



Fall 2024
Vol. 42

Holy Angels Echoes

The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters
www.olivben.org

Diamond Jubilees

On July 11, the feast of St Benedict, the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters celebrated two Diamond Jubilees: the 75 years of religious life of Sr Mary John Seyler, and the 60 years of religious life of Sr Helen Herbstritt. Bishop Anthony Taylor celebrated the Mass along with several diocesan priests. On this joyful day, the Jubilarians were joined by friends and family in person and in spirit. Join us in our grateful prayers for these Sisters and their witness of fidelity to Jesus in consecrated life!



Srs Helen and Mary John renewed their vows during the Jubilee Mass. They are pictured signing their profession document on the altar.



(L-R) Sr Helen Herbstritt, Bishop Anthony Taylor, and Sr Mary John Seyler



Sr. Marya
Duscher, OSB

Sister Marya Duscher, a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent for 45 years, died January 25, 2024. She was 74 years old.

Mary Katheryn was born in Redwood Falls, Minnesota, on May 3, 1949 to James and LuVerne Duscher. She graduated from St. Mary's Catholic High School in 1967, and worked in several different jobs before entering Holy Angels in 1979.

She made First Vows in 1981 and Perpetual Vows in 1986. Sister was a gifted artist who excelled in various crafts and mediums, many of which were sold in the convent gift shop. Her love of God's creation inspired her to create art out of materials found in nature, including a set of special wooden plaques put on display every Advent at the convent.

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New Postulants Welcomed



(L-R) Postulant Josie Nuñez &
Postulant Laurie Nick

On August 15, we received Josie Nuñez and Laurie Nick as Postulants. Postulant Josie is from Immaculate Conception Parish in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and worked for several years for the City of Fort Smith. Postulant Laurie is from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, St. Francisville, Louisiana, and most recently served as the Director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Shreveport, Louisiana. Please keep them in your prayers as they begin their formation at Holy Angels Convent.

Message from the Prioress

Dear Family, Friends and Benefactors,

I send greetings to you, thankful for cool days after many very warm ones! This summer has been full of many events and activities that have kept us busy. As I write this letter we have a small group of young girls visiting us for the day from Texas and it is such a joy to hear their joyful giggles and see their smiles in the halls and out on the convent grounds.

We had a wonderful retreat this summer. Fr. Denis Robinson of St. Meinrad Archabbey gave us much to meditate on when praying with the Gospel of Luke, and he was even able to make us chuckle during his conferences. We then had our summer community meetings. On July 11th, the Feast of our Holy Father St. Benedict, we had a grand celebration for Sr. Mary John's 75 years and Sr. Helen's 60 years Jubilee. Thank you to all who were able to come or be with us in prayer!

Lately I've felt the Lord inviting me to trust Him more. Like any adult, I have to make lots of decisions that will impact the future. Sometimes these decisions and their many facets all start to come up in prayer, and I feel like running from my own thoughts because I just want to pray - and not think about all these cares! At the convent, we have daily Mass, Holy Hour, Divine Office, and I even try to spend extra time with Jesus every morning in private prayer. Even though we have all these set times for prayer, sometimes I still struggle in the area of trust. But I will share with you something that has been helping me.

I have a little chalkboard in my office that says, "I am with you, I love you, Trust Me." I can't tell you how many times a day I read this message from Jesus. This is such an important reminder for all of us: He is with us, He loves us and we *can* truly trust that He will take care of all the things! I would encourage you to write down those words, or another Scripture verse that reminds you that you can trust God with all your concerns. "Cast your cares on Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

In Christ,
Mother Mary Clare



Mother Mary Clare
Bezner, OSB

Sr. Marya, continued

During her religious life, Sister Marya served as the community Infirmarian for two years, for a time as the Sacristan and for many years as Refectory Supervisor, in which she served both the community and our guests with her warm hospitality. She also enjoyed working outdoors and corresponding with many family and friends. She was dedicated to prayer and spiritual reading. In 2006, she celebrated 25 years of religious life.

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 contact Sr Mary John at srmarijohns@gmail.com.

Summer Retreat



Fr Denis Robinson of St Meinrad Archabbey gave our annual retreat in June on the Gospel of St Luke.

Holy Angels Echoes

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Our Jubilarians



*Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee;
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I hope in Thee;
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I love Thee.*

Sr. Mary John Seyler - 75 Years

Sister Mary John Seyler was raised in the strong Catholic community of Muenster, Texas. Having been taught by our Sisters, she was inspired to enter Religious Life in 1947. She has often shared about the homesickness she initially felt, having left her close-knit German community. But she persevered, feeling convinced that God was indeed calling her to be a Sister. She made First Profession in 1949 and Perpetual Profession in 1953.

After completing her initial formation, Sister began what would be a 40-year ministry in Catholic education. During these years, Sister Mary John taught at Blessed Sacrament School in Jonesboro, Our Lady of the Holy Souls in Little Rock, Arkansas, and St Maria Goretti School in Lake Arthur, Louisiana. She was both teacher and principal in Sacred Heart School in Muenster, Texas, and St Paul's School in Pocahontas, Arkansas.

