



Holy Angels Echoes

Olivetian Benedictine Sisters
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72403-0130



Volume 27 No 4

Fall 2010

Groundbreaking For New School



On July 28, officials from Blessed Sacrament School broke ground for a new school building. Bishop Taylor was on hand to officiate and bless the ground at 1103 East Highland Drive.

Albert Frankenberger is the architect, and the general contractor is Ramson Construction Co. for the \$2.4 million, 28,400 square-foot facility. The school will be a third larger than the present school building, adjacent to Blessed Sacrament Church, which was dedicated on August 12, 1962.

Father Weibel established the first Catholic school in Jonesboro in the spring of 1886. For the future of Catholicism, he felt it necessary to teach the fundamentals of our faith to your people. "Ms. Kate Esselmann, daughter of the noted Dr. Esselmann in Pocahontas, was hired to conduct the first school. She began with about twenty pupils of whom scarcely half were Catholic. Later, Kate Esselmann married a William Skinner in Pocahontas."

According to a letter written to Fr. Lucy in Pine Bluff, dated Dec. 5, 1887, Fr. Weibel wrote the following. "We have 40 pupils at our school, of whom 30 attend regularly. I give them Catechism classes daily when I am there. The school is my greatest happiness, and I might say my only consolation on this mission."

At first, the school was called St. Roman's after the name of the Parish. The name was changed in 1933, to "Blessed Sacrament Parish." The school has been the "heart of the parish" for nearly 125 years now, since the

future of the parish depends on future Catholics.

Since Fr. Weibel was pastor of both Pocahontas and Jonesboro, he was anxious to secure Sisters to teach at St. Roman's Parish as well. During the month of April 1889, Mother Beatrice sent Sr. Agnes Dali to teach in St. Roman's School. Sr. Maura, OSB, (a Sister borrowed from St. Mary's Convent, Navoo, Illinois), was sent to accompany her.

The history of the School and the history of the Sisters has been intertwined throughout these nearly 125 years. The parish is grateful to have a Sister, once again this year, as Principal, Sr. Lisa O'Connell. In addition to Sr. Lisa, Sr. Glorea Knaggs teaches Third Grade in the school. The community thanks God that we have qualified members to work in the school.

At present time, the facility being built, will include a classroom for each grade level from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, as well as several multipurpose rooms. The school will be equipped with science labs and computer rooms. It will also house a kitchen, dining room and lobby. Later, the next phase to be constructed will include a gymnasium, storage areas and the remainder of the parish center. There will also be a playground on the campus.

Fr. Jack Vu, pastor, said that the educational complex is being funded through pledges and donations from parishioners. Construction officials estimate the project will take almost a year to complete. Students beginning the 2011-12 school year are expected to start school in the new building.

Sister Helen Swirczynski, OSB



Sr. Helen Swirczynski, age 92, died at 12:10 a.m. on October 8, 2010 in Holy Angels Convent. She was born on July 13, 1918, in Muenster, TX to Joe and Margaret (Yosten) Swirczynski. She was the eighth of fifteen children (eleven boys and four girls). Surviving

her are two sisters, Rita Miller of Austin, TX, Catherine Erpelding of Colorado, Springs, CO, and two brothers Ed of Richland Hills, TX and George of Dallas, TX. She is also survived by three sister-in-laws, and a number of nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews.

Sr. Helen attended Sacred Heart School in Muenster, TX and entered Holy Angels at an early age. After profession in 1935, she was assigned to the culinary department in a number of places, including cooking for the priests and seminarians at St. John's Seminary. Also she worked at Blytheville, Pocahontas, Benedictine Manor at Hot Springs, AR and in Muenster, TX. She was in charge of the convent kitchen at the Motherhouse in Jonesboro from 1975 to 1994. She retired after 54 years of cooking and was living in the Infirmary during her last years. She celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1960, Golden Jubilee in 1985 and Diamond Jubilee (75 yrs) on July 11, 2010.

She had a great love for the outdoors and liked to watch the birds that came to eat at the feeder outside her window. She enjoyed animals and also watching them on Video and TV. Although confined to a wheelchair and on constant oxygen, Sr. Helen always had a cheerful smile and pleasant greeting for all who came to see her.

