



The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters
www.olivben.org

(L-R) Sr. Mary Beth, Subprioress; Mother Mary Clare, Prioress; Sr. Romana Rohmer, and Bishop Anthony Taylor

Join us in our grateful prayers for Sr. Romana and her witness of fidelity to Jesus in consecrated life!

Mother Mary Clare presented each Novice with the Holy Rule of St Benedict.

Our community begins each month with a Novena to the Infant of Prague for new vocations. (L-R) Novice María José Nuñez & Novice Emmanuel Marie Nick

Message from the Prioress

Dear Family, Friends and Benefactors,

Over the last few months I have been studying the early Desert Fathers. Most of them lived in the 3rd and 4th century - men and women who were teachers in the early Christian church, and whose lives greatly influenced St. Benedict. The thing I find most interesting is the human issues they were responding to are still issues today. We can benefit from their wisdom, particularly as we search for meaning in our own lives.

One example of this can be found in the impact of the Desert Father, St. Antony the Great, on St. Augustine. St. Antony (often called St. Antony of the Desert) was born into a Christian family in Egypt in the third century. His radical conversion occurred one day when, as a young man, he heard the words of Christ in Matthew 19:21: "If you would be perfect, go sell what you own and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." He resolved to follow this to the letter, and from this point forward, lived a life of prayer and asceticism which eventually led him to the solitude of the desert. After 20 years or so, word spread of his innocence and holiness of life, and many sought him out. One of those who became a disciple of his was St. Athanasius, who later wrote his biography.

A century later, St. Augustine read his *Life of St. Antony of the Desert* shortly after converting to Christianity. Augustine once witnessed a companion, who, after reading about St. Antony, instantly converted, realizing the emptiness of his worldly life and finding the truth and meaning in the pursuit of Christ. Seeing the conversion of his friend, as well as his reflection on St. Antony's asceticism and total offering of his life for God, caused Augustine himself to question his own purpose in life, and ultimately spurred him on to his own radical conversion to Christ.

In a world where so many search for meaning through earthly goods like wealth, power, and prestige, the lives of the Desert Fathers and those they impacted show us that the greatest meaning of life is found in pursuit of Christ. May we learn from their example of holiness and grace.

In Christ,
Mother Mary Clare



Mother Mary Clare
Bezner, OSB

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Summer Retreat

Each summer, the Sisters take time to make a five-day retreat. During this week, they avoid unnecessary work or communication and enter into a deeper silence. This year, our retreat was led by Father Cassian Edwards, OSB, of St. Vincent



Fr. Cassian Edwards, OSB (center) is pictured here with
the Sisters during retreat.

Archabbey, Latrobe,
Pennsylvania. Fr. Cassian
teaches at St. Vincent's
seminary. He gave
conferences each day
pertaining to growing in our
relationship with Jesus and
one another.

Holy Angels Echoes

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15 Years of Religious Life

Sr. Romana Rohmer

Sister Romana was born in Muenster, Texas, to John and Mary (Hesse) Rohmer, who named her Teresa. She credits her family with providing a strong foundation in the Faith that still supports her religious life today. She was inspired to answer God's call by the loving example of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters who taught her for 12 years at Sacred Heart School in Muenster. In first grade, she met her cousin Sister Aloysia and desired to wear "a pretty dress like hers." After entering Holy Angels Convent, she made First Vows in 1950 and Final Vows in 1954.

Sister Romana earned a BA in Education from Arkansas State University, with a minor in History. She completed the diploma program from the Theology Institute at St Norbert's College, DePere, Wisconsin. She ministered as a teacher in Catholic schools and as a CCD teacher for twenty-six years in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas; for seven of those years, she also served as principal.

There is no holy one like the Lord;
there is no Rock like our God.
1 Samuel 2:2

Her desire to become a nurse was fulfilled during the ten years when she cared for her elderly parents. At that time, Sister began a new venture that lasted 31 years: serving as Director of Religious Education in parishes in Arkansas and Texas. She also participated in the Little Rock Scripture Study program and was a long-time member of the Diocesan Council of Women Religious.

Sister Romana is presently in charge of the gift shop at Holy Angels Convent and sends handwritten thank-you notes to our benefactors. She also serves on the Council and on St. Bernards Advisory Board, and teaches a weekly community history class to our Novices. Sister Romana is grateful to our founding Sisters and to the Community for all the opportunities they have provided for her.



Sisters originally from Muenster, Texas, are pictured here with Sr. Romana's cousin, Deacon Gary Endres, at the Jubilee luncheon. (L-R, standing) Sr. Jeanette Bayer, Deacon Gary, Sr. Mary John Seyler. (L-R, seated) Sr. Lillian Marie Reiter and Sr. Romana.