Sister also taught religious education at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Erath, Louisiana. In 1981, she was elected Prioress and served two terms in office. She then returned to teach at Sacred Heart School in Muenster for nine years before returning to the Motherhouse to serve as the Formation Directress. She then began a new ministry in the Pastoral Care Department at St Bernards, in which she visited patients and served as the director until 2017. Sister enjoyed visiting patients so much, that some time after retiring, she began visiting local shut-ins and veterans. Sister also serves as the community's Directress of Oblates, a position she has held for the last 22 years. Her love for teaching is still evident in the way she provides new learning experiences for our Oblates. In her free time, Sister Mary John enjoys rescuing little projects that need to be crocheted or pieced together, making crafts out of re-used paper, and whatever else she can find.

Sr. Helen Herbstritt - 60 Years

Sister Helen Herbstritt was born in St. Marys, Pennsylvania, the youngest of 10 children born to Floyd and Catherine Herbstritt. Baptized Eileen Marie, she attended Sacred Heart Parish School where she was taught by the Benedictine Sisters. Their witness inspired her to enter religious life in their community - the oldest female Benedictine foundation in the US.

At the age of eighteen, she entered St Joseph's Monastery in 1962. She professed first vows in 1964, and solemn vows in 1969. Sr Helen earned her BS in Education from Villa Maria College, in Erie, Pennsylvania and a Masters in Education from the University of Dayton, in Dayton, Ohio. Sister is also a talented musician, and also earned a Masters in Music from St. Joseph's College, in Rensselaer, Indiana.

During her religious life, Sr Helen taught elementary school and religious education for twenty years. She especially loved young children, teaching little ones to love music and Jesus. Sister has served both in a parish setting and in community as organist, choir director, liturgist, and piano teacher for decades. Just think about how many people have a love for music because of Sr. Helen's inspiration! In her former monastery she held many roles of service, including subprioress, sacristan, vocation director, and council member.

Sister Helen formally transferred to our community in 2018. We have been so blessed to have her support with our liturgy and organ music - God sent her at just the right time, when we were in need of someone with her talents and experience. Sister Helen's kindness and encouraging disposition are a great blessing to our community.



*That in all things God may be
glorified through
Jesus Christ.*

Special Thanks

The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all our benefactors who made contributions in 2023. Whenever attempting to create such a list as this, we run the risk of accidentally omitting a name. If we have done so, please accept our apologies and know that we are very grateful!

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St Mechtilde of Hackeborn

A Saint from Our Tradition

St. Mechtilde (1240-1298) entered the Benedictine Abbey at Rodardsdorf, Germany, where her older sister was a nun, by her own choice at the age of seven. When her sister became abbess at Helfta, St. Mechtilde also transferred there. She was put in charge of the abbey's young girls and thus became a mentor to the future St. Gertrude the Great. St. Mechtilde was gifted with a beautiful voice and led the abbey's choir.

St. Mechtilde is best known for *The Book of Special Grace*, which St. Gertrude wrote to record her mentor's mystical experiences and spiritual insights. Although St. Mechtilde originally shared this information in strict confidence, she had a vision of Christ assuring her that the book had been written according to his will. In other visions, Jesus commended to her the reading of the Gospels, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and prayer to his Sacred Heart.

St. Mechtilde's book was popular in Italy within 15 years of her death and inspired Dante's *Purgatorio*, where he uses her image of Purgatory as a seven-story mountain and mentions her by name.

Special Thanks, Continued

Vickie Thurman
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Steve & Michelle Yeoman
Daryl Young
Cindy Zimmer
James & Dolores Zimmerer



Bart Benson Retires



(L-R) Carl Kirkendoll, St Bernards
Director of Engineering & Bart Benson

Get to Know Sr Jeanette Bayer



Year I entered religious life: 1955

Hometown: Muenster, Texas

Feast day: December 14, St John of the Cross

Hymn I love to sing: We Walk By Faith

Favorite saints: St John of the Cross

Last book read: Beautiful Eucharist

A precious memory: Caring for dying parents

Favorite Bible Verse: "The Lord is gracious and merciful." Psalm 103:8

Hobbies or interests: Classical music

Favorite activity at evening recreation:
Rummikub

Favorite way to pray: While walking

Favorite church: Sacred Heart, Muenster, Texas

Years I have taught: 64

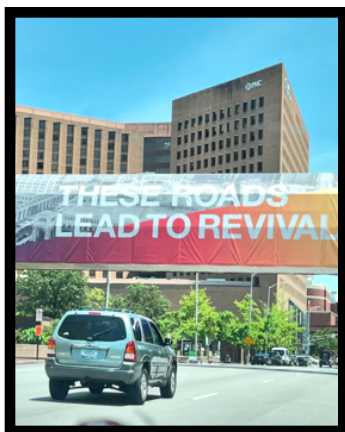
Favorite subject to teach: Math & Reading

Farthest I've traveled from home: Italy & Germany

States I've taught in: Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas

In May, the Sisters joined with employees from the Convent and St. Bernards to congratulate our maintenance man, Bart Benson, on his retirement. After working 33 years for St Bernards Engineering Department, Bart joined the Holy Angels Convent maintenance crew in 2018. During his years with us he brought a wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as many kind words and laughter. God bless you, Bart!