Visitation and Rosary were held at Holy Angels Convent Chapel on Monday Oct. 11, at 7:00 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial was held on Oct. 12, at 10:00 a.m. with burial in Our Lady of Mt. Olivet Cemetery on the convent grounds under the direction of Emerson Funeral Home. Pallbearers were Knights of Columbus, Council 1721 of Blessed Sacrament Parish. Memorials may be made to the Retirement Fund of Holy Angels Convent, P.O. Box 130, Jonesboro, AR 72403.





FRIENDS OF HOLY ANGELS

You are invited to join in celebrating our QUASQUICENTENNIAL - the 125th anniversary (1887-2012) of our first Sisters coming to Arkansas. By sending \$10, your name will be listed in the commemorative booklet, "Memories and Milestones," under the section, "Friends of Holy Angels."

The year-long celebration will begin, December 13, 2011. **DEADLINE** for entering your name in the booklet is: **April 30, 2011.** If interested, please make a check for \$10 to Olivetan Benedictine Sisters and how you want your name listed in the booklet.

SEND TO:
Olivetan Benedictine Sisters
Attention: *Sr. Henrietta Hockle*
P.O. Box 130
Jonesboro, AR 72403

New Postulant



Michelle Keller

On August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption, Holy Angels Convent welcomed Postulant Michelle Keller to the community. Postulant Michelle arrived from Owensboro, Kentucky on August 1.

Just prior to the singing of the Magnificat at Vespers, Sr. Mary Anne Nuce, Prioress, called Postulant Michelle forward for the simple ceremony in which she was given a Benedictine Medal and commended to the care of Sr. Lisa O'Connell, Formation Directress. Although one Sister is responsible for the Formation Program, all the Sisters are encouraged to participate by their good example and prayers.

HOLY ANGELS CONVENT

Echoes published quarterly by the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters

Sister Henrietta Hockle - Editor
Sister Glorea Knaggs - Associate Editor
Sister Monica Swirczynski - Proof Reader
Sister Marilyn Doss & Sister Miriam Burns - Photos
Sister Thérèse Johnson & Sister Virginia Baltz - Circulation

Master Print Group • Jonesboro, AR - Printing

Message From The Prioress



Driving up Catholic Hill a week ago, I viewed the beautiful St. Paul Church in Pocahontas. I began to think of all

the history that this place had witnessed throughout the many years. My trip to St. Paul Parish was to be a sad one, as I was to meet with the pastor to make arrangements for a new convent as the old one was too big for one Sister and in need of costly repairs.

Making all these changes was especially hard for me because the Church, the Convent, the School and surrounding grounds were a part of my history. I was baptized at St. Paul's Church, attended St. Paul's School, entered Holy Angels Convent from there and returned twice to live in this very convent when I taught at St. Paul's School.

The pastor was new, in fact from Nigeria, so he could not know how my heart was breaking, to see this part of history being swept away. I understand the convent will be torn down, so as to give the people more parking space.

Our Sisters came from Convent Maria Rickenbach in Switzerland. The Community had perpetual adoration, so our Sisters tried to continue this devotion. The original chapel in the Church had been built for a Sister's chapel. Today, parishioners have perpetual adoration. They use this same chapel in the church for adoration.

In the mid fifties, when the Sisters had this convent built, a brother from Pevely, Missouri, built the light colored pews altar and tabernacle. I was filled with joy when the parishioners asked if they could use the furnishings from the convent chapel for the Adoration Chapel in church. I had been wondering what we could do with furnishings. All things are passing, so I end with the psalm:

"Hear my prayers, O Lord; To my cry give ear. For I am but a wayfarer before You, A pilgrim like my fathers."

(Ps 39: 5-6, 13)

Sister Mary Anne Nuce

DCWR JUBILEE CELEBRATION

On October 23, the DCWR (Diocesan Council of Women Religious) sponsored the annual Jubilee Celebration at McDonald Hall in the Cathedral Parish, Little Rock. This annual celebration honored all the religious in the diocese who are celebrating jubilees this year.

Mr. Robert McAfee, the featured speaker, gave a presentation on global warming and its effect on our world. Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, DD, celebrated the 12:00 noon Liturgy. At the close of the Mass, Bishop Taylor gave the Jubilarians a special blessing.