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.

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to the Olivetan
Benedictine Sisters

Mission Statement of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters

We are a community of monastic women who seek God through prayer and work in the Olivetan Benedictine Tradition. Accordingly, we proclaim Jesus Christ and the Gospel message through our service to each other in community, hospitality, health care, education, and other apostolic works.

In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Virginia Baltz, a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent for 23 years, died February 23, 2025. She was 86 years old. Virginia Mary was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on November 20, 1938, the firstborn of the 13 children of the late Paul and Ida (Layton) Baltz. She recalled wanting to be a religious Sister from a very young age, and at 16, entered the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood in O'Fallon, Missouri. After 12 years of service as a teacher and organist, she left for health reasons. She then spent the next several years as a teacher in Catholic schools and later public education before changing career paths and working in business for 22 years. In 2002, she felt the Lord calling her again to religious life, and she entered the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters. She made First Vows in 2004 and Final Vows in 2008. Sister Virginia spent her early years as a Sister as community Infirmarian, teaching religious education at St. Mary's in Paragould, and as an organist. She also provided support for the community liturgy and newsletter. Sister Virginia was a gifted musician and was dedicated to prayer and spiritual reading. She was preceded in death by her parents; 2 brothers, Gerald and Joseph Baltz; 2 brothers-in-law, Hurschell Walker and Harold Ungerank; and 1 sister-in-law, Delphine Baltz. She is survived by her Sisters in community; 5 brothers, Fr. David Baltz, mscj, Kenneth (Jennie) Baltz, Leonard (Yolanda) Baltz, Anthony (Violeta) Baltz, and Vincent (Mary) Baltz; 5 sisters, Pauletta Walker, Bernadette Ungerank, Joan (Henry) Gross, Mary Therese Koch, Margaret (Alex) Lantos; and nieces, nephews, and cousins.



SR. M. VIRGINIA BALTZ



SR. M. ELAINE WILLET

Sister Mary Elaine Willett, a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent for 71 years, died March 28, 2025. She was 85 years old. Florence Helen was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas on January 28, 1940, the third of the five children of the late Joe and Rose (Freppon) Willett. In the first grade at Blessed Sacrament School, she felt inspired by her teacher, Sr. Fridoline, to one day become a Sister, a teacher, and a missionary, but she was also inspired to become a nurse like her mother. While attending Holy Angels Academy, she entered the community in 1954. She made First Vows in 1957 and Final Vows in 1962. After professing her vows, she spent her first year as a Sister teaching third grade at Our Lady of the Holy Souls School in Little Rock. From there she went on to earn a BS in Nursing, and served for over 20 years in various nursing positions at St. Bernards; hospitals in Brinkley, Arkansas, and New Iberia, Louisiana; and as a nursing instructor at Arkansas State University. After spending 4 years as a missionary in Mexico, she served as community Formation Directress, and was then asked to help establish a ministry to Hispanics in Northeast Arkansas. In 1997, she founded Hispanic Community Services Center, Inc. (now El Centro Hispano) where she served as Executive Director until 2005. During her years in Hispanic Ministry she served as a translator for many local facilities, including the

Jonesboro Police Department, local hospitals, and Blessed Sacrament Church and School. She continued to work in Hispanic Ministry at Blessed Sacrament Parish until her retirement in 2016. Sr. Elaine loved visiting with her sisters, family, and friends, listening to music, spiritual reading, and was a talented seamstress. She was preceded in death by her parents; her sister, Rose Marie O'Neill and 2 brothers, Paul and Harold Willett. She is survived by her Sisters in community; a brother, George Willett; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Sister Mary Christopher Flowers, a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent for 75 years, died June 23, 2025. She was 92 years old. Rachel Ann was born in Ripley, Oklahoma, on March 2, 1933, to the late Sam and Ruth Flowers, the eldest of 7 children. The family moved several times in her early childhood, ending up in Hulbert, Arkansas, at which time she began attending St. Michael's Catholic School in West Memphis. Here she met religious Sisters for the first time, and soon after, she and her family entered the Catholic Church. She attended the Holy Angels Academy Juniorate, and entered Holy Angels Convent in 1950. She made First Vows in 1952 and Final Vows in 1957. After professing her vows, Sr. Christopher began what would become a decades-long career in education. She attended Arkansas State University and earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a master's degree as a Reading Specialist. For over 60 years she taught at Catholic Schools in Arkansas and Texas, including 35 years at St. Michael's Catholic School in West Memphis. After retiring from Catholic Schools, she tutored English language learners and Sisters in Formation at Holy Angels Convent. Sr. Christopher loved visiting with her Sisters and friends, spiritual reading, crocheting, and making visits to the Chapel each day. She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers, Michael, Charles, and Sam Flowers; and sister, Mary Robinson. She is survived by her Sisters in community; and two sisters, Martha and Valerie Flowers; and many nieces and nephews.



