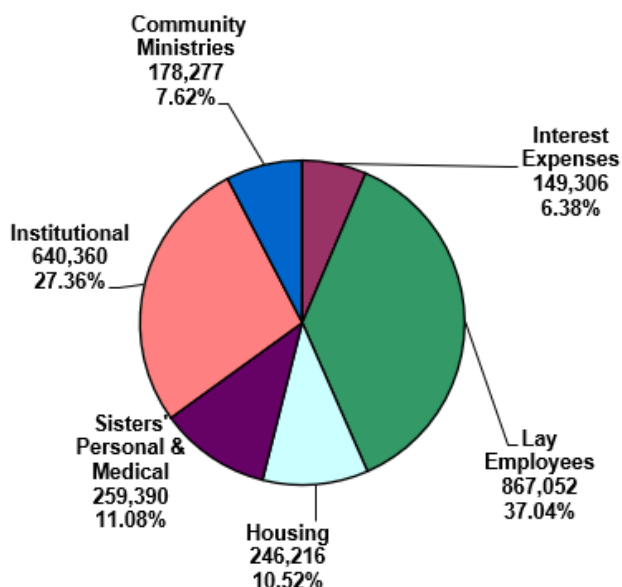


ANNUAL REPORT
September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

REVENUES



EXPENSES



Change in Net Assets \$ 836,566

THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE HELPED US HAVE A GOOD YEAR

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.

News Briefs

April 9, 2026: Sister Elizabeth Carillo, OSB, of Atchison, Kansas, led the Community Day of Input on care of the earth in the Rule of Benedict.

May 1, 2026: Sister Kimberly Prohaska led a prayer service of blessing for the employees on the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker.

May 3-9, 2026: Sister Judith Sutera, OSB, from Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas, led the Community Retreat on humility in the Rule of Benedict.

May 13-17, 2026: Sisters Regina Schroeder and Cecelia Brickell attended the Subprioress/House Coordinator meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

May 18-21, 2026: Sister Siena Fisk attended the North American Benedictine Vocation Formation Directors Conference Symposium in Schuyler, Nebraska.

May 23, 2026: Sisters attended Father Joseph Chan's celebration of his 10th anniversary of his ordination at Columbus Acres in Fort Smith.

June 6, 2026: The Sisters hosted a picnic for employees and volunteers and their families.

June 7-17, 2026: Sisters Kimberly Prohaska and Laura Cathcart attended the Chapter of the Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude in Waverly, Nebraska.

June 15-20, 2026: Sister Siena Fisk and the Sisters of St. Scholastica hosted a Vocation Discernment Retreat.

July 3-6, 2026: Sisters Laura Cathcart and Siena Fisk will attend the 55 and Under gathering in Duluth, Minnesota.

July 11, 2026: Oblates from Fort Smith and Tulsa, Oklahoma, will have a joint meeting in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

July 22, 2026: Sister Hilary Decker will celebrate the 70th anniversary of her profession.

St. Scholastica Monastery

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ST. SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY

AS OF JUNE 2024, WE CONCLUDED
THE USE OF OUR P.O. BOX ADDRESS.

PLEASE USE THE MONASTERY'S
PHYSICAL ADDRESS FOR ANY
CORRESPONDENCE:

1315 S. ALBERT PIKE AVENUE
FORT SMITH AR 72903

THANK YOU!



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Horizons

July 2026

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