Following the luncheon, the Jubilarians were recognized and presented a gift. The host pastor for the event was Fr. Matt Garrison, Rector of the Cathedral. Jubilarians from Holy Angels were: Sr. Helen Swirczynski, 75 years (died Oct. 8, 2010), and the following celebrated 60 years of professed life: Sr. Monica Swirczynski, Sr. Dominica Wise, Sr. Romana Rohmer and Sr. Mary Anne Nuce.

Prayers and Sympathy

We extend sincere sympathy and assurance of our prayers to the following who lost loved ones recently.

✠ The Schmidt & Hess Families on death of Phyllis Schmidt (alumna '57), who died on Sept. 25, 2010.

✠ Sr. Henrietta Hockle on the death of Aunt Florence Thielemier, who died on September 11, 2010.

✠ The Long and Hess Families on the death of Rose Marie Hess Long (alumna '46) who died on October 10, 2010.



QUASQUICENTENNIAL 125th Anniversary

Olivetan Benedictine Sisters in Arkansas
1887-2012

Calendar of Events and Dates

2011

- Dec. 10, 11, 12** – Tridium in preparation for opening of Quasquicentennial Holy Hour Honoring St. Bernard Tolomei, Blessed Virgin Mary and Blessed Sacrament.
Mon. - Tues. Wednesday
- December 13** – **FOUNDERS DAY** – Opening of Quasquicentennial Celebration 124th Anniversary, of our Foundation in Arkansas. Mass & Dinner- Bishop and Community.
Thursday

2012

- March 21** – **FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT** – Mass and Dinner – Special Guests: Abbot General, Superior from Switzerland & All Benedictines
Wednesday
- July 4** – **SISTERS OF HOLY ANGELS DAY** - Community Celebration Vespers, Picnic at Frierson State Park
Wednesday
- July 11** – **SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT** – Jubilee Day: Mass, Dinner, Special Guests: Relatives of Honorees
Wednesday
- August 15** – **FEAST OF ASSUMPTION OF MARY** - Final Vow Day - Mass & Dinner - Special Guests: Relatives of Honorees and all Sisters. Afternoon Reception: Guests: Friends of Community
Wednesday
- October 2** – **FEAST OF HOLY ANGELS** – Afternoon Reception & Open House Special Guests: Oblates, Hospital Administration, Governing Board Foundation Board & Convent Advisory Board
Tuesday
- October 12** – **38th ANNIVERSARY OF CONVENT DEDICATION** – Mass & Dinner – Special Guests – Diocesan Clergy
Friday
- November 25** – **FRIENDS & EMPLOYEE DAY** – Afternoon Reception and Open House - Special Guests: Parishioners, Hospital Employees, Volunteers, Medical Staff, Ministerial Alliance, Friends.
Sunday
- December 13** – **CLOSING OF QUASQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION** Community Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving for all God's blessings during these 125 years.
Thursday

Celtic Illumination Workshop



Holy Angels Convent hosted a Celtic Illumination Workshop on October 22-23. Roann Mathias, a member of the Memphis Calligraphy Guild was the instructor. She is a mixed media artist who has specialized in calligraphy since 1980, and holds a Master's degree in art history.

Sr. Deborah Coffey, Holy Angels Convent resident artist, coordinated the workshop. The class, she explained "covered basic Celtic art techniques, painting and use of gold leaf. Students learned to construct a simple Celtic knot and progress toward more advanced and complicated designs."

She stated, "The students were pleased with the workshop and noted that spaces filled quickly due to return of former students." Sr. Deborah suggested students visit the studio website for updates, photos of the workshop and future developments.

Mr. Owens Receives Award

Ben E. Owens received the Distinguished Service Award from the Arkansas Hospital Association at the 80th Anniversary Awards Banquet held at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock on October 7.

In addition to Mr. Chris Barber, Administrator and CEO of St. Bernards, a number of Administrators and employees from St. Bernards, four Sisters attended this prestigious ceremony. Sr. Henrietta Hockle, Sr. Eileen Schneider, Sr. Miriam Burns and Sr. Damian Marie Atkinson attended this prestigious ceremony held in Little Rock.

After 38 years as President and CEO of St. Bernards, Mr. Owens retired at the end of July 2010. This well-deserved award is presented to individuals who have promoted the cause of the health-care industry, thereby becoming entitled to this special recognition.