SR. M. CHRISTOPHER FLOWERS

Special Thanks

The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all our benefactors who made contributions in 2024. 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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We always
give thanks to
God for all of
you and
mention you in
our prayers.
I Thessalonians 1:2

St. Bernards Healthcare Celebrates 125 Years of Christlike Healing



In 1900, the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters responded to a malaria outbreak by establishing St. Bernards Hospital (pictured right). The founding Sisters named the hospital after St. Bernard Tolomei and asked for his patronage and intercession in their service of the sick. 125 years later, St. Bernards Healthcare is the largest healthcare provider in Northeast Arkansas. During this anniversary year, there have been many celebrations and expressions of gratitude for St. Bernards, as well as a updated history book published to mark this milestone.



Sisters and guests view the pop-up museum in the tower lobby at St. Bernards.



Sisters and Postulants pose at the kickoff of the 125th anniversary year, which included a pop-up museum containing artifacts from hospital archives.



On January 25, St. Bernards hosted a gala to celebrate 125 years at St. Bernards Auditorium.



On July 9, the community gathered at St. Bernards for the launch of its updated history book, "The Heart of Great Medicine: 125 Years of St. Bernards Healthcare" by Sr. Johanna Marie.



At the July 9 book launch, Bishop Anthony Taylor, who authored the foreword of the new history book, addressed the Sisters and members of St. Bernards with words of congratulations and encouragement.



In keeping with recent tradition, Sr. Mary Beth made the inaugural swing at the St. Bernards Triple Swing Fundraiser in June.

Visit: <https://www.stbernards.info/about-us/125th-anniversary/> for more information and photos.

Ordinations to the Transitional Diaconate and Priesthood

Over the past year, our Sisters were blessed to be able to attend the many ordinations that took place. We praise God for the gift of the new priests and soon-to-be new priests in our diocese!



(L-R) Sisters Maria Rose and Ann Marie attended the ordination of Father Raban Heyer, OSB, of Subiaco in November.



At St. Andrew's Cathedral on May 15, (L-R) Sr. Maria Christi, Postulant Laurie, Mother Mary Clare, Sr Cecilia, and Postulant Josie attended the ordination of Duwan Booker to the transitional diaconate.



On May 31, (L-R) Sr. Thérèse, Sr. Mary Beth, Postulant Laurie, Postulant Josie and Mother Mary Clare attended the priestly ordination of Father Joel Brackett at the cathedral.



On May 13 in Jonesboro, many Sisters were able to attend the ordination of Quinn Thomas to the transitional diaconate. Pictured above, two of our Sisters carry up the gifts in the offertory procession.

Get to Know Sister Cecilia Nguyen



Year I entered religious life: 2003

Birthday: January 4

Hometown: Chanhassen, Minnesota

Feast day: November 22 - Feast of St. Cecilia

Treat I like for my feast day: Swedish

Pineapple Coconut Cake

Favorite saints: St. Joseph, St. Cecilia, St. Thérèse, the Little Flower

Favorite flower: Sunflowers

Last book read: *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori

A precious memory: The time I went with my parents to Rome

Favorite movie: *The Sound of Music*

Favorite book: Books about the lives of the Saints

Favorite Bible verse: John 3:30 - "He must increase, I must decrease."

Hobbies or interests: Reading, listening to music, walking outside and hearing the birds singing while praying the Rosary, enjoying nature

A color that makes me happy: purple and blue, but yellow brings me cheer

Dream pilgrimage: The Holy Land and Rome.

Favorite way to pray: Silently praying in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

Best season of the year: Autumn

Favorite title of Our Lady: Our Lady of Perpetual Help



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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 smaryjohns@gmail.com.



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Vocations



(L-R) Sr. Maria Christi and Sr. Cecilia attended the CMSWR Formator's Workshop in Huntington, New York in April.

Have you ever wondered, "What is a Vocation Director?" A Vocation Director is a representative from a diocese or religious congregation who helps individuals in discerning their call. They communicate through email, telephone/zoom, or in person to listen and guide the person as they navigate the question, "Is God calling me to this particular way of life?"

Throughout the year, you can find our Vocation Director, Sr. Cecilia, at state and national conferences, retreats, and workshops, sharing about our community and about religious life with interested young women. She also hosts an annual diocesan women's retreat with other religious from the Diocese, and two Come & See Retreats at Holy Angels Convent.

Please join us in prayer for all those discerning a vocation to the priesthood and religious life.

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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