Eucharistic Revival



National Eucharistic Congress: Along with more than 60,000 Catholics, our Sisters Cecilia and Sister Maria Christi attended the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, Indiana in July. The Sisters hosted a booth to promote vocations, but also enjoyed the daily Masses, conferences and most especially the public Eucharistic procession.

Corpus Christi: On the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we held our traditional procession in the halls surrounding our Chapel. There was a particular feeling of devotion and peace as we prayed before the little altars our Sisters set up at various stations in the hallways. Each time we leave the Chapel as a community, we pray aloud: O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine: all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine! This is a beautiful prayer to pray when you pass a Church or Chapel with the Blessed Sacrament, in your heart or out loud.

Special Visitor

In July, the Sisters were honored to host our special friend, Abbot James Liprie, OSB Oliv. A native of Louisiana, he currently resides at Monte Oliveto Maggiore in central Italy and serves as the Vicar General of the congregation. While in the states visiting family, he spent a few days at Holy Angels.



Abbot James Liprie

During his visit, Abbot James brought with him several gifts, including a plate bearing the coat of arms of the Olivetan Benedictines. Our coat of arms bears the image of a crimson cross that represents the Passion of Christ, two branches signifying His interior and exterior sufferings, and three snow covered hills, representing Mary's purity.



Leave a Legacy

Ways to support the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent:

- *Remember Holy Angels Convent in your will.
- *Name Holy Angels Convent as a beneficiary of your IRA or Pension Plan.
- *Purchase a Life Insurance Policy and name Holy Angels Convent as beneficiary.
- *Remember deceased loved ones with memorial gifts to Holy Angels Convent.
- *Remember Holy Angels Convent with planned gifts.
- *Establish a Charitable Remainder Trust with Holy Angels Convent as the charity.

Sympathy & Prayers

The Sisters extend sincere sympathy and prayers to the following who have lost a loved one recently:

Sr Maria Rose Carter and family, on the death of her sister, Sandra Acaldo, on April 11.

Sr Elaine Willett and family, on the death of her brother, Paul Willett, on August 27.

Sr Therese Marie Kintzley and family, on the death of her brother, Mark Kintzley, on August 30.

Activities & Meetings



Consecrated Life Day

Sr. Thérèse, and a group of our Sisters participated in the annual diocesan Consecrated Life Day at the Carmel of St Therese in Little Rock. This is always a joyful event to celebrate Jubilarians from around the diocese.

Solar Eclipse

(L-R) Sisters Miriam, Deborah, Ann Marie (standing), Therese Marie and Elaine are pictured at the community solar eclipse party back in April. Jonesboro happened to be in the path so that we were able to experience about 2 minutes of total eclipse.



Triple Swing

(L-R) Sisters Thérèse, Deborah, Mary Beth and Maria Christi enjoyed posing for the photo booth at the Triple Swing in June. This year, St Bernards Foundation raised funds to support our Cancer Center.



Pregnancy Clinic Expansion

Mother Mary Clare joined St Bernards employees and representatives from the Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce in celebrating the expansion of our local pregnancy clinic. This clinic provides prenatal care for local moms who might not otherwise have access to healthcare.



Get to Know Sr Johanna Marie Melnyk



Year I entered religious life: 2003 (transferred to Holy Angels in 2014)

Hometown: Northwood, Ohio

Feast day: August 29 - The Passion of St. John the Baptist

Treat I like for my feast day: Chocolate

Favorite saints: SS John the Baptist, Therese of Lisieux, Thomas More, Elizabeth of the Trinity

Hymn I love to sing: Creator of the Stars of Night

Last book read: Northern Light, by the Cistercian Nuns of Tautra Mariakloster

Favorite Flower: Hydrangea

A precious memory: Visiting Monte Oliveto in 2008

Favorite Bible Verse: Lamentations 3:22-23—
“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.”

Hobbies or interests: Reading, papercrafting, crochet

A color that makes me happy: pink

Dream pilgrimage: The Vatican

Favorite way to pray: Silence

Favorite pope: Venerable Pius XII or Benedict XVI

Best season of the year: Advent

Favorite Artist: Gesualdo Six (vocal ensemble)

Favorite title of Our Lady: Our Lady of Vladimir

Favorite thing about Holy Angels: The Sisters' love for the Eucharist



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Vocations Activities



Sr Cecilia with a group of students from the University of Central Arkansas at the Seek24 Conference.



Mother Mary Clare and Sr Cecilia pose with a group of homeschool students from Lindsay and Muenster, Texas.



Sr Cecilia worked with other Religious from the diocese to host a 5th Grade Vocation Day in Little Rock in May.

Is God calling you?

Are you or is someone you know considering a vocation to Religious Life? Contact Sr Cecilia Nguyen, Vocation Director, at Vocations@olivben.org.

Keep in
touch!



www.olivben.org



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