**CONGRATULATIONS,
MR. OWENS FROM ALL OF US!**

OBLATE SPIRITUAL DAY

The Fall Spiritual Day for Oblates was held on October 16 at Holy Angels Convent. Our Chaplain, Fr. Udo, gave a conference on "Suffering." He also offered an opportunity for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Sr. Mary John Seyler, Directress of the Oblate program showed a DVD on the good work of AIM, (Alliance for International Monasticism) to which the Oblates contribute every year. This organization assists Bene-

dictine Communities, especially those in Third-World Countries. Lisa Whitehead made her Oblation during Mid-day Prayer.

Each Oblate received a three-ring binder in which to keep printed materials. This idea was suggested by Oblate Bernadette M-Ponton, at previous meetings. Oblate Don Curtsinger was able to furnish the three-ring binders that he picked up at local garage sale. A "Mini Art Exhibit" was also held by the Oblates.

BENEDICTINE OBLATES OF HOLY ANGELS CONVENT

Oblates of St. Benedict associate themselves with a Benedictine Community in order to strengthen their baptismal commitment and enrich their Christian way of life. Anyone interested in joining the Oblate Program of Holy Angels Convent, please call or write:

Sister Mary John Seyler, OSB

Phone: 870-243-2440.

or mail to:

P.O. Box 130

Jonesboro, AR 72403-0130



**OLIVETAN BENEDICTINE SISTERS, INC.
HOLY ANGELS CONVENT NEWSLETTER**

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Vocation Activities



**Sr. Mary Clare Bezner & Sr. Glorea Knaggs
with participants in Vocation Fair in Stubenville.**

July 28 - August 1- Joanna Gallegos of Texas visited Holy Angels. While here she participated with the Sisters at prayer, meals and recreation.

August 6-8 - Sr. Mary Clare Bezner and Sr. Maria Christi Cavanaugh attended the National Catholic Family Conference in Kansas City, Kansas. Both assisted in conducting workshops for children and teens.

October 7-9 - Sr. Mary Clare Bezner and Sr. Glorea Knaggs hosted a booth at the Vocations Fair at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. The annual event featured representatives from over 60 different Religious communities, and is open to the local Catholic college students.



RENEWAL OF TEMPORARY VOWS

During First Vespers of the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 5, four Sisters renewed their Temporary Vows. The Sisters read the Profession of Vows together, and each signed her document on the altar in the presence of the Community. Sister Mary Beth Hackley, Sr. Mary Clare Bezner, Sr. Maria Christi Cavanaugh and Sr. Glorea Knaggs

renewed their vows for one year. This annual renewal is made for three consecutive years after making First Profession. After four years in Temporary Vows, a Sister is allowed to request permission to make Perpetual Vows. Please pray for all those in their Religious Formation!

Activities Meetings

Aug. 3 - Penny Rogers from St. Bernards Health Care. presented a program for the Sisters at Holy Angels on Alzheimer's disease. She included helpful ideas on how to deal with people who have that disease.

Sept. 8 - The Fall session of the Little Rock Scripture Class began. Sr. Romana Rohmer leads the group, which meet every Wednesday evening.

Sept. 21 - Deacon David England began a second year of Studies in Philosophy for the Sisters of Holy Angels.

Sept. 25 - Five members of the Johns Family presented a piano concert for the Sisters. The following presented selections: Garrett, Mark, Vivian, Stephen and Samuel.

Oct. 2 - A number of Sisters attended the Fall Festival at Blessed Sacrament Parish Hall.

Oct. 3 - The Fall Picnic for the Community was held at Lake Frierson State Park. Special thanks again to Novitiate members for preparing the great picnic meal.

Oct. 7 - Sr. Henrietta Hockle, Sr. Eileen Schneider, Sr. Miriam Burns and Sr. Damian Marie Atkinson attended the 80th Arkansas Hospital Awards Banquet in Little Rock, when Mr. Ben E. Owens received the Outstanding Achievement Award for his 38 years as head of St. Bernards.

Oct. 10 - St. Bernards sponsored the Third Annual Butterfly Release for the benefit of the Phil and Flo Jones Hospice House.

Oct. 8-10 - Sr. Ann Marie Ferricher, Sr. Therese Johnson and Sr. Deborah Coffey attended the Youth 2000 Retreat in North Little Rock.

